

An evolutionary perspective on the economics of energy consumption: the crucial role of habits

K. Maréchal

The climate change issue imposes us not only to change the way we produce and convert energy but also to modify current energy consumption patterns. A substantial body of literature has shown that our behaviour is often guided by habits. The existence of habits - not fully conscious forms of behaviour - is important as it contradicts rational choice theory. Their presence thus calls for the setting of new instruments as it is difficult to expect consumers to be capable of exercising control over their consumption of energy in reaction to given incentives. This is further increased in our perspective where the current carbon-based *Socio-Technical Systems* constraints and shapes consumers' choices through structural, cultural, social and institutional forces. Habits being potentially "counterintentional", they can be considered as a form of behavioural lock-in that may explain continued increase of energy consumption. Policies should thus specifically address the performance context of habits.

Keywords: Habits; Evolutionary Economics; Energy consumption; Lock-in

JEL Classifications: D11; Q40; Q54

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Kevin Maréchal

Centre for Economic and Social Studies on the Environment
Université Libre de Bruxelles
Tel: + 32 2 650 33 32 Fax: + 32 2 650 46 91
E-mail address: kevin.marechal@ulb.ac.be

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Abstract:

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