



Webinar 7 – Citizen Engagement in PilotSTRATEGY: What Communities Are Telling Us

Thursday, March 26, 2026 – 11:00 to 12:00 CET



The PilotSTRATEGY project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101022664

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What to expect

Welcome & Introduction
Sabine Preuß, Fraunhofer ISI

11:00–11:10

Offshore CCS in Portugal: experimenting with different methods of citizen engagement
Ana Delicado, University of Lisbon

11:10–11:20

Trust and CCS in rural, depopulated areas: What we heard in Spain's Ebro Basin
Christian Oltra, CIEMAT-CISOT

11:20–11:30

France (Paris Basin): Ins and outs, ups and downs: The scales of community engagement
Claire Mays, Symlog

11:30–11:40

Moderated Q&A

11:40–12:00





Welcome & Introduction

Sabine Preuß, Fraunhofer ISI

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Overview: Scaling up CO2 storage – pilot studies in regions with promising geological resources (H2020, May 2021 - April 2026)

📍 Project regions

📍 Additional project partners

🏭 Number of industrial facilities in the promising regions (2018) (STRATEGY CCUS, 2019)

☁️ CO2 Emissions (Mt/2018) in the promising regions (STRATEGY CCUS, 2019)

PilotSTRATEGY aims to advance understanding of deep saline aquifers (DSA) for geological CO2 storage in five European industrial regions.

[Explore the Regions](#)



Trans- and interdisciplinary dialogue including *manifesto* (WP1)

Exploratory phase

Engagement phase

Final outcome

Analysis of policy alignment in the PilotSTRATEGY countries (PT, ES, FR, PL, HL) and in frontrunner countries (NL, UK) (D6.1 and D6.6)

Stakeholder engagement in 20 Regional Stakeholder Committees involving ca. 300 stakeholders (D6.4)

Recommendations for future engagement pathways beyond project lifetime (D6.7)

Regional profiles based on document and analyses of local media, google search outputs and wikipedia articles and 56 interviews (D6.2)

Citizen engagement in country specific formats (D6.3 and D6.5)

Measuring public acceptance (surveys) including over 3300 respondents (D6.2 and D6.5)

**Zooming-in:
Societal
aspects in
Pilot-
STRATEGY**





For policy makers, local authorities and project developers

Social acceptance possibly emerges through

- iterative dialogue
- transparent information sharing and
- genuine opportunities for communities to voice expectations and shape project design

