Practice makes policy? The role of government and policy in shaping practices

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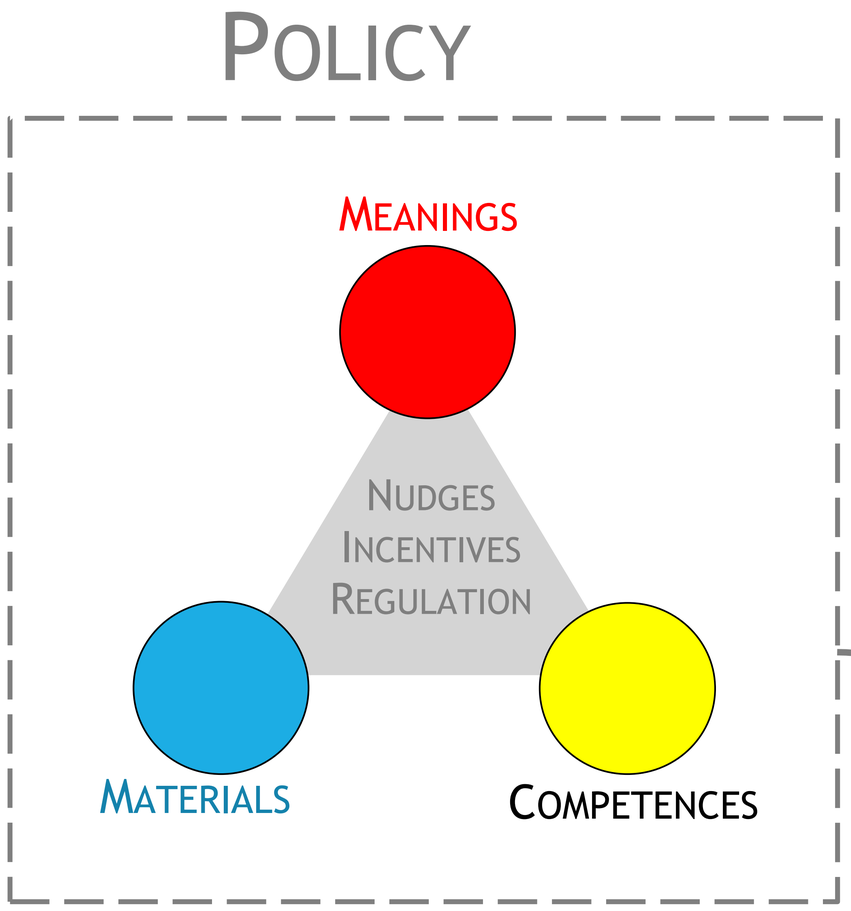
Government and policy inevitably shape social practices. Both directly and indirectly, policy instruments can produce, configure, disperse and kill-off practices.

