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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
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Improving public engagement & public trust for nuclear decision-making: A case study of the UK approach

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Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Baptist University

14th September, 2013
Civic Exchange: Energy Forum 16
Our project
Research funded by grant from Public Policy Research Programme of RGC (July 2011-Sep 2013)

Research team
• BU, HKU, CityU, Tsinghua
• expertise: energy policies, governance, trust

Project website
http://www.kadinst.hku.hk/nuclear/

Working Papers
• Improving Public Engagement and Public Trust for Nuclear Decision-making: A Case Study of the UK Approach
• Risk perception, trust and public participation of nuclear decision-making: Results of a Hong Kong survey and policy implications
What this study is (not) about

• This is not a study that supports or is against nuclear energy

• It is about – the \textit{processes} of making \textit{good energy decisions}

• Focusing on a \textit{case} study of \textit{nuclear} energy decision-making in \textit{HK}

• We especially concern about how \textit{public engagement} and \textit{trust building} can bring us \textit{better nuclear decisions}

• Current \textit{limitations} of nuclear decision-making in HK?

• Are there \textit{better alternatives}?
Nuclear decision-making characteristics:

- Nuclear risks: a special kind of technological risks - “Low level of occurrence” but “catastrophic and long-term health impacts”; “reluctant acceptance”
- Nuclear concerns: technological; life-cycle - radioactive waste; regulatory and competence…
- Challenges: Science/data-intensive but value-laden, moral and emotional concerns; significant uncertainty and lack of complete knowledge but have to make difficult and complex trade-offs

Trust - is very relevant to nuclear decision-making

- Trust as a context of nuclear decision-making: public distrust
- Trust as governing capacity: enhance policy legitimacy, improves policy implementation, facilitate collective actions (Focht, 2005)
- Trust as a governing process: trust-building as an important process to strength the capacity to govern
- Dimensions of Trust: trust in “motives”, trust in “transparency”, trust in “competency”

Public engagement – a means of restoring trust (Wynne, 2006)

- Challenges: the public consist of a large uninformed and not very concerned majority (Sjöberg, 2006)
- Public engagement can stall decision-making when decisions are needed to be made.
- Trust, however, may be destroyed rather than enhanced in the PE decision-making process.
Our research plan and methodology

Better nuclear decision-making in HK
- Through improving PE and trust-building

Qualitative analysis
- International case studies (e.g. UK, Jap)
- Face-to-face interviews
- Focus group meetings

Quantitative analysis
- Public opinion survey

Outputs
- Academic papers
- Policy analysis
- Engagement activities and knowledge exchange (e.g. workshops, project website)
Disapproved nuclear option: New nuclear plants are an “unattractive options”

Re-opened the nuclear options: New nuclear build can be part of the UK’s energy plan

Government’s preliminary view (a pro-nuclear view): it would be in public interest to give private sector energy companies the option of investing in new nuclear power stations

The focus of our investigation
A rare case of consultation exercise under such intense scrutiny...

What happened in the UK
2003: disapproval of nuclear

2006: 1st nuclear public consultation (“The Energy Review Consultation”)

2006: Greenpeace filed a judicial review: the govt’s conclusion that nuclear power had a “role to play” in the UK’s future energy supply is unlawful.

2006: British High Court made a judgment that the consultation was “misleading, seriously flawed, manifestly inadequate and unfair” because insufficient and “misleading” information had been made available by the government for consultees to make an “intelligent response”. As a result, the govt was obliged to re-consult comprehensively on nuclear power prior to making decisions to allow or support new build.

2007: 2nd nuclear consultation “The Future of Nuclear Power”

2008: Nuclear consultation working group
  - the consultation was “conducted in a far less structured and transparent manner...significant “what if” issues were not consulted”; “decide-announce-defend” approach.
  — Conclusion: “a poor consultation practice undermined people’s trust in government”

The Case Study: the 2007 Nuclear Consultation (23 May- 10 October, 2007)


Written and online Consultation

Stakeholder Engagement Events
- 9 Site Stakeholder Meetings
- 12 Regional Stakeholder Meetings
- Independent Review of the Outputs

Deliberative Public Engagement Events
- Citizen Advisory Board Meeting
- Stakeholder Review Group
- Development Event
- 9 Deliberative Public Engagement Events

The Future of Nuclear Power – Analysis of Consolation Responses

Legend
- Activities
- Reports

Warburton Evaluation

Warburton Report
An evaluative framework for assessing public engagement in nuclear decision-making: 

**A content-process-outcome model**

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<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Accuracy</td>
<td>• Remove error or provide more precise descriptions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Comprehensiveness</td>
<td>• To exchange information on the knowledge, attitudes, values, practices and perceptions of interested parties concerning the issues</td>
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<td>Balanced-views</td>
<td>• A balanced inclusion of the variety of perspectives that exists within the stakeholder population, rather than biased/partial information</td>
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<td><strong>Process</strong></td>
<td>Timeliness</td>
<td>• Early involvement; adequate time provided to consider, discuss and challenge the information</td>
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<td>Representativeness</td>
<td>• Inclusion of all stakeholders rather than the selected few</td>
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<td>Capacity building of civic engagement</td>
<td>• Meaningful engagement supported by adequacy of resources</td>
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<td>Consensus building</td>
<td>• Participants’ value/opinion changed) rather than intransigence (refused to be persuaded)</td>
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<td>Adaptive decision-making</td>
<td>• Evolving process rather than pre-determined decisions</td>
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<td>Transparency</td>
<td>• Transparency in arriving at and implementing decisions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Be honest, candid, and open</td>
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<td>• Accountable to the decisions made</td>
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<td>• Be honest, candid, and open</td>
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<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Quality decision</td>
<td>• Policy quality is improved through informed decision-making and incorporating knowledge and ideas from the public</td>
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<td>• Policy changes are made that reflect inputs from the public</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Policy legitimacy</td>
<td>• People have trust in the motives, transparency and competency of the government</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Working relationships are strengthened</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trust enhancement</td>
<td>• To foster trust and confidence in the policy process</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Mutual respect among all participants is strengthened</td>
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<td>Improved capacity of problem solving</td>
<td>• Access to expertise; improve competence, have adequate knowledge on the subject matter</td>
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<td>• To promote awareness and understanding of the specific issues under consideration during the policy process, by all participants</td>
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Policy Implications and conclusions

1. **Trust building and participatory governance** need to receive as much attention as scientific inputs in nuclear decision-making
   - If engagement is not properly done, trust can be easily eroded

2. **The context-process-outcome model:**
   - Can become the *principles* (check-list) and an *inventory* (a tool-box) of effective PE for nuclear decision-making
   - Public engagement which performs well only certain dimensions (content/ process/ outcome), or meet only certain criteria of under each dimension – cannot guarantee good outcomes.

3. **What NOT to do?**
   - Rely too much on the “*structural openness*” of consultation (govt: need to be responsive – e.g. explain why public views were not accepted)
   - Pre-empt decisions (e.g. nuclear – an absolute necessity?)
   - Present biased information; perceived as withholding information

4. **Reaching out: The role of independent advisors/ think-tanks**
   - **Sustainable Development Commission** (SDC) – was trustworthy
   - It played multiple roles, acting as knowledge broker, watchdog, and policy advocate