

Energy Poverty Conference 2024

DATE

6th November 2024

VENUE

ESRI, Whitaker Square, Sir John Rogerson's
Quay,
Dublin 2





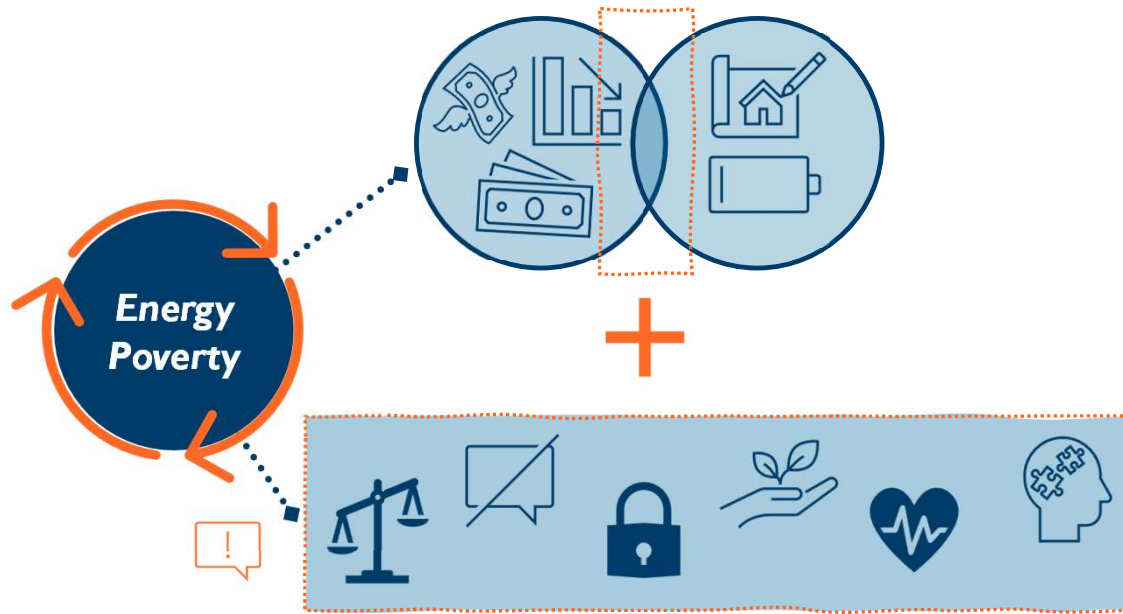
REFRAMING ENERGY POVERTY: An Exploration of Social Dimensions and the Shaping of Policy

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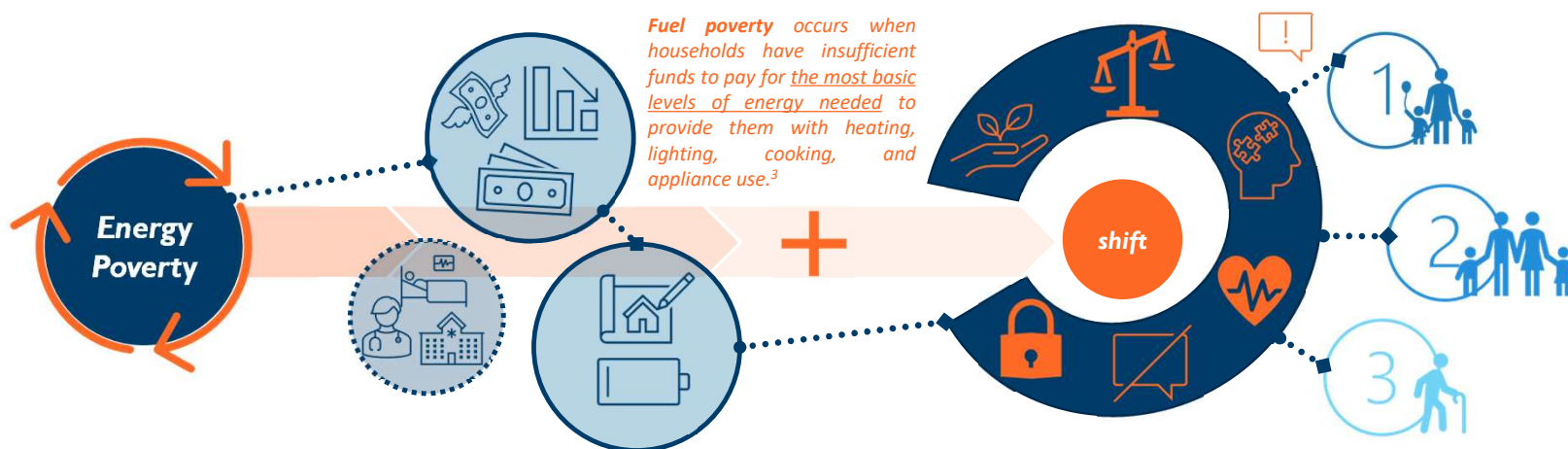
A TRADITION OF
INDEPENDENT
THINKING



