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How is energy implicated in a minimally decent life? Socio-technical change and social justice

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It is increasingly recognised that socio-technical transitions need to be conceived and pursued in ways that embed social justice and fairness alongside other normative objectives such as sustainability or carbon mitigation. One of the markers of a fair and just society is that *all* its citizens have the capability to secure what is required to live a 'minimally decent' life and to engage in effective societal participation. Notions of energy poverty recognise that deficits in access to energy services, and the technological goods that enable these services, can play into inequalities that undermine universal access to a minimally decent life. However, 'relative deprivation' conceptions of poverty suggest that the relations between energy services, technologies and notions of minimum living standards are open to debate and subject to change over time. In this paper we consider the complexities and dynamics involved in how domestic access to energy-consuming technologies is 'necessary' for a minimally decent life, by drawing on secondary data from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's 'Minimum Income Standards' research in the UK. This used a series of focus groups to ascertain the goods and services that various members of the public consider to be the basic necessities that everyone in the UK should be able to afford, providing a rich resource for examining how energy technologies are part of a minimally decent life. Various implications arise from our exploratory analysis related to the dynamics of energy demand and the development of socially just energy policies and transition strategies.

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