

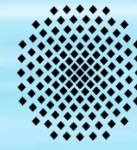
The sociological perspective

Dr. Jürgen Hampel, Senior Lecturer,
Dept. for Environmental Sociology and Technology Assessment,
University of Stuttgart

11th Annual Liability Regimes Conference

Keeping the Floodgates Shut? Mastering Accumulation
and Bodily Injury Exposures in a Rapidly Changing Environment

4–5 November 2015, Rüslikon

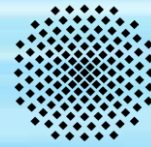


The sociological perspective

Dr. Jürgen Hampel

Annual Liability Regimes Conference

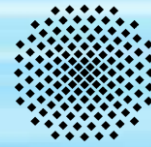
Rüschlikon, Schweiz



Medicine and Medical Technology

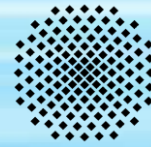
- In general, there is an overwhelming support for medical research and medical technology.

- But there are exceptions.
 - e.g. human embryo stem cell research
 - some medical devices



Human Embryo Stem Cell Research

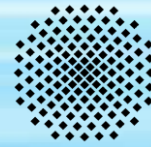
- One of the major controversies on technology at the turn of the century
 - The controversy was not based on judgements on risks or on a general rejection of technology but on
 - conflicting moral evaluations
 - Sanctity of life versus moral duty to develop new therapies



Medical Devices: Some Survey Results

Even if medical devices are similar from a technical point of view, public reactions are different

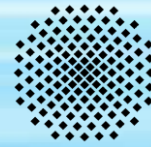
Example: Computer Chip implants into the brain



Medical Devices: Some Survey Results

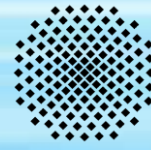
Eurobarometer 225: „Social Values, Science & Technology“

- Implanting into the brain a tiny computer chip that can give hearing back to deaf people.
 - 12% never
- Implanting into our brain a tiny computer chip that would improve memory.
 - 54% never
- In both cases, a computer chip is implanted into the brain but reactions are very different.



What are the reasons that make technologies unacceptable?

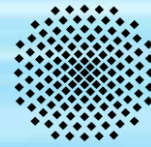
- Whether technologies are contested or not is the outcome of a societal process where social processes have to be studied.
- Technologies are not rejected because of inherent properties of the technology but for a number of other reasons which refer to the social context.
- What is perceived to be acceptable or not may change over time.



What are the reasons that make technologies unacceptable?

- Risks and benefits and their distribution

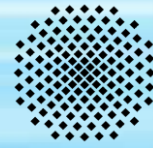
- What is the goal of the application?
 - Is it supported by society or not?
 - Are there interest conflicts within society?
 - Does the application interfere with major societal values?
 - See stem cell



What are the reasons that make technologies unacceptable?

➤ What is the societal context?

- Who takes the decision to use it and who is in charge of supervising the use?
 - People defend autonomy!
- If data are produced, are these data only accessible to the user or are they transferred to others?
 - The issue of data protection is highly controversial
- If actors beyond the individual user are involved, which level of trust do people have?



University of Stuttgart

Thank You!

Institute for Social Science
Department for Sociology of Technology