Public engagement is key – implement it early

Adjust to local context and dynamics

Key agents to build lasting relationships and trust

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Offshore CCS in Portugal

Experimenting with different methods of citizen engagement

Ana Delicado, ICS-ULisboa

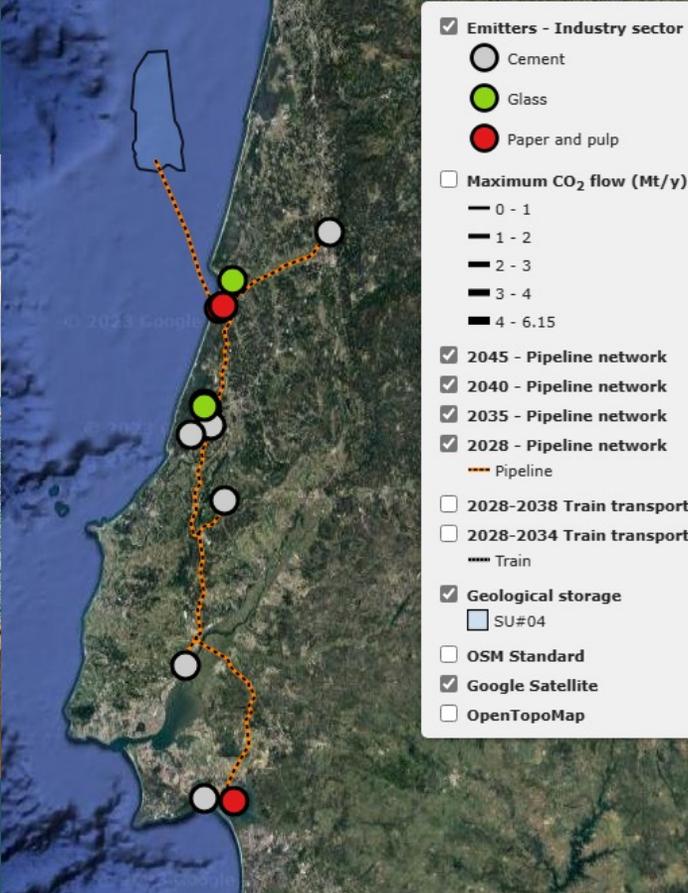
Jussara Rowland, INESC-ID

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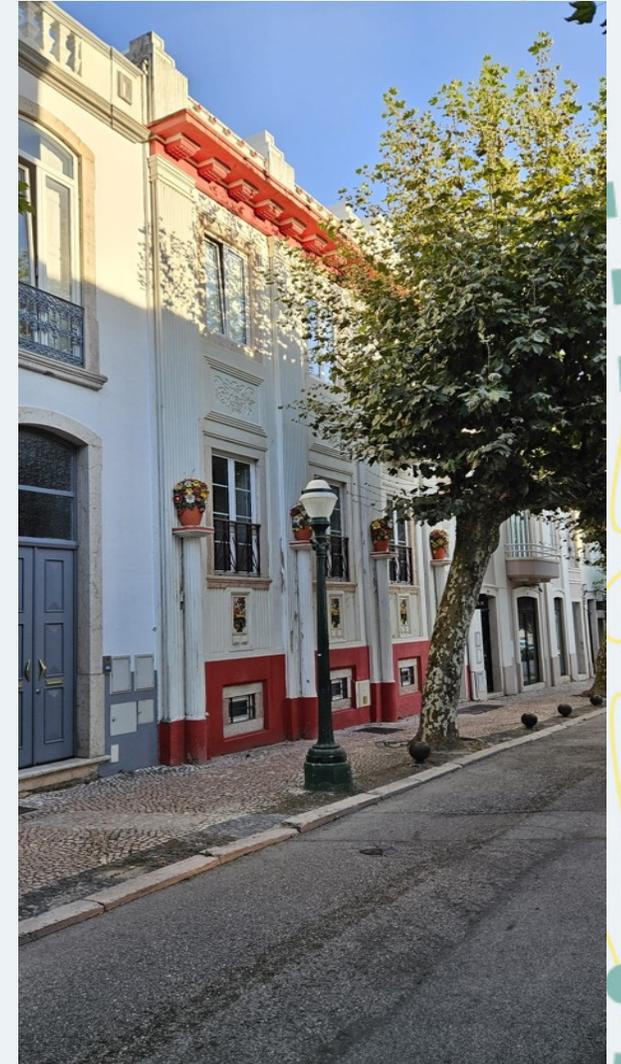
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The location



The local community

- Figueira da Foz, medium-sized city in a municipality of 61 thousand inhabitants
- Commercial port
- Fishing harbour
- Beach resort, summer tourism
- Local industry (paper mills) with environmental impacts



Citizen engagement

2024	2025
<p>Workshop</p> <p>1 session, February 2024</p> <p>9 participants</p> <p>Recruitment: open, invitations sent to CSO and other local actors</p> <p>Full participation of the technical team</p>	<p>Interactive exhibition</p> <p>1 afternoon, September 2025</p> <p>29 participants</p> <p>Recruitment: social media, invitations sent to CSO and other local actors</p> <p>Full participation of the technical team</p>



Workshop

Carbon capture and storage (CCS)

