



# MEDIA ANALYSIS OF THE FUKUSHIMA NUCLEAR POWER PLANT DISASTER

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## THE MOST IMPORTANT FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH.

- In this research we are presenting the appearance of the disaster of the Fukushima nuclear power plant in the Hungarian online press (Index, Origó, NOL, MNO, Hetiválasz, Figyelőnet, HVG) with quantitative methods. However, we did not limit our research to news reports on the Fukushima disaster, but included all articles referencing Fukushima. This enables us to follow how reports on the events unfolded, from economic effects through news items about victims, damages and the dangers of radioactivity.
- The topic of Fukushima entered Hungarian online press as a sensation. It is usual for sensations that they start growing from close to nothing, and after a certain point the number of articles published on the subject start decreasing. From the first mention

until about the 19th day, articles related to the subject were published in a continually increasing number, and afterwards there were less and less reports and references published in Hungarian online press.

- Sensations are not necessarily destined to be forgotten. Certain sensations remain discussed in different discourses, they become “unavoidable milestones”, important points of reference. In our opinion, the Fukushima subject will probably become such a reference point, although empirically confirming it would only be possible after a longer time period. It has been transformed into an important reference, lieu de memoire or place of remembrance in relation to several topics, such as energy policy issues; the construction, expansion, life cycle and safety of nuclear power plants;

environmental protection and the human destruction of the environment; or Japan's economic situation.

- The subject of Fukushima comprised several sub-topics: the disaster of the power plant itself could be interpreted from different viewpoints, and there were also peripheral subjects that are not reports of the accident or its direct consequences, but "only" refer to it. The sub-topics are divided into four main groups: the natural disaster; the power plant accident; energy management issues; economic aspects.

- The ratio of articles related to the Paks nuclear power plant was altogether increasing week by week after the Fukushima disaster. However, Paks became a significant subject only in week 13, after a slight "concentration" in week 2. Content detailing the safety of the Paks power plant became a central topic of discourse in week 2, aimed at putting the Hungarian public at ease. After a longer pause, news items on the expansion of the Paks nuclear power plant gained limelight around week 13.

- The Fukushima subject escalated not only in terms of its content, but also spatially: more and more articles appeared in the Hungarian and international press about countries that had been affected in one way or another by the consequences of the earthquake, the tsunami or the nuclear power plant disaster. Japan was mentioned in various contexts in the news. Beside the natural catastrophe, the nuclear disaster and its consequences received the most press coverage. Hungary was primarily mentioned in energy policy and economy-related questions in relation to the Fukushima accident. The Japanese nuclear catastrophe amplified discourse about the Paks nuclear power plant in Hungary. The United States was mostly mentioned in an economic

context, more precisely in topics on capital and stock exchange markets, while the scientific-technological aspect was also linked to the US.

- Based on the articles of The New York Times, we can state that the American press organ discussed the Fukushima article on more of a global scale, mentioning more countries than the Hungarian press. Several countries were only mentioned marginally, loosely connected to the nuclear catastrophe in The New York Times. This can be explained with the fact that The New York Times reports on events of the world much more expansively, presenting the correlations between different processes in more detail.

- It can be observed that certain sub-topics related to Fukushima were closely connected to data provided and quoting experts. This was most strongly perceivable in articles on financial topics, where more than two and a half times as much data is included than in other articles. In general, the strong presence of economic topics also increases the average amount of data per 1000 characters. In the case of articles related to the direct effects of the accident (victims, power plant accident, radioactivity, nature, health topics) this correlation is inverted. Similarly, mentions of the topic of Paks also decreased the average amount of data in the articles.

- Comparing the Hungarian press and The New York Times, we can find significant differences in the practice of providing data and expert opinions among articles about Fukushima. The ratio of articles containing facts or referencing experts, studies is much higher in The New York Times.