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From deserving to denied: Exploring the social construction of energy excluded citizens

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ABSTRACT

This research critically examines the process of constructing the policy problem of energy exclusion in the Spanish context. Focusing on three case studies of peripheral neighborhoods experiencing extreme energy deprivation, the study adopts a deservingness theory framework to deconstruct the narratives that frame the policy problem and consequently shape policy responses. Using qualitative methods, including qualitative interviews, articles, and policy documents, the research examines the impact of these framings on policy responses to energy exclusion. By analyzing the process of policy problem construction, we explore the fluid boundaries between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' individuals and communities, thereby challenging established narratives in energy support policies. Our findings highlight the ambiguous nature of deservingness, revealing the complex interplay between neighborhood dynamics, policy interventions, and power actors. The article emphasizes the need for a broader understanding of energy deprivation that goes beyond techno-economic perspectives to include spatial and infrastructural factors.

1. Introduction

In the Font de la Pólvora neighborhood, a small area on the outskirts of the city of Girona on the northern border of Spain, a 12-h power outage left residents in a state of despair. Deprived of electricity, they were desperate to communicate with the power company to solve the problem. Meanwhile, local WhatsApp groups buzzed with activity, and there was constant communication between community representatives and town council members. Despite these efforts, the response from the power company's helpline remained consistent and unhelpful, blaming the outage on system overload, and denying responsibility, leaving residents without solutions or support. The only option is to stay without electricity for as long as it takes.

This situation seems far away from our context, but the narrative presented is actually a real description¹ based on the personal experiences of the residents of repeated and systematic situations of energy precarity and exclusion that they have been forced to live not once or for a certain period of time, but for years and in some cases as an -almost-permanent condition. This research examines a particular manifestation

of extreme energy deprivation: systematic and repeated power cuts affecting whole areas and neighborhoods in the context of the region of Catalonia, in north-eastern Spain. The cases studied are three neighborhoods located in mid-sized cities: Font de la Pólvora in the city of Girona; Sant Joan and Culubret, in Figueres; and part of La Mina neighborhood in the city of Sant Adrià de Besòs.

This interdisciplinary investigation attempts a comprehensive exploration of the social constructions and policy implications in specific cases of extreme energy deprivation [1,2]. Through a qualitative approach, based on a critical policy framing analysis through a diversity of data, including interviews, articles, and policy documents, this article aims to critically examine the dominant deservingness paradigm that informs the building process of the policy problem of energy exclusion in the Spanish context. In short, deservingness theories in policy analysis examine the criteria and perceptions that determine which individuals or groups are considered entitled to public assistance, and even more, if a problem affecting a specific group should be tackled through public action. Deservingness notions always operates in a specific social context, which determines its meaning and consequences [1].

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¹ There is no official record of power outages in the cases studied. In some of the neighborhoods, the neighbors have kept unofficial records of power outages, based on the collection of data by the neighbors themselves. The actual case presented in this article corresponds to December 21, 2019, when the neighborhood was without electricity for 12 h. Between December 21, 2019 and January 1, 2020, the author of this article documented the power outages during Christmas 2019. From this record, an average outage duration of 10 h per day was documented, indicating that some of the households spent an average of 40 % of the day without access to electricity.

Through an analysis of the policy problem construction process, we identify the deservingness framing applied to this type of social problem and how this specific framing directly influences the type of policy that might be applied. We aim to expose the permeable and diffuse boundaries between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ individuals and communities, challenging established narratives. Despite the paper's clear focus on policy definitions and responses, this article does not analyze specific policies and measures developed to address the phenomenon of energy exclusion. However, the manuscript does focus on policies, but on a first step of policy problem definition, which has a direct impact on potential policy outcomes at the design and implementation stages.

A second challenge in this process, as we develop later, is to examine how energy exclusion is framed as an individual or collective problem, linking to further discussions in energy politics scholarship around citizen agency in the energy system [2] as well as ideas such as energy democracy [3,4]. This debate is not exclusive of energy exclusion, or energy precarity in a broader sense, but it is an already classical debate in poverty studies [1]. How and why people end in situations of poverty (including energy precarity) has been explained and debated from different schools of thought, as we develop in Section 3.

The paper is structured as follows. After the introduction, the first part of the paper focuses on presenting the concepts of extreme energy deprivation and energy exclusion as extreme expressions of energy deprivation. Also, in the first half of the article, we situate the main contributions of deservingness theories and the main analytical elements from this scholarship to be applied in this research. After that, the fourth section presents the methodological approach of the paper, and the fifth section is dedicated to the case studies through which we collect the data for the analysis, as well as to introduce and describe the collective social problem of energy exclusion. We dedicate the last section to the presentation of the results and the discussion with the existing literature. Finally, the article closes with a concluding section with the main reflections and policy implications derived from the research findings.

2. Extreme energy deprivation and energy exclusion: being left behind

Debates on how we comprehend and evaluate energy deprivation have led to the development of various interrelated concepts, including energy poverty [5,6], energy vulnerability [7–9], and energy precarity [10]. Nevertheless, although conceptualizing the phenomenon is a strong and necessary step to define and propose successful policies, it is also true that all these terms end referring to domestic energy deprivation with serious impacts on both peoples' physical and mental health [11,12]. In the following lines, we unravel the various concepts mentioned and their relationship to the phenomenon of energy exclusion (Fig. 1).

Energy poverty has been conceptualized and defined in a variety of ways. Here, we refer to one of the most widely accepted definitions of energy poverty: “the inability of a household to access socially and materially necessitated levels of energy services in the home” [7,p. 277]. Despite the breadth of this definition, traditional views typically link energy poverty directly to financial constraints [13]. This can be explained because this perspective is directly linked with one of the sides of the classical triangle of energy poverty drivers, composed by the income level, energy efficiency of buildings, and energy prices [14]. In this case, the (low) income level driver. The fact that the income driver has been prioritized over the others can be explained by its direct link to techno-economic approaches [15,16]. However, this paper argues for a broader understanding that captures the complex nature of energy deprivation [17]. Going beyond these limitations, authors have pointed out how the vulnerability framework helps to uncover the underlying factors leading to energy poverty which are variable in space and time [18]. In this same line, we incorporate the energy precarity concept [10,19], that encompasses the economic and spatial factors contributing to energy shortages

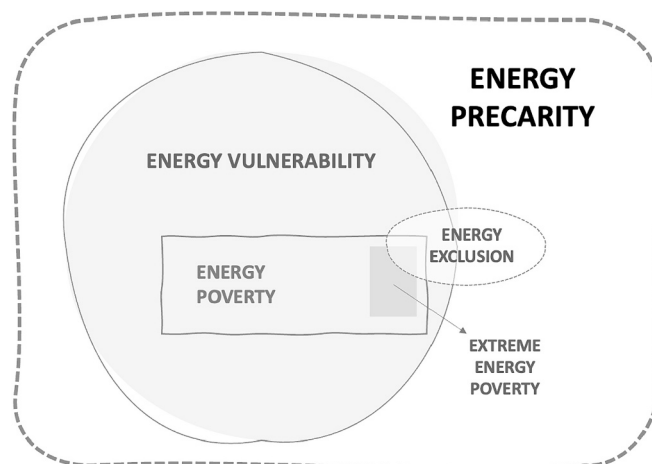


Fig. 1. Energy exclusion conceptualization and relation to other concepts. Source: elaborated by the author.

in households.

