

Energy controversy theorised in the context of socio-technical change: The case of fracking for shale gas

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While sociologists of science and technology have long understood technology acceptance as a process of social embedding, the psycho-social processes involved have received relatively little attention in the socio-technical transitions literature. Similarly, energy technology controversy, particularly public objection, has rarely been theorised within the theoretical context of socio-technical change. Here we illustrate the value of Moscovici's social representations theory for its contribution to the most commonly used model of socio-technical change, the multi-level perspective (MLP). Using fracking-derived shale gas as a technology case study and newspaper representations of the technology in Poland, Germany and the UK as data, we address and illustrate connections between the processes of anchoring and objectification that are central to social representations theory and the socio-technical dynamics observed. In so doing, we set out an approach for further work on agency in the MLP and socio-technical change processes generally, informed by a social psychological approach that aligns with a structuration-based approach to social agency and change.