

Exploring the maintenance of multiple infrastructural lives: the Nuclear Power Plant in Austria

Céline Parotte, FNRS-FRS
University of Liege

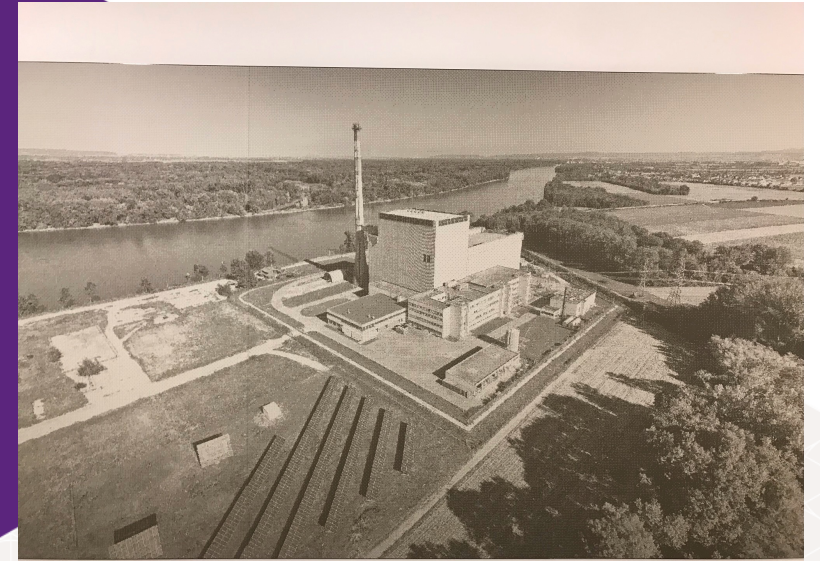


Photo Zwentendorf NPP – in
information building of Zw.
NPP, Parotte, 2022



Outline



1. Studying one particular object: the decaying nuclear infrastructure

2. Zwentendorf NPP through maintenance, repair & ruination

- *Within and outside*: the current interrelated lives of Zwentendorf NPP.
- Beyond the « naturalized » anti-nuclear symbol : Maintaining multiple forms of nuclearity.

3. Conclusion: Zwentendorf as time machine?

- Traveling in time: Zwentendorf NPP transformations as non linear process.
- Nuclear time out? « Keeping technology out » imaginary for nuclear and alternative activities in.

1. Studying one particular object: *The decaying (nuclear) infrastructure*



1. Studying nuclear *infrastructure*

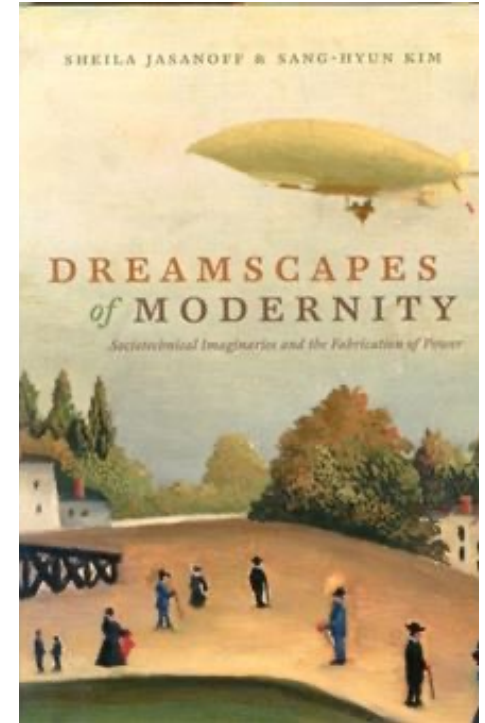


Zwentendorf nuclear power plant
in Austria

The framing and bounding of infrastructure projects and related policies remain closely **intertwined with nation-building** (e.g Hecht 2009, Anand et al. 2018, Felt 2015, Bayer et Felt 2019).

Research question:

How decay management practices intersect with, and contribute to, the reshaping of political decision about sociotechnical futures?



