Everything said and done? The role of the humanities and social sciences in nuclear waste governance

Karena Kalmbach, PhD
Assistant Professor, History of Technology
I. Introduction

II. Nuclear Waste Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Where do we stand?

III. Anything left to do? Some Outlines of Research Desiderata

IV. Too High Expectations? The Future Role of Social Sciences and Humanities in Nuclear Waste Governance

V. Conclusions
Introduction

I. Research Background:
   I. Chernobyl
   II. Nuclear History

II. ENTRIA / Environmental Policy Research Centre (FU Berlin)
   I. German Nuclear Waste Commission
   II. Public Debates on Dose Limits

III. TU Eindhoven: Technology, Innovation & Society
   I. NIRG, Nuclear History and Ethics
Nuclear Waste Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Where do we stand?

I. Nuclear Risk and Modernity
   II. Charles Perrow’s Normal Accidents (1984)

II. Public Perception of Risk / Participation / Acceptance-Acceptability

III. Ethics: Future Generations / Justice

IV. History / Anthropology: Site Marking, Individual Case Studies
Anything left to do? Some Outlines of Research Desiderata

I. Historization of the Field of Public Perception of Risk
   I. Institutions, Persons, Networks, Funding
   II. Uptake of Research Results through Stakeholders
   III. Scientists as Stakeholders, their Shaping of the Discourse

II. Historization of Nuclear Waste
   I. Nuclearity (Hecht) → (Geographical) Power Scales
   II. (Changing) Social Definitions of Waste
   III. Nuclear Singularity
Too High Expectations? The Future Role of Social Sciences and Humanities in Nuclear Waste Governance

I. The German Nuclear Waste Debate: Calls for a Stronger Role of the Humanities and Social Sciences

I. “We need historians to be able to move forward!”

II. “We need social scientists to bridge the front lines!”

II. How do these expectations align with the reality and internal logics of the academic system?

III. What if the research does not deliver what the stakeholders wish for?

IV. Who should pay for it? Where are the limits of academic independence?
Conclusions

I. A huge amount of research results is already available.

II. There could be still a lot done, in particular in terms of the historization and contextualization of this very research.

III. New academic research will not automatically result in new and promising strategies for nuclear waste governance.

IV. Very likely, it will rather raise new questions and increase the complexity instead of providing clarity and simplification.

V. Thus, the stakeholders of the nuclear waste debate should be more considerate of the role they attribute to academic research in the social sciences and humanities.
Thank you!