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Social benefits of renewables – lessons learned from Germany's Energiewende

Boosted by impressive technological innovation and cost reductions, renewable energy in a growing number of countries is now primarily considered for its social and economic benefits. Among the benefits of the emerging new energy world are opportunities for local value creation, for responding to growing energy demands and for reducing conflicts over scarce water, which are aggravated by fossil power generation. Allowing for distributed electricity generation, the rapidly expanding renewable energy world is opening up business models for many, including local communities, citizens and citizens' cooperatives. In his talk Sebastian Helgenberger will illustrate the social dimension of renewable energies and the Energiewende (energy transition) – in Germany and internationally. He will share surprising experiences from Germany's Energiewende, with citizens finding themselves on the driver seat of reshaping the energy market and the way we produce, consume and own energy. Similar developments connected to the societal drivers, game changers and opportunities of renewable energies can be observed around the globe showing that energy transitions are about much more than energy.

Biography

Sebastian Helgenberger leads the "Multiple Benefits of Renewables" project at IASS Potsdam. In their research activities and international science-policy dialogues, he and his team are giving particular emphasis on the social and economic benefits of renewable energies as drivers of accelerated transitions towards sustainable energy for all. He graduated in Environmental Sciences at Leuphana University Lüneburg and conducted his Master's thesis at ETH Zurich on knowledge co-creation among science and society in sustainability transformations. He also holds a PhD in Socio-Economics. He is committed to advancing and experimenting with the transformative potential of science and research to accompany societal change.

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