

# INTRODUCTION

This book came about as the result of research encompassing a period from the 1980s (archival research) until 2014. Various media forms and diverse channels of mass communication were analysed in the selected time periods, which allowed us to gather material that on the one hand was abundant and differentiated and on the other illustrated the dynamic of changes based on consistent tracking of the fields of nuclear and wind policy and shale gas. It was no coincidence that these types of energy were chosen, while the most obvious one in Poland, coal, was left out. When the research began, they were (all in their own way) innovative technologies. Nuclear energy – perhaps the hardest to define in this way (as many actors treat it as a technology of the past) – is still to be implemented in Poland. For several years, though, it has again begun to be considered as a solution that might satisfy the future demands of energy policy, assuring a stable energy supply, increasing the country's energy independence and leading to reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In this sense (as a new solution), it is an innovative approach for the Polish energy system.

Wind energy is the most popular renewable energy source (RES) in Poland, as well as the most recognisable and the one most readily associated with environmental friendliness. As a result, although it has been around since the 1990s, and in recent years has even undergone a marked increase in generating capacity (albeit remaining relatively low in comparison to leading European countries), it is treated as an alternative to “hard” yet “dirty” energy technologies based on fossil fuels (including uranium).

Shale gas is a new subject that appeared in the media discourse just two years before the beginning of the study, during which it became a hot topic in the media. Unlike the remaining two energy types, saddled with a certain history of discourses around which specific epistemic communities had developed and narrative tracks, types of argument and symbolic rep-

representations had formed, the selection of the topic of shale gas permitted an ongoing observation of all these processes. New media representations need to in some way be anchored in the world of already existing meanings, which meant that it was also possible to track the networks with connections to foreign discourses or the traditions of the Polish gas industry. A further significant consideration was the positioning of shale gas compared to other energy sources, actors and their various interests.

Let us stress from the outset that the aim of the analyses was not to assess the usefulness or risk of a given energy technology, but rather to reconstruct their media representations in the context of dynamically developing discourses. As such, the selected energy topics, concerning all citizens as well as their descendants, thus determine the future not only of their immediate environment, but also that of the region and the world. In terms of their relations to the key economic interests of various groups and entities, meanwhile, they become peculiar case studies of the way in which media discourses function in the contemporary public sphere. The main question is therefore about the way in which public policies are formed, presented and discussed in the media space, with particular attention given to the participation (and /or lack thereof) of diverse social actors in these processes.

There are two main parts to this book. The purpose of first part, comprising the first two chapters, is to present the theoretical and methodological foundations. It shows the results of the conceptualisation work and explains how the research was organised. Owing to the diversity of this research, conducted in a number of stages using various methods, it is impossible to include all the analytical tools and detailed interim reports (analysing a given topic in a specific media type) in the book. This presentation of the theoretical-methodological framework and essential approach to thinking about media discourses developed over the last three years is therefore especially important.

Second part includes individual analyses of specific topics, and is more diverse. It begins with Chapter 3, Rafał Garpiel's analysis of the nuclear energy discourse, followed by Chapter 4, in which Maria Świątkiewicz-Mośny examines the discourse on wind energy, and Chapter 5, in which Aleksandra Wagner tackles media discourses on shale gas.

The logic in Chapter 6 is somewhat different. Wit Hubert uses data provided by the SentiOne group to analyse the specific nature of discourses developed in social media. Rather than simply presenting a subject discourse, then, the author concentrates on the medium – and specifically the discourses developed in the communication space constituted by new media. Our reasoning for this was that the initially planned analyses of the internet discourse and the accepted criterion of its visibility led to the conclusion that the sources are mostly institutional. We therefore decided to expand the

spectrum of analyses to allow us to take into account discourses that were dispersed and therefore less visible, yet no less significant for the developing argumentative structures and dynamically related to the expert discourse of professional websites and blogs.

All the authors, as members of the research team, worked within an agreed-upon theoretical conception, employing a joint conceptual framework and common categories, yet remained independent, and the individual chapters are the result of their incisive observation, individual astuteness and creative interpretation. The analysis is based on the materials generated over the course of the research. We ought to point out that, to keep the qualitative analyses as intersubjective as possible, the researchers exchanged interim reports, analytical notes, conceptual and location maps, discussing and consulting their findings and conclusions together. And this is as good as place as any to thank them for this.

As the editor of this book and head of the research project, I thank Maria Świątkiewicz-Mośny, Rafał Garpiel and Wit Hubert for accompanying me on this fascinating journey and offering their support in the form of advice and ideas, for their hard work and commitment. My thanks also to all who participated in the project for their painstaking coding, piloting the research methods and their valuable comments. I am hugely grateful to Jacek Bednarz, Ewa Niezgoda, Katarzyna Rabiej-Sienicka, Magdalena Stawicka and Aleksandra Latko, as well as to the Press Service and SentiOne teams, who furnished us with high-quality data. I thank Professor Marian Niezgoda for his meticulous reading and review of the book, as well as his kind support throughout the project. His enormous technical knowledge meant that we were able to steer clear of many errors; we ourselves are to blame for any that we failed to avoid.

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