University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh



Reframing Energy Poverty



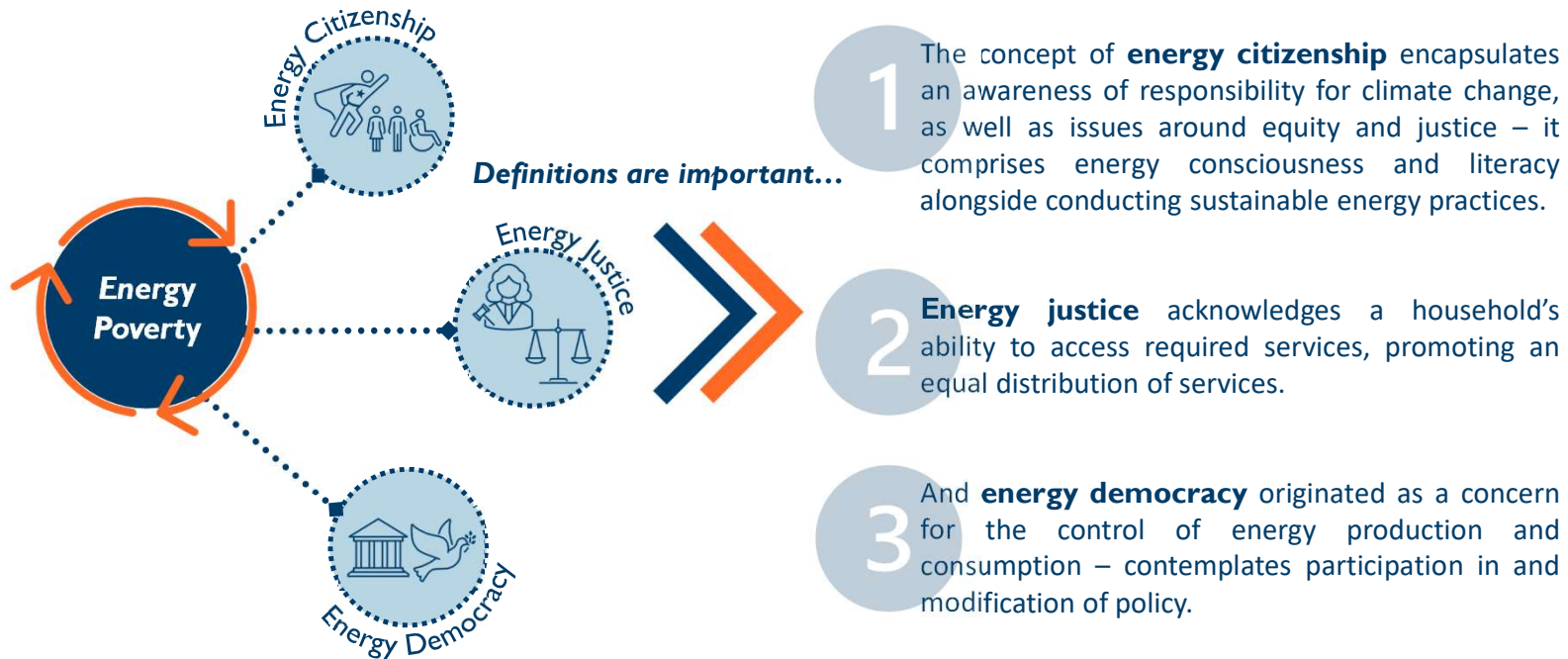
...is the impossibility (or the difficulty) for a household to gain access to the energy it needs to ensure dignified living conditions at an affordable price from the point of view of its income.⁹

