

## **Saving energy on use of ICT: Inertia and embeddedness of young people’s use of information and communication technologies**

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### **Abstract**

The extensive use of information and communication technology (ICT) in everyday practices does not only have social implications, but also results in increasing consumption of energy and materials. Academics, NGOs and policymakers are beginning to address this issue and develop policies and campaigns to promote “sustainable” use of ICT.

The use of ICT is particularly widespread among young people, and this paper investigates how young people use ICT and interpret their own user practices and potentials for change. The analysis is inspired by STS and practice theory and primarily based on focus groups carried out in the Netherlands and Denmark as part of the EU project useITsmartly. In addition, we will refer to key findings from other countries participating in useITsmartly and from Dutch and Danish “creativity workshops”.

Our results indicate that young people find it difficult to see a link between personal use of ICT and environmental problems. They are in general reluctant with regard to changing their own use of ICT, which is closely related to the integration of ICT across everyday practices and the social embeddedness of media use (in particular social media). This problematizes the traditional approach to sustainable behaviour, which emphasises the role of knowledge and attitudes in defining individual behaviour.

The paper concludes with a discussion of alternative approaches to promote more environmental-friendly user practices; in particular by taking advantage of the social embeddedness of young people’s use of ICT and their personal experiences with negative “side-effects” of intensive ICT use.