

Looking behind and beyond accusations of NIMBYism: a framework for identification and analysis of stakeholder responses to renewable energy developments

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Previous work on renewable energy siting controversy has tended to focus upon description rather than explanation and has often been based on quantitative approaches using prompted questions. Opposition to obviously 'desirable' renewable energy developments has been presented as 'the problem' and therefore alternative interpretations of the technologies, and the (contested) contexts in which they sit, have been less fully explored. Whilst the dominance of Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY) explanations of opposition are increasingly being tackled by researchers in this area, such simplistic 'explanations' continue to dominate much of the media and political discourses. Rather than seeking areas of 'ignorance' or 'misunderstanding' there is a need to look more closely at the explanation and justification of different interpretations of developments. A conceptual framework for analysing opposition and support positions is presented which draws on the fields of science and technology studies, risk, participative decision-making and place. In the framework, I call for further consideration of: knowledge claims, consultation and symbolism. Qualitative data from a number of case studies in the UK are used to illustrate the framework (including Wave, Wind and Biomass energy developments). By considering the reasons for opposition and support positions, I argue that potential space is opened up to make changes to developments, their institutional arrangements and engagement activities in order to deliver more supported developments. The IAS STS conference offers an exciting opportunity to discuss the proposed framework with international colleagues from many disciplines and consider the applicability of the approach in other international contexts.

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