In combination with spatial factors, there are other conceptual layers that need to be considered when examining complex situations of energy precarity, such as racial or ethnic segregation and discriminatory practices and their impact on energy access. Several authors have explored this issue and highlighted relevant elements for our analysis. Buzarovski et al. [20] provide the example of the higher prevalence of the Roma population in energy poverty in post-communist countries. Among the factors they stress the spatial segregation of these communities in suburban areas, high rates of social exclusion, and historical practices of discrimination and criminalization. A study with data from the UK also underscores the existence of a ‘diversity penalty’ and the existence of specific drivers and characteristics of energy injustices among ethnic minorities [21,22]. Although this research uses the neighborhood as a unit of analysis for the case studies, we will see how other factors – such as the ethnicity of the population – plays a role in energy inequalities.

This study particularly highlights the issue of electricity disconnections as an expression of energy precarity. While power outages are often seen as side (and extreme) effects of energy poverty, usually due to unpaid bills, there are other types of interruptions in electricity supply that aren't solely related to financial issues. These interruptions, connecting them to the broader concept of energy precarity [10], result from a mix of social, economic, and geographical factors. Teschner and colleagues [23] explored the situations of two ethnic minority groups, the Roma in Romania and the Bedouin in Israel, facing challenges like inconsistent housing and inadequate infrastructure. Their findings underscore extreme energy poverty, marked by limited access to grid energy, frequent power cuts, and unstable grid connections. The term “extreme energy poverty” is also used by other researchers [24] to describe severe forms of energy deprivation, including the complete lack of access to energy.

However, the author believes that using the same term (just adding the prefix ‘extreme’) might create confusion, especially when formulating policies to tackle these specific types of energy deprivation situations. The current techno-economic approach to energy poverty provokes that in some policy contexts, such as the Spanish one in where the cases studied in this paper are located, policies addressing energy poverty focus on the economic aspects and may not adequately address

other causes of energy disconnections.² In the scenarios studied, ongoing power disconnections represent severe forms of energy precarity and deprivation. This research categorizes such severe manifestations of energy precarity as **energy exclusion**.

The concept of energy exclusion, which is not fully developed in this work, emerges from other ‘brother’ concepts such as social exclusion. Brugué et al. define social exclusion as “a changing, relational phenomenon, embedded in the transformations of post-industrial societies and susceptible to collective political mediation” [25,p. 12].

From this definition, several features emerge that can be also applied to the notion of energy exclusion, framing it in the specific energy deprivation field. First, exclusion should be understood as a structural phenomenon that explains new social divisions and thus generates new excluded groups. Second, it is a dynamic phenomenon that affects groups and individuals differently depending on their specific vulnerability [26]. This leads to a more complex and generalized distribution of social risks. Third, it is multifactorial and multidimensional, requiring holistic and comprehensive approaches. Finally, social exclusion should be understood as politicizable. Pierson [27] points out that excluded groups are not homogeneous and find it difficult to articulate politically to overcome exclusion. For this reason, the political opportunity to emancipate from exclusion is sometimes questioned and seen as inherent [25].

3. Deservingness theory and target groups

The study of deservingness in target groups has been an area of academic interest since the 1980s, with significant theoretical and methodological advancements [28–30]. In a social welfare system framework, the concept of deservingness plays a pivotal role in determining whether individuals are eligible to receive support but also in defining the policy problem, and consequently, the potential policy approach. This issue is fundamentally tied to the principles of distributive justice, addressing the critical question of allocation of resources and support [31,32]

As mentioned in Section 1, deservingness theories are closely tied to more general theories in poverty studies, particularly those exploring how and why people end in poverty situations. Watkins-Haye and Kovalski [1] explore these visions in the following terms. On the one hand, “structuralists” points out the role of social structures in causing situations of poverty, hence emphasizing the systemic factors driving poverty. On the other hand, we have the ‘individualist’ perspectives, that situates the individual at the center of the explanation of poverty situations.

In addition to being based on a variety of factors, perceptions of deservingness are dynamic, evolving along with societal changes and shifting power dynamics [32]. The theory challenges stigmatization from binary classifications by exposing the often arbitrary and socially constructed nature of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’. There can be direct implications for those experiencing energy precarity when stigmatization determines what types of problems are considered policy problems to be addressed through specific measures, and subsequently who is included in such policies.

From a framing perspective, deservingness research has explored what the main factors are that determine how policymakers, the media and the public discourse place certain individuals and collectives into the dichotomy of deserving and undeserving groups, constructing ‘hierarchies of deservingness’ [33]. Oorschot identifies five main criteria: control, need, identity, attitude, and reciprocity. Later, other

authors have simplified these elements into three main criteria: need, identity and behavior (including the latter elements of reciprocity, control and attitude). According to Guijarro Rubinat [34], *need* refers to the perception of the social and economic difficulties faced by the individual or group; *identity* is related to the perception of belonging to a group; and *conduct* includes several elements – such as intentionality or control over one's own situation - that influence the perception of the behavior of the individual or group. As this author stresses, the motivations behind each of these deservingness criteria are different: solidarity in the case of need, in-group altruism for the identity criterion, and finally reciprocity in the case of conduct.

Other authors, from a more structural and political perspective, point out how deservingness social construction also intersects with racism and other discriminatory axes. For example, Bhattacharyya [35], using Robinson's [36] argument that capitalism is dependent on creating inside differentiations (rather than homogenization), underscore the role of race in this process. So, deservingness dichotomies should be seen as techniques of capitalist differentiation, intertwined with other factors, including racial [37] and gender factors [1].

Returning to the individual or structural perspectives on poverty situations proposed in the previous passage, Watkins-Haye and Kovalski [1] emphasize that deservingness theories are more consistent with individualistic explanations of poverty because they are based on perceptions and judgments about specific individuals and groups and underemphasize structural and systemic factors.

Every public policy—or policy problem—is shaped through a narrative, and all narratives incorporate characters. In this work, we adopt the target group concept as proposed by Ingram, Schneider, and DeLeon [38], defining it as the groups identified to receive benefits and/or bear burdens throughout the public policy problem construction process. According to these authors, policy designs not only create different opportunities for different target groups, but also convey messages about government actions and intentions to different groups [38]. We use this perspective to shape our analytical model.

Our analysis explores whether the definition process of the public policy problem of energy exclusion, as a facet of public policy design, also sends messages to the involved target groups. These messages can potentially influence not just the groups' stance but also their engagement in the process, which could play a crucial role in shaping future public policies. The actors, resources, and elements at play at one stage in the policy process might differ from those at another, significantly impacting other concurrent and/or subsequent processes [39].

