

Gareth Thomas

Doctoral researcher, School of Social Policy

Contact

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Year started: 2010

F/T or P/T: Full time

Supervisor(s): [Stuart Connor \(/staff/profiles/social-policy/connor-stuart.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/social-policy/connor-stuart.aspx) and Dr David Toke

Research topic

'The Political Economy of Hydrogen Energy'

Qualifications

- MA International Relations, University of Lancaster
- BA (Hons) Politics & International Relations, University of Lancaster

Background and professional experience

I completed my MA in Politics and International Relations at the University of Lancaster in 2007. After a brief period working in fundraising I returned to academia at Birmingham in 2010. My research interests lie in the role of ideology and discourse in the legitimisation of emerging technologies and examining the role of politics in the management of technological transitions.

Research Overview

I am currently working towards a PhD focusing on the community emerging around hydrogen and fuel cells (HFC's) as a technological solution to policy discourses surrounding energy security and climate change.

The key units of analysis within the study will be the public narratives relating to green technologies; and the social practices through which individuals engaged in technological research and policy circles situate themselves in relation to them. In doing so, the project will draw on Bent Flyvbjerg's conception of phronetic social science; emphasising the importance of examining power and promoting public debate in social research, in contrast to more technocratic, managerial accounts of technological innovation.

Major research questions will focus on the relationships and coalitions forged between different types of actor within the hydrogen fuel cell community; the discourses they articulate and the consequences of these on fuel cell research, development and funding. These will be addressed through a combination of in-depth qualitative interviews with scientists, engineers and research funders working within the hydrogen community, follow-up communications and documentary research. In using this combination, I hope to develop a reflexive process capable of accounting for social context, responding to contest and emergence in the fuel cell community whilst stimulating comment and debate within it.