

Governance | Individual communication

IC - (20860) - TRANSFORMING THE INDUSTRIAL ENVIRONMENT: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT WITH FUTURE LOW-CARBON ENERGY SYSTEM TRANSITIONS IN A STEEL TOWN

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Background and objectives

The implications, perceived risks and unintended consequences of new technologies for patterns of everyday life will be one of the major challenges in many countries as they move to implement the low carbon, secure energy systems of the future to combat climate change. A significant research gap is to develop methods for engaging citizens with the whole systems energy transitions needed to combat climate change at either country or regional level. Using methods from interpretive and deliberative risk research, this paper describes a novel methodology and findings of a project to engage citizens of an industrial UK town with the transitions that might be required to achieve low carbon energy in their local environment. The fieldwork location for this research was the town of Port Talbot in South Wales, a region dominated by an existing major steelworks which is also one of the UK's largest single site emitters of greenhouse gasses.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

The paper describes how a multi-disciplinary team (social psychology, human geography, technology studies) developed 4 different scenarios of decarbonising the industrial and energy system for the town, and the conduct of interviews and 5 deliberative workshops with citizens living in or with connections to the town to explore their responses.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

Findings point to the importance of local context and place in the interpretation of the risks and benefits of energy system futures, alongside the impacts of proposed changes upon other issues such as local air quality and health.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

This paper adds important methods and empirical evidence to support the growing movement to engage citizens with the macro-level societal changes to combat climate change, as well as to build a social contract for such change.

Palavras-chave : citizen engagement, low carbon transitions, public perceptions