A study by Grossmann et al. [40] on energy poverty policy illustrates how everyday policy implementation practices profoundly impact people's attitudes, participation, trust in institutions, and their ability to manage fuel poverty by communicating messages regarding the ‘deservingness’ of target groups. Meanwhile, the intricate interactions among groups of actors—always contingent upon power dynamics—is crucial in crafting discourses and subjectifying the involved actors (particularly the target groups) [38,p. 108].

Within a public policy framework, four types of target groups can be distinguished [41,42], categorized based on their placement along two dimensions or axes. The first dimension refers to the political power resources available to the group, and the second dimension relates to the positive or negative social construction of the group as more or less deserving [38]. Consequently, we identify the following categories (see Fig. 2): privileged, contending, dependent, and deviant groups. Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of each of these categories, which will help us to better understand the identification and construction of audiences and how they fit into a particular framing in our model of analysis.

Public policies' effectiveness is directly influenced by the positive and negative social constructions of target groups. Policy makers, particularly those in elected positions, act in response to and help shape the social constructions of target groups, all the while anticipating the level of public approval or acceptance these constructions will receive

² In this article, we do not develop an analysis of the existing energy poverty measures in Spain. However, we can refer to the National Energy Poverty Strategy of 2019 and the most relevant energy poverty measure in Spain, the “social bond”, which is a discount on the electricity bill, the amount of which depends on the characteristics of the household's vulnerability status.

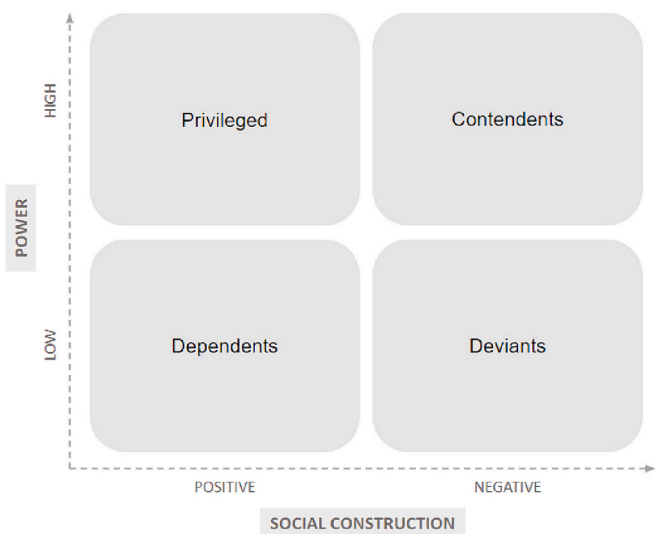


Fig. 2. Categories of groups-objective. Source: elaborated by the author based on Schneider & Ingram [41,42].

[38,p. 114].

In the context of our study, we observe how the actors involved in shaping the public policy problem—especially those within the public administration who have the capacity to take action—operate based on the existing social constructions of the target groups. They tailor their actions according to the expected level of acceptance or rejection from the general population concerning the actions related to the groups involved.

4. Methods

There have been several qualitative studies on energy poverty and energy vulnerability published in recent years [23,40,43]. The lived experience of energy vulnerable households and their daily struggles have been the focus of this type of research, seeking a better understanding of the lived experience of populations lacking adequate access to energy services [9].

From a methodological perspective, we highlight a group of scholars that have focused on the discourses around energy poverty and vulnerability, and how they shape policy responses. In their study, Rafey and Sovacool [44] analyzed the contending discourses on energy development and found that energy poverty is a subjective or non-closed phenomenon that is part of an ongoing discursive negotiation. Similarly, Fungisai Chipango [45] examined competing discourses on the causes of energy poverty in Zimbabwe. Finally, Koďoušková and Lehotský [46] use frame analysis to explore how Czech bureaucrats frame the energy poverty issue and how simultaneous frames can complicate negotiating

Table 1 Characteristics of target groups.

	Privileged	Contending	Dependent	Deviant
Power	High	High	Low	Low
Social Construction	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Benefits	Often receive benefits and respect.	Benefits are received in a hardly identifiable manner.	Inadequate and limited benefits.	Receive no or very limited benefits.
Burdens	Voluntary burdens.	May receive burdens, though they are often not applied.	Burdens are imposed due to their perceived lesser deservingness compared to privileged groups.	Receive disproportionate burdens.
Participation	Participate in the design of public policies.	Non-visible participation in the design of public policies.	Low participation in the design of public policies.	Scant participation in the design of public policies.
Examples	Small businesses, “ideal type” families, homeowners.	Unions, lobbyists, weapons industries.	Widows, poor families, people with disabilities.	Criminals, illegal immigrants, drug traffickers, and addicts.

Source: Own elaboration based on Ingram, Schneider, and DeLeon [38].

or agreeing on a common policy approach.

Recognizing the multiplicity of social realities and the role of multiple interdependent actors in their construction, this study adopts a constructivist perspective. It explores the policy frameworks that shape the experiences of energy deprived communities and navigates through different dimensions of energy poverty and exclusion.

4.1. Data collection and materials

The empirical grounding of this study is based on a multi-method qualitative approach, with in-depth data collection from July 2019 to December 2021. Given the nature of energy precarity and its multifaceted impact on communities, a range of data collection methods were employed to capture the phenomenon from different angles (see Table 2).

We conducted **in-depth qualitative interviews** with key stakeholders, including policymakers and civil servants, community leaders and social organizations, as well as impacted neighbors, to explore individual and collective narratives of energy precarity. A total of 48 participants took part in the study, with the selection process using snowball sampling. Individual interviews were conducted with 18 participants, while group interviews were conducted with 30 participants. The interviews were open-ended, allowing participants to fully express their experiences and insights.

Observant participation [47] was applied to incorporate relevant information to better interpret meanings, beliefs, and emotions that are rarely captured through other data collection tools. This method involved attending and participating in meetings, assemblies, and demonstrations, gathering data through field notes and reflections in a fieldwork diary. The data includes depictions from physical settings, activities, and interaction patterns among actors.

To complement the primary data, the research process also included a review of news and press articles. Using the MyNews database, articles published between 2018 and 2021 were retrieved using Boolean operators aligned with the keywords of the study. The initial corpus of articles followed a selection process in which articles with a relevance score of 30 % or higher were included (except for articles related to the La Mina neighborhood, for which a lower threshold of 15 % was applied due to low press coverage). Finally, to understand the policy context and its evolution, as well as to capture the voice of the political groups present in the City Council, minutes from City Council Plenary Sessions between 2018 and 2021, were examined. The selection of minutes was done following a two-step process. Firstly, a first sample was selected applying keywords related to the research resulting in 91 documents. After this first selection, a manual revision limited the final number of minutes included to the research to 12 documents.

An extended summary of the data analyzed, as well as an explanation of the code system used to identify the primary data sources, can be found in Appendix A. The same code system is used in the results section of this paper to identify the direct primary data sources used to support

Table 2
Summary of the collected data.

