



# CRC

Centre de recherche sur les Risques et les Crises

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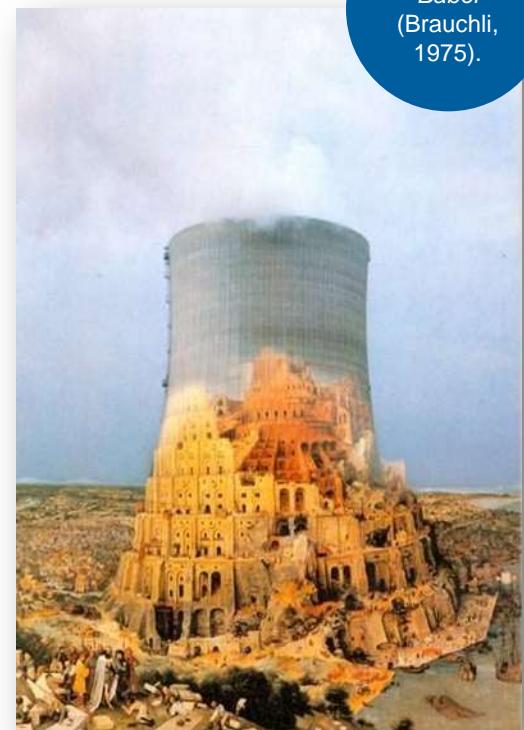
## ■ What cultural objects say about nuclear accidents and their way to depicting a controversial industry

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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 ?



*The Tower of Babel*  
(Brauchli,  
1975).

# 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

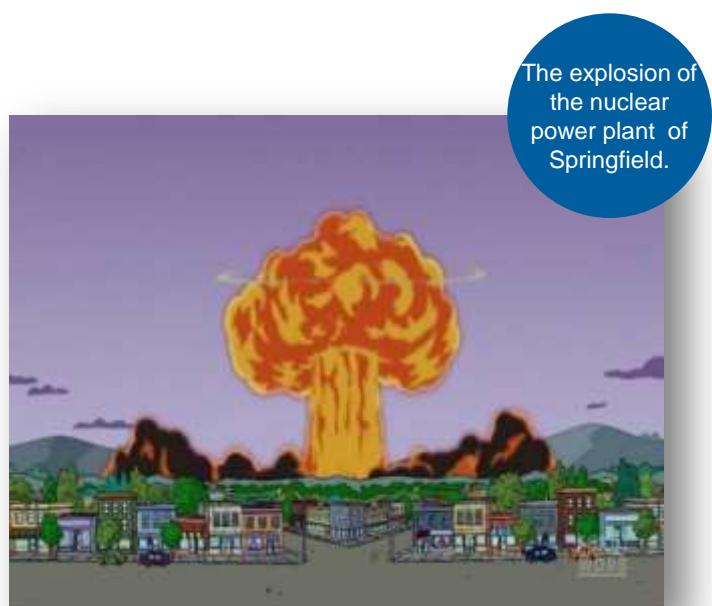
- A public debate where opposing opinions are used to interpret a particular object or technical system.
- The anti-nuclear movement in France.
- Chernobyl marked a rupture.
- The debate was revived with Fukushima.



# 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 interactions between objects and representations

## ○ Cultural object as product

- A product of social representation.
- The violence of the nuclear technology.
- A Japanese film: *Mount Fuji in Red* (Kurosawa, 1990).



*The Mount Fuji  
in Red  
(Kurosawa,  
1990).*

# 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”.
- A Japanese film: *The Land of Hope* (Sion, 2012).

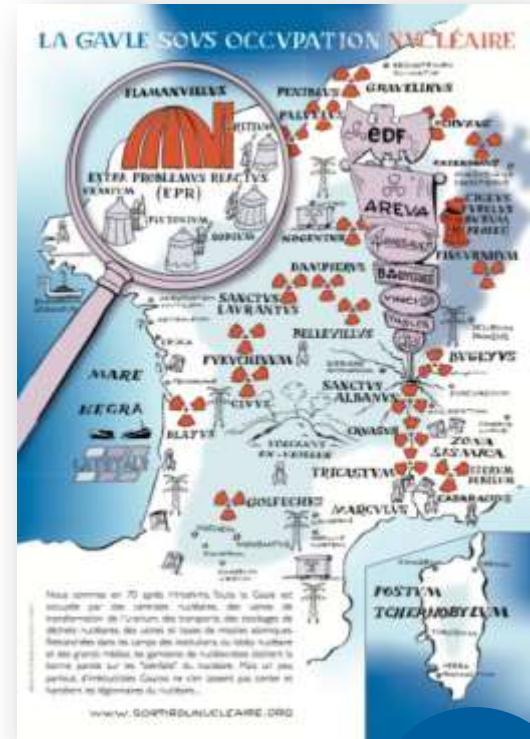


The fear of  
contamination  
(*The Land of  
Hope*, 2012).

# 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.



La Gaule sous  
occupation  
nucléaire (RSN).

# 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.
- Example: *Le monde après Fukushima* (Watanabe, 2012).



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.
- Example : *Fukushima, une population sacrifiée* (Zavaglia, 2012).



The use of the depth of field  
(Zavaglia, 2012).

# 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.



Anti Nuclear  
Protest, Lebrun &  
Barreyre, 2011.

# 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.



*Un printemps à Tchernobyl*  
(Lepage, 2012).