

IC - (21104) - PLACE ATTACHMENTS & SPATIAL IMAGINATIONS IN UK COMMUNITIES FACING SHALE GAS DEVELOPMENT

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Background and objectives

A plethora of research focuses on place attachment in the context of energy infrastructure, yet little has focused on shale gas sites which have garnered significant resistance worldwide. Here, we highlight how community members facing shale gas conceptualize space and place, how place attachment is crucial for understanding their concerns about shale risks. In addition, we highlight the importance of interviewees' conceptualizations of 'placeless' space, the social construction of 'place' in the underground, and how concerns about place disruption span time and space to create both immediate concerns and a collective vision of a negative sociotechnical imaginary if the shale gas projects were to move forward.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

We developed two case studies to explore place-based concerns of residents who faced potential shale exploration. Fieldwork (including 45 interviews with local residents and local government) was conducted in 2019-20. In addition local surveys were conducted (~200/community) in 2020 (Altcar) and 2021 (Woodsetts).

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

Conceptualizations of place expand across space (distances from site locations, disruption across horizontal and vertical planes), scale (body, household, community, nation, fears about scale of drilling) and time (immediate, long-term and intergenerational concerns). Connections are embedded in social interactions, as well as interactions with landscapes and the physical location. With several unknowns and a lack in community engagement, residents are left to fill in their own blanks—this process often leads to a collective worst-case scenario, a vision of a future where the sociotechnical imaginary is a bleak 'place-pocalypse.'

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

Research importance and implications:

- (1) Contributes to more holistic understanding of place attachment, and perceived threats to place
- (2) Draws connections between place-based attachment and collective sociotechnical imaginaries
- (3) Points to relationship between unknowns and uncertainties and place-based concerns about shale
- (4) Demonstrates importance for policies and processes to address potential unknowns and uncertainties for energy technologies *prior* to beginning these projects

Palavras-chave : place, place attachment, energy development, shale fracking, spatial imaginaries, landscape meanings