

Social licence to operate and the role of the state: lessons from nuclear waste management

**Workshop on social license to operate and nuclear waste management
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M. LEHTONEN, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain

Co-authors: Matti Kojo, Tuija Jartti, Tapio Litmanen, Mika Kari

Outline

- SLO as a means of managing the social risks of (nuclear) megaprojects?
- SLO usually primarily focused on community-company relationships
- The forgotten role of the state?
- Specificities of nuclear waste management: the vital and multiple roles of the state
- Illustrative examples from Finland, France, and Sweden
- Boutilier & Thomson SLO framework as the starting point

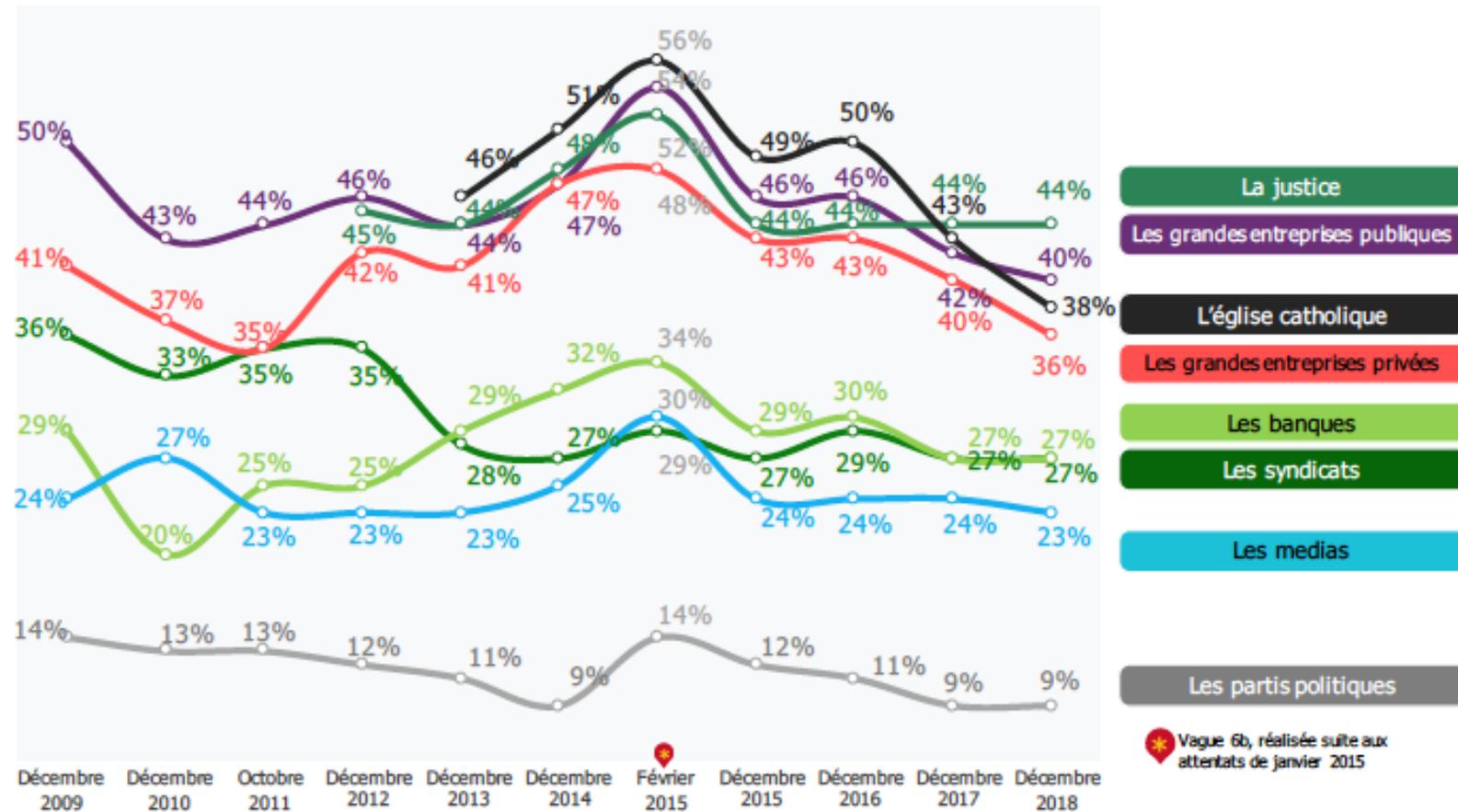
Why Finland, France and Sweden?

