

Robbe Geysmans, Marika Silvikko de Villafranca, Joke Kenens

Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (SCK•CEN), Belgium

E-mail: robbe.geysmans@sckcen.be



Introduction

Radioactive waste requires humanity to think and act on the long term, as the disposal of this waste entails its containment and isolation for centuries up to a million years. One of the challenges this confronts us with, is "how can we [...] remember and understand across generations where, why and how radioactive waste is disposed?" (Schröder, 2019: 16).

→ *How can the past be kept alive?*

This is a **process**, rather than an end-product, which requires "creative, dialogical, 'more-than-human' engagements between persons, objects, places and practices" (Harrison et al., 2020, 5)

Past
Present

Case: Tabloo

Tabloo is the new visitor and communication center of the Belgian radioactive waste management organization ONDRAF-NIRAS. It was opened in spring 2022 and is located near a future disposal site for low- and intermediate level short-lived waste.

Methods

- ✓ Desktop research of public documents
- ✓ Semi-structured interviews (n=8) with Tabloo stakeholders
- ✓ Site visit

Research question:
How to incorporate needs of past, present and future in initiatives that aim to create and preserve awareness, memory and knowledge on radioactive waste?

... of a multifunctional visitor center

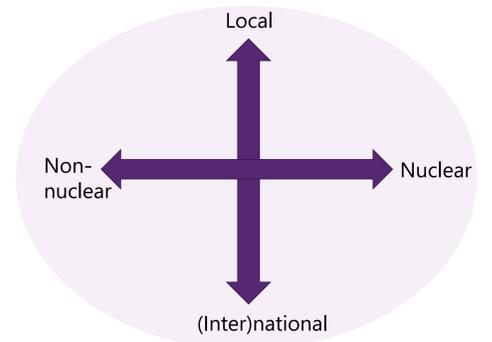
Tabloo is imagined to be a(n):

- ✓ information and communication center
- ✓ tourist and recreational destination
- ✓ community center
- ✓ preserver of knowledge and awareness
- ✓ marker
- ✓ framework for various activities
- ✓ ...



{ Combining functions is both an advantage and a challenge }

Meeting point of various perceived needs :



The participatory co-design....

Meeting current needs: Tabloo was developed at the request of and with close involvement of local community stakeholders.

Key stakeholders: local partnerships → long-term structures for community participation that formulated initial conditions for hosting repository and monitor its development

Challenges:

- Participation often through established partnerships → potential threshold for broader public involvement
- Ageing partnerships → needs of younger generations?
- Long-term project, long-term engagement → challenging for voluntary involvement
- Engaging professionals in a participatory project → sometimes outside comfort zone



Tabloo, source: https://www.niras.be/sites/default/files/image/Tabloo%20noordoost_nord-est.jpg

✓ **STORA:** Study and Consultation Group on Radioactive Waste, active since 1999 in the municipality of Dessel

✓ **MONA** Mol Consultation on Nuclear Waste, active since 2000 in the municipality of Mol



Potential future of Tabloo, source: <https://www.groepvanroey.be/nl/referentieprojecten/niras-tabloo>

"past decisions and actions influence and delimit current decisions and actions. Here certain futures are set in train already." (Adam, 2008: 116)

Talking to/about the future

Tabloo is imagined to act as a marker, signaling the presence of radioactive wastes in the future.

Main challenge: combining durability and flexibility so that memory lives on in the future, while adapting to the needs of generations yet to come.

- ✓ Inscribed in materiality of Tabloo through concrete superstructure (durable) and wooden substructure (flexible).
- ✓ However, future potential uses and needs are met with high uncertainty and are envisioned through a reflection on the past rather than the future.

References

- Adam, B., 2008. Future matters: futures known, created and minded. *Twenty-First Century Society*, 3(2), pp.111-116.
- Schröder, Jantine. 2019. *Preservation of Records, Knowledge and Memory (RK&M) across Generations: Final Report of the RK&M Initiative*. Paris: OECD Nuclear Energy Agency
- Harrison, R.; DeSilvey, C.; Holtorf, C.; Macdonald, S.; Bartolini, N.; Breithoff, E.; Fredheim, H.; Lyons, A.; May, S.; Morgan, J.; et al. 2020. 'For ever, for everyone . . .'. In *Heritage Futures: Comparative Approaches to Natural and Cultural Heritage Practices*, UCL Press: London, UK

