



Case histories in scientific and pseudo-scientific mass-media communication in energy/heat production from underground (geogas storage, geothermics, hydrocarbons), in the frame of Nimby Syndrome enhancement in Europe: the proposal of a new European Directive

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In the frame of energy/heat production from underground, the paper considers some European case histories and the needs of a complex and motley stakeholders community, made by scientific-industry-institutions, involved in the difficult task to study and accept (or refuse) projects strongly impacting the lived territory & underground, in densely populated countries, as Italy, in terms of appropriate public communication and sound deontological behaviour.

Successively, the paper recalls years of “scientific” communication within the mass-media, highlighting the positive and negative messages, in comparison to the true and objective experimental data gathered by the real scientific work, as perceived by citizens of medium scholastic culture, which not delve the geologic disciplines, but receive simply the journalistic front-end, very often as sensationalist scoop.

The authors retrace case histories of heuristic-participatory communication with the citizenship about the scientific results on challenges raised by certain technologies. The objective and rational communication is often impeded by local interests and by local journalism, which prefers to create sensationalist news more than scientific truths.

This path progressively tangles as a consequence of the complex and with conflicting use of underground to produce energy (heat as gas storage, geothermical, unconventional gas exploitation, mining, etc...). Even the chain of renewables meets by now serious issues, exacerbated also by the need to start mining and drilling for the smart grids materials too (metals, rare Earths, etc..). A new text for a smart and innovative European Directivity is discussed, starting from the Italian regulatory issue.

The review efforts for a “paper” on both a newspaper or a blog could be more difficult than the review a scientific paper, as a consequence of the peculiar situations behind the scenes and the conflicts of interests staying in the nest in a newspaper article or in a blog comment (locally political interests, commercial interests, attention-seeking, colleagues envies, etc..). The scientific journalists are normally of low scientific and ethical level and they are often coopted by negative mechanisms (mainly political for some newspapers or TV). The paper travel over again the AAPG rule of ethics (American Association of Petroleum Geology), taking the advantage of certain concepts developed by Nomisma Energia too and of concepts coming from our work, building energy-related questionnaires, also with municipalities affected by disastrous geological adverseness (i.e. earthquakes, contamination, slides, floods), even managing infrastructures of energetic production from underground (rims, storage, geothermics, etc...). In conclusions we suggest a “scientific journalist licence” (from Italy this kind of skill is escaping) and grave procedures of “Hippocrates adjuratory” for scientific journalists as well as for scientific community and operators involved in the sector. The case histories reported emblematic of how the road is long, meandrous but necessary.