

Energy vulnerability and diverse economies in Northern Greece

EVENT project policy brief

Energy Vulnerability and Alternative Economies in Northern Greece (EVENT) is a one-year project funded by the Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (see <http://urban-energy.org/event>). The project aims to understand how experiences of energy vulnerability in Greece are underpinned by the social and spatial infrastructures of everyday life. In the context of the project, energy vulnerability is seen as the propensity of a household to become incapable of securing a socially- and materially-necessitated level of domestic energy services (particularly space heating and cooling).

EVENT is based on an ethnographic case study of experiences of domestic energy deprivation in Thessaloniki (Greece), combined with decision-maker interviews and a survey of the secondary literature. The project is led by **Dr Saska Petrova**, a Lecturer in Geography at the School of Environment, Education and Development at the University of Manchester. Saska Petrova is also Research Co-ordinator of the Centre for Urban Resilience and Energy (<http://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/cure/>), which has hosted the project. Her work has been assisted by **Dr Alexandra Prodromidou**, a Lecturer at the International Faculty of the University of Sheffield, Thessaloniki.

Our research showed that the recently-established economic austerity regime in Greece – which is characterized by increased taxes and energy prices – **has created new patterns of domestic energy deprivation among urban and peri-urban households**. Such problems were much less common before the economic crisis. While general evidence from other context shows that energy poverty does not necessarily correspond with income poverty, all of the interviewed households who were income-poor **also faced energy affordability problems**.

Future policies to ameliorate domestic energy deprivation and vulnerability in Greece should take into account:

- The need for providing **lifeline amounts of energy** to the increasing number of households with basic domestic energy access difficulties;
- Policies to support **community-level resources** that can enable the growth of diverse economic practices and socio-technical flexibility in the provision of energy;
- Systemic issues at the level of **national utility regulation, social welfare and economic pricing policies** to address issues of unjust energy pricing, neoliberal reforms of the electricity sector, and inadequate support for vulnerable groups.

