

While a growing body of qualitative data and research on energy poverty exists, this workshop concluded there is room to make better use of qualitative evidence for both research and practice. This includes better sharing of data amongst researchers, linking with quantitative researchers, and seeking more attention for qualitative findings in policy-making processes. Over the course of two days, 50 researchers, policy-makers and practitioners from across the Netherlands and the ENGAGER network (UK, ESP, ROM, BEL, FRA, NOR, DEN) came together to:

1. Investigate the possibility for better use of qualitative research in academics.
2. Investigate opportunities and methods to communicate qualitative research on energy poverty to policy-makers and practitioners.
3. Investigate opportunities for translation of qualitative research into policy and practice in the Netherlands.



Introduction by co-conveners **dr. Lucie Middlemiss**, University of Leeds (UK) and **Koen Straver**, ECN/TNO (NL)

## Day 1

On the first day participants largely discussed in break-out sessions and panels: (a) how qualitative data has been used in interesting ways so far, (b) how data can be better shared amongst researchers and with policy-makers; (c) how interaction or integration between qualitative and quantitative data on energy poverty can be optimized. Short panel presentations were given by **dr. Lucie Middlemiss**, **Dr. Kim O’Sullivan**, **dr. Tom Hargreaves**, **dr. Bardia Mashhoodi** and **dr. Harriet Thomson**.

Matters discussed, inspired by presentations, included the **rich diversity of methods and objectives within the domain of ‘qualitative’ research**, involving many different data sets, and analysis at different scales – i.e. ranging from interviews, observations, focus groups with households, social workers, policy makers, building managers and other stakeholders, to the analysis of relevant discourses, policies and laws (incl. on (social) media). Particular attention was paid during the workshop to the different ways of making the most of **research on the lived experiences of the energy poor**. Topics discussed included innovative research methods involving (audio)visual materials, better sharing of data amongst researchers, and finding new ways of engaging policy makers or other stakeholders. One participant shared an example of deciding to share qualitative findings from household-based research with social workers, as important systemic issues were found to emerge in this area, and making them part of the research project.



Break-out sessions

A specific opportunity flagged for improved use of qualitative data, particularly the lived experiences at household level, would be finding ways to better discuss and define **how, when, whether or under which conditions to share data**. The possibility of setting up shared databases for such purposes were discussed **Other challenges** were raised as well, such as overall trust in sharing, legal aspects (GDPR and ownership of data), or the translation of materials across languages, cultures and (local) social realities. It was mentioned on several occasions that the Energy Poverty Observatory (EPOV) still largely (too much?) focuses on **quantitatively driven indicators** - even if EPOV increasingly has qualitative materials and studies available too. Finally, the workshop discussed various examples of how **qualitative data and quantitative data can be better integrated**. Here, the workshop stressed the importance of finding better ways for cooperation, but also the need to assert the unique value of qualitative data in its own right to policy-makers.

## Day 2

The second day placed discussions on qualitative research in the Dutch energy poverty context. Several Dutch speakers, incl. **dr. Sandra Beckerman** (MP for the Socialist Party), **mr. Daniel Depenbrock** (KAW Architects), **mr. Koen Straver** (ECN/TNO) and **mr. Alexander Oei** (Ecorys) explained how the Netherlands is just embarking on energy poverty debates, especially in relation to concerns (just) energy transition.



A specific aspect of the Dutch policy context is the Dutch government's decision to stop extracting and using natural gas from the Groningen Province gas field per 2030 due to the social costs associated with earth quakes in the region. In addition, the Dutch government has formulated ambitious climate targets underlying a new Climate Law, partially under pressure of the *Urgenda* climate case.

Prof. **Stefan Bouzarovski** was present to introduce insights from the ENGAGER Action so far and to share lessons from ongoing debates in UK/European practice. Ms. **Nadine Andrews** (Scottish Government) was invited to shared lessons and experiences with qualitative evidence from the Scottish perspective specifically.



Similar to Day 1, the day consisted of **break-out groups** and inter-active **panel discussions**. This time participants tried to identify (a) how energy poverty is affecting Dutch households and (b) whether any specific interventions may benefit them. The **break-out groups** were given one of six '*energy poverty vignettes*' describing a 'lived experience' of a

specific Dutch household, based on qualitative household interviews carried out by ECN/TNO, a report of KAW architects on energy poverty in the North of The Netherlands, and a Master Thesis of Saskia Bertolini.

**Plenary discussions** reported on and compared findings in different groups, and formulated a list of policy recommendations that could be delivered to the Dutch government. Amongst these **policy recommendations**, formal recognition of 'energy poverty' as a policy concern was mentioned by many participants, as was the need for robust cross-sectoral integrated approaches, especially in the social domain. Most households in the case-studies were clearly struggling with more than one problem at the time. They might require help in different areas simultaneously.

**In relation to the 'just' energy transition specifically, a number of proposals were also made to better distribute burdens and benefits in relation to climate change measures and energy poverty.** These included: (a) improved and novel access for poor households or housing cooperations to energy efficiency schemes, (b) incentivizing private landlords to improve energy-efficiency of rental properties, without diverting costs to tenants, (c) empowering tenants to demand better energy services and efficiency, including as a matter of 'rights' and (d) improving the design and distribution of existing (energy) taxes and levies in favour of (energy) poor households, including for example the levy free base on minimum energy consumption that currently applies to all households.

*The event was reported by several national Dutch newspaper and radio broadcasting outlets, including Radio 1 Journaal, BNR Radio, and newspaper Trouw.*

- Jeannine Julen, 'Het aantal mensen dat energierekening niet kan betalen dreigt te verdubbelen' (Trouw, 8 November 2019) <https://www.trouw.nl/economie/het-aantal-mensen-dat-energierekening-niet-kan-betalen-dreigt-te-verdubbelen~be43f3ae/>
- Jeannine Julen, 'Voor sommigen is het te duur om eten op te warmen' (Trouw, 8 November 2019) <https://www.trouw.nl/economie/voor-sommigen-is-het-te-duur-om-eten-op-te-warmen~ba89bf5a/>
- Radio1 Journaal, 'Energiearmoede Koen Straver' (31 October 2019) [https://365tno.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/Organisation/CS/Marketing\\_Communications/Media/20191031\\_Radio1Journaal\\_energiearmoede\\_KoenStraver.mp3](https://365tno.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/Organisation/CS/Marketing_Communications/Media/20191031_Radio1Journaal_energiearmoede_KoenStraver.mp3)
- BNR Nieuws Radio, 'Ochtendspits Energiearmoede Koen Straver' [https://365tno.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/Organisation/CS/Marketing\\_Communications/Media/20191108\\_BNRochtendspits\\_energiearmoede\\_KoenStraver.mp3](https://365tno.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/Organisation/CS/Marketing_Communications/Media/20191108_BNRochtendspits_energiearmoede_KoenStraver.mp3)