JUST CENTRE FOR JOINED-UP SUSTAINABILITY TRANSFORMATIONS

EDRC Energy Demand Research Centre

The hidden labour of energy injustice struggles

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Context and starting points …

Rapid growth: The total number of ‘green’ jobs grew by over 30% between 2015 and 2023, now estimated to be in the region of 690,000 (ONS 2025), with numbers expected to exceed 1m in the next 5 years (LGA 2025)

Unknown typologies: Professional services and management jobs are estimated to be at least 10% of this (PWC 2025)

Tip of the iceberg: The definition of green energy jobs is wider, and includes a range of poorly understood occupational profiles in the energy intermediation domain (Bouzarovski 2025), particularly in terms of **energy assistance**

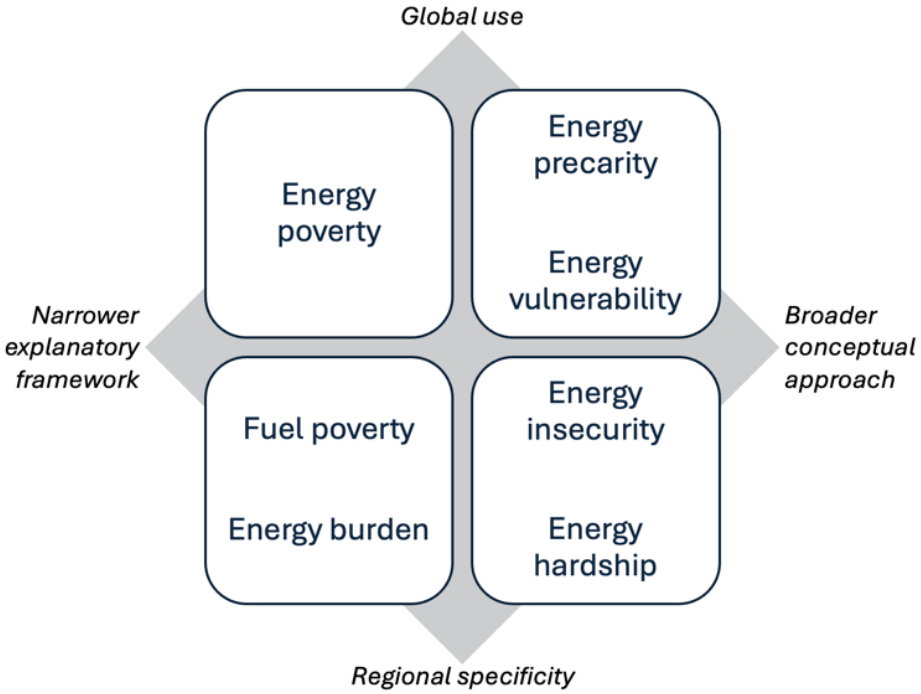
Urgency: This work will grow in importance, but is inadequately supported and recognised, there is a lack of skills provision,

Energy assistance work – an unrecognised labour sector in the eco-social transition

- Provision of support to address energy injustices, housing upgrades and people's well-being
- Reason: Energy efficiency upgrades are socially and technically complex
- However: intermediaries can influence policy-makers and deliver on-site interventions. Community care (UNRISD 2025)
- Energy assistance can help build the social capacities, relations and emotional well-being of participants

From ‘poverty’ to ‘injustice’

- Energy poverty is the dominant framing to capture domestic energy injustices
- Different terms have been or are being used to describe a similar set of circumstances:
  - Fuel poverty
  - Energy vulnerability
  - Energy burden
  - Energy insecurity
  - Energy hardship
  - Energy precarity
- The term ‘energy poverty’ is politically resonant but can lead to confusion with income poverty, and partly misidentifies the drivers and impacts of injustice
- We need to stop using stigmatizing language that individualizes the drivers of inequality: ‘fuel poor’, ‘energy poor’, ‘diagnosis’, ‘victims’, ‘suffering’ ...



‘Diagnosis’ – how are injustices identified and addressed?

Challenging home energy injustices requires multiple layers of judgement, engagement and support

Actors undertake unseen forms of infrastructural work / economic intermediation / care / emotional labour / place-making

They help determine horizons of policy action and imaginations of possible futures

Training and knowledge approaches focus on ‘fixing the poor’ and ’diagnosing energy poverty’ but rarely on the complex skills required to engage with energy injustice struggles

Energy assistance – a form of ‘home’ making

Switching

Communication

Payments

Referrals

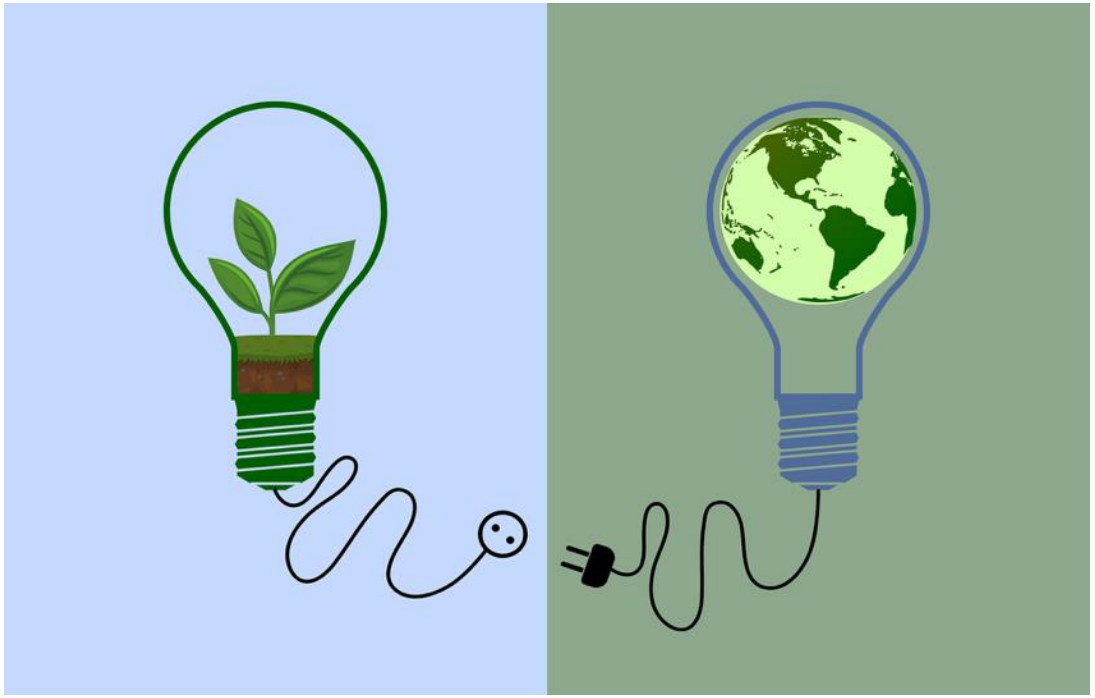
Material support

Concluding thoughts

- Energy intermediation and energy assistance offer a social infrastructure that will grow in importance as building renovations and eco-social policies expand in size and importance.

- This work is largely undertaken by the third sector or local government. It is underfunded and unstable.

- We need to recognise and support the social infrastructure-building role of these sectors, and integrate their energy injustice and climate mitigation roles



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