Hållbar dialog?
Retorik i möten om svensk kärnavfallshantering

av

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Abstract


Rhetorical choices and strategies are central to democratic decision-making, especially regarding decisions on matters that are open for argumentation depending on perspective. The thesis considers public meetings on Swedish nuclear waste management as an example of rhetorical argumentation, specifically in relation to the project of finding a place for final deposition of the high-level spent nuclear fuel – with local geological investigation as a critical part of that project. Project managers have met with other organizations such as protest groups, associations of experts and authorities on several occasions, mainly through local and national hearings. The thesis is guided by a research question regarding the most salient challenges to a resilient rhetorical dialogue for nuclear waste management. The concept of rhetorical dialogue is applied in two ways. Firstly to explain the lack of dialogue that is experienced by participants despite arrangements to reach consensus-oriented dialogue in the Habermasian sense. Secondly in a discussion of rhetorical relations that might explain ambiguity in participants’ interpretations of each other. Three meetings are compared: two local meetings at sites of geological investigation (Kynnefjäll 1979 and Kolsjön 1985) and one national meeting held in Stockholm in 2008. Research materials have been collected from the archives of participating organizations and from interviews with participants. Analyses of these materials are combined with a rhetorical analysis of meeting recordings, with a specific focus on question-reply argumentation. One main conclusion is that the principal rhetorical challenges concern the roles of participants in relation to the rhetorical situation, the establishment of rhetorical genre in the format of hearings, and inclusion of relevant perspectives in the early project phase.

Keywords: rhetoric, dialogue, democracy, Habermas, risk communication, hearings, nuclear waste management.

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