

TRUST AND MONEY: WHAT IS PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE ABOUT ?

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ABSTRACT

Many questions need answering when we are faced with the issue of whether or not our project or plans will find consensus at the wider societal level.

1. What do we refer to when we speak about “public acceptance”? Why is this topic becoming more and more relevant for managers and policy makers? What is the rising wave of popular discontent telling us?

When the relationship with the public is given *early and correct* attention, issues of public acceptance usually do not arise.

2. How should we proceed, how should we address the potential problem when we don't even know if there will be a problem?

The public, instead of being a problem, can be seen as an important *resource* that can be used to better understand the implications of what we intend to realize. In other words, is it in the best interest of us all?

3. Why is it so difficult to reason and dialogue with the public?

Conflicting points of view are the expression of a socio-cultural *process*: complex cultural patterns which are continuously evolving in relationship to the emerging needs of the community. When this process is recognized and actively supported, conflict can melt into change, different perspectives can be integrated, solutions appear.

4. Where are we now?

While most psychosocial studies point out the importance of building an enduring trusting relationship with the public, a very common idea among decision makers is that problems can be solved through some kind of economic incentive or compensation. While economic compensation has worked in the past and can still work in some cases, it will not always be sufficient or it might even be counterproductive, if the real needs of the population are not being met. There is no single recipe, and thus social implications need to be considered *case by case*.

BIOGRAFIA

Samuela Vercelli is a researcher in the field of psychosocial factors that shape people's perception and reactions to science and technology. She started in the late 1990's collaborating with the Fluid Chemistry Lab at Sapienza University of Rome on projects that aimed at public awareness of earthquake preparedness. Recently she has focused her work on issues regarding the communication and dissemination of a new technology with a great potential for greenhouse gases emission mitigation, CO₂ Geological Storage. A very specific and unique aspect of her approach is that she unites psycho-sociological skills with a thorough knowledge and dialogue on the scientific-technological aspects. She participates to several European research projects and has been involved in the creation of CO₂GeoNet, the European Network of Excellence on the Geological Storage of CO₂, as Management Board member and Activity Leader for Spreading of Excellence. She is now vice-chair of the Executive Committee of the Network.

She graduated at Sapienza University of Rome in Psychology (1989) and specialised in Clinical Psychology (1994).