

Collectively building an operational monitoring system for geological disposal: A case of 'lab participation'

Ricomet Conference 2018, 13th of June – Panel: Involve, Engage, or Participate? Shaping “Engagement” with Stakeholders and Wider Publics in Radiation Protection

Axelle Meyermans – PhD Candidate, University of Antwerp

1



Modern2020 Project

- **General project aim:** Develop monitoring concepts and technologies to observe repositories for high level nuclear waste that will take into account the requirements of specific national contexts and public stakeholder expectations
- **Transdisciplinary EU project:** Engineers, geologists from NWMOs and research institutions, social scientists, local public stakeholders (*FR, BE, FI, SE*)
- **Social Science – Research team:**
 - BE – University of Antwerp: Anne Bergmans, Pieter Cools, Axelle Meyermans and Céline Parotte
 - SE – University of Gothenburg: Göran Sundqvist, Hannes Lagerlöf



Modern2020 has received funding from the Euratom research and training programme 2014-2018 under grant agreement n° 662177.

Shaping stakeholder “engagement” within Modern2020

- **Monitoring as a ‘tool’**
 - Inform and engage local stakeholders
 - Build confidence (and acceptance of geological disposal)
- **Social scientists within Modern2020 - Very active role in shaping public engagement**
 - Establishing expert-public interactions on the ‘project level’
 - Discovering opinions on monitoring during ‘home engagement sessions’
 - 13 engagement activities with citizens from BE, FI, FR and SE
- **Experienced difficulties**
 - Convincing civil stakeholders to participate
 - Convincing experts to ‘open up’

3



Modern2020 as a case of ‘lab participation’?

Bogner, A. (2012), The Paradox of Participation Experiments. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*. 37(5), 506-527

- **Participation as protest >< Lab participation**
 - No technology controversy (e.g. Monitoring)
 - Requested and initiated by technical experts / social scientists
 - Participation ‘under controlled conditions’ – decontextualization
 - Social-scientific observation of the experiment
- **Various questions arise:**
 - Does this form of participation offer a ‘gain in rationality’? (cf. Bogner)
 - Possibilities for politicizing technology?
 - Role of the social scientists involved

4



Role of the social scientist

- **Our work affects:**

- The selection of participants
- Topics being discussed – framing / agenda-setting
- Normative framework of discussion
- Expert-public interactions
- Organizational aspects of participatory events

→ Tension between organizing, coordinating, moderating the participatory processes and studying them at the same time? (“How to study ourselves?”)

5



Role of the social scientist – Research idea

- **Delphi-questionnaire**

- Iteration of different rounds
- First round of questionnaire – Synthesis of first round – Second round of questionnaire - ...

- **Target audience**

- Social scientists who work(ed) in contexts of ‘lab participation’
- In EU Research projects, or other...

- **Main research question**

- How to assess the tension between organizing, moderating participatory events and observing, studying them at the same time?

- **Theoretical framework**

- PAR: Participatory Action Research in the context of ‘lab participation’

6



Thank you for your attention!

Questions, remarks?