

**NUCLEAR POWER,
IDEOLOGICAL TRUST,
(DE)POLITICISATION AND
MISTRUSTFUL CIVIC VIGILANCE
–
FINNISH, FRENCH, GERMAN AND
SPANISH EXPERIENCES**

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BACKGROUND

- Paper for a special issue on trust & nuclear, Journal of Risk Research
- Editors: Lehtonen, M., Prades, A., Espluga, J. & Arapostathis, E.
- Material:
 - Interviews with communication experts from several stakeholders
 - Earlier interviews with stakeholders
 - EU project “History of Nuclear Energy and Society” (HoNESt)
 - Secondary literature

HoNESt History of Nuclear
Energy and Society



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Factor
1.931

TOPICS OF ANALYSIS

1. The role of **ideological trust** in the emergence (or not) of **mistrustful civic vigilance** in the form of **counter-expertise** and **co-construction** of expertise.
2. The ways in which the involved actors perceive and mobilise the **history of nuclear**, to criticise, defend, or justify specific policies.
3. The processes and degrees of **(de)politicisation** of nuclear policy.



Trust





Mistrust



COUNTRIES OF TRUST AND MISTRUST



Photo by Ari Tikka, Flickr/cc.

Trust in:	National institutions			Political institutions (parliament, natl government)			Non-political state institutions (legal system, police)			The media		
	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016	2007	2011	2016
Finland 	6.9	6.5	7.0	6.5	5.9	6.4	7.8	7.6	7.8	5.8	5.4	6.6
France 	5.2	4.7	4.8	5.0	4.3	4.2	5.7	5.3	5.6	4.6	4.5	4.4
Germany 	5.3	5.6	5.9	4.8	5.1	5.4	6.3	6.4	6.6	4.6	5.0	5.3
Spain 	5.6	4.6	4.5	5.5	3.9	3.7	5.9	5.3	5.2	5.1	4.5	4.6

Source: Evolution of trust in national institutions (2007-2016) (on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 means not trust at all, and 10 means trust completely).

Eurofound (2018), *Supplementary analysis – Societal change and trust in institutions. Online working paper.*

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/report/2018/societal-change-and-trust-in-institutions#tab-03>

NUCLEAR IN FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY & SPAIN

	Finland	France	Germany	Spain
Military nuclear	No	Yes	No	No
Political system at the beginning of nuclear	Democracy	Democracy	Democracy	Dictatorship
Share of nuclear electricity	27% (35% once the EPR in operation)	>70%	12%	21%
Nuclear policy	New-build underway (EPR)	New-build underway (EPR); share of nuclear electricity down to 50% by 2035	Phase-out by 2022	<i>De facto</i> phase-out
High-level waste management	Repository under construction	Repository site identified; operation planned for 2030	No site yet; HLW policy commissions	No site; temporary storage site plans underway

KEY CONCEPTS

TRUST AND MISTRUST

Trust

- ‘Believing without knowing’
- Voluntarily placing oneself in a position of vulnerability towards ‘the other’ (an individual or an institution)

Mistrust

- Attitude rooted in doubt or fear
- Passive and prudent “wait-and-see” stance

OR

- Active **strategy**, a skill or an art, to deal with the reality perceived as risky and dangerous

MISTRUSTFUL CIVIC VIGILANCE

Countervailing power that helps citizens to hold political, economic and cultural elites to account

1. Organisations and procedures of regulation (e.g. auditing, evaluation, ranking, and benchmarking)
2. Non-governmental counter-expertise organisations
 - independent monitoring of the health and environmental impacts of nuclear installations
 - critical analysis of the role of nuclear in energy policy
3. Co-construction of expertise

THE INTERACTING TYPES OF TRUST AND MISTRUST

Type of trust, mistrust, distrust	Social	Institutional	Ideological
Description	Generalised Particularised	Diffuse support Specific support	Legitimacy of and support to meta-level institutions (state, market, planning, science...)
Sources of trust	Competence Sincerity		Worldviews, visions