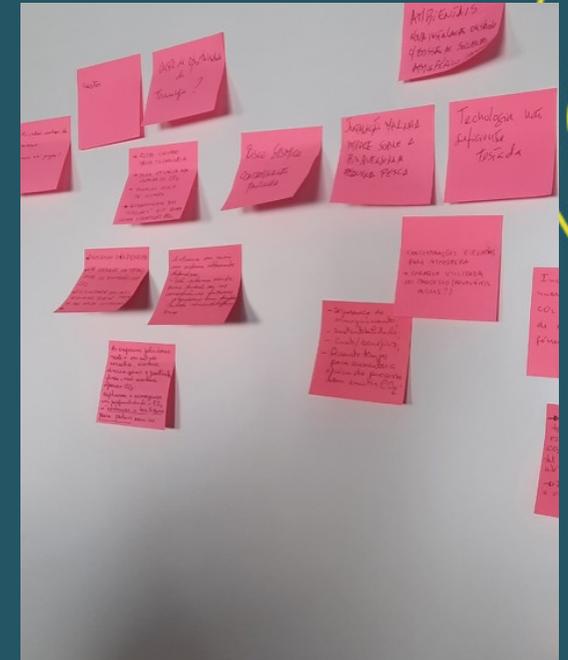
Introduction
Video about CCS
News article
Benefits and concerns

First part

PilotSTRATEGY and CCS in Figueira da Foz

Presentation on PilotSTRATEGY
Discussion
Q&A
Factors for acceptance
General stance

Second part



Results

Some participants did their homework beforehand, arrived at the event fairly informed

Pre-existing negative stance in some, more vocal, participants (against CCS for environmental reasons and techno-solutionism)

Many specific questions to the research team

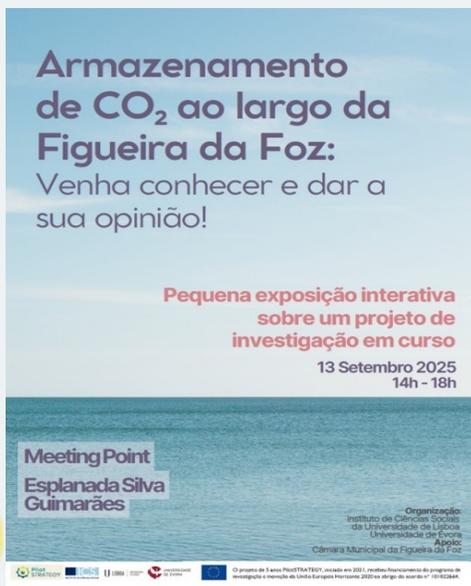
More risks identified than benefits

Reluctance in selecting factors for acceptance

Half reject the project, other half consider that it's not the ideal solution but could benefit the planet



