

# NUCLEARWATERS: Putting Water at the Centre of Nuclear Energy History

## Newsletter April 2022

The ERC project [NUCLEARWATERS](#), based at KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, explores the **connections between nuclear energy and water** in historical perspective. The goal is to rewrite the global history of nuclear energy by putting water at the centre of the analysis. Led by **Per Högselius**, the project comprises seven senior and junior researchers, who collectively examine the “wet” history of nuclear energy from a range of thematic and geographical angles.

We have had a busy start of the year. **Melina Antonia Buns**, who joined us formally already in December 2021 as a [visiting post-doc researcher](#) (see the previous newsletter), arrived physically at KTH and promptly presented her project “Nuclear Nordics” in the NUCLEARWATERS seminar series on 26 January. Melina’s two-year stay with us is based on a collaboration with [The Greenhouse](#) at the University of Stavanger and a major grant that she was awarded by the Norwegian Research Council.

Also in January, the first 2022 issue of *Technology & Culture* was published, which featured **Per Högselius’** article [“Atomic Shocks of the Old: Putting Water at the Center of Nuclear Energy History”](#) (open access). It synthesizes the main finds from our project so far, while elaborating on the history of “nuclear droughts” and “nuclear floods”. Per also published a German-language debate article, as part of a broader discussion forum, in the journal *Technikgeschichte* on [how and why historians of technology and environment can and must contribute to the public debate](#) – with nuclear-historical research as an obvious example (also open access). Another recent NUCLEARWATERS publication is **Siegfried Evens’** book chapter, in French, on the risks of nuclear cooling: “Les risques de refroidissement: L’eau comme frontière spatiale et temporelle de l’énergie nucléaire” (published as part of the edited volume [Enquêter dans le nucléaire](#)). On the lighter side, **Kati Lindström**, **Per Högselius** and **Anna Storm** contributed a chapter – “Phaedo or The Death of Socrates at Forsmark” – to a Festschrift celebrating our colleague **Sverker Sörlin’s** 65th birthday.

On 18 February the next event in the NUCLEARWATERS seminar series took place. On this occasion we invited [Greenpeace campaigner Dima Litvinov](#) to present his unique video materials from the Priargunsky uranium mine in eastern Siberia, recorded in the early 1990s. This material was converted into a digital format with the financial support from NUCLEARWATERS.

In March, NUCLEARWATERS PhD students **Siegfried Evens** and **Achim Klüppelberg** participated in the Switch Desk Initiative, a Nordic tradition that aims to stimulate exchange between the history departments of different universities. Siegfried spent two weeks at Uppsala University and Achim two weeks at Södertörn University, exchanging ideas and presenting their work to new colleagues.

The NUCLEARWATERS team currently has the pleasure of hosting PhD student **Hannah Klaubert** from the University of Giessen, as a guest with the project. Hannah's research focuses on fiction from the last three decades dealing with nuclear accidents and disasters.

In terms of conference participation, the NUCLEARWATERS team organized a session specifically devoted to the project at **Teknik- och vetenskapshistoriska dagar**, the main Swedish conference on the history of science and technology. Introduced and moderated by NUCLEARWATERS project leader **Per Högselius**, the session featured in-depth presentations by **Achim Klüppelberg, Alicia Gutting, Siegfried Evens, Anna Storm** and **Kati Lindström**.



*Eugene, Oregon. Photo by Siegfried Evens.*

Most recently, **Siegfried Evens** represented NUCLEARWATERS at the annual conference of the [American Society for Environmental History \(ASEH\)](#), held in Eugene, Oregon, where he led a panel on “Nuclear Technologies and the Environment”, with **Jacob Darwin Hamblin, Jong-min Lee, Jong-min Choi, Mar Rubio-Varas, Diego Sesma-Martín** and **Astrid Kirchhof** as participants. The panel reflected on the multiple ways in which nuclear installations interact with the environment.

