Invitation and programme

course

Exploring the Science, Politics and Ethics of Nuclear Technology Assessment

21 & 22 February 2012
Club of the University Foundation, rue d'Egmont 11, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Introduction

Due to the specific character of its associated risk, the societal justification of nuclear energy technology is troubled by moral pluralism. That is: even if we would all agree on the scientific knowledge base for the assessment of the risk, opinions would still differ on its acceptability. Science may thus inform us about the technical and societal aspects of options, it cannot instruct or clarify the choice to make. The matter becomes even more complex if we take into account the fact that science can only deliver evidence to a certain extent. Despite the maturity of nuclear science & engineering, the existence of inherent uncertainties, unknowns and unknowables puts fundamental limits to understanding and forecasting technological, biological and social phenomena in the interest of risk assessment. Last but not least, we have to accept that three important factors remain to a large degree beyond control. These are human behaviour, nature and time…

The resulting room for interpretation and discourse that unavoidably marks any 'political act of justification' puts a heavy responsibility on nuclear technology assessment as a research and policy practice. The course will focus on the science, politics and ethics of nuclear technology assessment by starting from an analysis of the complexity of nuclear risk governance and by linking these insights to the question of how approaches to knowledge generation and decision making could 'generate societal trust'. The idea is that this trust would need to be generated 'by method instead of proof', regardless of whether the outcome of decision making would be acceptance or rejection of the technology. The overall aim of the course is to provide better insight into the complexity of nuclear risk governance and to discuss as well the moral foundations for risk governance as the practical implications for research and policy.

Course spirit and approach

The course is organised by the Science & Technology Studies Unit and the Belgian Academy for Nuclear Science and Technology, both part of the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre SCK•CEN. Lectures will be given by invited speakers who are chosen for their experiences with and contributions to the intellectual debate on (nuclear) technology assessment rather than on the basis of their specific views on nuclear. The target audiences of the course are professionals who are active in the broad field of nuclear energy R&D, engineering, management and policy and who have an interest in discussing critical perspectives on energy policy and nuclear technology assessment.

Information and registration on http://www.sckcen.be/en/Events/NTAcourse

The registration fee of € 360 (incl vat) covers course materials, lunches, coffee breaks and the closing drink on the second day. The number of participants is limited to 14. Participants will take part in the course together with 14 young nuclear engineering students who take the course as a part of their master curriculum.

Course structure

Day 1	Tuesday 21 February 2012
Welcome	**Introduction to the course and to the programme of day 1**
09h00 – 09h15	*Michèle Coeck, SCK•CEN, Nuclear Science & Technology Academy*
Introduction	**Considerations on the politics and ethics of nuclear technology assessment**
09h15 – 09h45	*Gaston Meskens, SCK•CEN, STSu & University of Ghent, Faculty of Arts & Philosophy*
Session 1	**Methods/1 – Fields & disciplines**
09h45 – 10h45	Lecture 1, Science & Technology Studies; *Pierre Delvenne and François Thoreau, University of Liège, Dept. of Science and Technology Studies*
(break)	
11h00 – 12h00	Lecture 2, Technology Assessment; *Michiel Van Oudheusden, University of Antwerp, Faculty of Political & Social Sciences*
(lunch)	
13h00 – 14h00	Lecture 3, Risk Governance; *Henk Zandvoort, Delft University of Technology, Dept of Philosophy*
Session 2	**Analysis/1 – Historical approaches to the Science, Politics and Ethics of NTA** Where are we? Why did things go this way? > Drivers & dynamics related to (the politics of) science / technology / nuclear
14h00 – 14h30	STS, TA and Risk Governance in nuclear R&D and policy today; *Jantine Schröder, SCK•CEN, STSu & University of Antwerp, Faculty of Political & Social Sciences*
(break)	
14h45 – 15h15	Discussant 1, 'concerned with reality', looking back on Methods/1; *Robby Berloznik, Flemish Institute for Society & Technology*
15h15 – 16h00	Discussion in small groups
16h00 – 17h00	Group work presentations and roundup

Day 2	Wednesday 22 February 2012
Introduction	**Interactive feedback on day 1 and introduction to the programme of day 2**
09h00 – 09h15	*Gaston Meskens, SCK•CEN, STSu & University of Ghent, Faculty of Arts & Philosophy*
Session 3	**Methods/2 – Normative approaches to (N)TA science**
09h15 – 10h15	Lecture 4, The theoretical and practical meaning of **mixed methods**; *Jantine Schröder, SCK•CEN, STSu & University of Antwerp, Faculty of Political & Social Sciences*
10h15 – 11h15	Lecture 5, The theoretical and practical meaning of **transdisciplinarity**; *Bart Libbrecht, University of Brussels, Faculty of Philosophy and Moral Sciences*
(break)	
11h30 – 12h30	Lecture 6, The theoretical and practical meaning of **inclusion**; *Christine Larssen, University of Brussels, Faculty of Law*
(lunch)	
13h30 – 14h30	Lecture 7, The theoretical and practical meaning of **futures studies**; *Timon Wehnert, Free University of Berlin & The Wuppertal Institute*
Session 4	**Analysis/2 – Future approaches to the Science, Politics and Ethics of NTA** What is at stake? What should we do? > Implications for research and policy
14h30 – 15h00	Mixed methods, transdisciplinarity, inclusion and future studies in nuclear R&D and policy today; *Gaston Meskens, SCK•CEN, STSu & University of Ghent, Faculty of Arts & Philosophy*
(break)	
15h15 – 15h45	Discussant 2, 'concerned with reality', looking back on Methods/2 *Marc Depoortere, Belgian Federal Council for Sustainable Development*
15h45 – 16h30	Discussion in small groups
16h30 – 17h30	Group work presentations and roundup
(closing drink)	