1. Distinct roles of the state differs between the three countries
 - French centralism and “dirigisme”
 - Nordic municipal autonomy
 - State agency as implementer in France
2. High-trust vs. low-trust societies (FIN/SWE vs. France)
 - France – a society of defiance?
 - Strong trust in the state in all three countries
3. Three forerunners in the management of high-level waste
 - Repositories to become operational by 2030

Trust in institutions - France

2116
individus

Q25. Avez-vous très confiance, plutôt confiance, plutôt pas confiance ou pas confiance du tout dans chacune des organisations suivantes... ? Réponse 'Très confiance' + 'Plutôt confiance'



Why SLO?



Local opposition against (NWM)
megaprojects
Acceptability, acceptance, resistance

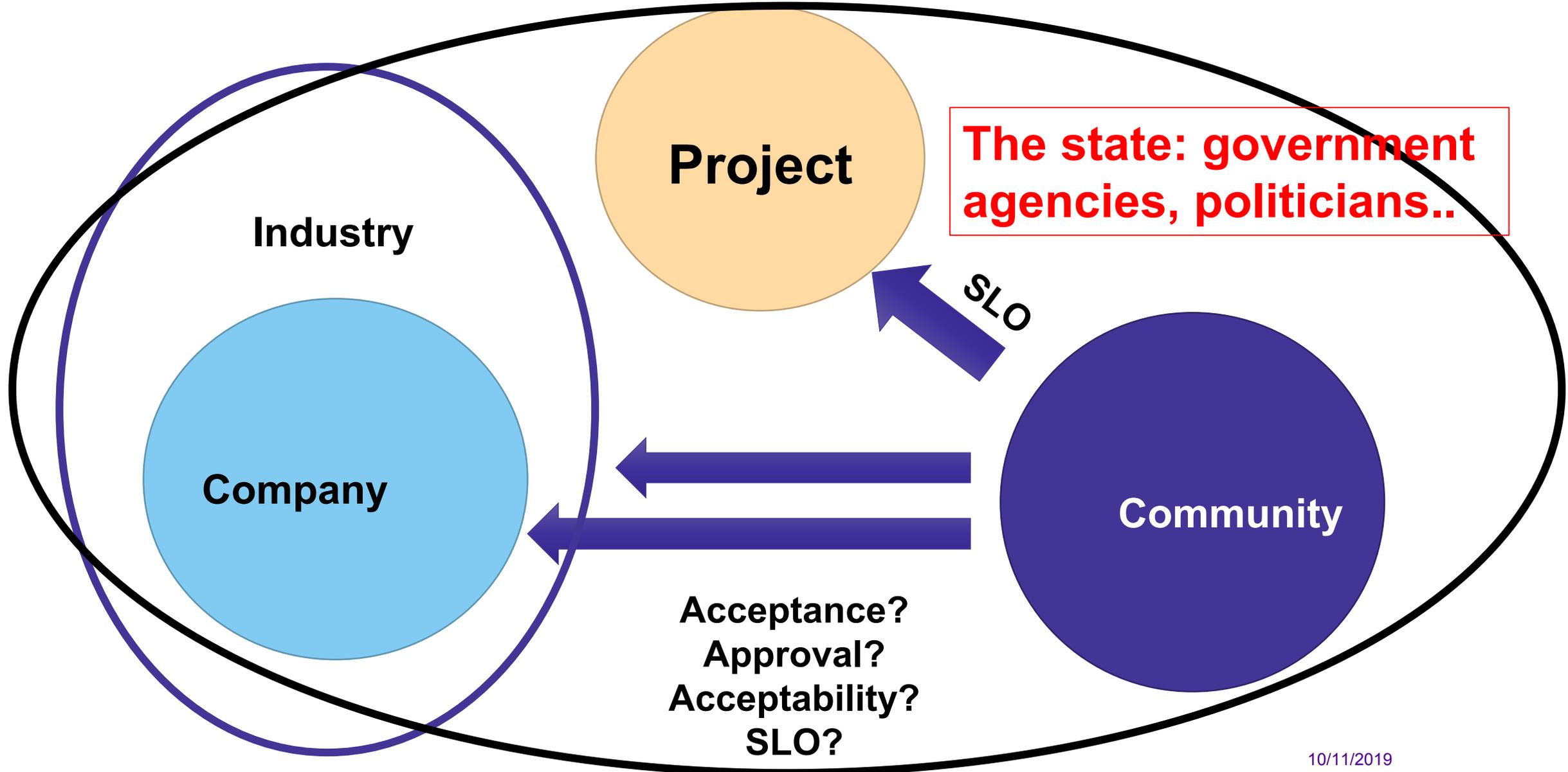


“Social risks”:
Delays and budget overruns
France: movement against the “useless
and imposed-upon large projects”

SLO: définitions

- *“the social license is based on the degree to which a corporation and its activities meet the expectations of local communities, the wider society, and various constituent groups”* (Gunningham et al. 2004, 308, 313)
- **acceptance** and/or **approval** by local communities and other stakeholders
- **Social acceptability:** perception amongst the *local stakeholders* that a project, company, or industry is socially acceptable or legitimate (Boutilier et Thomson, 2011, in Raufflet 2014)

Project, company, industry – and the state?



