

Framing Safety: On the Technopolitics of Nuclear Infrastructure in Switzerland

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This thesis explores the complex discursive framework that underpins safety in the nuclear industry, emphasising the interconnectedness of infrastructure and containment, trust and expertise, and law and regulations. It addresses the absence of a singular definition of safety and highlights the role of physical barriers and safety measures in protecting the environment and people from ionising radiation. A qualitative approach was adopted, utilising semi-structured interviews to grasp how the various individuals understood and comprehended safety. The influence of a dominant source of information, a single narrative that is reproduced allows for standards and their critique. The expertise of nuclear professionals has cultivated a narrative positioning them as guardians of public safety, though this has sometimes led to public mistrust due to perceived opacity. The regulatory framework, built on institutionalised practices, further reinforces public trust, providing a structure that assures safety, though it faces criticism from opposition groups. Additionally, the social aspects of a sociotechnical system are anchored in a politicised context due to social anchoring. Acceptance and legitimacy through social acceptance are crucial for the longevity of a dangerous industry. The thesis concludes that the nuclear industry's survival relies on maintaining this dominant discourse, securing public trust, and emphasising safety as a top priority, despite ongoing opposition.

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