Collected data	Detail on the collected data	Number	Type of data	Data analysis
In-depth qualitative interviews	18 individual interviews 30 interviewees in group interviews	48	Text (transcriptions)	Critical framing analysis
Observant participation	Field notes and fieldwork diary	–	Text and audio	Used to inform the interpretation of the rest of data.
News and press articles		109	Text	Critical framing analysis
City council minutes		12	Text	Critical framing analysis

Source: elaborated by the author.

our conclusions.

4.2. Analysis methods

A critical policy framing analysis has been used to identify the mechanisms through which certain narratives are privileged while others are marginalized, with a particular focus on the construction process of targeted groups of policy actors [48]. We pay particular attention to the construction of deservingness and the implications of these constructions for policymaking and the lived experiences of affected communities.

Based on a modified version of the framing matrix by Jenkin, Signal & Thomson [49] and Kwan [50], this analysis examined the text corpus for thematic content, with a particular focus on the “affected groups” dimension. This aspect of the analysis focused on who the issue was a problem for, exploring whether it was perceived as an individual, community or population-wide problem, also considering age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic factors. The analysis also looked at how those experiencing the problem were described and what type of profile was excluded from being considered affected. By identifying key policy frames through the lens of these target and affected groups, the study examines how policy narratives around energy precarious population are constructed, which are shaped by the overarching policy content and the interactions of the actors involved. This approach allows a nuanced understanding of the position and definition of the policy problem, particularly in relation to the identification of conflicts and the process of constructing the policy problem as experienced by these groups.

5. Case studies

5.1. The neighborhood as a unit of analysis

In this study, the neighborhood is the main unit of analysis, defined as a localized network of social relations and identities between residents and businesses [51]. The study of neighborhoods, crucial to disciplines ranging from sociology to urban planning, has gained relevance over the past thirty years. A key theoretical advance in this area is the theory of the “neighborhood effect” which links spatial segregation to social outcomes and posits that residing in a vulnerable area exacerbates residents' adverse social conditions [52,53]. From an ecological perspective, that means that residential segregation and poverty concentration are not natural phenomena, but the result of structural forces, including the role of institutions in perpetuating inequalities [54,55].

The study focuses on three peripheral neighborhoods in medium-sized cities selected for their common characteristics: all were built as social housing in the mid-20th century, have similar housing and urban characteristics, and are home to populations with comparable demographic and socioeconomic profiles. Unlike larger cities such as

Barcelona,³ these neighborhoods do not have the political power to find specific solutions to problems such as energy precarity.

The first case is the **Font de la Pólvora** neighborhood in the city of Girona, located in northern Catalonia. The neighborhood is composed of a group of buildings built in 1977, originally social housing. The current population in this area is the result of a longer-term process of resettlement of the population that has lived in the city's historic shantytowns since the 1950s.

The second case refers to two small neighborhoods, **Culubret and Sant Joan**, located side by side, in the city of Figueres, a small city in northern Catalonia, near the French border. Although they are two different neighborhoods, with different origins, we consider them the same case for this research as the current dynamics are deeply interconnected. Culubret is a group of single-family houses built in the 1960s and 1970s that were originally constructed to house migrant workers from the south of Spain. Sant Joan, on the other hand, is a more complex neighborhood from an urban planning point of view. It consists of different groups of buildings built at different times and for different purposes. It includes social housing for migrant workers and buildings built specifically for resettlement of 60 Roma families displaced by heavy floods in 1962.

The last case is a specific area, the Venus building, in the district of **La Mina** in Sant Adrià del Besòs, located in the northern border of the city of Barcelona. The district has its origins in 1969, from an urban plan to relocate families living in informal urban settlements. The Venus Building is one of the most historic buildings in the area. It consists of 244 apartments. The Venus Building is also at the center of an ongoing conflict in the neighborhood regarding the urban redevelopment plan for the area [56].

5.2. Understanding the problem: the energy exclusion phenomenon

In the cases studied, the main expression of the phenomenon of energy precarity are the repeated and systematic power blackouts that these communities have collectively suffered for years. As mentioned in Section 2 of this paper, in this research we identify this specific type of collective manifestation of energy precarity as a form of energy exclusion.

The cases under analysis are examples of zones affected by systematic and prolonged power cuts that affect entire neighborhoods or areas (such as streets or groups of streets) and are not directly or only related to the economic burdens of the specific families and households affected. In Font de la Pólvora and Culubret - Sant Joan, the blackouts began around 2013, were infrequent at first, but then escalated in frequency

³ The cities of Barcelona and Madrid, in Spain, enjoy a special regime in terms of competences that distinguishes them from the general framework that applies to the other municipalities in the country. This special status implies greater autonomy and capacity to manage different areas normally reserved to the provincial or autonomous level.

and duration, with cases of more than 15 interruptions in a week and some lasting up to 12 h.⁴ La Mina, particularly the Venus building, experienced a different pattern. There, blackouts were not gradual, they started in 2016 and were extreme from the beginning. Interventions by the local administration managed to control these blackouts until a recurrence in the fall of 2021, which led to an intense period of power outages during the winter of 2021 and 2022 (Interviews LM/T/7 and LM/T/8).

The problem is multi-causal, leading to differing interpretations and difficulties in accessing detailed technical data. A common factor in all cases is the poor quality of electricity service due to outdated infrastructure and the impact of indoor marijuana cultivation (Interview CSJ/T/1 and LM/T/7, among others). The growth of marijuana plantations in these neighborhoods has been associated with a significant increase in electricity consumption, often through illegal connections, contributing to grid saturation. As a result, grid saturation leads to overloading of the infrastructure, resulting in interruptions for safety reasons.

According to existing research in this field, Spain has become one of the main producers of herbal marijuana in Europe [44] and one of the main exporters. In 2018, 90 % of the herbal cannabis (of known origin) seized by the French police came from Spain, particularly from the Catalonia region [45]. The production activity often associated with problems of energy precarity refers to the activity of indoor cultivation of marijuana plants in homes, which is intensive in the use of electricity. Family clans dedicated to this crop diversify production in different houses or apartments, which allows them an average of 4 or 5 harvests per year [57]. One of the characteristics of this type of production is that, in addition to the intensive use of electricity, it is usually obtained illegally through electricity fraud practices.

In addition to these more organized criminal networks, it has been observed how families in vulnerable situations have begun to grow marijuana in their homes as an economic outlet after the impact of the economic crisis in 2011 [57,58]. These families or individuals, depending on the case, are linked to external clans that commercialize the marijuana grown. This information is also important to determine whether or not this phenomenon is widespread in vulnerable neighborhoods and to profile the homes used to grow marijuana.