SLO and the other licences

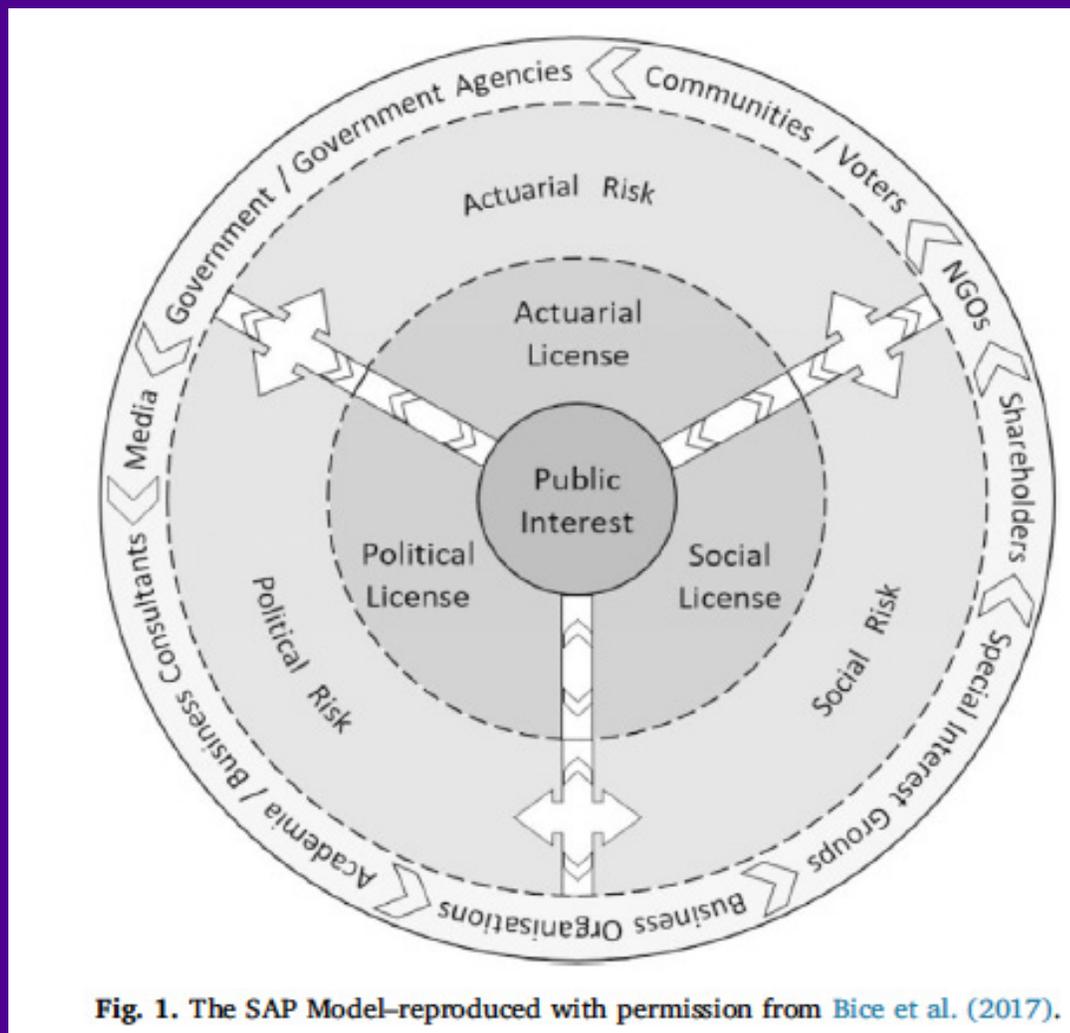
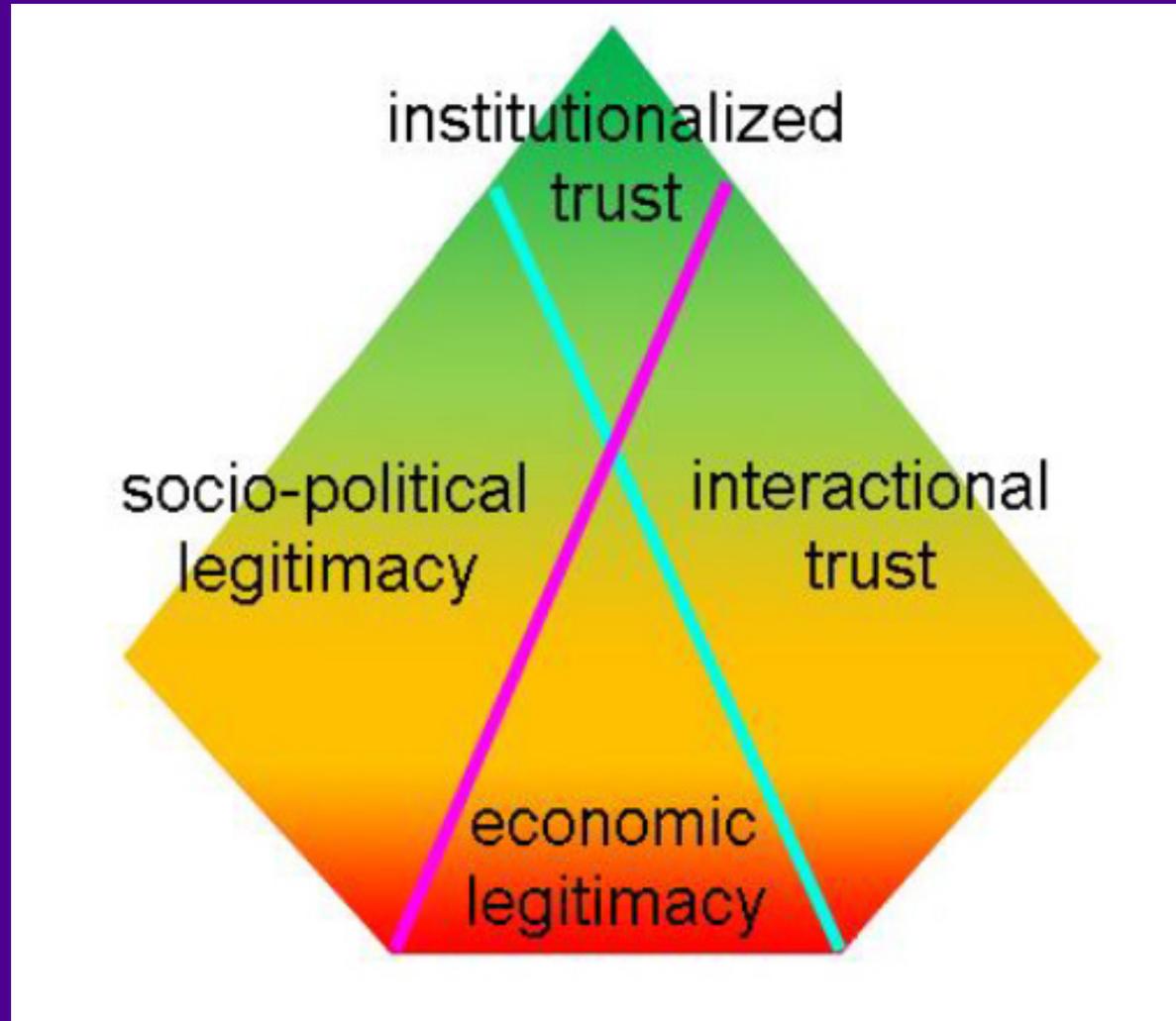


Fig. 1. The SAP Model—reproduced with permission from Bice et al. (2017).