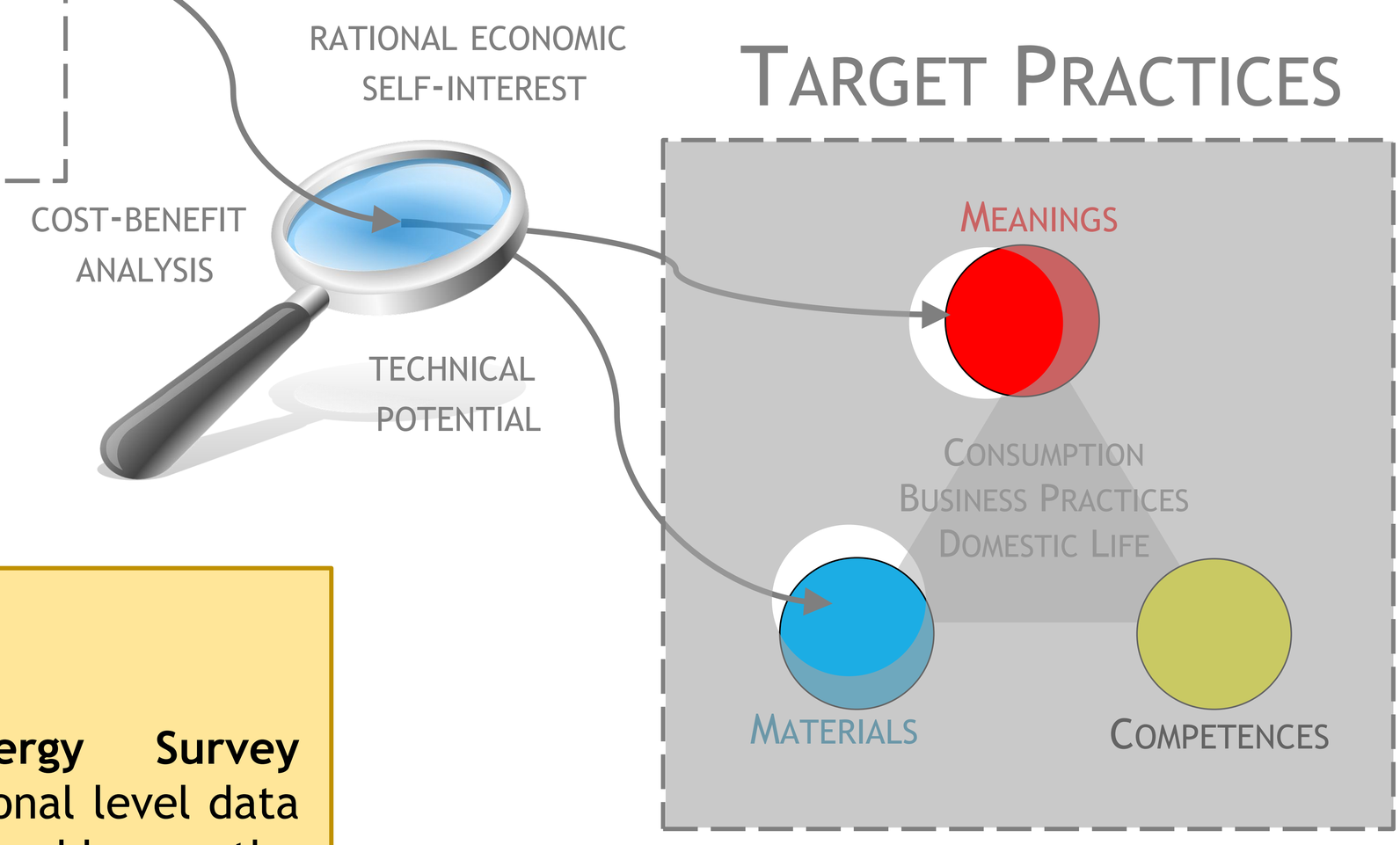
How policy makers understand the nature of energy consumption crucially informs the design of policy interventions.

The physical, technical and economic model (PTEM) of energy demand dominates policy, with little regard for how social norms, service expectations and always-changing practices influence the role of energy in everyday life.



The tools, techniques and theoretical approaches that government uses are the **lens** through which energy demand is understood. These are the practices of UK policy-making.

We argue that these approaches offer only a ***partial*** and ***refracted*** view of energy demand, partially identifying relevant aspects of practices an including irrelevant ones. A skewed idea of the **ontological landscape** of homes and businesses results.



The two projects below aim to add depth policy makers' understandings of energy practices:

LUKES

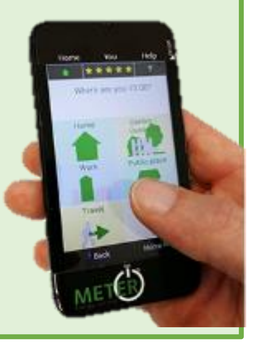
The **Longitudinal UK Energy Survey** represents a vision for how national level data could be gathered in a way that addresses the gaps above. LUKES would be a longitudinal, socio-technical study of over 10,000 homes.

A UCL-led study in 2014 estimated it could cost £20-25m over 5 years, but would provide a step change in understanding **energy consumption** and **domestic practices**.

https://www.ucl.ac.uk/steapp/research/projects/energy-lab

METER

Meter is an innovative project which links household electricity with everyday practices by simultaneously collecting quantitative meter readings and householders' activities using time-of-use diaries from smart phones.



http://www.energy-use.org