practice theory for social change
practice theory is not for social change in itself. It has no internal normative content.
practice theory for understanding social change

well demonstrated as enabling distinctive insight into change
transition only happens if enough people do enough things differently enough transition therefore has to be a transition in *practices*

(Watson, 2012, 488 & 489)
how useful can practice theory be for effecting social change?

lessons from using it to tackle energy demand

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1. Outline of a practice theory and how it understands change

2. Understanding past and present changes in household energy demand

3. What does practice theory offer for informing future change?
Reshaping the domestic nexus

engaging policy understandings of kitchen practices and how they change

nexusathome.wordpress.com
1. Outline of a practice theory and how it understands change

2. Understanding past and present changes in household energy demand

3. What does practice theory offer for informing future change, like reduction in energy demand?
Practice theories

Emphasize tacit and unconscious forms of knowledge and experience through which shared ways of understanding and being in the world are established, through which purposes emerge as desirable, and norms as legitimate.

Practices are the fundamental unit of social existence

‘both social order and individuality…result from practices’ (Schatzki 1996)
Practice is not simply ‘what people do’:

• **Practice as a coordinated entity**
  Something enduring across moments of doing; can be represented

• **Practice as a performance**
  Processes of doing through which practice-as-entity is sustained, reproduced and potentially changed
Conceptualising cooking as a practice

Meanings of cooking

Materials of cooking

Competences of cooking
Dynamics of practice

Performances of a practice are always potentially unique:

• Practitioners actively integrate the elements of practice into an effective configuration
• Incremental innovations in successive performances shape the trajectory of the practice
Mechanisms of change

1. Changes to the *elements* of practices
2. Changes to the population of ‘*carriers*’ of practices – processes of ‘recruitment’ to and ‘defection’ from a practice
3. Changes to *how practices inter-relate* – bundles and complexes of practices
Energy and practices

Energy is not used by householders.
Energy is used by technologies which provide services which are means for performances of practice by householders.

So…

Understanding energy demand means understanding the dynamics of practice.
Cooking *bundles* with other practices

**In time**
rhythms of household (and societal) routines of work, rest and play – flow of practices

**In space**
practices happening in the kitchen – eating, cleaning, stocking, homeworking, conversing, etc
Different interventions

1. By comprehending diversity of elements converging within practice, reveals broader range of points of intervention

2. By understanding bundling of practices, reveals possibility of intervening in one practice to effect change in another
Cooking part of *complexes* of practices

In cooking, extended systems of provision – energy, water, food – are worked together.

Systems of provision extend across locales over space – distribution, production, regulation, policy as well as consumption.

Systems are themselves comprised of practices throughout the locales constituting them.
Implications

• State, civil society or commercial institutions are sites of practice as much as are households
• Practices of institutions are part of the same complexes as those practices they seek to change
• Significant change in framing of problems and solutions and the means of pursuing those solutions demands change in the practices of those institutions.
What does it take to get evidence and ideas from practice theory research into the practices of policy making?
Marshalling evidence and ideas around focus issues identified with partners:

- reducing food waste in relation to food safety
- waste fats oils and grease disposal

HOME FOOD PRACTICES

- energy demand, flexibility and change
how useful can practice theory be for effecting social change?

Practice theory:
- provides means for distinctive insights into (past, present) processes of change
- is good for explaining why change can be slow and is usually unpredictable
- can help to identify alternative means of intervention
- shows change in any one practice demands change in other practices
how useful can practice theory be for effecting social change?

Concluding contentions:

In seeking to effect change in one practice, it may be that practices elsewhere in the ‘complex’ need to change first

Cannot approach social change without contending with practices in relation to institutions and to power