- **Actuarial (legal) licence:** granted by the authorities
- **Political licence:** approval and support from decision-makers (government, parliament)
- **Social licence** = informal, dynamic and unofficial, granted by the community

Legitimacy and trust = key prerequisites for SLO (Boutillier & Thomson framework)



- Full trust
- Approval
- Acceptance
- Absence/withdrawal of SLO

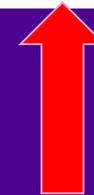
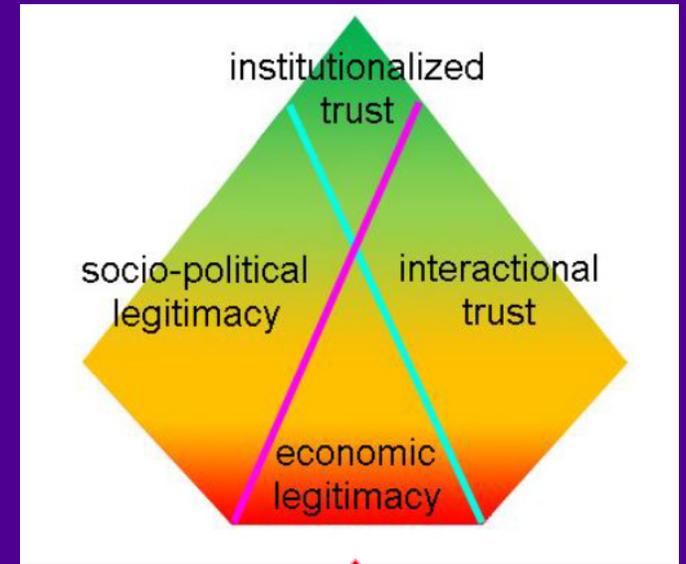
Specificities of nuclear waste management megaprojects

- Raison d'être: local solution to a national/global problem
- Strong mutual dependency relationship between the community and the project owner
- Extremely long timescales: ethics and intergenerational justice
- **Role of the state**
 - Heterogeneity, economic and political interests, energy policy, ownership structures...
 - Risk governance and long-term safety (safety authority!)
 - Guardian of (economic and socio-political) legitimacy and trust
 - Ideological trust and perceptions concerning the legitimate role of the state

Illustration of the roles of the state via examples from Finland, France and Sweden

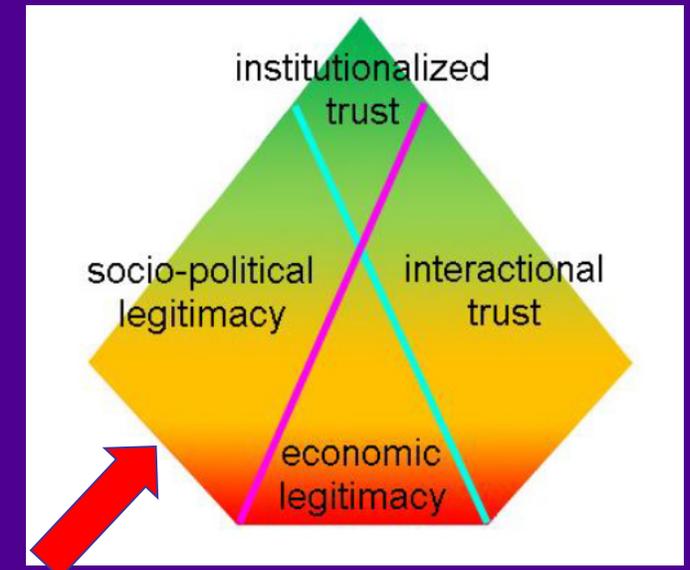
Economic legitimacy (sharing of risks, costs and benefits: distributive justice)

- Provision of economic legitimacy, via tax benefits or legally mandated community benefit schemes
- Community benefit schemes perceived as (il)legitimate bribery?
- France: only the state seen as legitimate to organise the benefit schemes (FRA) – by redistributing industry money
- Criticism and opposition fuelled by the high standards expected from the state?



