What cultural objects say about nuclear accidents and their way to depicting a controversial industry

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International Workshop on Nuclear Safety: From accident mitigation to resilient society facing extreme situations

France Berkeley Fund
Introduction

• *The Tower of Babel* (Bruegel, 1563).

• Reproduction of this painting in a poster (Brauchli, 1975).

• A social fear which came true with the Chernobyl and Fukushima.

• What can cultural objects teach us in the way of representing nuclear accidents and the industry?
Definition of the concepts

- Social representation
  
  - A sum of content and a process that can modify thinking and behavior.
  
  - A study based on the analysis of interviews, questionnaires, texts or images.
Definition of the concepts

- Socio-technical controversy

  - A public debate where opposing opinions are used to interpret a particular object or technical system.
  - The anti-nuclear movement in France.
  - Chernobyl marked a rupture.
  - The debate was revived with Fukushima.
Definition of the concepts

- Cultural objects

  - Productions that convey a reconstructed vision of the world.

  - A dramatic angle.

  - The distinction between nuclear power plant and nuclear weapon representation is not always clear.

  - An American series: *The Simpsons*.

The explosion of the nuclear power plant of Springfield.
The interactions between objects and representations

- Cultural object as product

- A product of social representation.

- The violence of the nuclear technology.

The interactions between objects and representations

- A representation crisis
  - The reflection on the possibility of representing the « invisible evil ».
  - The key role of color to represent the “impossible representation”.
The interactions between objects and representations

- The integration of the object in representations

- An agent which intervenes in the formation of social representation.

- Example: « La Gaule sous occupation nucléaire ».

- The diffusion of the ideas from anti-nuclear network.
The representation of Fukushima in the documentaries

- The meaning given to the japanese accident

  - An open ending and the illustration of the theory of society at risk.

  - A repetition of history.


From Fukushima to Hiroshima (Watanabe, 2013).
The representation of Fukushima in the documentaries

- The representation of the actors of the nuclear crisis

  - The lack of reactivity and the incompetence of TEPCO and the Government.
  
  - The workers are subjected to extreme work conditions.
  
  - The social dimension of the crisis.
  
The representation of Fukushima in the documentaries

- A social rebirth in Japan
  - Association of the Japanese nuclear industry with an autocratic form of governance.
  - The progress of the antinuclear movement in Japan.
  - In the representation, the safe nuclear energy is a fallacy.
  - The mobilization of the Japanese population.

Conclusion

• Interest of the documentaries.

• The figurative system of nuclear accidents is not disrupted.

• The end of the myth of soviet negligence.

• The reactivation of discursive elements of antinuclear movement in the public debate.