

**Briefing new editorial practices at Energy Policy: Case ‘Discussion of frameworks that hold discourses on the sustainability of nuclear power, including sustainability assessments’.**

This briefing is about the assessment of the sustainability of nuclear power. This is an issue of high energy and climate policy relevance to obtain answers on the question: ‘Is nuclear power part of a sustainable electricity supply system?’ With a few co-authors we attempt to analyze and answer the question.

‘*Assessment of the actual sustainability of nuclear fission power*’, A. Verbruggen, E. Laes, and S. Lemmens is published by *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* 32, 16-28 (2014). Complementary research on frameworks of sustainability assessments continued. In July 2014, the manuscript ‘*Sustainability assessment of nuclear power: discourse analysis of IAEA, IPCC, and EC frameworks*’ was submitted to *Energy Policy*, and numbered JEPO-D-14-01352. It underwent a very unusual ‘*two-phased one-round*’ review process, invented by the editor of *Energy Policy*, and involving six persons.

Table 1 provides an overview of the set up to come to the final editorial decision. In the beginning there were two reviewers (person A and person B), knowledgeable about the contents of the manuscript. Added was a third reviewer (person C) providing puzzling, unclear comments, very difficult for the authors to understand and not really helpful to improve the quality of the manuscript. Notwithstanding their concerns about person C, the authors answered the comments of all three reviewers and revised the manuscript (October 24, 2014).

Table 1: Overview of the six persons involved in the review of JEPO-D-14-01352 (/R1), and their roles in Phase I and Phase II of the review process

Six person	Phase I	Phase II	Comments	Final
A	Rev#1		Provided a review – authors answered.	Contacted? Recommendation?
B	Rev#2		Provided a review – authors answered.	Contacted? Recommendation?
C	Rev#3	Rev#2	Puzzling, unclear Phase I comments – authors asked for clarification and replied as neatly as possible.	Puzzling Phase II comments. Language purist?
D		Rev#5	Not a review but a personal opinion “out of scope for <i>Energy Policy</i> ”. Wrong interpretation of IAEA and IPCC mandates/roles. Etc.	Straw man tactics; A non-starter for <i>Energy Policy</i>
E		Rev#4 = Rev#5 bis	A new review with various interesting comments/suggestions. Authors can answer, provide additional detail, and defend the own work as they did with the persons A and B in Phase I.	Authors precluded from interaction/ reply
F		Rev#6	A new review by an informed scholar about nuclear power, but not familiar to and doubting about the discourse-analytical framework.	Authors precluded from interaction/ reply

December 28, 2014, the authors received the four Phase II comments of the ‘one-round’ review process. There were five comments delivered but one was a copy paste with as difference only one statement deleted/added [Which journal editor adapts reviews?]. The comments numbering in Phase II is anyhow a mess (see column 3 in table1). Table 1 (column 1) clarifies that six persons (A to F) were implied in different roles:

- The Phase I reviewers #1 and #2 (persons A and B) are excluded in Phase II. From our position, it is difficult to know whether they were Y/N contacted to advise on the revised manuscript, or whether their recommendations were shelved because not in line with the editor's opinion. When persons A and B would read this message, it would be helpful that they reveal the facts (eventually in an anonymous way to keep the half-blind review process in tact).
- The puzzling, unclear Phase I reviewer #3 (person C) is maintained by the editor, to deliver in Phase II similar confusing, unclear comments as before. In poor English language, person C is telling the native speaking academic that proof read the revised manuscript, to improve his English writing.
- The fourth person (D) added to the process, is shouting a batch of offending comments, without any reference to the text, neither to the academic standards a reviewer has to respect. The person is an expert in 'straw man' tactics, so overwhelmingly that s/he tries to transmit it on the authors. This is clearly a "non-starter for Energy Policy".
- The fifth and sixth person (E and F) provide Phase II reviews of the manuscript. The authors could very well answer to the comments, but they are not allowed because reviewing at Energy Policy is now set up as a 'one-round' process. In this way authors are judged and condemned without any right of defense.

The Energy Policy editor uses to tell authors that Energy Policy faces "a large number of papers". This is true for all journals, and we as scientists are overloaded with review invitations. However, in this case resources are squandered to align the outcome with the editor's pursued decision.

The process evidently mocks the rights of authors.

The process is extremely offending for persons A and B that delivered a good review, but were removed from the process. Also for persons E and F whose review had no scientific result because the authors are not allowed to respond. Four meaningful reviews by academics are scratched, and precedence is given to two sub-standard comments.

The editor uses standard text about "a large number of papers" for refusing proper discussion about manuscripts. The door is fully closed by "Further, journal policy is that an Editorial decision is final and we do not enter into discussions regarding the outcomes of rejected manuscripts." The door is fully open for manipulation of the editorial process to obtain the decisions the editor wants, disregarding all standards usual in the scientific community and disregarding basic rights of authors and reviewers.

The decision-making about nuclear power is an important case of true energy policy. Stating (like person D) that discourse is 'beyond scope' of policy-making reveals little understanding of what policy-making is all about.

The scientific community has lost the journal 'Energy Policy' as a platform to discuss important energy policy issues.