Aside from the impact of the phenomena of indoor marijuana cultivation and electricity congestion, the neighborhoods where the energy exclusion situations occur are highly degraded and segregated areas. A relevant argument added to the discussion is the state and maintenance of the existing electrical grid in these areas (Interviews LM/C-A/9, G/C-A/23, LM_FP/T_P/28, FP/T/22). Although the DSO⁵ is legally obliged to maintain the grid, it is also a reality in the Catalan context that the regional administration, which is responsible for the control of the DSO, has not been able to really control the execution of these obligations in specific areas or neighborhoods.

In summary, the situations of precarity and, more specifically, energy exclusion that are the focus of this paper are related to aspects of the quality of electricity supply (rather than the traditional elements associated with poverty and vulnerability, such as affordability). This is relevant because, on the one hand, the regulatory frameworks and the distribution of competencies and responsibilities in this regard are significantly different, and, on the other hand, the actors to be

considered are also distinct. In this respect, the main regulation in Spain for the protection of vulnerable consumers in cases of energy poverty is - in principle - addressed to the energy suppliers, as they are responsible for the contractual relationship and the billing to the final customer, whereas in the cases of energy exclusion that we are dealing with here, the responsible actor is the DSO.

6. Energy, individuality, and collectivity: losers and winners in energy exclusion

In this section, which focuses on the construction of subjects and actors in the articulation of energy exclusion as public policy, we have identified two key dimensions. The first relates to conceiving and attributing responsibility for the problem (linked to identifying causes), and the second relates to constructing political subjects and identifying actors.

6.1. Individualization and community: consumer or citizen?

In this first part, we look at the concept and attribution of responsibilities in relation to the issue of energy exclusion. Two approaches to the problem can be distinguished: one that views the relationship between the energy supply service and the household as a commercial-contractual interaction, and another that views the relationship as a right to fulfill a basic need, recognizing individual agency in the context of energy citizenship [2]. This distinction has implications for the processes and frameworks used in the identification of systemic causes, the allocation of responsibilities, as well as for the formulation of subsequent actions and solutions.

From the first perspective, the relationship between households and access to electricity - and therefore to the supplier - would be interpreted as a strictly commercial one. In this scenario, the supplier is contracted to provide a service. Following this logic, energy and electricity supply are perceived as commodities [59,60]. Because of that, cases of energy precarity should always be understood within this relational framework, and systematic and recurrent interruptions of supply could and should be resolved through the channels established by the sectoral legislation for the resolution of conflicts between the contracting parties.

This discourse, dominant until the emergence of the problem as a basic rights issue, has changed significantly. Initially, the distribution company and, for a considerable period, public administrations were the main proponents of this view. From this perspective, the public administration would choose a subsidiary position, recognizing electricity supplying as a regulated activity but fully embracing the purely commercial relationship between the company and consumers. In this way, the neighbors' claims for lack of electricity supply would be directed through established consumer channels, especially for vulnerable consumers, and through specific compensation provisions of the electricity sector regulation for cases of non-compliance of supply quality indicators. It is crucial to note that these types of measures, especially compensation measures, aim at the individualization of the problem, the negation of its collective dimension and, as a result, the denial of the community - or the group of neighbors - as a valid interlocutor. This perspective has been widely debated in practice not only by organized citizens, social movements, or local administrations, but also by the courts (Decision 29/2020 of the Contentious-Administrative Court 1 of Girona).

From the second perspective, the relationship would be conceived as a matter of citizenship rights and access to essential services. This view has gained ground in recent years, especially with the consolidation of public policies on energy poverty, which provide more guarantees

⁴ As mentioned in footnote 1, there are no official records of the blackouts. However, we can document them through the researcher's personal records for specific time periods, neighbors' records, interviews, city council and social service policy documents, and periodic newspaper articles.

⁵ In Spain, 97,64 % of the electricity network is owned and managed by five private companies. In the specific neighborhoods studied in this paper, the DSO that owns the grid is the private company "E-Distribución", which is affiliated with the Endesa group, which is part of the ENEL group, one of the five largest energy multinationals in Europe [70].

(especially in Catalonia).⁶ From this point of view, the precarious situation and the systematic interruptions of supply should not be seen as a disruption of the contractual relationship between the consumer and the distribution company. Rather, they should be understood as a problem related to the infrastructure, to the positions of power, to energy justice and to the structures of inequality in the current energy model.

However, while our analysis has suggested a distinction between these two perspectives - that of the consumer and that of the citizen - they should not be seen as polar opposites or mutually exclusive. Rather, they represent discursive constructions that can be transformed and even strategically co-opted. As Lennon et al. point out, neoliberal discourses on citizenship have brought it so close to the idea of the consumer that the distinction becomes blurred, and this also generates a shift in the allocation of responsibility from the state back to the individual [2, p. 4]. Just as different concepts of energy can exist and coexist in the same discourse [61], not all of them carry the same weight. In the case of energy, where the commodity concept predominates, the figure of the consumer is dominant. Yet, the analysis must avoid simplistic positions because, as previous research has shown, even when the citizenship dimension is emphasized, it tends to be translated through a neoliberal individualist discourse that limits the agency of the individual and the community [2].

6.2. Who deserves access to energy? Constructing the notion of deserving neighbors

One of the elements we have identified during this research is the dynamic process of subjectivation and categorization within the neighborhood communities under study. This process culminates in a distinction between 'deserving neighbors' and 'undeserving neighbors'.

This categorization proves functional for different policy narratives at different stages: from the formulation of the policy problem to the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies. Our study focuses primarily on the role of this classification in the process of framing energy exclusion as a public policy problem. It's important to note that these categories do not reflect direct material differences (e.g., it's not about distinguishing neighbors based on formal criteria), but socially constructed ones. This means that the boundaries between these groups are permeable and blurred.

First, there are the "deserving residents" (see Fig. 3). This group includes residents who have regular electricity supply contracts and are current with their payments, as well as those in economically vulnerable situations who are unable to pay their electricity bill.

Recognition of this group comes primarily from public administrations, whether at the political or technical level. This is reflected in statements such as:

"We need to find solutions for people who have everything in order but still suffer from power cuts, and also for those who, due to economic vulnerability, cannot afford to pay their bill" (Minutes of the Plenary Session of Girona City Council, February 11, 2019).

"As long as there are people who have a contract and are up to date [with payments] and who are experiencing electricity problems due to overload, we cannot say that [the measures] are sufficient" (Minutes of the Plenary Session of the Girona City Council, February 11, 2019, clarifications added by the author).

Regarding the processes of subjectivation among the residents, and

focusing on the case of La Mina, Aubán Borrell highlights how the construction of a stigmatizing discourse has led to the creation of an intra-neighborhood narrative [62]. This narrative blames a "devious and uncivilized minority" and facilitates the creation of a collective subject that can be used as a "scapegoat" [63] and as a crutch to explain existing problems in the neighborhood. As highlighted by various authors, the creation of this undeserving, uncivilized collective subject responsible for the neighborhood's problems has weakened the structures of mobilization and neighborhood struggle that have existed since its inception [62, 64]. Such narratives, consistently included in all the transformation plans proposed regarding La Mina, present the idea of "perennial marginality" as an inherent and therefore indestructible characteristic of the neighborhood [62, p. 415].

