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Mapping the mindsets of Dutch municipal policy workers on mitigating energy poverty

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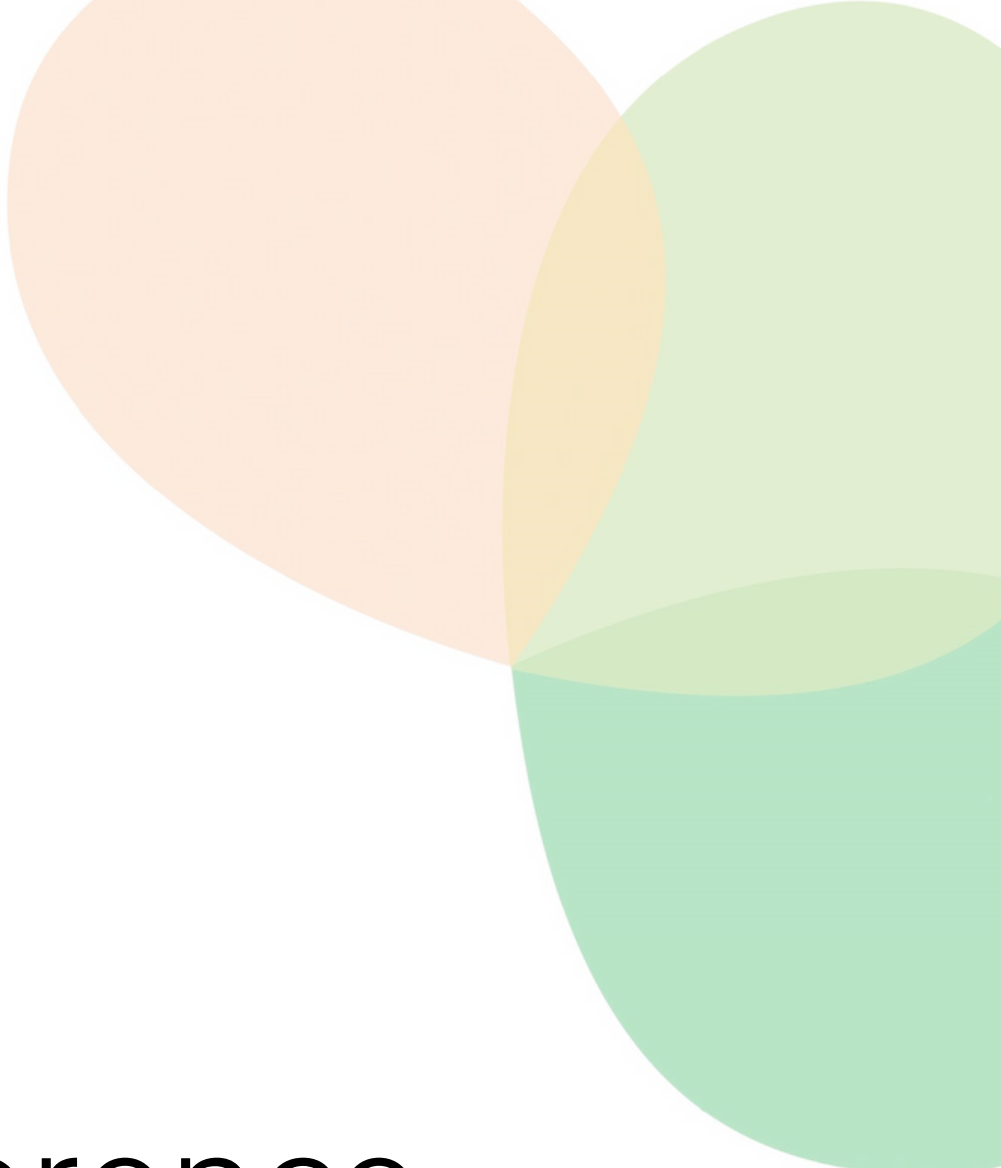
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Designing a gender-just energy policy: mapping the mindsets of Dutch municipal policy workers on mitigating energy poverty

