

# FME HighEFF

## Centre for an Energy Efficient and Competitive Industry for the Future



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**Centre Innovation**

**What's The Magic Word? What we talk about when we talk about energy efficiency**

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| Dissemination Level |   |   |
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| <b>Abstract</b>   |
|---|
| This is the abstract for the accepted conference paper to ECEEE 2018, showing the plasticity of the concept Energy Efficiency in Norwegian media. |

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## 1 What's The Magic Word? What we talk about when we talk about energy efficiency

Keywords: media discourse, energy efficiency action plans, industrial energy saving

Energy efficiency has become an integrated concept in modern language and public discourse, yet definitions and effects of energy efficiency and reduction is still an ongoing debate within academic discourse. This article investigate how industrial energy efficiency is framed and features in media narratives. Media discourses both reflect and shape public opinion and essentially the political sphere, calling for an improved understanding of how energy efficiency features in public discourse. The paper is based on a media analysis of 309 articles featuring "industrial energy efficiency" in a selection of Norwegian newspapers in the period between 2013-2017. We find numerous different framings of energy efficiency in the articles, where the authors draw on various notions of relative and absolute reduction in consumption, indicators and system boundaries. Even more common is the tendency to frame energy efficiency generically without explicit or implicit assumptions about reduction in consumption. The analysis show that energy efficiency is rarely an object of contention or controversy and often not even the topic of the articles itself. Rather it figures in arguments within transition narratives of climate change mitigation and economic stability and growth. The paper outlines the underlying structures of how energy efficiency serves as a legitimizing concept in these narratives, as well as ammunition on both sides of heated controversies regarding development of renewable wind or hydro-parks, transmission lines and oil & gas industry. The combination of a multitude of framings and generically use of the concept essentially lead to a black-boxing of the relationship between energy efficiency and reduction. Consequently, the associative equation between "energy efficiency" and "reduction" contributes to establish energy efficiency as a magic word in media narratives, suitable to legitimize almost every thinkable argument within transition narratives.