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INVESTIGATING PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE PRACTICES IN THE APPLICATION OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

NUCLEAR ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE:

Nuclear energy is experiencing a comeback after a period of contraction following the Chernobyl accident. However, it remains an area of great complexity and controversy associated with multiple risks and uncertainties. As a policy area that is inherently connected with normative, value, and ethical factors, nuclear energy governance still suffers a **legitimacy deficit** (*research problem*).

In my research I attempt to understand which **factors** have been **shaping nuclear policies in EU member states** (*research question*) based on the analysis of **two empirical cases**: (1) the German case on Gorleben waste storage and disposal facilities; and (2) the Lithuanian policy process on the decommissioning of the country's Ignalina nuclear power plant (NPP), waste disposal and new NPP siting, all in the district of Visaginas.

Methodology: For the two cases data has been collected by documentation review, site visits, media publications, and interviews. I begin my empirical description in the early 1970s, with a historical account of the events in both countries that provided a politico-societal context and paved the way for further developments of their respective nuclear policies. Given the time span of the covered events, I also relied on secondary sources. My assessments are primarily based on media publications, interviews, and personal observations.

I argue that in both cases state-societal interactions have been conditioned by 'path-dependent' processes. In Germany initial success of the anti-nuclear opposition, entry into parliamentary arena, visibility of both pro- and anti-nuclear discourse, as well as robust regional politics, have led to the opening up of

the nuclear energy issue and its contestation by various publics with multiple rationalities. In Lithuania policy outcomes can best be understood as driven by professional elite networks established in the 1980s and 1990s.

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS:

Status quo:

Germany: failure of a nuclear waste siting process on Gorleben up to now

Lithuania: impasse and low consensus in the society on the processes of Ignalina closure (to be completed tentatively by 2020), waste disposal (storage facility in the Visaginas region), and siting of a new NPP in the same region.

The explanatory variables can be grouped into those referring to: the institutional characteristics (Polity), actor constellations (Politics), and process, procedural and situational developments (Policy) (Treib et al. 2007).

Polity Component :

Concept of *political opportunity structure* and access within the system (Kitschelt 1986, Tarrow 1989): more access and more direct channels of access available result in greater influence on a policy by its challengers and opposition.

In Germany: a moderately prohibiting electoral system; strong presence of channels such as public hearings, inquiries (recently both federal and state of Lower Saxony parliamentary investigating committees on Gorleben and Asse II sites); counter-expertise; anti-nuclear Green party and Social-Democratic party (since 1984) as political allies; lobbying by environmental groups. *In Lithuania*: established green movement with links to parliamentary politics; national referendum; limited channels for public dialogue.

State involvement with electricity companies and nuclear industry: higher involvement of the state could be associated with policy closure and sometimes conflicting regimes of justification (due to the necessity to provide simultaneously for public and commercial interests). In both Germany and Lithuania this involvement has been strong. *In Germany*: construction/operating functions aren't clearly separated from those of control/oversight; Atomkonsens discourse; at the local level controversy over Gorleben Gelder. *In Lithuania*: judicial decision on Leo Lt. electricity company.

Politics Component:

Interaction among the government, industry, science and civil society: the more the elites are divided the more likely the opposition succeeds in challenging a policy. *Elite consensus* has been low in Germany (interparty competition). In Lithuania it has been relatively strong.

Mobilization capacities and sustainability of anti-nuclear movements: potential for policy change. *In Germany*: very strong and sustainable opposition movement that has acquired its own symbolic structure and identity ('1004', 'free republic of Wendland', etc.). *In Lithuania*: the movement saw very strong mobilization in the early periods, but subsequently subsided. The mobilization capacity in this country can be viewed as related to insufficient resource base (Dawson 1996), a quasi-independent status of the civil society and its perceived role within the country. A distinctive feature has been a regional rather than a strictly national character of the movement.

Policy Component:

Coherence of the decision-making and policy implementation system: related to trust and policy contestation.

In Germany: complex web of division of responsibilities among the different agencies at the federal and local levels. Throughout Gorleben history decision making/implementation have been driven by inconsistent/mutually exclusive logic: firstly, by political logic (the choice of Gorleben) underestimating scientific and especially procedural aspects. In the 1980s and 1990s the expert and technological issues became predominant. This period was followed by a period of stalemate and inability to proceed with a solution (Gorleben moratorium). In the late 1990s the procedural aspect comes to the fore (AkEnd commission), but its recommendations never implemented for political reasons. *In Lithuania*: insufficient funds, several donors, irregularities in payments; dependence on neighboring states' decisions; predominance of expert discourse at the expense of political and procedural; general low transparency and legalistic closure at the implementation phase.

The impact of contingent events: the Chernobyl accident significantly increased pressure on governments and escalated state-civil society interactions in both countries. *In Lithuania*: separation from the Soviet Union (1990) and EU accession (2004) affected capacities to implement NPP running, closure and waste siting policies, as well as the loci of power.

RESEARCHER



Olga Narbutovich was born in Minsk (Belarus). She studied education, international development and European studies in Belarus, Poland and the US.