

WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways. The most frequently quoted definition is from the Brundtland Report. *"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* One of the needs that future generations will have to meet is the ability to make decisions, specifically concerning legacies inherited from the past.

The present workshop, and supporting vision document¹, is about starting a broad-based reflection in Sweden and elsewhere on how to help future society maintain or regain awareness of some of the most relevant legacies that they will inherit – notably nuclear waste. Such reflection would also identify difficulties, potential conflict of interests, target achievements and potential paths forward.

This workshop and reflection are timely in Sweden, in that the Swedish government is in the process of deciding about a repository for final disposal of spent nuclear fuel to last 100 000 years. A similar, deep underground repository for the indefinite isolation of mercury-tainted and other processing waste is slated to be operating shortly. Even if current management approaches may not require human beings' continued attention or presence, ought we not facilitate the task of dealing with those legacies – specifically by providing relevant documentation and information – if that is what future societies may want or need?

At the same time, there are about 80,000 potentially or confirmed contaminated areas in Sweden, of which approximately 1,300 have been assessed to entail very great risks to human health or the environment. When they will be remediated, the polluted soils will be disposed of in a number of deposits that will be constructed all over the country. How then to ensure that future generations will remember that these places must be considered to be off-limits for housing, play grounds etc.? Besides, will all of these deposits function as planned? Remediation of contaminated areas are thus another example where the need arises to conceive a **Records, Knowledge and Memory (RK&M)** preservation strategy that will support future generations to make decisions based on exploitable information.

The workshop will take advantage of national and international thinking in the field of RK&M preservation, including the findings of a recent, eponymous international project dealing more specifically with radioactive waste. Nuclear waste, whose literature on the subject is fairly large and recent, can act as a useful trigger for better understanding the wider questions at hand as well as suggest possible strategies and tools. The vision document made available in advance of the workshop provides background to the relevant questions for the workshop as well as a draft set of principles that would inform future actions in the area of memory preservation.

During the last decades the issue of RK&M preservation has moved up on the agenda in Sweden and in other countries. Eventually, this may create a critical mass towards strengthening and enlarging current practices in records, knowledge and memory preservation for the benefit of future generations.

¹ C. Pescatore, *Information and memory for future decision making: radioactive waste and beyond*, available from <http://lnu.diva-portal.org>