

The Future of Consent-Based Disposal Sting and Discussion on the Alternatives

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Anne Bergmans et al. on "The participatory turn in radioactive waste management" in *Journal of Risk Research* 3 (2015)

National policies for long-term management of radioactive waste have for decades been driven by technical experts. The pursuit of these technocratic policies led in many countries to conflict with affected communities. Since the late 1990s, however, there has been a turn to more participatory approaches. This participatory turn reflects widespread acknowledgement in the discourse of policy actors and implementing organisations of the importance of social aspects of radioactive waste management (RWM) and the need to involve citizens and their representatives in the process. (from the abstract)

Blue Ribbon Commission on Consent-Based Siting

...based on a review of successful siting processes in the United States and abroad—including most notably the siting of a disposal facility for transuranic radioactive waste, the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) in New Mexico, and recent positive outcomes in Finland, France, Spain, and Sweden—we believe this type of approach can provide the flexibility and sustain the public trust and confidence needed to see controversial facilities through to completion. (BRC, Report to the Secretary of Energy, 2012, p. ix)

Two questions

1. What exactly is a consent-based siting (CBS)?
2. What are the argument for and against CBS?

1. The concept of consent-based siting

- "(A)ffected communities (should) have an opportunity to decide whether to accept facility siting decisions and retain significant local control"
- Part of a decision-making process, which is (1) adaptive, (2) staged, (3) transparent, (4) standards- and science-based and (5) "goverened by partnership arrangements or legally-enforceable agreements with host states, tribes and local communities" (BRC. Disposal Subcommittee Report, p. v)

2. The pros and cons of consent-based siting (CBS)

- Suggested pros: (1) CBS increases the legitimacy of decision outcomes, (2) CBS improves decisions by enhancing the knowledgebase and (3) CBS secures democratic values and contributes to the creation of true democratic citizenship (Bergmans et al 2015, p. 349).
- Suggested cons: (1) nuclear waste is first and foremost a national not a regional or local issue, (2) CBS initiatives "are mainly driven by a need to increase acceptance for already technologically agreed solutions" (Bergmans et al. 2015, p. 350), and (3) a science-based process is difficult for the general public.