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### **Energy Poverty: a sociological case study in Austria**

My case study explores energy poverty in Austria. I compare these findings with research from other EU states, particularly Great Britain and Ireland, and bring them into the context of social inequality and environmental justice.

In Austria, social scientific research on energy poverty is underdeveloped. These issues are also peripheral in government policy and in the agendas of non-governmental organisations. My first step was a critical analysis of „energy poverty“ definitions and the construction of a locally-relevant conceptualisation for Austrian research. The definition of energy poverty used in my research includes all energy consumed in a home, rather than only energy used in heating, reflecting complex socio-technical assemblages of energy distribution, accessibility and consumption.

This analysis, based on a qualitative field study in Styria, an Austrian province, is research-in-progress. The Austrian social welfare system is among the highest ranking in the European Union, but the inability to pay monthly energy bills is growing considerably. A dynamic of constant growing debt on the household level can be observed among vulnerable homes. I emphasise particularly on the concepts of social inequality and environmental justice, because future energy systems must also include parts of the population that lack the individual ability to invest in energy efficiency or to participate in the shift towards more sustainable forms of energy.