

Abstract #: 415

Author Name: Ronnie Lipschutz

Author Company: University of California Santa Cruz

Second Author's Name: Kevin W. Bell

Abstract Title: Analyzing Energy User Behavior and Consumption through the Lens of Social Practice Theory

Abstract Text:

In this paper, we examine the application of social practice theory (SPT) to energy users behavior and consumption, reporting on current research in Europe and the application of social practice theory to a small cohousing development in Northern California. A social practice approach to energy consumption assumes that how energy is used is not a feature of individual preferences and behaviors as such but, rather, a consequence of socially-normative actions and behaviors). There are two broad approaches to applying SPT to energy use: seeking to identify shared patterns among individuals and groups through surveys, interviews and analysis of data sets; and understanding how the organization and arrangement of society and its institutions, and the ways in which energy is deployed, serve to broadly shape practices. People use energy in particular ways because that is how energy is normally used in practice. It has been argued that, by seeking to change or transform these normative practices at a group or social scale, it might be possible to save more energy than would result from individual efforts. Following a review of empirical research and results from both approaches, we discuss preliminary results from a mixed-method research project to monitor electricity consumption in a housing development of approximately 25 single-family and duplex homes and relate these data to social practices as described in the second definition above.