Exhibition



1 CO2 emissions by country and per capita, daily life emissions

2a CCS Technology

2b Use of CCS technology in the world

3 Geological requisites and how it works

4 Offshore potential at Figueira da Foz

5 Projects PILOT and CTS, Model

6 Pilot at Figueira da Foz, timeline

Introductory posters

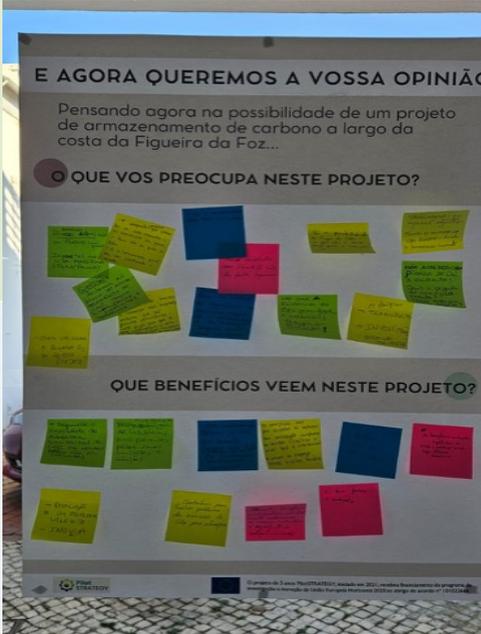
Post-its, voting, comments



Results

Concerns	Benefits
<p>Safety issues (earthquakes, leaks, environmental contamination, transportation)</p> <p>Carbon footprint of the project</p> <p>Costs (and who will pay for them), bureaucratic delays</p> <p>Need for consulting the community</p> <p>Risk of delaying emission reduction</p>	<p>Emissions reduction and environmental protection</p> <p>Corporate responsibility</p> <p>Economic benefits</p> <p>Job creation</p>

Opinions were mostly in favour, but opponents stayed away (comments on social media)



Challenges

- How to engage citizens in discussions about a fairly complex technology
- How to provide balanced and neutral information to sustain the discussion
- How to promote a public discussion on a project that is at an early stage of development stage (e.g. no regulation, no actual promoters)
- How to combine the need to collect scientific data with a participatory approach, responding to the needs and concerns of citizens
- How to overcome “self-selection” bias (negative in the workshop, positive in the exhibition)
- How to go beyond ‘vocal minorities’ and reach disengaged citizens
- How to widen the discussion to encompass larger sections of the local community



Trust and CCS in rural, depopulated areas: What we heard in Spain's Ebro Basin

Christian Oltra, Ciemat

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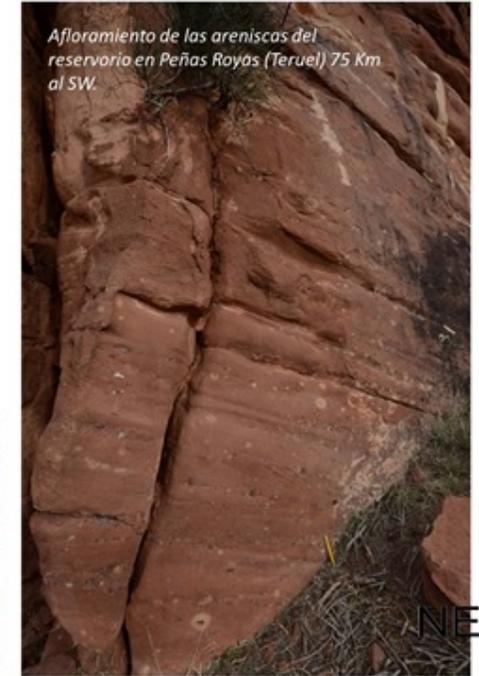
LOPÍN SITE, EBRO BASIN, ZARAGOZA, SPAIN



Situación de antiguos pozos de exploración petrolera de la zona (1950-1980)



