

Negotiating Contested Visions and Place-Specific Expectations of the Hydrogen Economy

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Abstract:

This paper explores the role of the ‘hydrogen economy’ as a guiding vision encompassing multiple contested technological futures, value judgements and problem framings. Hydrogen visions draw upon six overarching and competing narrative themes: power and independence; community empowerment and democratisation; ecotopia; hydrogen as technical fix; inevitability and technical progress; and ‘staying in the race’. In other words the vision of the hydrogen economy possesses great interpretive flexibility. This, it is argued, is the key to hydrogen’s rhetorical power, allowing it to become a space in which divergent interests and agendas are promoted. Turning to issues of scale and place, the case of London is used to document the dynamics of expectation: how the open flexible guiding vision of a hydrogen economy must inevitably be re-invented and grounded in local agendas and contexts if its promise is to become realised.

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