

Karlsruher Institut für Technologie


Institut für
Technikfolgenabschätzung
und Systemanalyse

Late Modernization?


Critical Reflection on German Radwaste Policy and its International Context

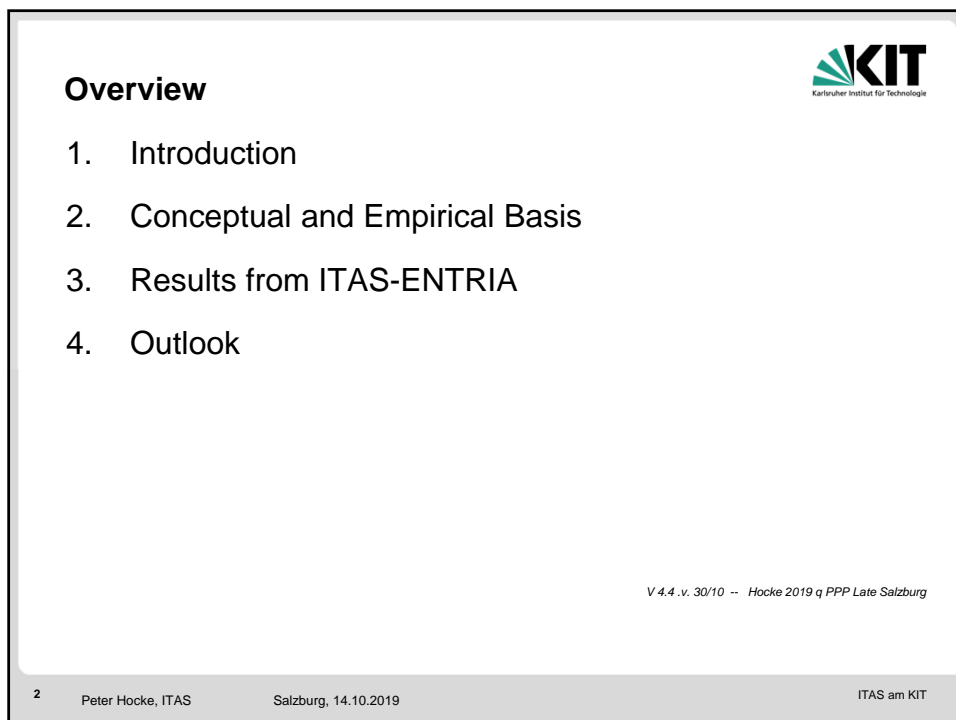
Dr. Peter Hocke, REFORM Group Meeting, Salzburg, October 14, 2019


Institut für Technikfolgenabschätzung und Systemanalyse (ITAS)

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Abstract



In the context of current repository policy in Germany, “late modernization” has very different meanings, sometimes also distortions. Research in the interdisciplinary research network ENTRIA has shown that state coordination and cooperation can fundamentally change even a highly politicized approach to the disposal of nuclear waste. Both legislators and experts have demonstrated amazing ability to compromise. The not at all self-evident resumption of the search for deep repository sites for high-level radioactive waste, the comparative site selection process, and the fundamental reorientation of the approach to this national project have been given a solid legal basis and are supported by new institutions (such as the National Monitoring Body). At the same time, great importance has been attached to public participation. Whether this can be seen as a delayed modernization or is just a flash in the pen is difficult to say. The authorities, NGOs, and stakeholders involved are active in important areas of domestic and nuclear policy. Experiences from abroad provide useful clues, but do not always fit into Germany’s political culture.

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1. Introduction



- Radwaste management policy is part of national politics in most countries using nuclear power for civil purposes.
- The “step-by-step approach” was developed in the late 1990s and early 2000s.
- After Fukushima and years of sharp and stable protest, second nuclear phase-out in Germany (e.g., Hocke/Kallenbach-Herbert 2015, Brunnengräber 2019).
- Success of the anti-NPP movement (Ott 2014: 240f).
- State of the art: increase in research literature on the German case, establishment of interdisciplinary research including social science (Röhlig 2019), first socio-technical studies, transdisciplinary research is in progress.

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2. Conceptual and Empirical Basis



- Is there a real reset of the site selection process or just a new phase of „muddling through“?
- Results based on the studies within ENTRIA (2013-2017)
- Governance research developed and carried out by the ITAS team, in cooperation with FFU and, on some issues, with research teams from technical sciences and teams studying long-term questions related to planning and long-term governance.
- Research question derives from technology assessment:
 - > RWM is state-controlled policy,
 - > focuses on quality of the new governance concept, used since 2012/13 in German nuclear waste politics and management (collective action of experts in a ‘hybrid expert group’, revision of the site selection law <2017>, attempt to install new forms of public involvement).

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2-2 National Context



- Germany: in many key questions a „divided society“.
- “Governance” focuses on
 - _ “interest intermediation” between different collective actors with very different targets and strategies,
 - _ signal to reduce dominance of the federal state without losing sovereignty.
- Grand coalition government (Social Democrats and Christian Democrats) and their dilemmas in finding consensus in polarized sectors such as nuclear.
- Source: ITAS research within ENTRIA (2013-17)

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2-3 Characteristics of the German Case



- Ongoing debate: different types of controversies since the late 1970s) (risk assessment, NIMBY, conflicts over nuclear sites or planned siting).
- The established stakeholders and interest groups show limited willingness to accept concepts of decarbonization and decentralized infrastructures for renewables:
RWM is only a social, not a technical and engineering problem!
- Collective German memory: huge amount of distrust.