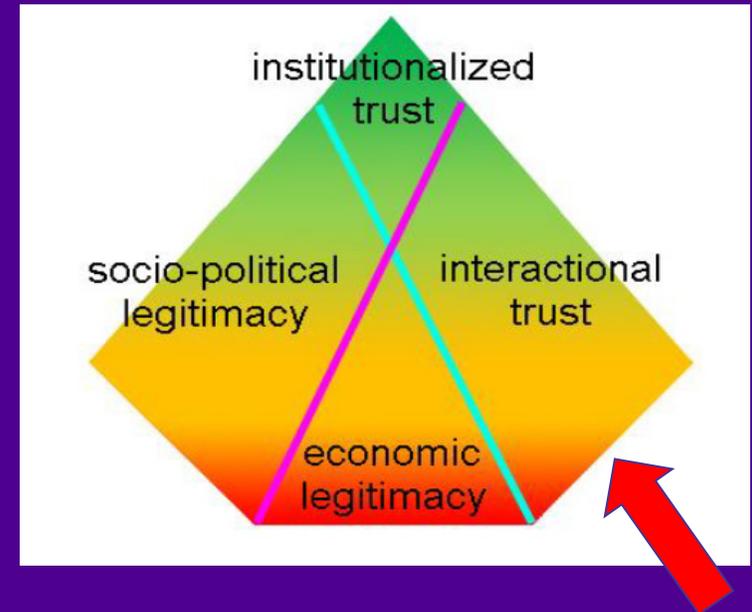
Socio-political legitimacy (openness, transparency: procedural justice)

- Municipal veto:
 - in Finland and Sweden – not in France
- Mandatory public consultations
- **Transparency, access to information**
 - French opacity vs. Nordic access to information tradition and legislation
 - But: French multiple transparency institutions, laws...
 - Transparency – in order to hide the essential?



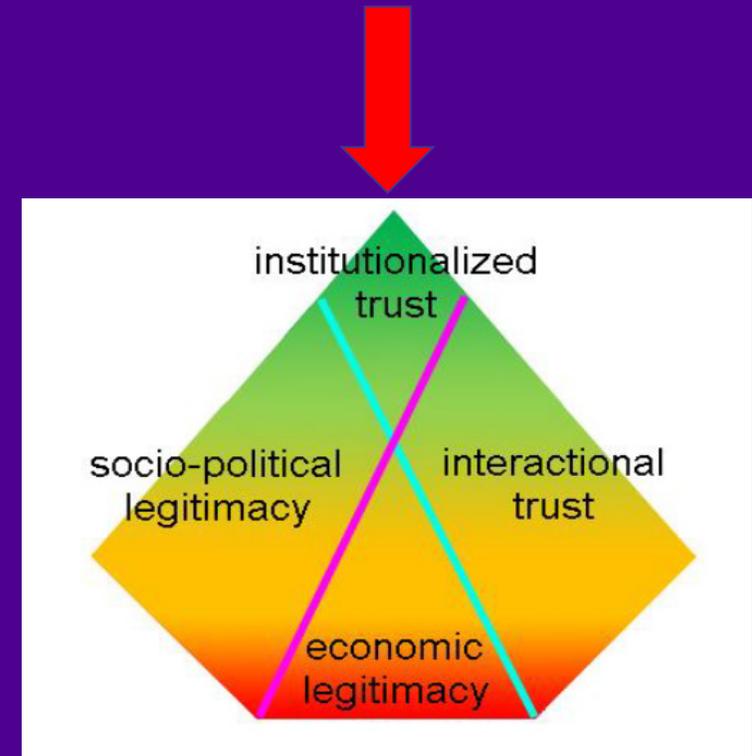
Interactional trust (keeping the promises, true dialogue)