POLITICISATION/DEPOLITICIZATION STRATEGIES

Depoliticization

- “Scientisation, technicisation, economisation and legalisation of issues”, which are thus transferred from the public sphere to the “closed circles of experts and their organisations” (Ylönen et al. 2017)
- “Technical, matter-of-fact arguments”, to downplay those appealing e.g. to values or particular interests (ibid.).
- Closing down public debates by providing presumably authoritative science-based arguments

Politicisation

- Opening up the issue at stake to a broad public debate
- Can facilitate democratic, political deliberation of the various technical and non-technical issues relating to nuclear power
- Often employed by the weaker party

ASSUMPTIONS/HYPOTHESES

- **Mistrust has its virtues**, especially in the form of mistrustful “civic vigilance”
- The forms and degrees of **politicisation** and **depoliticization** of nuclear debate crucially affect the emergence or not of mistrustful civil vigilance
 - civic vigilance goes hand in hand with politicisation, that is, opening up of nuclear policy debate to a broad range of publics and perspectives.
- **ideological trust** crucially conditions the processes of (de)politicisation and civic vigilance
- The perceptions of the **historical legacies** and their mobilisation in the debate influence shape trust in the technology and its promoters.

Finland

Mistrustful civic vigilance

- Weakly developed, not highly demanded/appreciated

(Portrayal of) nuclear history

- Positive – steady advancement according to plans
- Chernobyl confirmed the openness tradition

Trust-mistrust relations; institutional trust

- Exceptionally strong institutional trust
- (the safety authority!)

Ideological trust

- Nation of engineers, “world’s best engineers”
- Rational, matter-of-fact argumentation
- Local democracy and autonomy
- Finnish pride; mistrust of the foreign (France, Russia)

(De)politicisation

- Consistent and successful depoliticization as a foundation for trust

	France	Germany
Mistrustful civic vigilance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pluralist” & “counter” expertise since the mid-70s • Technically oriented counter-expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science-based counter-expertise since the 1970s • Strengthened and “politicised” counter-expertise after Chernobyl
(Portrayal of) nuclear history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problematic legacy, but “we’ve come a long way” • Chernobyl boosted counter-expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposition to authoritarian nuclear technocracy as a historical, generational duty • Chernobyl boosted counter-expertise
Trust-mistrust relations; institutional trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex web of largely mistrustful relations • Mistrust of government and industry (nuclear sector) • Trust in competence but not sincerity of experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistrust civil society vs. state/operators: 70s & 80s • Partial re-establishment of trust with nuclear phase-out & post-Fukushima
Ideological trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The state as the sole guardian of the public interest • Disappointment with the trusted state drives mistrust of institutions • Trust in science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistrust of authoritarian technocracy, large-scale technologies (in the 70s) • Disappointment with the trusted state drives mistrust of institutions • Rational, “matter-of-fact” argumentation & representative democracy
(De)politicisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual, partial politicisation since Chernobyl 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High degree of politicisation since Chernobyl

Spain

Mistrustful civic vigilance

- Weak counter-expertise
- Local *information* bodies

(Portrayal of) nuclear history

- “Franco’s nuclear”
- Mistrust of oligopolistic utilities
- Public disinterest in and mistrust of nuclear

Trust-mistrust relations; institutional trust

- Transition to democracy “institutionalised” mistrust between the regional & national governments
- Exceptionally weak trust in government competence and sincerity

Ideological trust

- Anti-Francoism as a basis for anti-nuclear action
- Weak culture of openness & public engagement

(De)politicisation

- Nuclearization of politics, instead of politicisation of nuclear

CONCLUSIONS

- High level of ideological trust in the state undermines civic vigilance when institutional trust is high (FIN)...
...but stimulates vigilance when institutional trust erodes (FRA, GER)
- Weak ideological trust in the state leads to a combination of high degree of politicisation but weak civic vigilance (ESP)
- Politicisation does not automatically foster civic vigilance
- Depoliticization is a risky strategy... (FRA, GER)