In the cases analyzed, there is a tendency to generalize the - relatively limited - number of households cultivating marijuana, which can indeed lead to an overload of electricity. This situation is often used as a general argument for non-intervention in the struggle against energy precarity. A similar phenomenon can be observed in relation to other neighborhood issues. In La Mina, for instance, comparable processes have been documented in the context of the emergence of drug trafficking: *"It does not matter that, in reality, the activity of the narco-flats is located in very precise places that are well known to the neighbors, the authorities and the police. The La Mina neighborhood as a whole (...) takes the form of a territory overrun by drugs and the dangerous dynamics associated with them"* [62, p. 447]. Likewise, despite the presence and knowledge of specific households cultivating cannabis, the distribution company and public authorities have remained inactive for years.

This process of subjectivation and division of identity has been taken up by the discourse of the DSO, as well as by some of the public administrations involved. The dominant logic of these processes and discourses is reflected in the following quote: *"People I call 'normal' or normalized are mixed with criminal people. When I say criminal, I mean people who live on drugs, who have plantations, and who have irregular connections, which leads to very high consumption"* (Interview FP/P/4).

On the one hand, a number of factors have facilitated this situation, including the recurrent argumentation of the distinction between "good" and "bad" neighbors by the DSO and the public administration, divisions and tensions within the community itself (Interview LM/T/8), or the requirement for neighbors to report other neighbors. Regarding this last example, the following quote exemplifies this tension: *"It can't be that Endesa [the DSO] asks neighbors to file complaints in order to take action... and then they make [fraud] detections based on abnormal electricity consumption. So, if they already know who they are, why do they need to turn the neighbors against each other or ask them to file a complaint?"* (Interview LM/C-A/12, clarifications added by the author).

On the other hand, the dynamic is not only driven by external factors, but also responds to an internal process of differentiation and social self-identification [65] among the neighbors themselves, which has shaped the social relations in the neighborhoods and how the energy exclusion problem has been collectively framed. For instance, Aricó [64, p. 251] illustrates this kind of process in the overall organization of social relations in the La Mina neighborhood, where neighbors with better social, economic, and housing conditions self-identify and distinguish themselves from the rest. In this regard, testimonies were collected from neighbors who, by identifying themselves among the deserving neighbors (who in turn perceive themselves as the "normalized" neighbors), highlight how these types of discourses have infiltrated the dynamics of social relations in the community (Interview FP/C-A/28 and Interview CSJ/C-A/24).

Moreover, we have already noted that the distinction between the two groups is often more than blurred. From the interviews, we can extract cases that - clearly - cannot be classified according to the logic of criminal practices due to gilled behavior: cases of electricity fraud due to precarious housing or irregular situations in migrant populations, or cases of irregular connections for economic reasons stemming from costs and burdens that go beyond non-payment of bills (for example,

⁶ In Catalonia, Spain, Law 24/2015 on Urgent Measures to Address the Emergency of Housing and Energy Poverty addresses energy poverty and ensures that vulnerable populations have access to electricity, gas, and water as essential services. To achieve this, it prevents utility companies from disconnecting vulnerable households without the involvement of social services. It also establishes a framework that recognizes the right to basic utilities and anchors the idea of energy as a right.

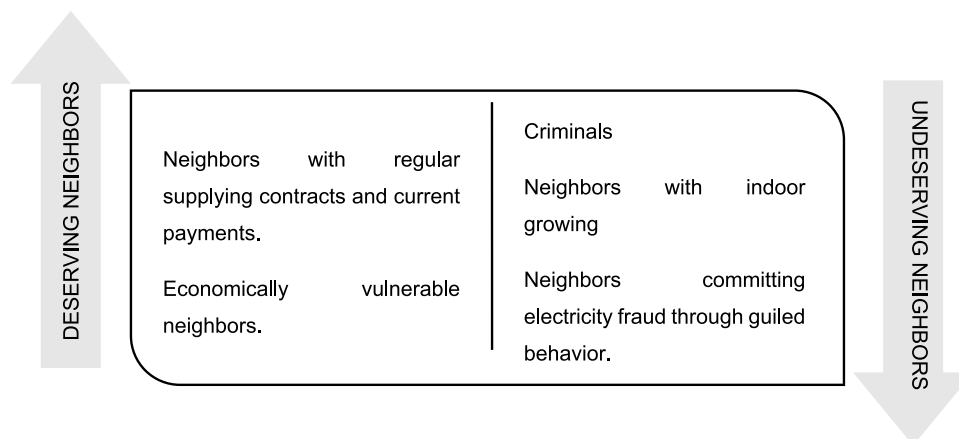


Fig. 3. Deserving Neighbors in the Analyzed Cases.
Source: Own elaboration.

outstanding debts for penalties, reconnection costs or adequacy to access a new supply). The phenomenon of indoor plantations in poor and vulnerable neighborhoods has increased, among other reasons, because it offers an economic alternative and access to income for families in situations of high vulnerability that have been hard hit by the successive economic crises of recent years [58].

Thus, the mechanisms of social distinction within communities respond more to subjective perceptions and mediated by official discourses than to an objective reality. Moreover, these distinctions generate social polarization processes that are reinforced by institutional discourses based on ideas of “transformation,” “civility,” or “coexistence” that deepen the division between “legitimate citizens” and those who are not [64,p. 252].

A relevant element in this process of social differentiation is also the discriminatory factor and racist behavior. This is present, to a greater or lesser extent, in most of the cases analyzed. As described in the introduction to the neighborhoods studied, in all cases a significant proportion of neighbors are Roma. While no explicit direct discrimination was expressed in any of the interviews, racism and indirect discrimination can be identified.

On the one hand, there is evidence of how the element of ethnicity has been a relevant factor in the process of social differentiation within the neighborhoods. The first case, and perhaps the most notable one, is the existing conflict among the residents of Sant Joan and Culubret neighborhoods. While the first one is the city area where most of the Roma community in the city is concentrated, the Culubret neighborhood, despite having a high Roma population index, presents a more mixed profile. From interviews and participant observation, racist practices have been detected, ranging from the no inclusion of Roma people in the activities of the Culubret Neighbors' Association, not informing the relevant Roma associations about important neighborhood meetings or activities, to even preventing access to the association's premises with paper notices.

A clear example of this racist attitude was the creation in 2017 of the “Josep Casero Coordinator” association, which brings together all the neighborhood associations in the western sector of the city of Figueres, with the exception of Sant Joan. Since its creation, the Coordinator has focused its advocacy activities on aspects such as security, civility or crime, taking the Sant Joan neighborhood in particular as a reference for the origin of the problems in the area. This process of self-differentiation is evident in the testimony of a neighbor from Figueres, who expressed this differentiation as follows: “If there were more people like us in this neighborhood, this wouldn't happen, but now there are more people like the others than like us” (Interview CSJ/C-A/42). This polarization not only exacerbates conflicts, but also hinders the creation of solidarity bonds and generates processes of “lateral denigration and mutual distancing”

[66], through which the inhabitants of these marginalized neighborhoods horizontally transfer their stigmatization to the “other”.