« Keeping Technologies Out: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Formation of Austria's Technopolitical Identity. »
Ulrike Felt (2015)

1. Studying the *decay* of nuclear infrastructure



Breakdown



Tchernobyl Accident,
1986

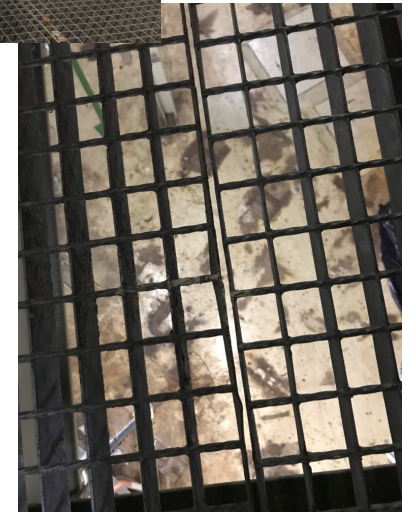
« **The world constantly decays.** Moisture gets in. Damp hangs around. Ice expand joints. Surfaces wear thin. (...) materials rot. »
(Graham and Thrift 2007,5)

Mundane



Visible signs of
mundane decay,
Zwentendorf
NPP, 2022

the changes that occur
continuously and normally in the
materiality of nuclear infrastructures



1 . Studying the management of Austrian NPP



- No nuclear energy country
- 1 reactor built in 1976 never put in operation at Zwentendorf
- **Yet, infrastructure maintains**



The Ethnography of Infrastructure
SUSAN LEIGH STAR
American Behavioral Scientist 1999; 43; 377
DOI: 10.1177/00027649921955326

- **On-Site observations** (March – May 2022) incl. 3 guided tours (2 private and 1 public) and one theater performance (Global Art).
- **17 semi-structured interviews** and **informal talks**: nuclear experts (6), austrian policy experts (2), Zwentendorf EVN representatives (5) and connected to Zwentendorf NPP (4).
- **Virtual** observation (e.g. EVN, Feb. 2022) and **online secondary sources** (dedicated youtube videos, testimonies, photos, EVN and minister official websites, brochure).

2. Zwentendorf NPP through maintenance, repair & ruination



2. Within Zwentendorf - 1000 rooms



In situ Museum of Zw. nuclear ruin
Free & private tours.



Modulable rooms for social and artistic events



Rooms closed to the public, EVN facebook

Waiting-to-be-explored archives in Zw. rooms

Offices for EVN NPP workers.



Host Zw. Municipality Museum



Dedicated Zw. Archives room

Training research Center



Solar energy zone



2. Outside Zwentendorf (closed area)



Beehives

Well-maintained roads.



Highly frequented by cyclists

« An oasis of nature » EVN Brochure, 2022, 19



« nesting bird on air stack », « Hegdehog (EVN website 2022)



Annual Festivals (here, Shutdown Fest)

