

Public Acceptance of New Energy Technology

The background of the slide is a photograph of a wind farm. Several wind turbines are visible, their dark silhouettes standing against a sky with soft, orange and yellow clouds from a low sun. The turbines are arranged in a line, with the one on the right being the largest and most prominent.

Overview

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- ❑ Public perceptions of new technologies
- ❑ Risks are “real” and socially constructed
- ❑ Volumes of research on impact of effective engagement and meaningful dialogue on technology
- ❑ Little application of research to governance or public participation
- ❑ Volumes of research on why governance doesn't change and lack of public participation
- ❑ Successful dialogues on technology acceptance

Public Perception and Risk

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Public Perceptions

- ❑ Trust—government and corporate lies, incompetence, and scandals
- ❑ Different individual vs. group costs and benefits
- ❑ Communication and transparency

Risks

- ❑ World views and values
- ❑ Time horizon
- ❑ Progress and growth
- ❑ Other bases for decisions-aesthetics, reliable sources, etc.

Research Findings

- ❑ Good public participation
- ❑ Improves quality of outcome, legitimacy of process, and improves trust
- ❑ Valuable in supporting high-quality science-based decisions
- ❑ Require clear goals, planning, resources, time, broad representation of interests, dialogue about science and values, transparency about assumptions/models, iteration between analysis and deliberation, support for all to understand
- ❑ Bad processes-scientifically compromised decisions, politicized process, compromised public trust

Findings Not Applied

- ❑ Information collection not planned or sequenced with policymaking or decision-making
- ❑ Failure to involve the public significantly or early enough to frame risks
- ❑ Organizational lag and paying attention to the wrong things
- ❑ Policies or methods do not involve broad representation or all sectors
- ❑ Narrow range of public participation models approved for use or used
- ❑ Lack of understanding, capacity, and resources to involve public meaningfully in significant problems

Why Not?

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- ❑ Disregard for public values
- ❑ Elite doubts about public understanding
- ❑ Power and politics
- ❑ What if they say no?
- ❑ Public tired of being “participated”
- ❑ Bright, shiny objects
- ❑ Concepts not understood nor application to new issues trusted
- ❑ Skills are not widely taught
- ❑ Not enough incentives
- ❑ Lack of time and resources
- ❑ Scale and scope too hard

But Meaningful Dialogue Does Occur

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- ❑ Companies, agencies, organizations, and leaders convene meaningful dialogues
- ❑ Companies, agencies, and organizations come together, talk, and listen
- ❑ Stories, rituals, and meaningful dialogue inspire vision and hope, and mistrust decreases
- ❑ Good process engages at realistic level for realistic time frame
- ❑ People agree on local or regional plans, policies, programs, and implement them

Successful Dialogues

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- ❑ National Wind Coordinating Collaborative
- ❑ National Conversation on Public Health and Chemical Exposure
- ❑ Nuclear Power Joint Fact Finding Dialogue
- ❑ Advisory Committee on Agricultural Biotechnology for the 21st Century
- ❑ Global Dialogue on Nanotechnology and the Poor
- ❑ Future of Vermont Energy Policy Dialogue

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