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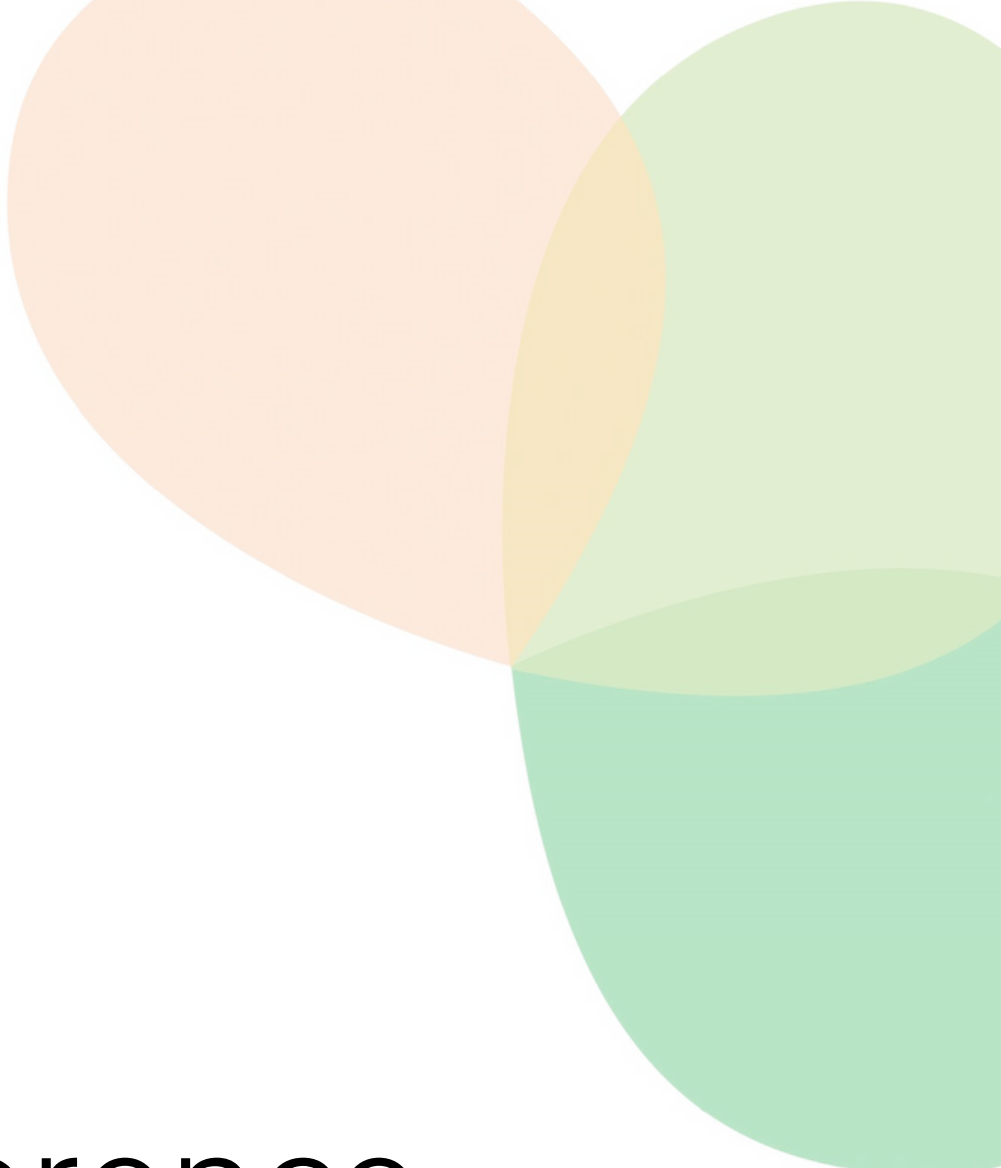
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Abstract

Citizens' participation in the energy transition seems mostly available for households with disposable incomes to invest in energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and retrofitting. Those who cannot afford the upfront costs might not benefit from the policy interventions, like tax benefits and subsidies. The energy crisis made energy poverty visible and a national energy policy issue. In the Dutch governance system, energy poverty mitigation measures are decentralized with mandate and budget for the municipalities. With decentralised budgets, municipal policy workers are the key actors in this: with tailored, local policies, they can financially support, stimulate energy-efficient behaviour and broaden access to the energy transition.

This study provides insights and deepens the knowledge on value-driven decision-making. The research analyses Dutch policy workers at the municipal level on their mindsets regarding solutions to mitigate energy poverty. The gender-just energy policy framework provides a holistic conceptual approach that includes both distributive, recognitional and procedural perspectives to inform value-driven decision-making. Q methodology is applied to uncover the subjectivity (opinions, values, etc) of the policy workers that are designing and implementing energy poverty mitigation policies. Q methodology is an exploratory methodology that unveils cohorts of like-minded people regardless of characteristics usually used in quantitative studies (such as age and gender). The study uses Q methodology to group municipal policy workers' mindsets into 'institution-focused' and 'explorers'. These mindsets pinpoint bottlenecks in municipal energy poverty mitigation in the short term. Furthermore, the mindsets uncover subjectivity in the policy cycle and present a transparent method to overcome subjectivity.



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