

Where to put nuclear waste? Yes to my backyard

June 19 2012

Researchers in Finland have found that acceptance of the site of a spent nuclear fuel repository can depend on gender and economic background. Writing in the *International Journal of Environmental Technology and Management*, the team reports that affluent men more often have a positive opinion on the location of such facilities than women or disadvantaged people.

While the actual quantities of nuclear waste around the globe are relatively small, the disposal or [storage](#) of such materials remains a controversial and sensitive issue and one that is likely to grow if more [nuclear power plants](#) are built. Matti Kojo of the University of Tampere and Mika Kari and Tapio Litmanen of the University of Jyväskylä have recently canvassed and analyzed local opinion on the siting of a nuclear waste repository in the municipality of Eurajoki, [Finland](#). They have demonstrated what they refer to as a "white male effect" associated with acceptance of such facilities close to a residential area.

"In many countries, the communities that have been more willing to consider acting as hosts for nuclear waste management facility projects are in fact those that already have a nuclear installation or installations within their territory," the team explains. "These communities are usually described as 'nuclear communities' or 'nuclear oases'. Another term associated with such communities is 'industry awareness'.

The team says that the term "nuclear oasis", which gives negative connotations to the host municipality, emphasizes unequal power

relations and the dependency of a host municipality, whereas the "industry awareness" interpretation attempts to offer a much more positive approach. In this latter phrase, the municipality is not seen simply as a dump for [nuclear waste](#) but has what is often referred to as "ownership" of this modern problem. Indeed, in the case of the Eurajoki, where the [repository](#) is still under construction but the plans for which have been expanded twice, acceptance is coupled with economic benefits despite the perceived risks. However, the "industry awareness" interpretation seems to be enthusiastically ignoring economic dependency altogether. The researchers argue that more holistic and balanced view is needed.

What the team has found, however, is that communal understanding of the development of such a site is constantly evolving although this often hinges on the fact that the nuclear industry is often well-embedded in the community to begin with. The researchers suggest that it is inevitable that such a community will be more willing to engage with discussions than one unfamiliar with or unconnected with the nuclear industry, given that many members of the community will be nuclear workers or members of the workers' family or social circle. In the case of the present study, the Olkiluoto area of Eurajoki already has two nuclear power plant units, with a third under construction and a fourth in the planning phase.

"Our analysis provides an investigation of the presumptions behind the nuclear oases and industry awareness hypotheses, offering scope for future study of nuclear communities," the team concludes.

More information: "Nuclear community considering threats and benefits of final disposal. Local opinions regarding the spent nuclear fuel repository in Finland" in *Int. J. Environmental Technology and Management*, 2012, 15, 124-145

Provided by Inderscience Publishers

Citation: Where to put nuclear waste? Yes to my back yard (2012, June 19) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-06-nuclear-yard.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.