



# Historical contextualization of the site selection process for the German high-level nuclear waste (HLW) repository as a tool for information and awareness preservation

Anselm Tiggemann

Knowledge Management, Bundesgesellschaft für Endlagerung (BGE), 38226 Salzgitter, Germany

**Correspondence:** Anselm Tiggemann ([anselm.tiggemann@bge.de](mailto:anselm.tiggemann@bge.de))

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**Abstract.** It is always the same old story – after a couple of years most people cannot remember how decisions in nuclear waste disposal were made because many important documents are not available to the public as they have not been officially archived or are not accessible. This is why site selection Act § 6 requires nuclear waste organizations not only to store, but also to publish those documents. So, the Bundesgesellschaft für Endlagerung (BGE) provides information about all the relevant documents on the BGE website (<https://www.bge.de/de/endlagersuche/wesentliche-unterlagen/>, last access: 25 July 2023) and gives them to the Federal Office for the Safety of Nuclear Waste Management (BASE), which publishes them on the following website: [https://www.endlagersuche-infoplattform.de/webs/Endlagersuche/DE/\\_home/home\\_node.html](https://www.endlagersuche-infoplattform.de/webs/Endlagersuche/DE/_home/home_node.html) (last access: 25 July 2023).

For the siting process, the BGE knowledge management works on methods to keep the relevant information at least for the next generation – as a first step in the process of long-term preservation, which is the task of the BASE. When we set up the historical contextualization project, our idea was not only to create an archive platform of the relevant BGE-internal and BGE-external documents on the siting process such as papers, letters, minutes, files, logs, and geological data, but also to show how the documents relate to each other. In order to do this, we had to take the historical background into account. At first, we began exclusively with the files and the eyewitness accounts of our site selection department, but we became increasingly aware that we also have to consider the interactions between all stakeholders involved in the site selection procedure.

The presentation will show techniques and examples of how all information from documents, eye witnesses, and other sources can be saved and related to each other in order to understand how and why decisions have developed in a certain direction.

A set of cohesive storylines, central documents, and oral history methods taken from contemporary historical research forms the background for this historical contextualization. A storyline consists of chronological actions in a certain topic, e.g. the writing of the sub-areas' interim report. The most important actions that are part of the storylines are related to the most important documents. Oral history methods are used for interviews with eyewitnesses to elicit their tacit knowledge and to reflect on the historical background and their emotions.

The aim is not to create documentation from the BGE's perspective only, but also to collect a variety of perspectives as reservoirs of information for future historians, who can create a broader historical image from them. Another goal is to keep an open mind with regard to the multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches of future social scientists.