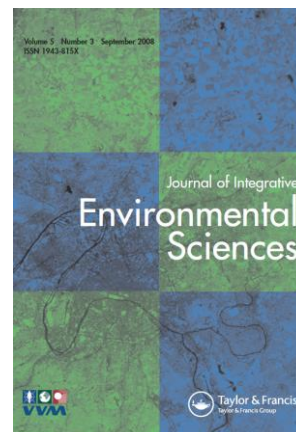


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SPECIAL ISSUE ON RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT

PARTICIPATION IN PRACTICE – RADIOACTIVE WASTE MANAGEMENT IN AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Edited by Andrew Blowers and Goran Sundqvist



Radioactive waste has long been the Achilles Heel of the nuclear industry. In opening this Special Issue the Editors Andrew Blowers and Goran Sundqvist describe radioactive waste as an apparently insoluble problem continuing into the far future, blotting nuclear's copybook and blocking the onward progress of nuclear energy. In every country with a nuclear industry it has proved hard to find technically convincing and socially acceptable solutions. This Special Issue of the [*Journal of Integrative Environmental Sciences*](#) makes a major contribution to the contemporary debate about nuclear energy and what to do with its long-term legacy of dangerous radioactive wastes.

In the past top-down, technocratic, unconsultative and even arrogant approaches attempted to impose radioactive waste on unsuspecting communities. These attempts were contested and rejected. New ways were sought focusing on participation in policy making as the means to unlock the problem and achieve legitimate solutions. The papers in this volume provide a critical assessment of the experience of engagement with stakeholders and public in seeking acceptable solutions.

They reach a variety of conclusions, some optimistic, some pessimistic but all are critical of the process. Nonetheless all the contributors argue that participation is a necessary condition for public acceptability.

Why Dump on Us? Power, pragmatism and the periphery in the siting of new nuclear reactors in the UK by Andrew Blowers takes a pessimistic view. He considers the pragmatic approach to policy that has been adopted in the UK which has led to a focus on existing sites for new reactors and waste stores. In the long term a repository is intended to take all the wastes but with an elaborate process of voluntarism, partnership and engagement there is still some way to go before a site is likely to be identified, if at all. In reality participative processes as 'an elaborate exercise in achieving premature legitimation for a predetermined policy'.

Deliberative decision-making on radioactive waste management in Finland, France and the UK: influences of mixed forms of deliberation in the macro discursive context: In a comparison of the deliberative and participatory mechanisms for policy making in Finland, France and the UK, Markku Lehtonen also finds there is a constant danger of deliberative engagement being used instrumentally to endorse rather than develop policy. This demonstrates the fragility of such approaches in the face of strategic power relations which determine policy outcomes.

Demonstrating safety- validating new build: the enduring template of Swedish nuclear waste management: Mark Elam and colleagues consider the apparent success of the much vaunted Swedish solution successfully choosing a repository site with public support. However, they conclude that the voluntary approach combined with a commitment to promoting local stakeholder involvement is, in effect, 'a participatory

facade protecting the core work of industrial demonstrations of safety from more threatening forms of public criticism’.

[Involving the Finnish public in nuclear facility licensing: participatory democracy and industrial bias](#): In Finland, too, there has been significant progress in implementation though as Hannah Strauss observes in her paper the public consultation process was formalised and not especially participative. The ‘participatory practices employed in Finnish environmental impact assessments are unlikely to further trust in authorities and to raise acceptance of decisions significantly, especially outside the host community because of the absence of unbiased supervision’.

[Technical safety vs. public involvement? A case study on the unrealized project for the disposal of nuclear waste at Wellenberg \(Switzerland\)](#): Pius Krütli and colleagues use a case study to show how failure to achieve community support in Switzerland led to the collapse of a technical solution. Their ambition, however, is to formulate lessons to be learned from this failure. They conclude that only through achieving a balance between technical and participatory requirements will it be possible to achieve solutions that are both scientifically robust and socially acceptable.

So, the papers suggest “a revolution in policy making had been achieved” but the outcome has not been everywhere decisive. The lessons are clear – unless there is public support, effectively achieved through engagement, the nuclear renaissance may yet falter as it fails to find a permanent safe and acceptable solution to the problem of radioactive wastes.

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[Editorial: Radioactive waste management – technocratic dominance in an age of participation](#) – Free to View Online!

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Pius Krütli; Thomas Flüeler; Michael Stauffacher; Arnim Wiek; Roland W. Scholz