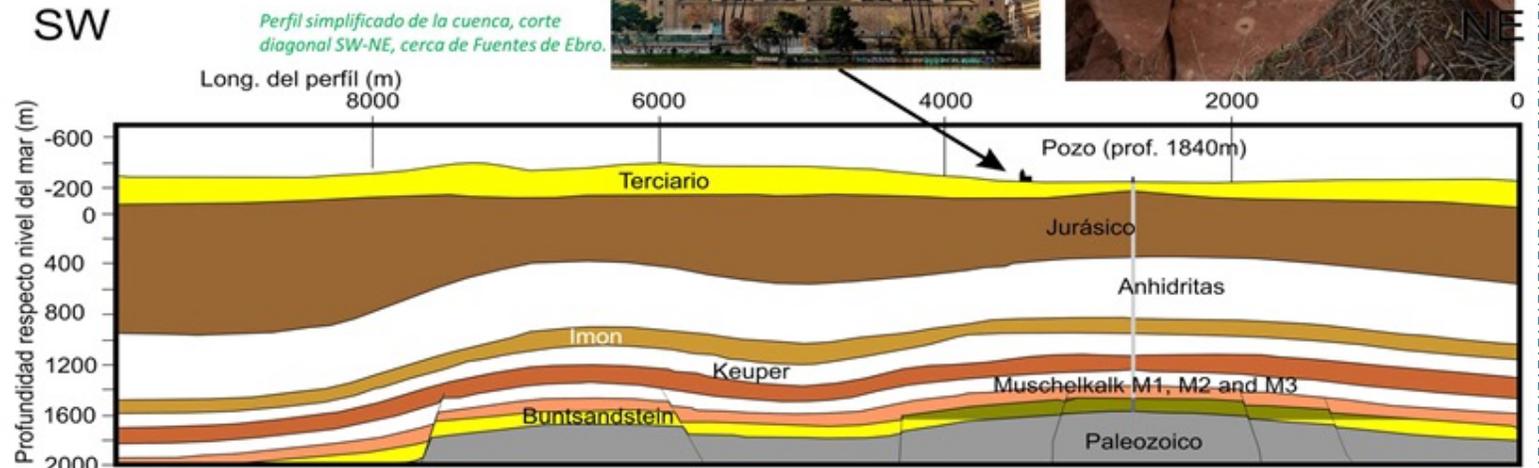
Imagen satélite de la zona con las zonas de Red Natura 2000



Afloramiento de las areniscas del reservorio en Peñas Royas (Teruel) 75 Km al SW.



92m 4 torres



The place shapes the conversation

Ebro Basin, Aragón — rural, depopulating, post-industrial

Around 2.000 inhabitants per municipality

Limited industrial activity, in transition (former coal mining, power plant closed)

Limited connection to major emission sources

“CCS is not judged only on technical safety, but on whether the project is fair, trustworthy and beneficial for the territory.”

RSC 1
(2022)

Belchite Focus
Groups (2023)

RSC 2–4
(2023–2024)

Quinto Focus
Groups (2025)

RSC 5–6
(2025)



Starting from zero

Initial emotional associations to CO2 storage

Belchite 2023

Astonishment

Curiosity

Scepticism

Fear

Some hope

Quinto 2025

Curiosity and hope

Fear and scepticism

“Why here?”

“Are we guinea pigs?”

Almost no one had heard of CCS. Without a technical frame, people make sense of the unknown through what they already know — previous energy projects, local conflicts, territorial experience.

“Why here?”

Why should this territory carry the burden?



CO₂ sources
(distant, industrial)



Storage site
(rural, depopulated, peripheral)

“Why a small town, not a coastal or industrial area?”

“Are we being chosen because we won’t resist?”

