

Media and experts: setting the agenda of the debate in an on going seismic sequence

Gemma Musacchio (1) and Giovanna L Piangiamore (2)

(1) INGV, Amministrazione Centrale, Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Rome, Italy
(gemma.musacchio@ingv.it), (2) INGV, Sezione di Roma2, Istituto Nazionale di Geofisica e Vulcanologia, Roma, Italy

Risk communication is a social responsibility that can efficiently be accomplished with cooperation between scientists, experts, and journalists. Informed and aware citizen can then take actions towards politics and policy makers. By channeling information in a way that makes some aspects more relevant than others the Media introduce frames of reference that influence how different individuals or societies perceive disasters, and yet act on the ethic of a disaster.

We have analyzed the echoes of a seismic sequence in the Media and addressed newsworthiness criteria with respect experts' knowledge. Our case study is the seismic sequence that struck Central Italy on August 24th 2016 (Mw 6.0), had two other large events on October 26th (Mw 5.9) and 30th (Mw 6.5) and was followed by intense seismic activity with large aftershocks lasting several months. We quantify the occurrence of specific indicators in the text of in-print and in the headlines of on-line articles and derive a statistic distribution. Indicators were to explore WHO does the journalist refers to (the source), WHAT is considered to be news-worthiness and whom is actually the journalist trying to give VOICE to. In assessing newsworthiness we break down the WHAT indicators into three main categories, which we think of major interest to understand natural disasters icons in the Media, in the first days of occurrence. They are: Scientific Coverage, Risk Reduction Issues and Earthquake Damage.

Our analysis inquires, throughout a quantitative approach, if prevention is discussed in the news and to what extent. We argue that the ethic of disaster reduction should pass by the understanding and support of prevention measures.

First results show that Media do think valuable to provide their public with an in-depth scientific coverage and refers to authoritative sources. Although memory of past earthquakes is always part of the story, only one month after the main shock risk reduction disappears from the media's agenda. We also explored the level of public engagement in risk reduction and found out that Media (in Italy) still seem not believe that citizens should be active part of the debate upon their own safety.

Risk reduction must stand on a dialogue between science, policy, media and local communities to build a more resilient society. Media have the ethical responsibility to communicate effectively experts' knowledge. Experts have to be aware of their ethical responsibility to communicate their science to citizen's bearing in mind that there is always a way to make things simple preserving correctness. This is the challenge.