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Umweltverträgliches Fracking?

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Ortwin Renn serves as full professor and Chair of Environmental Sociology and Technology Assessment at the University of Stuttgart (Germany). He directs the Stuttgart Research Center for Interdisciplinary Risk and Innovation Studies at the University of Stuttgart (ZIRIUS) and the non-profit company DIALOGIK, a research institute for the investigation of communication and participation processes in environmental policy making. Renn also serves as Adjunct Professor for "Integrated Risk Analysis" at Stavanger University (Norway) and as Affiliate Professor for "Risk Governance" at Beijing Normal University.



Ortwin Renn has a doctoral degree in social psychology from the University of Cologne. His career included teaching and research positions at the Juelich Nuclear Research Center, Clark University (Worcester, USA), the Swiss Institute of Technology (Zuerich) and the Center of Technology Assessment (Stuttgart). Among others he is a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of EU President Barroso, the Scientific and Technical Council of the International Risk Governance Council (IRGC) in Lausanne, the National Academy of Disaster Reduction and Emergency Management of the People's Republic of China and several national and international Academies of Science. In the past he served on the panel on "Public Participation in Environmental Assessment and Decision Making" of the U.S.-National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. (from 2005-2007) and on the German Federal Government's "Commission on Energy Ethics" (2011). In 2012 he was elected president of the Society for Risk Analysis (SRA). His honours include an honorary doctorate from the Swiss Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich), an honorary affiliate professorship at the Technical University Munich, the "Distinguished Achievement Award" of the Society for Risk Analysis (SRA) and several best publication awards. In 2012 the German Federal Government awarded him the National Cross of Merit Order in recognition of his outstanding academic performance. Renn is primarily interested in risk governance, political participation as well as technical and social change towards sustainability. Since 2012 he co-directs together with Armin Grunwald the German Helmholtz-Alliance: "Future infrastructures for meeting energy demands. Towards sustainability and social compatibility". Renn has published more than 30 books and 250 articles, most prominently the monograph "Risk Governance" (Earthscan: London 2008).

Address:

Ortwin Renn, University of Stuttgart, SOWI V, Seidenstr. 36, 70174 STUTTGART.

Germany

Ortwin.renn@sowi.uni-stuttgart.de

THESES

1. Public acceptance of new technologies and infrastructural changes depend on four aspects: knowledge about perceived impacts; personal benefit or benefit to people for whom ones care; self- efficacy, i.e. the belief that one's actions can make a difference, and identification with the proposed project or activity. All four aspects need to be addressed.
2. Public communication is only of limited value if utility and identity are at stake. In these instances open participation projects are needed.
3. For such participation projects to succeed it is necessary to articulate a clear mandate, define a time period for such activities and select a format that fits the purpose. Guiding principles should be transparency, legitimacy, fairness, and competence.
4. Fracking is suffering under several negative associations in the public eye: I can be seen as a barrier to climate change mitigation, as a support technology for large-scale fossil fuel extraction, as a risk for environmental quality and as an obstacle to sustainable development. In addition, local NIMBY movements are to be expected.
5. For giving Fracking a chance in public acceptance, it needs to be included and integrated in an overall strategy of energy and sustainability policy. If it can be viewed as a crucial element of the German „Energiewende“ or any other policy towards a dominantly renewable energy future it may overcome its present perception of being unsustainable and contributing to additional climate change and environmental pollution.