History of receiving unwanted infrastructure in depopulated areas

What worries people

What could go wrong? How residents assess risk



Subsurface safety —
Leaks, overpressure,
long-term integrity



Water & agriculture —
Aquifer contamination,
impact on farming



Transport — Moving CO₂
across the territory



Territorial equity —
Everyone should store
their own CO₂

Benefits open the door

But they do not close the deal



Local employment and training



Improved services and infrastructure



Municipal compensation and fiscal benefits



Population stabilisation

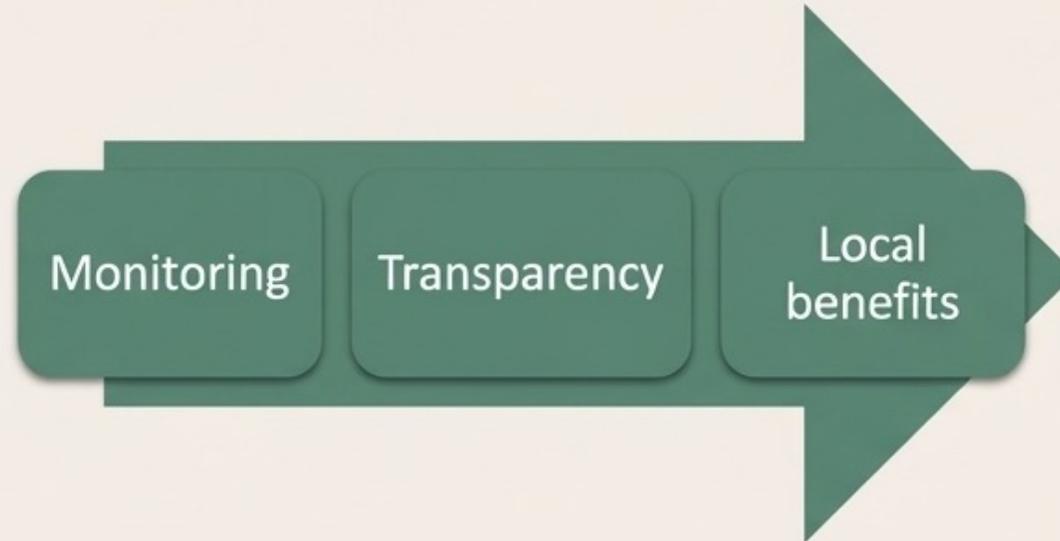
But benefits only work when people believe the project is safe, fair and real.

Stakeholders confirmed: tax incentives, business attraction, R&D centre, habitat restoration, local hiring

Trust has to be built

It cannot be assumed

High trust in technical experts, low trust in politicians and companies. Demand for verifiable mechanisms, not one-off assurances. 'Broken promises' from past energy projects.



“What residents expressed as conditions, stakeholders reformulated as operational commitments.”

“People don’t just ask ‘Is it safe?’ They also ask ‘Who decides, who benefits, and why should we trust them?’”

What we learned in the Ebro Basin

In the Ebro Basin, CCS is not judged only on technical safety, but on whether the project is fair, trustworthy and beneficial for the territory.

CCS is evaluated through territorial experience — not technical data.

Analogies, past projects and the feeling of being peripheral shape how people respond.

Acceptance depends on a package, not a single factor.

Safety without benefits, or benefits without trust, does not work.

Trust is not the starting point — it is the outcome.

It has to be built through transparency, fairness, verifiable mechanisms and genuine local participation.



France (Paris Basin): Ins and outs, ups and downs

Reflections from France

Claire Mays & Marc Poumadère, Symlog
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A study, a population: Field encounters and learning at different scales



Grandpuits, Seine et Marne, France (Paris Basin):
*100 km2 study zone,
20K residents*

Spring 2022: 3D Seismic Data Acquisition



**Summer 2022 – May 2024:
3 Open Doors Meetings**

Storage reservoir 9
CCS technology and potential 5
Project dependency on source factory 5
CO2 sources 3
Drilling and wells 3
Project next steps 2
Carbon capture 2
Carbon uses 1
Geothermal resource 1
Siting 1
Local benefit 1
Governance of R&I 1

STUDY SUBJECTS SET OUT BY RSC 1
CCS as a possible solution in the Climate Emergency
Technology & field experience, France & abroad
Risks: environmental, territorial, social
Economic dimensions
Governance and regulation

