

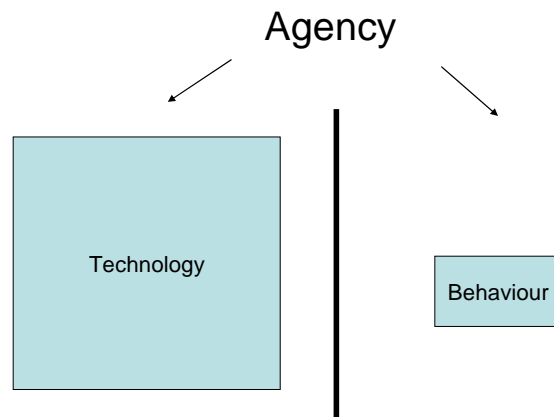
Agency: the capability or power to be the source and originator of acts (behaviour)

Some of the most important debates in social theory centre on agency. Is it social structures or individuals that have this power to originate acts? Does agency lie in the established routines or norms of a social group or in its ideologies? In the modern world of globalising information, how much agency does media have in influencing action? Similar questions can, and have been raised concerning technology

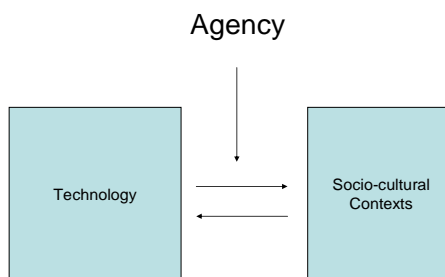
The transformative potential of technology

- Technologies bear with them potentials, 'frameworks of action' or scripts that channel behaviour in certain (unanticipated) ways.
- Another way of putting this: aspects of demand are embedded in the material world
- The insertion of a new efficient technology in practice (home, office, etc) has subsidiary effects on consumption and energy use. The net effect on energy use may be positive.

Two opposing theoretical positions on household energy consumption



Distributed agency in consumption



Refrigerators

- When introduced, bought to save space
- Latent potentials for storing foods and cooling drinks have paved the way for enormous changes in food practices and opened for new regimes of food technologies
- One latent potential involves saving time. Time pressures on families activate these potentials. The complement to the frig/freezer, the microwave oven is the most rapidly diffusing appliance in South India



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Implications for the longer term

- If we are interested in deep changes, need new thinking about how practices change in the interface between the technical and the social.
- Raise the horizon of thinking from the technology or device to the service (cooling, refrigeration, transport) . Aim at new promoting or creating potentials for achieving social aims using low energy-using technologies.