

Energy, need and justice

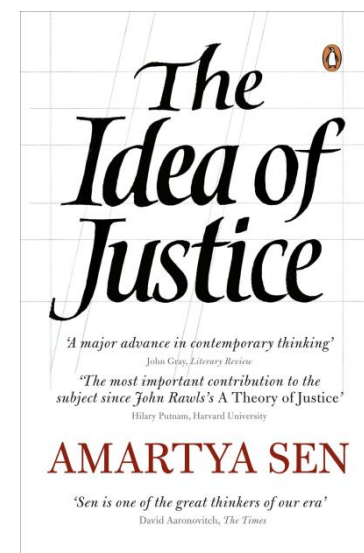
DEMAND research explores the various forms of linkage between energy demand and questions of need and justice, through an interplay between:

- *conceptual reasoning and development (A)*
- *analysis of public deliberation on what constitutes a minimally decent life (B)*
- *analysis of media discourses on energy and need (C)*
- *investigation of embedded norms and principles of need within 'hard' and 'soft' infrastructures (D)*

From this work we are drawing out **implications** for academic understanding including related to change over time; *but* also crucially the **governance implications** for policy and practice in relation to fuel poverty, carbon mitigation and energy demand reduction

PART A: How is and can energy use be positioned within normative theory on notions of need, rights and justice?

- relatively little theoretical work in this area specifically related to energy use and energy services
- but *many* traditions of thinking about what constitutes an essential need, a right and a matter of social justice
- focus has to first be not on energy per se, but on the ways of being that we *value* and that energy services (and therefore energy use) are able to support
- Sen and Nussbaums's 'capabilities' framework provides, for us, the best way of working out how energy use and energy services matter as a enabler or ingredient of basic capabilities



PART B: How is energy demand implicated in evolving public conceptions of what constitutes the necessary elements of an minimally decent life?

- finding out ‘what the public think’ is one way of guiding the types of governance arrangements that should be in place (and also of applying the capabilities framework)
- public deliberations also reflect to some degree the wider circulation of ideas on what is ‘normal’ and what are acceptable as a way of living
- not able to undertake our own deliberative processes; but have analysed outcomes of a series of focus group based processes focused on deriving ‘minimum income standards’ (every two years since 2008)
- looking for where energy use and energy dependency is directly and indirectly implicated



PART C: How do media discourses explicitly or implicitly connect notions of need and necessity to the use of and demand for energy?

- the media is a key way in which evaluative ideas about the norms of energy use circulate; shaping to some degree the public views investigated in part B
- media reporting also to some extent both reflects and shapes the content and boundaries of governance & policy
- we analysed newspaper reporting over one year – 2013 – which was very active in relation to energy related stories; prices, security, new nuclear, blackouts, fuel poverty
- how is energy connected to words such as “need”, “necessity”, “necessary”, “essential” in this reporting? Are there common repeated discourses? Are some more dominant than others? How much does this vary across newspapers?

The Telegraph

Home News World Sport Finance Comment Culture Travel Life Women Fashion
Companies Comment Personal Finance ISAs Economics Markets Festival of Business
ISAs Investing Pensions Savings Interest Rates Funds Mortgage Credit Cards Export
HOME FINANCE PERSONAL FINANCE HOUSEHOLD BILLS

Use less energy to cope with rising costs, consumers told
Millions of British Gas customers have been told to use less gas or electricity to cope with rising costs as the energy supplier announced a “devastating” £130 a year price rise



PART D: How are norms of energy use and principles of need for energy services embedded within infrastructural arrangements?

- infrastructure in material terms includes the 'pipes and wires', but also the end use technologies related to appliances, home layout and so on (hard infrastructure)
- infrastructure is not just material, also how that infrastructure is provided, managed and regulated (soft infrastructure)
- we can find ideas and principles of need embedded in both the hard and soft infrastructure related to energy provisioning and use; and these matter for norms and for degrees of inclusion/exclusion
- Ideas and principles have changed over time, but we can find historic ideas and principles still to some degree carried in contemporary socio-material arrangements



Some examples of Part D questions:

- What is provided in infrastructural terms?
- Who is connected and unconnected?
- What are the rules and terms of connection and disconnection?
- At what capacity and over what temporality is supply provided?

- How is resource flow through the infrastructure managed, charged and paid for?
- What are the mechanisms and means of measuring and paying for end use?
- How and in what terms are these differentiated spatially, socially or in other ways?

- What or who is protected in the event of shortage or breakdown; who or what is a priority?
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... connection

	Estimated % of households connected	Right of connection	Cost of connection	Differentiation
Electricity	100%	Duty of distribution company to connect when requested (unless not reasonable to do so)	Any reasonable expenses may be charged to person requesting	
Gas	90%	Duty of distribution company to connect if premises within 23m of main pipeline	All costs are charged to person requesting + they may lay own pipe to get within 23m	Ofgem 'assisted gas connection' scheme for vulnerable consumers

Energy use, energy services – a basic need? – essential and necessary? - a matter of justice? – a matter of governance – a state responsibility?

for whom, on what terms and why?

A what theoretical reasoning can say

B what citizens think and see as normal

C what discourses circulate in the media

D what is hardwired into infrastructures and their organisation