- The state and the broken promises (France)
- Framing of consultations and public debates: policy options on the table or not?
- Participation for legitimisation or legitimacy?
- State ensuring the respect for the spirit of the law
- Multistakeholder dialogue and licensing processes: safety authority, Environmental Court...
- The state actively feeding constructive mistrust and (civic) vigilance: Kärnavfallsrådet, support to NGOs



Institutionalised trust (psychological identification, shared interests)

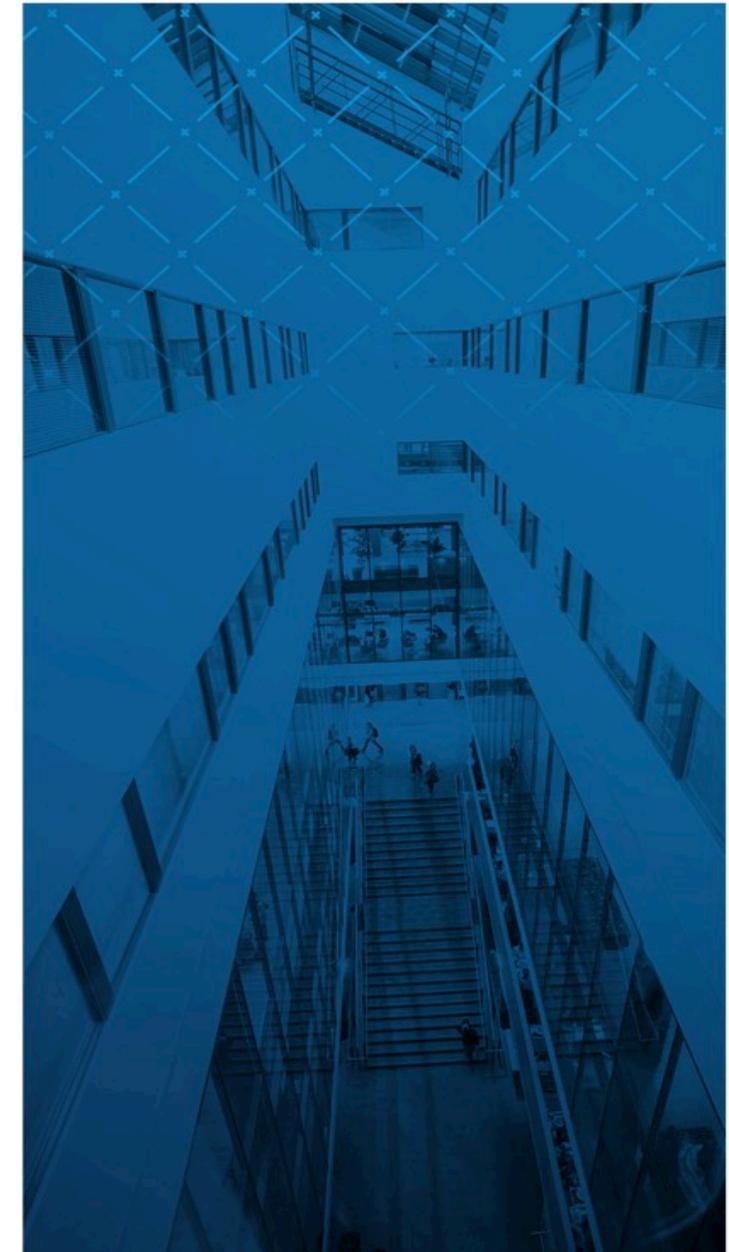
- Nuclear communities or nuclear-virgin areas?
- “our project” or “us vs. them”?
- Ideological trust: perceptions concerning the legitimate roles of the state, market, community, nuclear energy...
- Ambiguous relations towards the state in France: subject to high expectations and critique
- Trust in the sincerity and competence of the safety authority



A Finnish trust paradox?