**Spring 2023 – Feb 2025: 4 meetings of
Reflection Group “Adaptations and
Territory”**

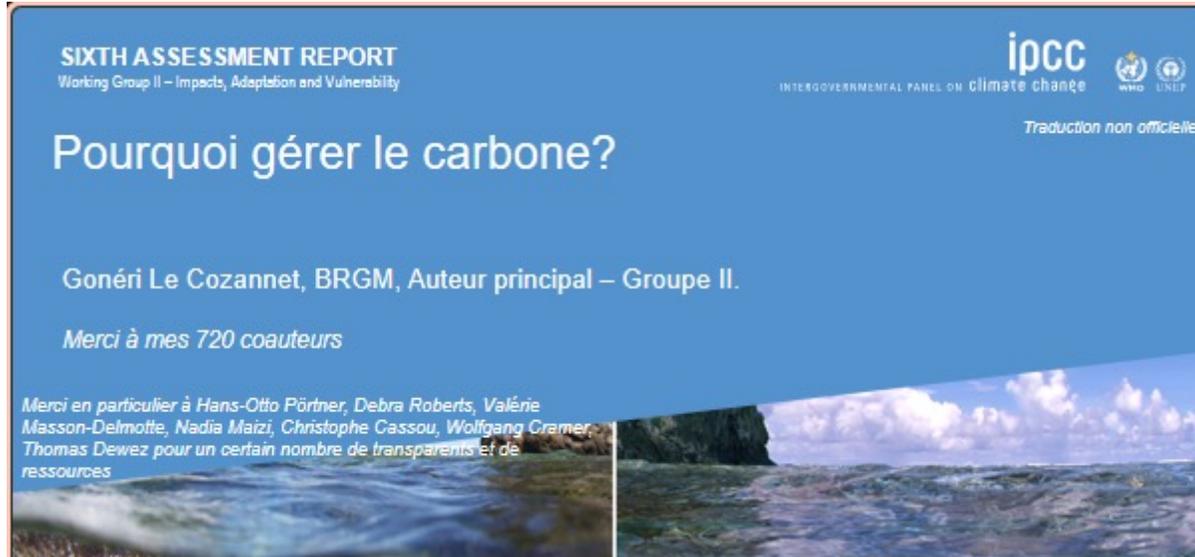


2nd RSC France:
Participant’s “practical
experimentation” with
the permeability of
different rock samples
from the investigation
zone

Framing too invoking different scales & values

Mutuality and collective solidarity: Recognized and rewarded engagement to meet the global risk of climate change

Bunker mentality and disinformation sorties:
A vulnerable territory unjustly targeted by a catastrophic capitalistic technology



Aerial view of Lake Nyos after the 1986 disaster Aerial view taken on August 27, 1986, of Lake Nyos in Cameroon, six days after a massive amount of carbon dioxide

Reflections

The research - however present, interesting and potentially impactful - doesn't necessarily garner attention on researchers' terms



Scientific & local knowledge production vs. catastrophism & disinformation

How to come together around a constructive response to risk?

Education and information: objectives but not solutions

Need to find common ground – at a scale that unites

Like the 100-year-old ceramic drains in farmers' fields

A boundary object enabling relationships



Farmers and the local Chamber of Agriculture repeatedly expressed concern about shallow subsurface ceramic drains placed in fields exposed to the seismic 3D data campaign.

- **Resolution to attend to** the concern and **respond** (georadar, resistance tests) as an **interdisciplinary** cooperation within the French team.
- **Reciprocity** took place: we (PilotSTRATEGY) ask stakeholders and citizens to pay attention to a complex EU CCS research project; in return, we pay attention to what they care about.
- **Co-construction** of an object: besides their materiality, the symbolic dimension of the drains is acknowledged (familial heritage over generations). Their value can be linked to *place attachment* and *environmental concern*.
- **Risk/Uncertainty handling** was not restricted to classical evidence & probabilities, but was opened up to accommodate concern for perceived vulnerability.
- Ditto for **responsibility**: a leak sprang in a municipal water system. It is unlikely that the vibrating trucks caused it, but there's a causal relationship between trucks' presence and the local concern triggered by the leak. So the cost of a network inspection was shared.



Q&A



D6.7: Policy Brief

with

Guidelines for Public Engagement and Recommendations

Release Status: Public

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PilotSTRATEGY (H2020- Topic LC-SC3-NZE-6-2020 - RIA)



PilotSTRATEGY Final Event – “The way forward for CCS in Southern and Eastern Europe”

21/04/26 | 08:30 – 16:30 | Consejo Superior De Investigaciones Cientificas & European Parliament, Brussels | Time shown is CEST



Feel free to share the news

Register here =>





Thank you for listening!

Feel free to reach out

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