

## Energy Services

**Energy itself, measured in units like kWh, is often the focus of policy and research. DEMAND research shows that focusing on the services that these resources make possible offers a better understanding of how demand changes and how reductions can be made.**

Lighting and heating are often thought of as energy services, but DEMAND researcher Janine Morley (2018) suggests that this way of thinking about services does not go far enough. For example, travel as an energy service can be described in distances covered in miles. However, this does not say much about the purpose of the journey, and therefore how the demand for mobility exists and changes. Similarly, while the energy service of heating provides a certain room temperature, it does not deliver or guarantee thermal comfort.

Morley introduces the concept of ‘meta-service’ as a way to draw attention to what energy services are actually ‘for’. It highlights that many different elements, beyond energy services alone, are involved in producing qualities like comfort, mobility, cleanliness and cosiness. Heating, for example, represents one amongst other dimensions or means of achieving the ‘meta-service’ of comfort. Clothing and activity are also involved.

As Morley explains, ‘meta-services’ should not be viewed as universal or fixed ‘needs’ that must be satisfied one way or another, but as outcomes of arrangements that vary from culture to culture and that change over time. As we know, meanings of comfort or mobility and means of achieving them have been different in the past and are likely to change in the future.

These ideas have a number of practical implications. One is that there may be scope for reducing energy demand by modifying the social and collective arrangements that constitute meta-services like comfort and mobility. This might involve changes that are not directly associated with energy services at all, for instance fashion design. Another implication is that if such reconfigurations result in lower demand for energy services this does not necessarily imply lower levels of wellbeing or quality of life. Together, this means that ‘service demand reduction’ may become a more attractive policy option: it is not simply about asking people to lower their thermostats or to travel less, but about enabling a suite of changes that would enable these outcomes to be both more likely and desirable.

*Morley, Janine (2018) ‘Rethinking energy services: the concept of ‘meta-service’ and implications for demand reduction and servicizing policy’ in Energy Policy 122: 563-569*

*Morley, Janine (2019) ‘Energy Services’ in Energy Fables: Challenging Ideas in the Energy Sector, edited by Jenny Rinkinen, Elizabeth Shove and Jacopo Torriti. Routledge*

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