The uptake and diffusion of solar power in Africa: Socio-cultural and political insights on a rapidly emerging socio-technical transition

This special issue focusses on the now rapidly growing solar photovoltaics markets across various geographies and scales in Africa. Herein we summarise the contributions of the component papers and position them within the context of the sustainable energy access literature. We argue that there is an urgent need for greater attention to the neglected socio-cultural and political dimensions of sustainable energy access, dimensions that are vital to understand if ambitious global commitments to sustainable energy for all by 2030 are to be achieved. Included in this special issue are papers on the systemic and socio-technical nature of energy access transitions; their politics and political economy; gendered dimensions; critiques of their technologically determinist framing and the implications for marginalising local actors; and, perhaps for the first time in the energy access literature, application of social practice perspectives to the energy access challenge. The result is a diverse range of empirically-grounded, theoretically and methodologically novel approaches, providing new insights into and understandings of the neglected socio-cultural and political dimensions of sustainable energy access.

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