

Risk and Rationalities Conference

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TITLE

Nuclear Narratives

ABSTRACT

This paper reports the results of 35 qualitative interviews obtained in 2005 with members of the local community around a decommissioning nuclear power station, at Bradwell in the UK. Taking an innovative narrative approach, we explore people's subject positions and values through the stories that they tell about living with nuclear risk. There is now a growing body of research in science and technology studies which seeks to recognise the central role that meaning and interpretation play in discourses and action around risk issues. What unites many such studies is a concern to examine the circumstances under which risks come to be understood and acted upon by people in the contexts of their everyday lives. The present work is also more broadly located in methodological work on 'personal risk biographies' which draws on both narrative/biographical interviews and narrative analysis of these interviews. We discuss the means and discourses that our participants deploy for living with nuclear risk, which include: processes of familiarisation/normalisation, tradeoffs between risk and both monetary and non-monetary benefits, and the emotional engagement or disengagement they achieve with the risk issue. The paper concludes with a discussion of the methodological usefulness of a biographical and narrative approach for interpretive qualitative risk research.