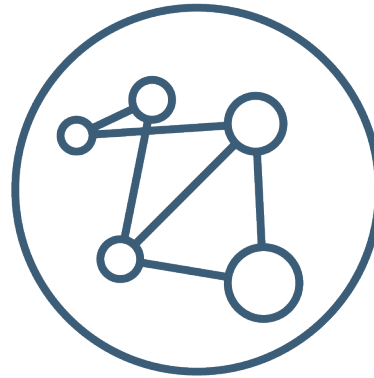


ENERGISE

EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR RESEARCH, GOOD PRACTICE
AND INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY 

THE BENEFITS OF A PRACTICE-BASED APPROACH



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THE PROBLEM - DOMESTIC ENERGY USE

- Efforts to lower household energy use—
focused on efficiency actions intended to
reduce demand
 - Buildings Directive (EPBD) (2010a), Energy Labelling
Directive (2010b), Ecodesign Directive
(2009), Energy Efficiency Directive (2012)
- BUT:
 - Domestic energy consumption remains high
- Efficiency can simply open up seemingly
exciting new opportunities for consumption
 - Traditional market-based approaches
- Overemphasis on efficiency measures sidelines
viable alternatives



ALTERNATIVES?

- Calls for social innovation rooted in sufficiency thinking
 - **Strong Sustainability** delivering real reductions (Fuchs and Lorek 2005); **EUFORIE Project** (Lorek and Spangenberg 2017).
- Practice-based approaches that consider the various elements of a practice as well as interactions between practices can open up new pathways towards sufficiency



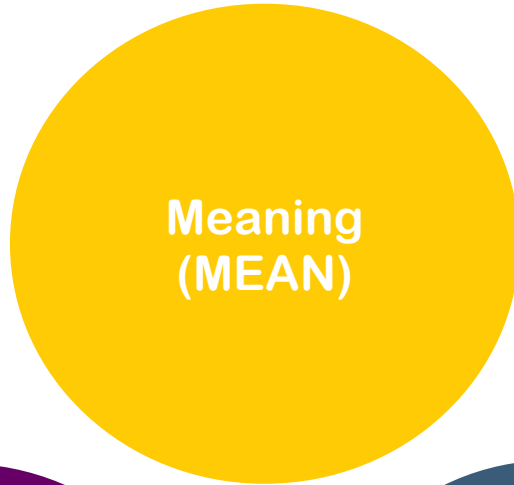
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK-A PRACTICE BASED APPROACH

#4

- Practical-theoretical approach
 - Domestic energy use viewed as consequence of people's engagement in everyday practices (rather than a consumer good)
 - What is energy use for? → socially significant and culturally meaningful practices (e.g. mobility, heating, cooking, cleaning)
- People as carriers of practices –
 - Reproducing and maintaining ways of doing
 - It is important to understand why and in what way people perform (and indeed continue to perform) these practices as this may reveal opportunities for change, leading to reduced energy use



ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE



Spurling et al. (2013)



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ELEMENTS OF PRACTICE STICKY VS. MALLEABLE

- The nature of a particular practice can determine if the practice is sticky (hard to change) or malleable (easier to change/adapt)
- Material conditions (MAT)
 - may be difficult/easy to change in the short-medium term
- Competence and skills – Level of complexity (COMP)
 - High vs. Low
- Meaning (MEAN)
 - May be context dependent
 - Home v. social situations



IDENTIFYING PRACTICE CULTURES

- Practice Culture: culture-specific sets of practices that result in particular patterns of energy demand and use (Rau & Grealis 2018)
- Moving beyond the individual: recognition of distinct constellations of practices that are adopted and shared by different units of social organisation (e.g. household, community, workplace etc.)
- Includes both routine practices that people engage in on a regular basis (e.g. heating, doing the laundry) and once-off/occasional practices (e.g. travelling long distances, going on a holiday)

IDENTIFYING PRACTICE CULTURES

#8

- Practices may be performed differently in different social contexts as people follow prescriptions and/or adapt to local conditions
 - Dress, recycling, eating-out, lighting etc...



