



Gender roles: a useful concept to help understand the dynamics of energy retrofits?

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According to the general director of **Mr Bricolage**, a French leading chain store of do-it-yourself products, 80% of their do-it-yourself products are either bought or prescribed by **women**... (2006)

Outline of the presentation

- Theoretical challenges
- Empirical material
- First results
- Discussion

Energy retrofit & gender: challenges

➤ For gender roles theories

- Gender: West & Zimmerman (1987): gender is (re-)created in situations: importance of social interactions
- Gender: Butler's notion of *performativity* and *a situated social practice*
 - Gender tasks seen “*through repetitious acts of gender performance*” (Thornham and McFarlane, 2011)
- ‘Doing gender’ as a social practice: acknowledged as an influence by Schatzki

Energy retrofit & gender: challenges

➤ For gender roles theories

- See in **time use surveys** the item 'construction and repairs'
 - A stake for including men's tasks into domestic tasks (Welzer-Lang, 2004)
- **Knowledge about climate change**: + males
- **Daily practices about climate change**: + females

Energy retrofit & gender: challenges

➤ For gender roles theories

- MacGregor (2010) both “**a masculinization of environmentalism**” and an “**ecomaternalism**”: “In so far as consumption is a private sphere activity, and women tend to be principally responsible for household consumption, it is likely that exhortations to ‘live green’ are directed at (and will be received primarily by) women. **Men may hear them, but expect women to do the work.**” (p. 134). Her examples are about conserving energy, taking public transportation, recycling waste and avoiding flights.
- **But what about do-it-yourself insulation work**, a masculine task (Watson and Shove, 2008)? Will men hear the message for saving energy, “but expect women to do the work”?

From a previous research: **Insulation work as a *no man's land*?**

◦ **Male territory**

- Periphery of the house
- Energy
- DIY
- Technique (not enough?)
- Interactions with male experts (not enough?)

No man's
land

Insulation
work

◦ **Female territory**

- Centre, living rooms
- (Project's idea)
- (Initiative)
- (Valorisation)

Source:
Bartiaux (2015)