Furthermore, testimonies are collected that show institutional racism on the side of public administrations, such as the willingness or predisposition of certain departments in local administrations to work on cases that affect Roma people: “We try to work in an integrated way. However, within the local administration, when you knock on the doors of different departments, there are departments that are more or less inclined to work with the Roma community” (Interview CSJ/T/2). On many occasions, the Roma population is systematically redirected to social services or local social departments when the issues that affect them are diverse (from urban planning to security issues).

These two examples are consistent with some of the findings of previous research. As noted in Section 2 of this paper, ethnic minorities are largely more affected by energy injustices caused by a variety of factors, and how these injustices are “mediated by a wide range of structural factors stemming from wider social, economic and political inequalities” [21]. Racism, gender and other structural axes of discrimination are not only relevant in terms of energy justice, but are also elements that play a crucial role in the social processes of constructing deservingness categories. [1,37]. Our findings show how ethnicity and racism affect not only the level of energy vulnerability of ethnic minorities, but also their social relations within energy practices and processes of social differentiation in neighborhoods.

6.3. Target groups in the analyzed cases of energy precarity

The distinction proposed by Ingram et al. [38] allows us to identify and classify the target groups in relation to the analyzed cases of energy exclusion. We will try to outline a general classification for the three cases, with the following caveats. The first, as we have developed in the previous section, is that the boundaries between the affected population - neighbors - considered deserving and undeserving are not clear. The cases that are included in one or the other target group can vary significantly depending on the specific moment and circumstances. This characteristic is not exclusive to this specific case, but it has also been found in other studies [67], highlighting the non-static nature of this hierarchy, which can change over time. Secondly, and closely related to this ambiguous character, the classification exercise does not respond to material or objective criteria, but to a subjective type linked to the construction of an alterity - the undeserving other - that is functional in the process of subjectivation.

Considering these limitations, the identification of target groups is of interest because of the impact it can have on all stages of policy making, and especially in the formulation of the public policy problem. In this case, three groups have been identified, corresponding to the

contending, dependent and deviant target groups proposed in the categorization of Ingram et al. [38] (Fig. 4 and Table 3).

The first group is the DSO, which in this case is identified as a contender target group, although with specific shades and characteristics of a privileged group. This mix is due to the power position of the distribution company, as part of the Spanish electricity oligopoly and in relation to all the actors involved in the situations analyzed, as well as the normalized influence of this type of actor on public and political powers in the Spanish context. The level of power is high, but the social construction is relatively negative, especially in recent years, where the increase in energy prices, as well as the uninterrupted growth of the profits of these companies, have collided with a reality of growing vulnerability and energy precarity. As for the burdens and benefits received by the distribution companies, they may receive burdens that are rarely applied or have a significant impact on these companies. On the other hand, these companies implicitly receive benefits through various channels (for example, through taxation) or even through the design of the energy model itself, which is in favor of the main companies of the oligopoly.

The second group corresponds to the dependent category, and in it we find the target group of the affected population, the neighbors who are considered “deserving” (being aware of the porosity of these categories, which we have already mentioned). Thus, this group will be a collective with a low level of power, but with a positive construction, usually articulated around empathy for the situation of hardship. Typically, this collective would identify neighbors of the third age who are severely affected by energy exclusion. It would also identify children and other highly vulnerable groups. These findings are particularly consistent with previous research on deservingness in social policy, which has identified certain groups - including the elderly and the disabled - as the most deserving [33]. This group receives benefits, but in a limited and inadequate way to the situation and specific needs. Conversely, they tend to get burdened by public interventions. In terms of participation in the design of public policies, their participation is very low, often without any power to influence the final outcome.

Going now to the deservingness criteria identified in this specific target group, we see that the predominant criteria here are *need* and *conduct*. *Need*, as we see how certain groups, such as the elderly (interview CSJ/C-A/26) or children (interview FP/C-A/16), are clearly identified as “deserving” because of their own vulnerable condition. *Conduct* is also a major criterion used to divide the affected population. Here we can see how perceptions of intentionality and effort are crucial. As an example, we can cite a statement made by the mayor of Figueres in

Table 3
Characteristics of the target groups identified in the studied cases.

	DSO	Deserving Affected Population	Undeserving Affected Population
Target group type	Contenders, but with characteristics of privileged	Dependents	Deviants
Power	High	Low	Low
Social construction	Negative	Positive	Negative
Deservingness criteria		Need and conduct	Identity and conduct
Benefits	Receive benefits in a way that is difficult to identify.	Inadequate and limited benefits.	Receive no benefits or very limited benefits.
Burdens	May receive burdens (e.g., through regulations in times of crisis) but often these are not applied. In some cases, these burdens may be voluntary, to be compensated in the future.	Burdens are imposed because of their less deserving character. In this case, it refers to neighbors affected by systematic power outages. Although they are considered deserving neighbors, they are affected by a situation of energy exclusion with no solution in sight.	Disproportionate burdens.
Participation	Have networks of influence and lobby activity for non-visible participation in the policy-making process	Low participation in the design of public policies in the policy-making process.	Very low or no participation in the policy-making process.
Policy message		Only deserving neighborhoods should receive help in this situation.	All households identified as undeserving should be excluded from any public assistance and, moreover, punished for their unruly behavior.

Source: own elaboration according to the classification proposed by Ingram et al. [48] and Guijarro Rubinat [34].

2018, indicating that the city would take measures to improve the situation of neighbors who are “compliant”.⁷ Here we can clearly see how a clear *policy message* is being sent: only those neighbors who “deserve” - even without specifying this ambiguous term - can expect a public response that may favor them.

Finally, we find the target group of the affected population considered “undeserving”, which, according to the distinction made by Ingram et al. (2010), corresponds to the “deviant” collective. Thus, in this group we find all those collectives that, being affected by the situation of energy exclusion - either due to lack of access to electricity or due to irregular access - are considered undeserving for various reasons. Typical examples in this category would be those groups or individuals who grow marijuana indoors. But also those family units that are irregularly connected to the electricity supply. In this case, the level of power is low, and the social construction is negative. Often, certain segments of the population are disproportionately burdened, such as

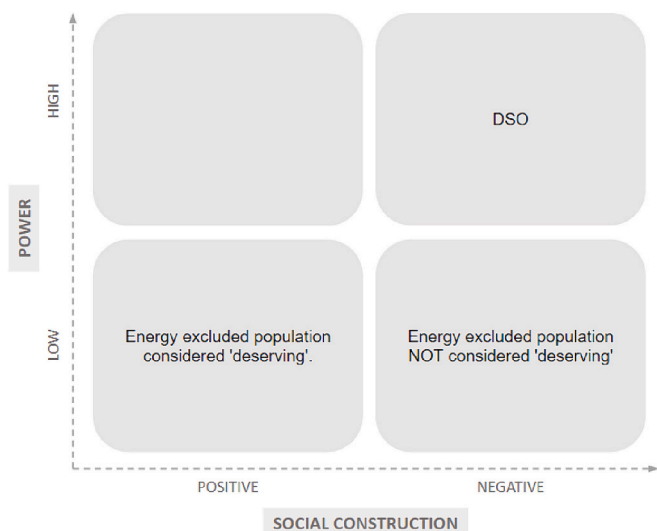


Fig. 4. Classification of target groups in the analyzed cases.
Source: Own elaboration based on the proposal by Ingram et al. (2010).