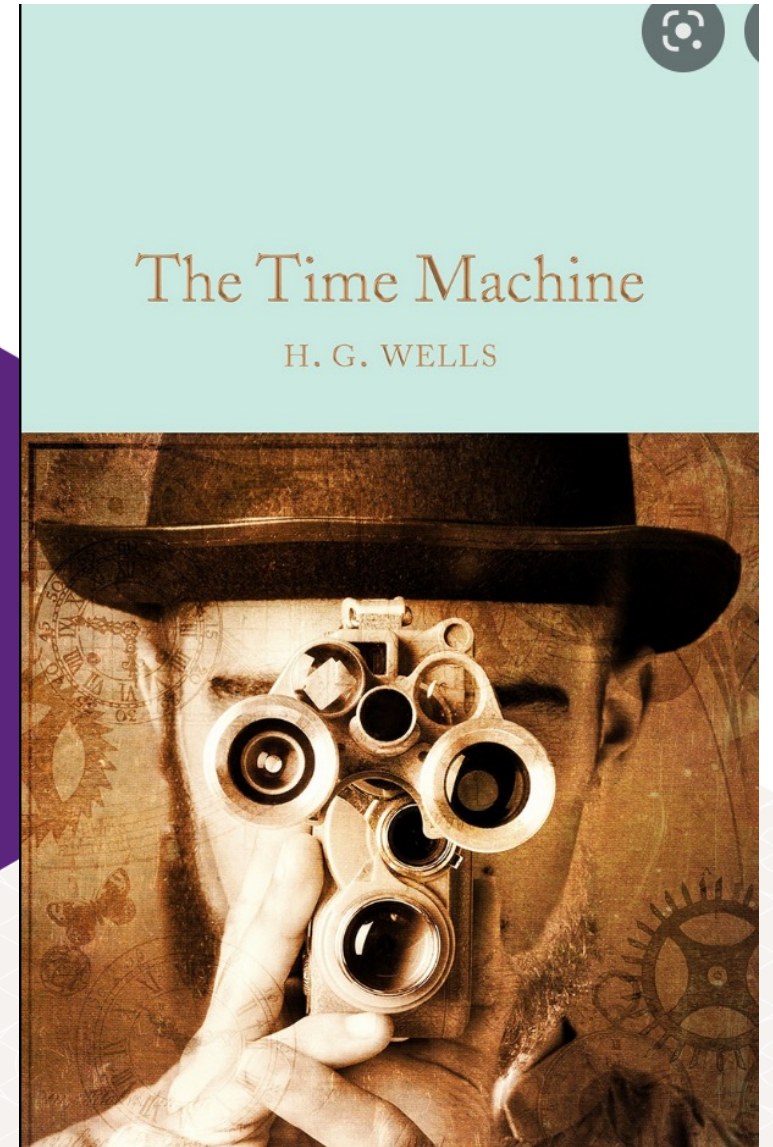


One Restaurant

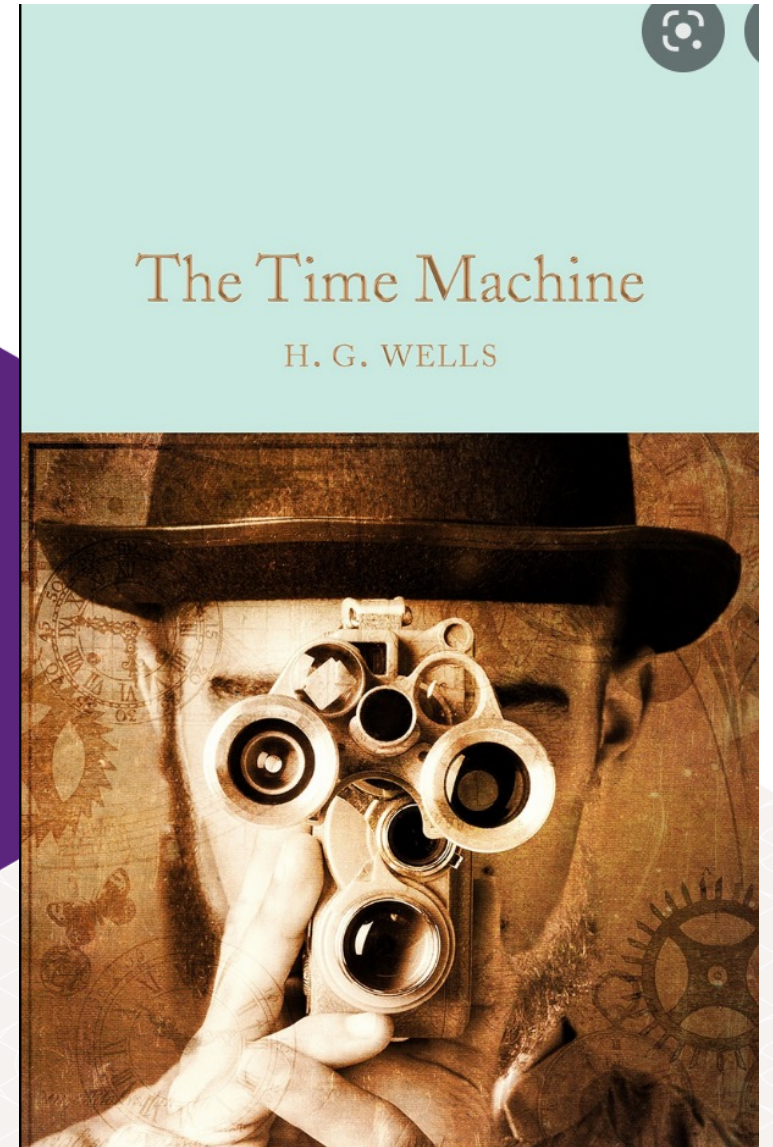


playground

3 . Conclusion: Zwentendorf, a time machine?



The psychologist to the time traveller: “you can move in about in all directions of Space, but you cannot move about in Time” (Wells)



Conclusion (1/3): Divided zones for traveling in time



1. Decay management performed as **non linear process**.

- ***Co-existence of multiple care practices*** of the decaying infrastructure ***at the same time***.

