

Natural or Human Disasters? Autonomy of the Science from Politics Facts, Needs and Challenges in Italy

Benedetto De Vivo

Pegaso University & Benecon Competence Center, Italy

As everybody knows, probably, in Italy after the tragedy of L'Aquila earthquake, scientists of Italy's Great Risk National Commission at Civil Protection Department were indicted not on their inability to forecast the magnitude-6.3 earthquake that struck L'Aquila in April 2009, but on their provision of "*incomplete, imprecise and contradicting information*". At the end of the 3rd level of Justice, all the scientists were acquitted, and only one was sentenced as guilty. The case highlights, on my view, a central problem in Italy, but also in other Countries - the incestuous relationships between science and politics, as often the scientists prefer to go along with, and even to defend, political decisions, rather than to act independently. In addition to the tragic case of L'Aquila earthquake, other examples of this behaviour, include, e.g., the building of the largest civil hospital (known as the Ospedale del Mare) in southern Italy on the slope of the Vesuvius active volcano and plan to dispose radioactive waste near the southern town of Scanzano Jonico, plan which luckily at the end was cancelled. I'm strongly convinced that scientists should speak loudly and clearly when insane decisions, which put at risk human lives, are taken by politicians (under the coverage of friendly scientists), because the value to preserve and to protect primarily is human life, and dealing with nature, should be always privileged the precaution principle, abandoning arrogant attitudes and the blind faith in the infallible technology.

Biography:

Benedetto De Vivo is Full Prof. of Exploration and Environmental Geochemistry at Pegaso University & Benecon Competence Center, Napoli, Italy; retired from University of Napoli Federico II; Adjunct Professor at Virginia Tech, USA and Nanjing University, China; Chief Editor of GEEA (Geochemistry: Exploration, Environment, Analysis); Fellow of Mineralogical Society of America. Has published 300 papers (most of them on top internationally referred journals); 30 educational publications; 30 Monographs, 7 text books (in Italian); and has edited 36 special volumes on international peer review journals books (in Italian) in geochemical prospecting and environmental geochemistry.