Understandings of the 'energy poverty' concept: from public health, to affordability, to well-being.

**fuel poverty and energy poverty are sometimes used interchangeably.*

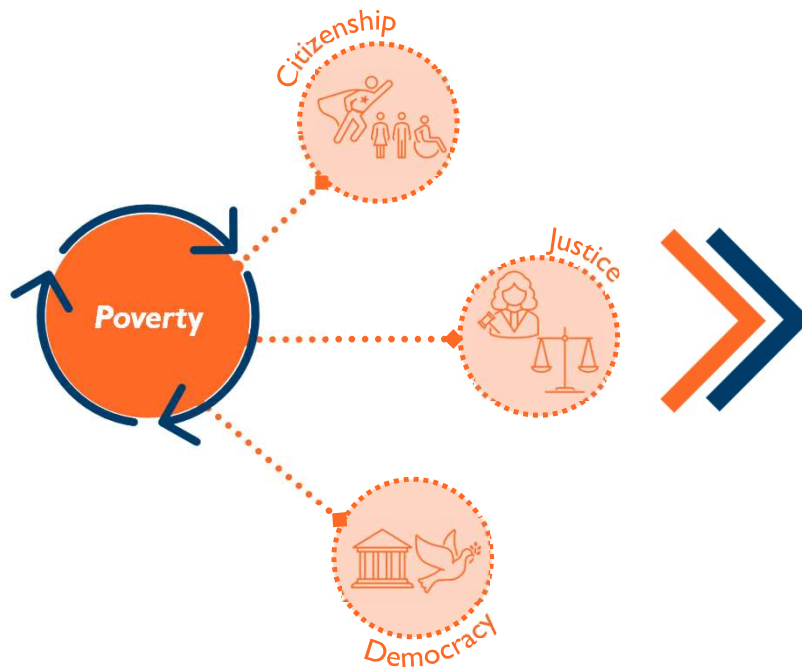
Of Energy Transitions

This is also about energy transitions, climate change, resilience, adaptability. With each transition a shift in society is created, therefore social and energy transitions go hand in hand.



Of a Just Energy Transition?

Matthew Desmond – *Poverty isn't simply the condition of not having enough money. It's the condition of not having enough choice and being taken advantage of because of that.*⁷