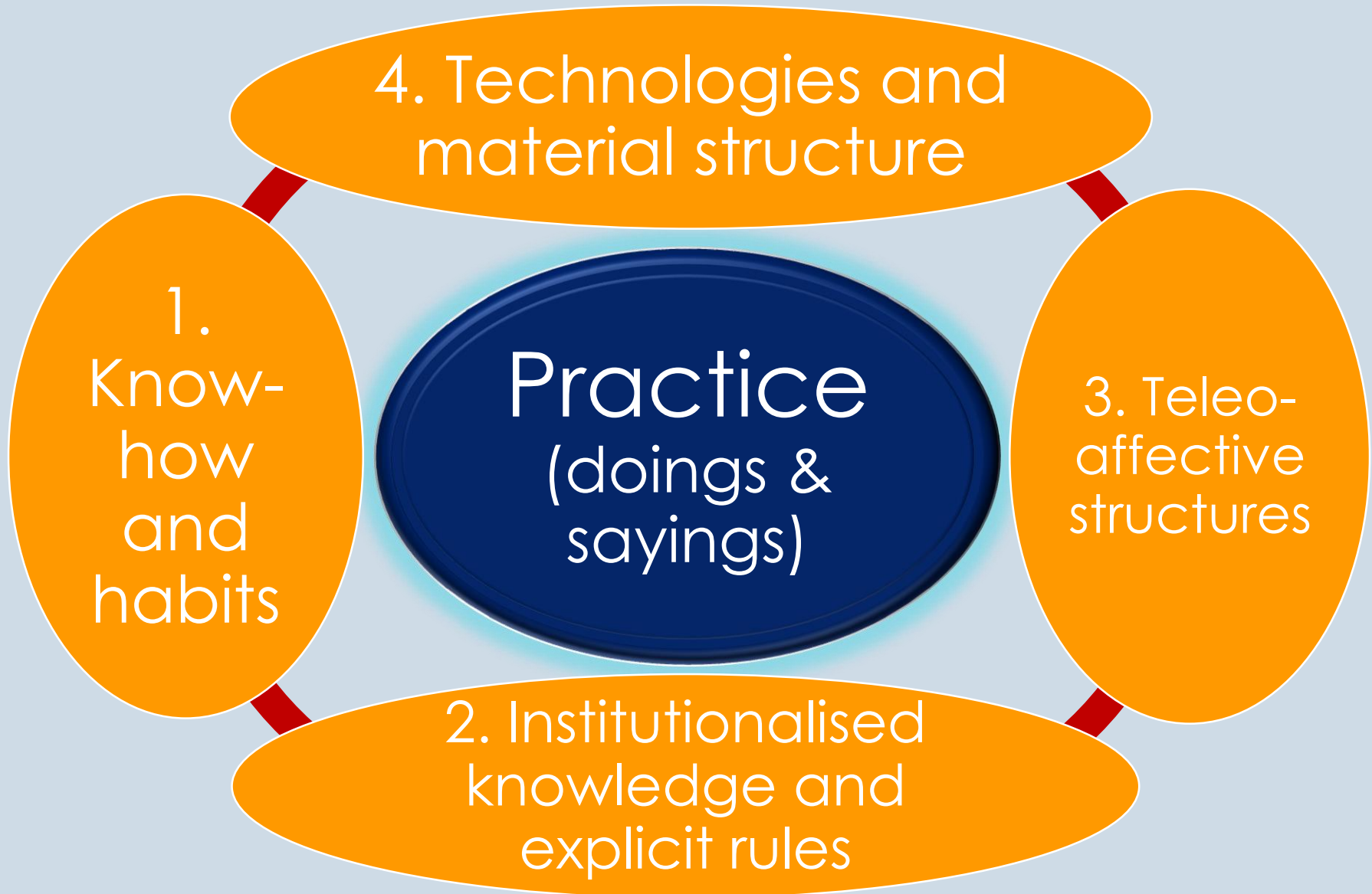
Energy retrofit & gender: challenges

- **For the social practice theories**

- Four components

Practice theories

Source: Gram-Hanssen, 2010



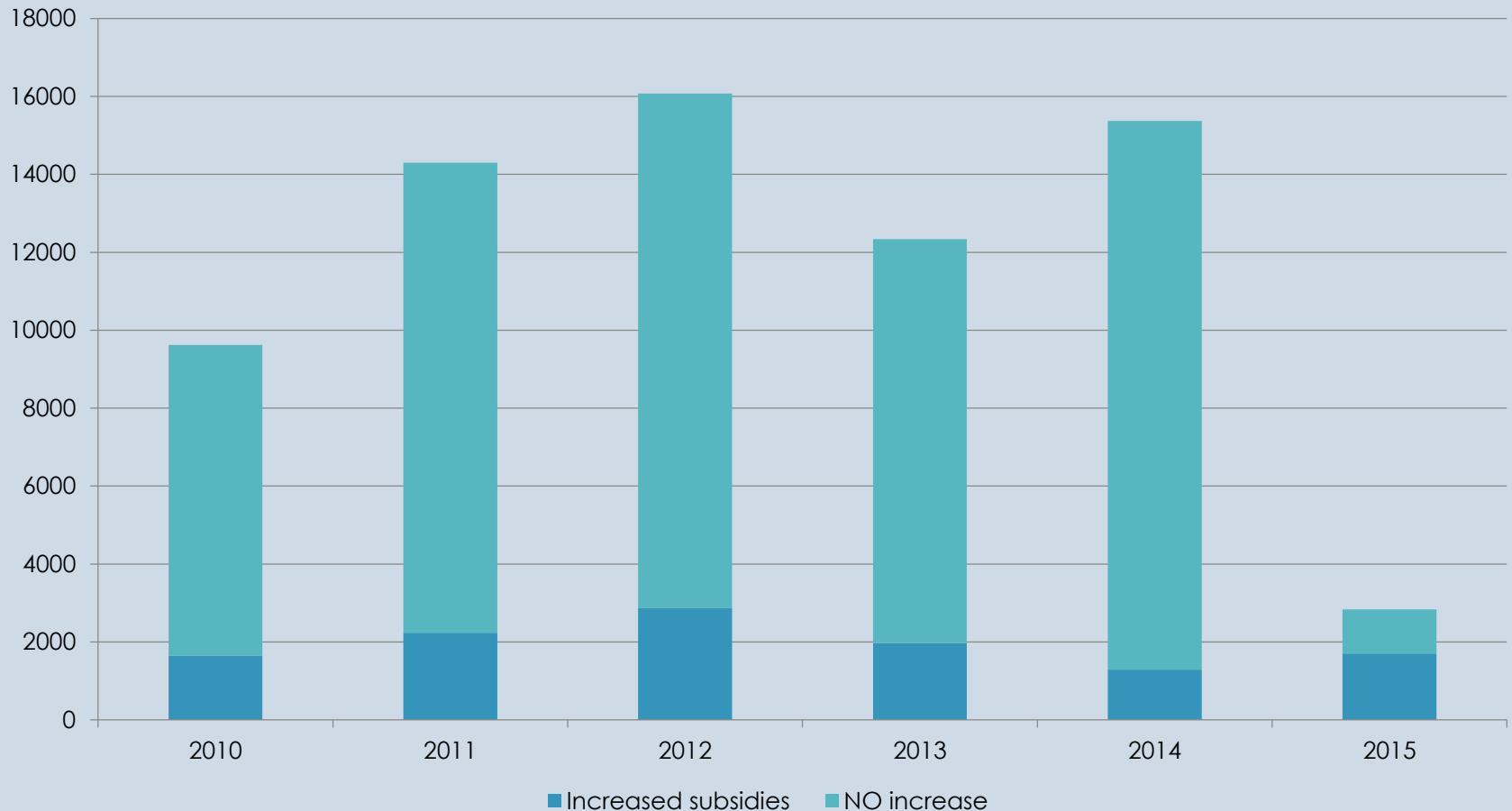
Energy retrofit & gender: challenges

➤ For the social practice theories

➤ Four components

- Teleo-affective structure: gender roles sustaining practices
- Technologies and material structure: a lot of possibilities, evolving techniques (cellulose)
- Explicit rules: in Wallonia, changing political rules for subsidies

Allocated subsidies for energy retrofit by the Walloon Region (roof, wall, floor)



Energy retrofit & gender: challenges

➤ For the social practice theories

➤ Focus on doing... but what if no(t enough) doing?

Energy retrofit is not (yet?) an integrated practice in BE, DK, LV & PT (Bartiaux, Gram-Hanssen et al., 2014)

➤ Embodied practical competence... but what if none?

→ System of interconnected practices?

(contamination)

Empirical material

- **In-depth interviews on insulation practices**
 - 8 couples, spouses usually interviewed separately; 4 low-income, 4 high income (Wallonia, French-speaking region, Belgium)
 - 5 contractors, of whom 1 woman and 1 semi-public organisation (Wallonia, Belgium)



RESULTS

Constructing energy retrofit as a male territory **Males' quotes**

- **Building as a masculine task, a tradition**

François: *"I work, I pay, I am the one who is responsible for the building"* (57, self-employee in his real estate company).

- **A negotiation (or a delegation?)**

Gilberte: *"So if there were some insulation, it would be better"* (70, retired seamstress)

Gilbert : *"You know, women always have the last say"* (87, retired bricklayer, has entirely built the house owning to his wife).



Constructing energy retrofit as a male territory **Males' quotes**

- **A special interest in acoustic insulation**

Olivier: *"My wife was interested in having a large kitchen and a nice bathroom, I wanted acoustic insulation, I didn't want to hear the children running"* (47, professor, 3 small children).

- **Planning for his death, concerned for his younger wife**

Bernard: *"I've bought this house because as I am older than my wife, I will with no doubt 'leave' before her, let's speak frankly. And as she has a small job, badly paid [less than 800€/month] my calculation is to leave her with a well-maintained house with minimal fees for heating, electricity, this is my goal (...) a good insulation, well, first, this is a small house and we don't consume so much"* (64, blue collar, now disabled, his wife is 44).

