

Social Change Symposium

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Title: Energy Culture: implications for energy policies in Coyhaique city, Chile

Abstract: This research explores the energy culture in Coyhaique city, Chile. In 2018, the city was reported as the most polluted city in Latin America in terms of levels of fine particulate matter. A key source of this pollution is firewood combustion used in domestic cooking and heating. Chile has made significant public investments to reduce heating demand and fine particle emission by allocating subsidies for improving thermal insulation and upgrading heating appliances. However, there are no studies exploring households' experiences of such programmes and associated shifts in cultural patterns of energy use. The research adopted a qualitative approach, using interviews to explore energy culture from the perspective of householders and focus groups with policy makers to understand the socio-political and institutional context in which policies are developed and implemented. By this means a rich and deep understanding is generated, allowing the research to contribute to understandings of the relationship between social housing energy efficiency interventions and changes in domestic energy culture, and how material changes may trigger or limit householders' capability to overcome energy poverty.