

P-418

**RADIOLOGICAL THREAT, PUBLIC AND MEDIAS: A PSYCHOSOCIOLOGICAL VIEW**

ARCISZEWSKI T<sup>1</sup>

(1) University René Descartes - Paris 5, Boulogne, France

Presentation preference: Poster Only

Major scientific thematic areas: TA9 - Radiation Policy and Society

Nuclear risk has become a major social communication along the XXth century because of its critical socio-political impact. That communication is not limited to expert speeches and simple acceptations. The way people understand that kind of threat is based on beliefs and on imaginary pictures. Consequently, and because it shapes people attitude, expectations and behaviours, their analysis is a key for policy and prevention. We will present, in the light of the research on risk perception and social psychology theoretical background, how people can manage with the nuclear fear. Some particular points will be studied: the nature of nuclear threat and fear, the cultural and medias coverage and the consequences of this threat on behaviour.

We will first focus on what a societal threat is and of which nature is the nuclear threat. We will rely on statistical data on risk perception. We have to consider the two main fields of information: first the nuclear threat as a mass destruction weapon and second, the radiological risk as a consequence of civil use of radiological material. Those two aspects, deeply related for most people, make the roots for the described fears. Then, the perception of the risks relative to nuclear is necessarily influenced by this representation. The representation of the nuclear power is and will be for next years, related to the nuclear mushroom as experimentally pointed out by Fiske, both with the abnormal children of Chernobyl. How can we change that vision? Not to be a liar, it will be hard work because it's a old story, a long construction of what will be the future of mankind, something deeply influenced by medias, movie, geopolitical facts like the cold war or technological accident like TMI or Chernobyl. It has to deal with the problem of media transmission of fears, which is a problem in itself, but due to the scientific base of our problem, particularly relevant. Moreover, there is a strong cultural background that maintains the fear of nuclear devices. In a scientific area as nuclear, where problems are often very complex for experts themselves, the way to communicate cannot be as simple as "good information".

Next to that statement, we will develop some conclusions based on the work of Slovic, Kasperson and some others, within the framework of the *amplification of risk*. This model describes how the threats can be diffuse in a population and specifically the radiological threat. Widely experimentally assessed, it analyse how the fear can spread and affect people, independently form the real measurable risk.

We will lastly ask ourselves if there is a way of handle panic for this kind of threat. We will show that the notion of panic is somehow irrelevant to such threats whereas the confidence in political and public regulation is strongly related to them. Finally, we will ask if the social psychologist could make a model of public reaction in case of nuclear threat. That question remains open until further experiments are made.