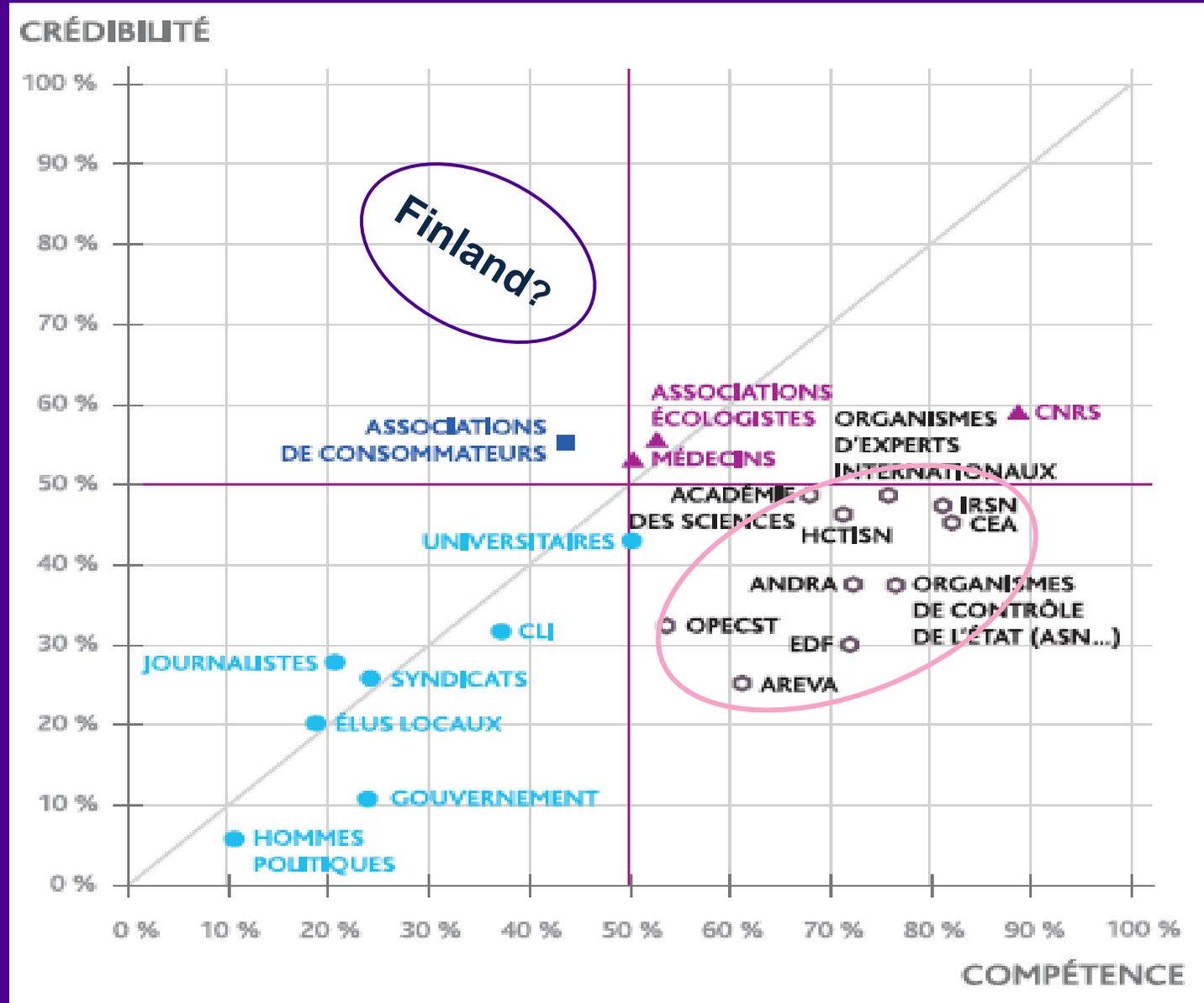
	France	Sweden	Finland
Safety of the project	78%	86%	41%
Implementer*	63%	76%	56%
Safety authority	40-76% (national level)	61%	82% (local & natl)

* Trustworthy source of information on safety



Institutional trust in France

“Our engineers are the best in the world”
(Finland and France)



Conclusions

Need to integrate the state in SLO analysis, as a key actor conditioning the processes of SLO acquisition

Articulation of “the project” and “the local” with broader national and international context

The state has multiple, often mutually contrasting roles in governing NWM and conditioning SLO processes

Institutionalised trust is not a silver bullet and not always desirable

Further analysis on:

- the potential virtues of mistrust and distrust
- ideological trust in state (vs. market, community, industry...) – combined with institutional mistrust in state agencies?

Thank you for your attention!

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