

**XXIV CYCLE**  
**Ph.D IN COMMUNICATION SCIENCES**  
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***NUCLEAR AS A SOCIAL CONFLICT IN THE NEW MEDIA***  
***(From Nuclear Renaissance to Fukushima)***

The disaster of Fukushima nuclear power station has happened as a result of the Japanese earthquake of March 11, 2011. It has confirmed how the media communicative processes are able to modify the vision of a given social object. The strong impact determined by the dissemination of news regarding the event have as a matter of fact caused a radical change in the public perception towards the perspective on nuclear energy. In no time we have gone from the possibilism, condensed in the symbolic expression “Nuclear Renaissance,” to a framework based primarily on the aspects of risk and impact resulting from such energetic option.

This process of reinterpretation of the nuclear social object was quite evident also through the digital media, including the online journalism examined in this research. The preliminary hypothesis is that in the communication process also new media (in this case particularly the on-line publishing) stand as social actors which actively participate in the dispute.

This role is expressed through the use of topics and keywords that have been given different levels of accessibility and visibility. In order to evaluate this active part, it has been decided to compare the communicative approach of some online newspapers in normal conditions with respect to emergency situations.

Then it was performed a content analysis on articles addressing nuclear issues, published in a period of time of one year (November 2009 - October 2010) by the three chronicle online newspapers with the largest number of web readers, according to Audipress data: il Corriere della Sera, la Repubblica and la Stampa. Afterwards, it was performed a similar analysis on the keywords used by the same online newspapers during the week following the disaster of Fukushima (11-18 March 2011).

The comparison of the results obtained from the two observations has highlighted the active role played by the examined newspapers, which have been able to produce a profound change in the perception of nuclear energy. The change in the public opinion was radical and deep and was able to determine the result of the referendum, which took place only two months later, in June 2011, and can be considered a tombstone on the nuclear energy option.