Meanwhile the start of **Anna Storm's** new project [Nuclear Natures](#), 2022-2026), a sister project to NUCLEARWATERS, has further widened our research opportunities. Based at Linköping University, Anna and her team will investigate the

nuclear natures of enclosed buffer zones surrounding nuclear facilities and old reactors undergoing decommissioning. This includes also the new construction of long-term waste storage facilities. Thus, this project will thoroughly examine issues at the end of the nuclear lifespan.

Unfortunately, our work has also been clouded since late February by the tragic developments in Russia and Ukraine, two countries that have played key roles in our nuclear-historical research. All violence and human suffering aside, Russia's criminal assault on Ukraine has had a direct impact on our research. As late as November 2021, NUCLEARWATERS PhD student **Achim Klüppelberg** was able to carry out very rewarding [archival work in several Ukrainian archives](#). This will clearly no longer be possible from now on; nor will we be able to return to Russia for the foreseeable future. At the same time we are witnessing the destruction of the social sciences and humanities in Russia and a number of our academic partners in Russia and Ukraine have been forced to leave their institutions and countries. The future looks exceptionally bleak and uncertain.

### Upcoming events:

Our next NUCLEARWATERS seminar will take place over Zoom on Friday 8 April from 13.15 to 15.00 Swedish summer time. On this occasion we have the pleasure of welcoming **Sonali Huria**, who will present her research on the Bishnoi community's relationship with water in nuclear India. Join our Zoom meeting via <https://kth-se.zoom.us/j/67164895000> (no registration necessary).

Also, watch out for the upcoming invitation to yet another NUCLEARWATERS seminar, to be held on 7 June, from 13.15 to 15.00 Swedish summer time, when **Stefan Guth** will present his work on nuclear technopolitics. That seminar will take place on-site at KTH and digitally.

On 21-22 June the [Nuclear-Water Nexus](#) workshop will take place at KTH. It will bring together 25-30 scholars from a range of fields with a common interest in the relations between nuclear and water.

In terms of further conference appearances, NUCLEARWATERS will be represented at the [Tensions of Europe Conference](#) (Aarhus, 29 June–1 July) and the [ESEH conference](#) (Bristol, 4–8 July). These events are further linked to two upcoming summer schools that NUCLEARWATERS project members are co-organizing. Hence **Siegfried Evens** is part of the organising committee for [the summer school at the Tensions of Europe Conference](#), called “Young scholars in the history of technology: surviving and thriving in academia”, while **Melina Antonia Buns** co-organizes the ESEH summer school on [“\(An-\)Hydrous Environments: Rethinking Water in Environmental History”](#), which will take place in Bristol, UK, 10–13 July 2022.

Melina also participated in a recent podcast on [Nordic Cooperation: Self-interest or Altruism?](#) For nordics.info. She and **Sunniva Engh** discuss how Nordic cooperation has functioned since the 1960s with respect to environmentalism and development aid, shedding light on contemporary reputations.

### Recent publications:

Evens, Siegfried. “Les risques de refroidissement : L'eau comme frontière spatiale et temporelle de l'énergie nucléaire.”. In *Enquêter dans le nucléaire*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2022.

Högselius, Per. [“Atomic Shocks of the Old: Putting Water at the Center of Nuclear Energy History.”](#) *Technology & Culture* 63, 1 (2022): 1-30.

Högselius, Per. [“Wie und warum Technik- und Umwelthistoriker\\*innen in öffentliche Debatten eingreifen können und müssen“.](#) *Technikgeschichte* 88, 4 (2021): 379-384.

Högselius, Per. “The European Energy System in an Age of Globalization.” In *Boom – Crisis – Heritage: King Coal and the Energy Revolutions after 1945*, ed. Lars Bluma, Michael Farrenkopf, and Torsten Meyer, 25–42. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022.

Lindström, Kati, Per Högselius, and Anna Storm. "PHAEDO of the Death of Socrates at Forsmark". In *In His Own Environment: En festskrift till Sverker Sörlin*, ed. Nina Wormbs, Arne Kaijser, Sabine Höhler, Mats Benner, and Marco Armiero, 102-110. Stockholm: KTH Royal Institute of Technology, 2021.