Audience; the weak link in the securitization process of the environment?

Anastasios Karafoulidis
National University of Athens
The 3 pillars of securitization

**Actor**
- Performing the securitizing move by making a “speech act”

**Speech act**
- Conveying the meaning of urgency about a designated threat toward the “audience”

**Audience**
- Receiving the securitizing move and responding to it either by concurring and granting a mandate to address the threat, or not
1. Actors

**Institutionally powerful actors**
Presidents, ministers, local administration officials, international organizations, etc.

**Widely known figures**
Former state leaders, artists, academics, etc.

**Mass media (possibly)**
Wide circulation newspapers, news networks, television, etc.
2. Speech acts

- Verbal utterances in the form of bold political speeches

- Official argumentation for climate change’s imminence, highlighting its impact

- Public calls for action
3. Audience

- Single individuals
- Citizens/the electorate
- Local communities
- Civil Society
How can an audience be convinced
1. By traditional speech acts
(all verbal utterances made by institutionally powerful actors)

- Political speeches urging for extreme measures
- Empirical or theoretical analyses of relevant phenomena
- Presentation of alarming evidence in numbers
- Explanation of nature’s mechanisms and the physics of climate change

In essence, scientifically based discourses coming into play with strict political language
2. Through visual representations

- Images of reducing glaciers and melting polar icecaps
- Pictures of flooded cities
- Televisual contact with the effects of hurricanes and similar phenomena
- In a nutshell, viewing the consequences of climate change’s effect on the planet’s everyday life
3. By being an actual victim

- Suffering family loss due to catastrophic events
- Suffering income loss due to decreased agricultural productivity in desertificated lands
- Suffering the immediate sociopolitical repercussions in areas adjacent to the directly affected ones (sudden and massive immigration, armed conflict over natural resources etc)
4. By being positively prepared (or constructed)

- Having undergone an environmentally responsible social construction
- Having embedded environmental concerns in its behavioral patterns
- Having developed a strong environmental awareness within its identity
Securitization of the environment;
A broken chain?

Being sensitized and convinced is one thing;
acting back is completely another...
Ineffective speech acts?

Speech acts may convey meaning to the audience, but cannot guarantee a positive reaction from its part.
Ephemeral visual images?

Images can evoke the public’s feelings but they can seldom cause any further reaction.
Insufficient suffering?

Being harmed by climate change’s consequences does not always increase people’s will to address the threat.
Investing on social construction

Embedding environmental responsibility in our identity can lead both to persuasion over the securitization of climate change and to active response from the respective audience.

Externally provoked sensitivity has proven insufficient to cause the audience’s positive reaction. It is internalized sensitivity that we should seek.