⁷ Figueres vol posar fi als talls de llum al barri del Culubret [Newspaper article]. El Punt Avui. 2018-03-29. Page 38.

those housing units that do not have regular access to electricity for reasons of personal, social, or economic vulnerability. This type of collective is the least present in the design of public policies, both in terms of their participation and as a target group to be considered.

In this case, the predominant deservingness criteria applied are *conduct* and *identity*. *Conduct*, because the main elements referred to in the interviews and other data analyzed are issues of responsibility, control and obedience. We can illustrate this operation with several data, including interviews (e.g., Interview CSJ/T/1, Interview FP/T/22) and minutes of city council plenaries (e.g., Plenary Session of the City Council of Figueres of November 2, 2019), in which the only references to the affected population were an abstract idea of generalized “criminal” behavior, as well as rude and disruptive (but not specific) citizens. This kind of framing technique is reinforced by the criteria of *identity*. In this case, the undeserving neighborhoods are always framed as the “other” people. This happens both in the discourses of the neighbors (Interview CSJ/C-A/42), who usually identify themselves with the “deserving” side, as well as in the discourses of politicians and political actors (for example, the plenary session of the Girona City Council on January 21, 2019). The *policy message* in this case is also clear. Not only will the undeserving neighborhoods not be helped, but they will be punished.

7. Conclusions

This research has explored, through three case studies, how target groups are constructed according to deservingness criteria and are used in the process of defining systematic and recurrent power outages as a policy problem, as well as policy responses. As we reiterated in the first part of this article, we do not use the term “extreme energy poverty” but rather “energy exclusion” as a specific expression of energy precarity to emphasize that the phenomenon presented in this research should not be approached exclusively through a techno-economic lens [15,16].

This article uses the concept of target group to describe the process of identifying the involved groups and collectives, as well as the distribution of benefits and burdens, through the process of policy problem construction [38]. Using individualist and structuralist perspectives, we have also examined how the relationship between citizens and electricity supplying and distribution are built, in the specific context of accessing electricity for domestic purposes.

This research has explored the complex dynamics of energy precarity and exclusion, revealing the intricate interplay between neighborhood communities, policies, and the actors of power in these scenarios. According to the case studies examined, there is a strong division within communities between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ neighbors. This categorization has significant implications for the development, implementation, and evaluation of public policy. The concept of deservingness is closely tied to general explanations of how people end up in energy deprivation and, beyond this specific concept, how people are in situations of poverty and, consequently, to more individualistic or collective visions. On the one hand, structuralist perspectives place the emphasis on systemic factors, meaning that energy exclusion should be understood as a structural problem to be addressed collectively, as a society, in line with arguments that recognize access to energy as a right. This specific perspective is not comfortable with the deservingness paradigm, since individual behavior is understood as residual to this vision. On the other hand, individualist perspectives understand energy exclusion situations because of the subject’s own individual characteristics, problems and actions. From this perspective, energy exclusion is understood as an individual extreme (but still an individual one) due to a problem between the consumer and the supplier. There is no place here for a collective vision - and therefore no place for collective action - to solve the problem. Here, policy action should focus on removing the disruptions in this consumer-supplier relationship. Since individuality is central to this school of thought, as well as individual conduct and behavior, it is more comfortable with the trope of deservingness

theories.

Our findings highlight the permeable and diffuse boundaries between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ neighbors, reveal the ambiguity of deservingness, and show that this distinction is not based on material reality. Rather, it is shaped and mediated by collective perceptions and official discourses. Moreover, energy precarity and exclusion affect even the most ‘deserving’ residents. This can be seen, for example, in the fact that neighbors with regular electricity supply contracts or who are economically vulnerable are affected by the collective and systematic power outages due to overloads of the grid, not having tools or mechanisms to protect themselves.

A bias can also be created if ‘undeserving neighbors’ are not considered as target groups and relevant actors in the definition of the policy problem. However, those labeled as “undeserving” may find themselves in this category for a variety of reasons, such as extreme vulnerability, irregular administrative situations, or irregular housing arrangements. Failure to consider these diverse profiles and situations limits the scope for intervention and the chances of success.

This division has been perpetuated by the discourse promoted by the DSO and certain public administrations, understood as institutional narratives, with profound implications for community dynamics. As a result of the construction of stigmatizing narratives, scapegoating mechanisms have emerged that weaken the structures of neighborhood struggle and mobilization. In addition to influencing the ways in which neighbors perceive and relate to one another, the categorization of people as deserving and undeserving has become embedded in the social fabric of communities.

The research also reveals the extent to which public discourse influences the categorization of neighbors and subsequent policy responses. The focus on a binary division overshadows the complex realities of energy precarity, leading to inappropriate and sometimes even harmful policy interventions. In this research we have not delved into the policy responses designed and implemented, but we have pointed out how each of the policy framings leads to a specific policy message. While in the case of the perceived as ‘deserving’ neighbors the message is that they should receive assistance, it is not the case for the ‘undeserving’ group. For the latter, the message is not only the exclusion from the policy targeting but also a punishing tendency. We can see how a scenario in which the policy problem construction process is excessively focused on the “undeserving neighbors” tends to take a punitive approach, losing a broader perspective that could incorporate a justice and equity lens. In the same vein, the results lead us to reflect on the need for a broader understanding of energy deprivation, including spatial and infrastructural factors - such as the elements connected to residential segregation the unequal infrastructural distribution in peripheral areas - beyond economic constraints.

Looking forward, there is an urgent need to re-evaluate the criteria used to determine deservingness and to acknowledge the fluidity and complexity of these categories. Future research should also explore the specific impacts and characteristics of energy precarity among marginalized communities. One line of analysis to consider for future research is the specific impact and characteristics of the phenomenon of energy precarity and exclusion among the Roma population living in Spain. There are recent publications that include belonging to ethnic or racial minorities as a relevant factor of analysis, especially in relation to the phenomenon of urban and residential segregation [23,68,69].

In conclusion, this investigation underscores the urgency of adopting a more nuanced and inclusive approach to addressing energy precarity and, in its more extreme representations, energy exclusion. In the specific cases, challenging dominant narratives and redefining the criteria for targeting affected groups, can pave the way to incorporate a broader understanding of energy deprivation in policymaking.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Anaïs Varo: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft,

Visualization, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

Part of the data is available under request. The interviews' transcriptions cannot be directly shared by request of the participants. Nevertheless, processed data will be available under request.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2024.103544>.

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