Repurposing
alternative
energy.

An organized nuclear ruin



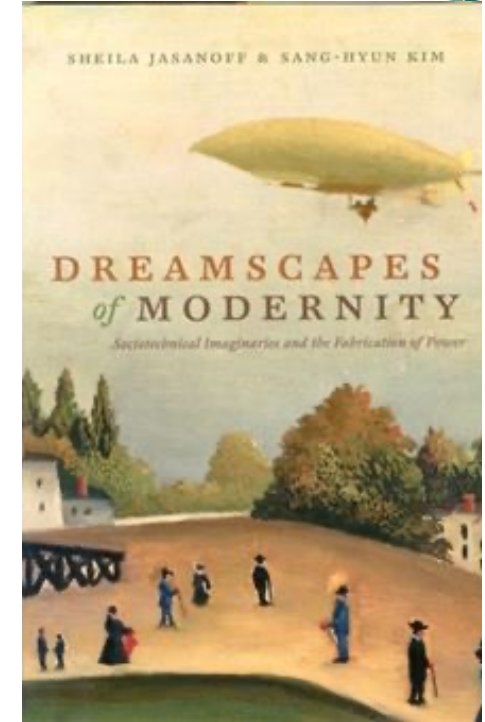
purposefully
abandonment for
multi-species
encounter.

Nuclear maintenance
and repair practices
here and elsewhere

Conclusion (2/3): Nuclear time out?

2. Nuclearity of Zwentendorf

- Infrastructure maintenance as ***symbol of “free from nuclear energy”*** (Zwentendorf as staged nuclear ruin) allows to be ***free to*** maintain other forms of nuclearity and alternative energy production ***at the same time.***



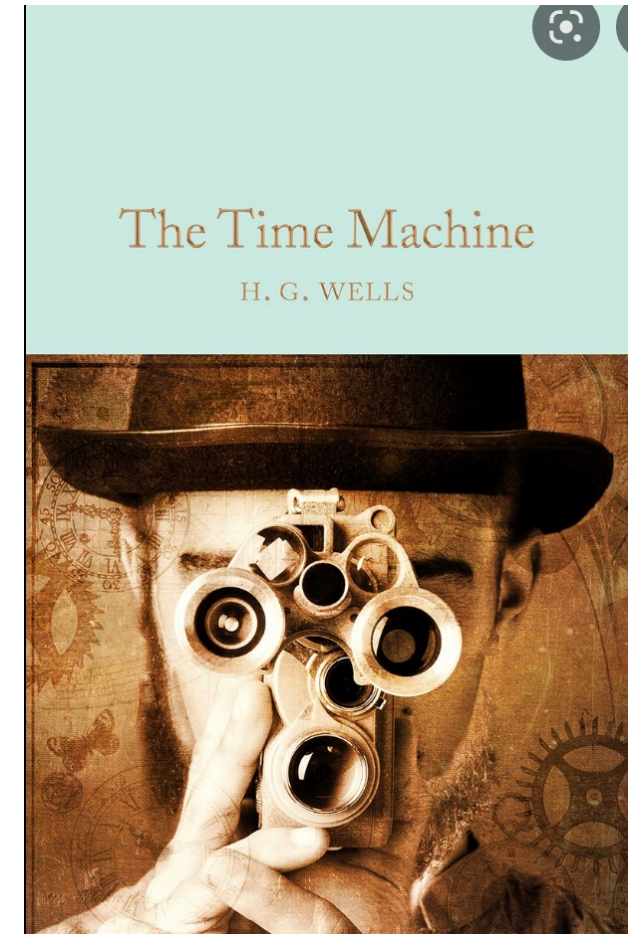
« Keeping Technologies Out: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Formation of Austria's Technopolitical Identity. » Ulrike Felt (2015)

Conclusion (3/3): (Re)organizing time traveling.



3. Narratives – materialities and recycling memories: maintenance as a discursive performance.

“ But you are wrong to say that we cannot move about in Time. For instance, if I am recalling an incident very vividly I go back to the instant of its occurrence: I became absent-minded, as you say. I **jump back for a moment**” (Time traveller in Wells, 1895, 7)





Thanks for attention!
Questions?

Celine.parotte@uliege.be

FNRS-FRS Researcher, Spiral Research
Center, RU Cité, University of Liege.