A Broader Conceptualisation of Fuel Poverty: Contributions from the Human Development Approach [1]

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Fuel Poverty (FP) is commonly understood as the inability to afford the most basic levels of energy for adequate heating, cooking, lighting and use of appliances in the home. But, should this concept be limited to a lack of resources? What are the implications of being energy poor in terms of justice or freedom? What options that people value are being restricted? In order to answer these questions, the Human Development (HD) approach can be used; it understands development not only as an improvement of resources, but also as an expansion of people’s capabilities to choose the way they want to live. This article proposes a wider conceptualisation of FP on the basis of the HD approach, considering the following five development dimensions: Human Well-being and Security, Equity, Participation and Empowerment, Environmental Sustainability and Integrity regarding corruption. From this perspective, the impacts of FP on different social groups are analysed. This article is aimed at contributing to and promoting the debate surrounding the conceptualisation of FP in a wider framework, focusing on people’s freedoms.


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