ENERGY

Why energy poverty is the real energy crisis

Mar 18, 2015

WORLD
ECONOMIC
FORUM

Morgan Bazilian

Director, Payne Institute for Public Policy,
Colorado School of Mines

Kandeh Yumkella

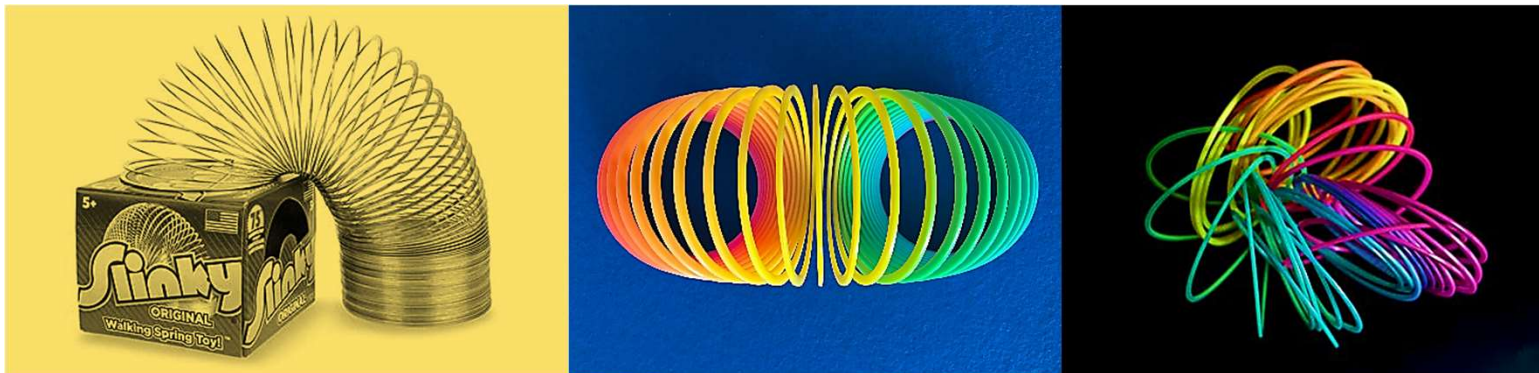
Co-Founder, African Energy Leaders
Group (AELG)



A lack of access to modern, reliable and affordable energy services hinders the aspirations of billions of people, and cripples economies. It, and not the recent drops in crude prices, the stability of OPEC nor the financial viability of traditional utility companies, is the real energy crisis.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/03/why-energy-poverty-is-the-real-energy-crisis/>

→ Through the 'System' Lens



*The root cause of poverty lies not within individual failings,
but within the structural failings of society.*

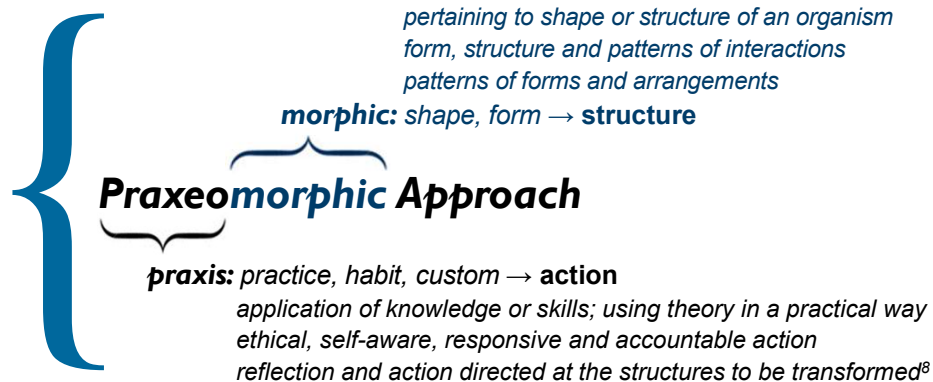
Musical Chairs: *“The critical mistake that’s been made in the past is that we’ve equated the question of who loses at the game with the question of why the game inevitably produces losers. They’re, in fact, distinct and separate questions.”¹³*

Exploration of Social Dimensions



Research focus: Societal engagement methods targeting households experiencing energy poverty to improve their resilience and increase their thermal comfort, health, and overall well-being.

Applying a 'praxeomorphic' approach could prove useful as a method to understand the problem and those it affects with an aim to arrive at the essence of the lived experience of energy poverty.



Zygmunt Bauman



Praxeomorphic way, [...] *“the know-how of the day, by what people can do and how they usually go about doing it”²*– understood as the way in which people understand the world around them.

Translation of Elements

IN THE ENERGY TRANSITION:



TECHNOLOGIES

or 'the know-how of the day',
includes tools, methods,
infrastructure, etc.



CAPABILITIES⁶

or 'what people can do',
includes resources,
accessibility, supports, etc.



PRACTICES

or 'how people go about
doing it', includes behaviour,
culture, traditions, etc.

