

Heating and Comfort: Past, Present and Future

Research by the DEMAND Centre shows that comfort is a dynamic achievement, and not a fixed 'standard' that heating and cooling systems have to meet. There are many ways of being and becoming comfortable.

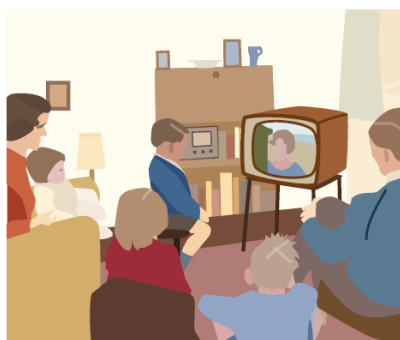
Changing practices of heating in the home

Historical research by Frank Trentmann and Anna Carlsson-Hyslop (2018) examine the interplay between public housing, urban infrastructures and politics as these affect domestic heating practices between the First World War and the first oil crisis (1973). The authors analyse changing interpretations of 'normal' practice and show how expectations and heating technologies in the home evolved. As they explain, it only became 'normal' to heat the whole home in the 1960s.

F. Trentmann and A. Carlsson-Hyslop (2018) The evolution of energy demand in Britain: Politics, daily life and public housing, 1920s – 1970s. The Historical Journal 61 (3): 807-839.



Central heating changed the use of space in the home



DEMAND research analysed city council archives and collected oral histories from tenants (Kuijer and Watson 2017; Spurling 2018) to show how central heating affected household routines and the use of space in the home. Having analysed material from Stockbridge near Sheffield covering the period from 1920 – 1970, Lenneke Kuijer and Matt Watson identified three processes that contributed to the spreading of demand for central heating. These included the separation of domestic activities across rooms (e.g. separating eating from 'living'), the delegation of monitoring and control to automatic systems and thermostats, and patterns of time spent indoors, also related to the introduction of televisions.

Nicola Spurling used archive data and oral histories from Stevenage (focusing on the period 1950 – 2000), and found that the introduction of central heating changed how the bathroom was used as well as the timing of having a bath and shower. She explains that because the availability and use of heating technologies develops and changes historically and across generations, different experiences and ways of using heat co-exist. The 'standard' of full central heating has only recently taken hold, and as the research shows, relations between heating and daily life continue to evolve.

L. Kuijer and M. Watson (2017) 'That's when we started using the living room': Lessons from a local history of domestic heating in the United Kingdom. Energy Research & Social Science 28: 77-85.

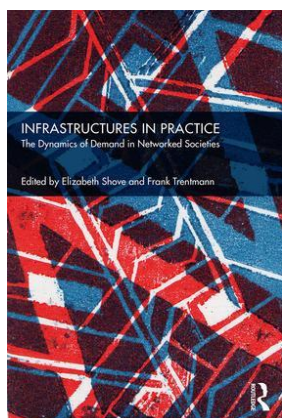
N. Spurling (2018) 'Matters of time: Materiality and the changing temporal organisation of everyday energy consumption'. Journal of Consumer Culture (0) 0: 1-18

N. Spurling and E. Shove (2015) ['If the walls could talk. Central heating comes to Stevenage'](#). DEMAND website.

N. Spurling and E. Shove (2015) ['If the walls could talk. Daily rhythms and energy use in Stevenage'](#). DEMAND website.

DEMAND Research Insight #7 [Transitions in Heat: The arrival and disappearance of gas central heating](#) (2016)

How infrastructures make demand



DEMAND research shows that infrastructures like central heating are part and parcel of daily life. They affect household routines and the use of space in the home, all of which matter for energy demand. Rather than simply meeting demand, infrastructures also make demand. Many more aspects of how infrastructure and daily life shape each other are explored in the book '[Infrastructures in Practice: The Dynamics of Demand in Networked Societies](#)', edited by E. Shove and F. Trentmann (2018). Routledge (£29.99).

For chapters that address heating, see Jenny Rinkinen on *Chopping, stacking and burning wood*, Anna Carlsson-Hyslop on *The construction of central heating in Britain*, and Charlotte Johnson on *District heating in Belgrade*.

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