Constructing energy retrofit as a male territory

Females' quotes

A female construction, by trust (and love)

- Françoise: “it is true that all things that are more technical, **of course, it is for him**. I do not even know how the three quarters of the house are functioning. (...) [Energy retrofit] once more it is for François. He is hyper euh sensible to that, and I know he does everything the right way. But it's true that I am interested **but I am not competent** as he is” (40, employee)

Erica: “When he told me what he planned to do [for insulating the roof], I asked myself ‘**Is it really the best practice or not?**’. That's true that I asked myself that question. (laughs). **But I trust him**. (...) **Today I've doubts** (hesitates) because of dampness problems we have in the attic.” (36, nurse in her own organisation)

Alicia: “I gently and slowly persuades him to search a house to buy” (45, cleaning lady)

Constructing energy retrofit as a... female territory? **Contractors' quotes**

- **Women more concerned: warmth, future generations...**

Big contractor: "From my experience, you may be astonished and laugh but I think that the female public is the most open-minded. (...) The man sees 2 cost estimates, he sees the difference. The lady, what does she see? She sees the thermal phase shift, she understands what it is, she understands that it is some natural insulation, (...) And thus, one should better inform women, I think that they would push more"

Constructing energy retrofit as a... female territory? **Contractors' quotes**

- **Women more meticulous**

Self-employed, accompanies self-construction projects : “So I will caricature, but the man will do the structure and the lady will put the membrane. And that's not to be caricatured or sexist, in one direction or another, it can be the opposite. But, basically, this is often what happens. And then I arrive, I blown cellulose.”



Discussion

- Genders roles are performed and adapted to new situations, the socio-political context is changing (e.g. EU climate policy)
- Shall interconnected practices restructure into an 'energy-retrofit' integrated practice with conflicting teleo-affective structure and changing policy instruments?



THANK YOU!

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