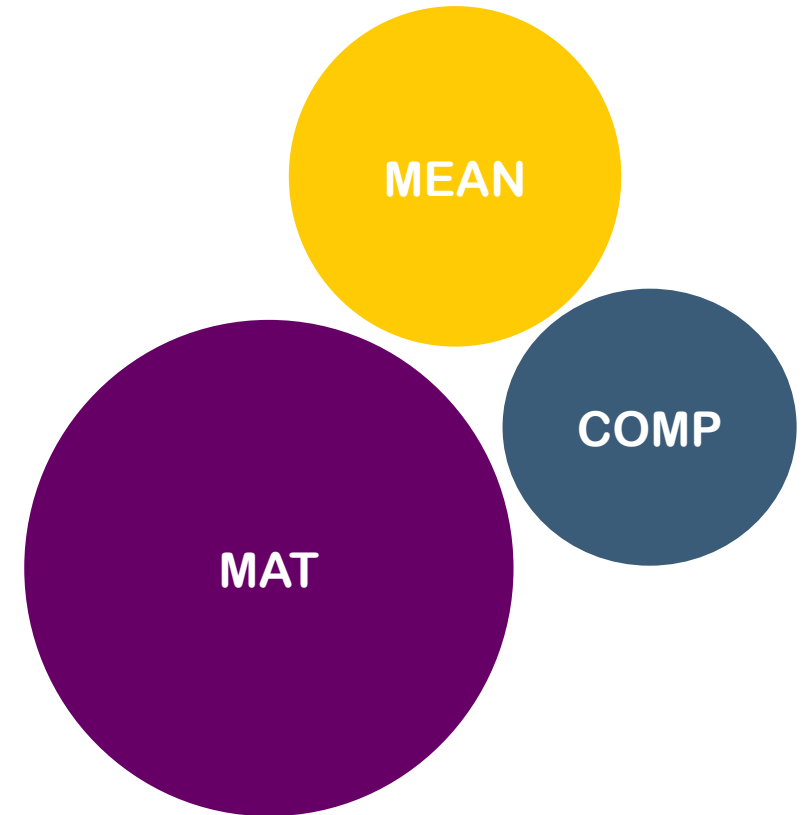
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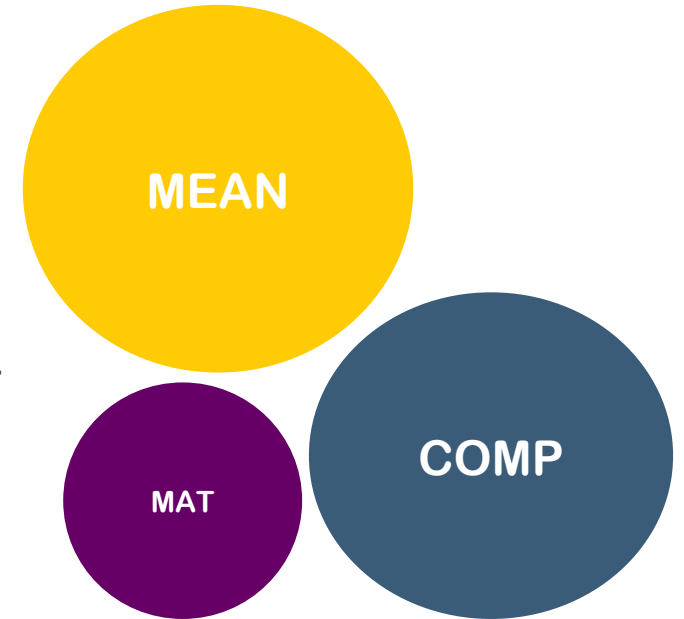
1. HEATING

- Significant proportion of domestic energy use
 - (Space and water heating 70%)
- Heavily material
 - Technical aspects dominate
 - Can be very passive
- Hidden and largely unobserved
 - Often pre-set/programmed/automated
- Attempt to make heating more visible and present
 - Thermometers, weekly surveys etc.



2. LAUNDRY

- Relatively minor impact in energy terms
- BUT:
- Highly visible and repetitive
 - Meaning and competence dominate in terms of malleability
 - Can be time consuming
 - Multi-Stage (Washing, Drying, *Ironing, Folding*)
- Highly interactive
 - Principals Participant and rest of household
 - Interlock with other practices (e.g. Dress, sport etc...)



- The most significant challenge for researchers and policy-makers is to break the cycle of problem framing surrounding energy use
- Overemphasis on efficiency measures marginalises strategies that support sufficiency thinking and action
- Depending on the constellation of elements and their respective importance for the reproduction of a practice, practices may be more or less open to a shift from efficiency- to sufficiency-based measures
- Strategies to reduce energy use must make sense to the people who are expected to adopt them

- Must reflect on aspects of existing practice cultures to critically question their compatibility with a sustainable future.
- Direct engagement with household practices through ENERGISE living labs has revealed that some practices can be so culturally ingrained as to be effectively insulated from sustainability concerns
- The un-reflexive reproduction of such practices poses a great risk to the goal of sustainable consumption



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THANK YOU!
THE LMU TEAM

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