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2-4 New Map by the German BfE



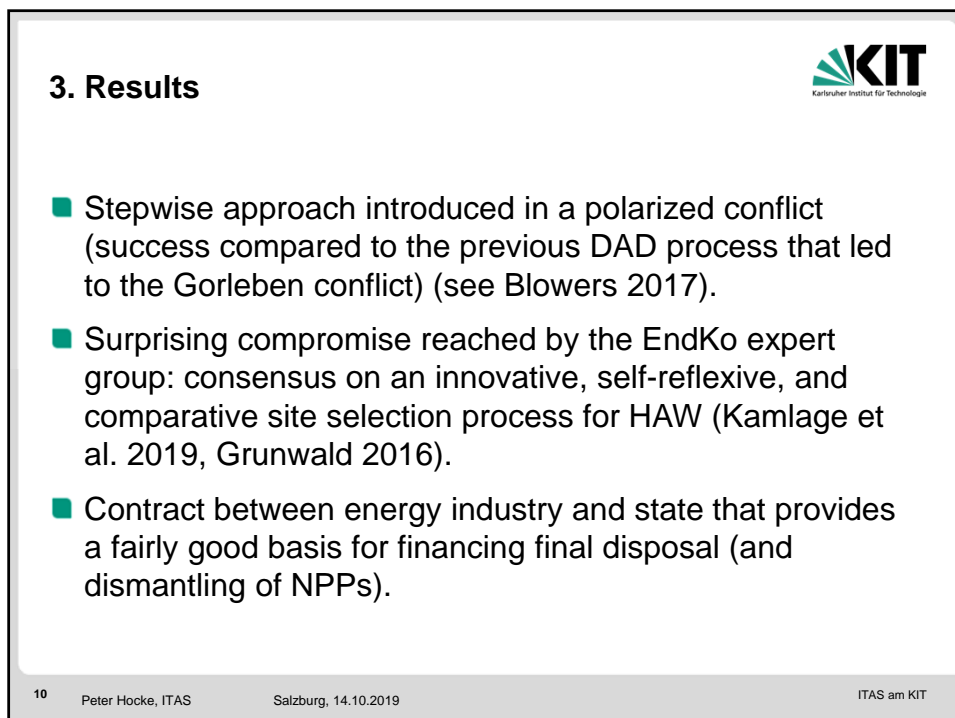
Source: BfE 2019 / Federal Office for the Safety of Nuclear Waste Management

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3-2 Results of ITAS and ENTRIA Research (1)



- Governance concepts are analytically promising: Dimensions “cooperation” and “coordination in networks” are central to detecting promising options and new alternatives in RWM and corresponding decision making. (see Hocke/Brunnengräber 2019, Grande 2012).
- Helpful for systematic analysis of “modern” site selection processes such as the federal “Repository Site Selection Act” StandAG (dimensions for analysis of legislative side effects).
 - New “dependencies”: quality of cooperation and integration of very different types of collective actors, quality of implementation of the new act and the EndKo suggestions.

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3-3 Results of ITAS and ENTRIA Research (2)



- Deconstruction of a primarily technology-based “solution” since 2005/06 in GER, increasing attention to social processes and expectations (programmatic und operative).
- Social processes with increasing public participation, dialogue-oriented, responding to concepts of deliberative democracy. Transparency alone is a challenge.
- Repository Site Selection Act was implemented with weak protest from political subsectors.
 - _ consultative-deliberative framing accepted
 - _ no systematic reflection of the past
 - _ hints that public attention is limited

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3-4 Without Complications?



- The national expert group EndKo showed that a productive struggle in the German conflict is possible. But this only works to a certain extent.
- The new division of labor and duties between the new federal authorities is a first step, but no more.
- Protest, contradictions, and new citizenship initiatives can be expected. Only contradictions or also escalation?

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4. Outlook

4-1 Comparable or Not?



- There is some opportunity to learn from similarities with procedural approaches in other countries.
- Switzerland: culture of transparency and flexible action by responsible authorities can lead to some progress in siting; Step 2 of the current siting procedure is completed, but there are problems in financing the ambitious approach.
- Sweden: voluntariness as a “door opener”, politics of compensation, but complications in dealing with non-knowledge and uncertainty, complications caused by changes in political majorities.

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4-2 Tensions in Nuclear Waste Policy



- Media and Myths
- Clarification and Fear
- Political Elite and Broad Participation

- *About Media and Myths:*

- _ the myth of Gorleben, the ongoing rebellion of citizens' initiatives, _ the procedure with its step-by-step approach over decades is not "newsworthy".

- *About Clarification and Fear:*

- _ Is it possible to find good arguments and visions for a procedure over several decades (min. by the year 2070, max. by 2140 or beyond)?
 - _ radioactivity and its effects and threats: invisible, odorless, dangerous (esp. if there are actors with terrorist or military intentions).

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4-3 Tensions in Late Modern Democracies



- *About Political Elite and Broad Participation:*

- _ interested public and unprepared lay people in an ambitious project,
 - _ stakeholders with their own partial interests ("neighbor democracy" vs. national duty),
 - _ experimental setting with some unpreparedness of authorities (e.g., role of the National Monitoring Body).

- "Late Modernization" or "Always the Same Old Story"?

- Depending on the support of the „Mothers and Fathers“ of StandAG over time.

- Success and Challenge


- Modernization of the DAD approach, shift to a comparative siting approach; however, unusual compromise requires reflective and powerful implementation with the willingness to accept dissent and arguments from experts, civil society, and interested public.

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Thank You!


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