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Decision Making for Complex Socio-Technical Systems

Robustness from Lessons Learned in Long-term Radioactive Waste Governance

The long-term governance of radioactive waste continues to be a major complex and contentious socio-technical issue worldwide. Traditionally, it has been considered as mainly a challenge to scientists and engineers to develop technical "solutions" to specific problems. But increasingly these narrow solutions have been enlarged by wider societal considerations such as ethics, public involvement, control and retrievability – needs that have in the meanwhile been recognised by the nuclear community, at least in a general way. In this book, we analyse motives for a broad discourse as well as suggest prerequisites to launch it. The author attempts to give a novel, empirically based and technically sound treatment of fundamental issues in long-term management and governance. Written to be accessible to a wide selection of the interested public, the study proposes a combination of technical design issues, analysis methods and institutional backup in a dynamic procedure, and with involvement at all levels of political, commercial and social life.

Contents: Preface.- Summary.- Introduction.- Part I: Overall Issue and Methodology. Setting and Topics at Issue.- Objectives and Aim.- Research Political Embedding.- Issues under Investigation, Evidence and Validation.- Part II: Perspective "From Below": Risk Perception of the Public.- Insights from Risk Perception Research.- Risk Perception in Radioactive Waste Issues.- Part III: Perspective "From Above": Decision Processes.- Insights From Decision Science.- Development of Decision Making in Technical Systems. Decisions in Radioactive Waste Management.- Siting as an Example of Sub-Optimum Decision-Making.- Part IV: Conclusions and further Development.- Patterns of Arguments In Radioactive Waste Governance.- Fundamentals of a Comparison of Disposition Options.- Proposal for a Concept of an Overall System Robustness.- References.- Index.

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