Not only about what a person does, but trying to understand the reasons behind it.¹

Intentions | Aims: Develop and refine methods for societal engagement with a view to improve resilience. Address the concept of energy poverty from a social perspective. Reframe the language of the human factor in the energy system.

→ **The Shaping of Policy**

Overarching Vision: Understanding the impact of language in knowledge co-production including vulnerable demographics. Introduction of a framework for improving resilience (underpinned by the understanding of the energy poverty concept). *Resilience viewed as positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity.*

We cannot simply ask people to keep adapting to untenable circumstances.

Sometimes it is the circumstances themselves that need to change.

‘Challenging, but manageable’



‘Untenable’

Gaining deeper understandings of the challenges faced may enable identification of more specific problems.

- *Perspectives shifting from associated negative attributes to the positive qualities of human behaviour (inc. resilience) and where the behaviour takes place.¹⁰*
- *Looking at cultures, systems, and processes that may be having a negative impact on people’s wellbeing.*

A Dialogue of Knowledge ←

A call for **knowledge co-production**^{4,12} towards a just transition by bridging technical aspects, diverse expertise, and insights from households experiencing energy poverty.

Poverty Cause-Theory | Broad Categories⁵

- **Behavioural:** How much are behaviours beyond individual control and dictated by structure?
- **Structural:** How much can governments mitigate the effects of demographic and labour market contexts?
Note: Some changes are beyond the control of governments.
- **Political:** How much can governments moderate the behaviour-poverty link?
Power and institutions cause policy and reinforce each other, causing poverty, and moderates the relationship between behaviour and poverty (resource distribution, relevant).

Policy & Resilience: Learning from our mistakes, developing our system resilience, becoming more adaptable and bouncing back from challenges. If we get the foundations right, we can bounce back very easily.

It is essential to understand daily life before attempting to intervene in it, and build resilience through inclusion.



¹Ariely, D. (2008) *Predictably Irrational: The Hidden Forces That Shape Our Decisions*, New York: HarperCollins.

²Bauman, Z. (2012) *Liquid Modernity*, 2019 ed., Cambridge: Polity Press.

³Boardman, B. (2010) *Fixing Fuel Poverty: Challenges and Solutions*, London: Earthscan.

⁴Bolger, P., Brereton, P., Grant, O. and Torney, D. (2021) *Better together: knowledge co-production for a sustainable society*, Dublin: Royal Irish Academy.

⁵Brady, D. (2019) 'Theories of the Causes of Poverty', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 45, 155–175.

⁶Day, R., Walker, G. and Simcock, N. (2016) 'Conceptualising energy use and energy poverty using a capabilities framework', *Energy Policy*, 93, 255–264.

⁷Desmond, M. (2023) 'Why Poverty Persists in America', *The New York Times Magazine*, available: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/09/magazine/poverty-by-america-matthew-desmond.html>.

⁸Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 2005 ed., New York: London: Continuum.

⁹Grevisse, F. and Brynart, M. (2011) 'Energy Poverty in Europe: Towards a more global understanding', *ECEEE 2011 Summer Study, Energy Efficiency First: The Foundation of a Low-carbon Society*.

¹⁰Lehning, A.J. MSS, Vu, C.M. and Pintak, I. (2007) 'Theories of Poverty', *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 16:1-2, 5–19.

¹¹Middlemiss, L., Gillard, R., Pellicer, V. and Straver, K. (2018) 'Plugging the gap between energy policy and the lived experience of energy poverty: Five principles for a multidisciplinary approach' in Foulds, C. and Robison, R., eds., *Advancing Energy Policy: Lessons on the Integration of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 15–29.

¹²OECD (2020) 'Addressing societal challenges using transdisciplinary research', *OECD Science, Technology and Industry Policy Papers*, No. 88, OECD Publishing, Paris. <https://doi.org/10.1787/0ca0ca45-en>.

¹³Rank, M. R. (2011) 'Rethinking American Poverty', *Contexts*, 10(2), 16–21, p.19.



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• **THANK YOU!**

ESRI Energy Poverty Conference – 6 November 2024

