

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE: COMMUNICATING CONTESTED GEOSCIENCE

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Geological issues are increasingly intruding into ordinary people's lives. Whether it be onshore exploration and extraction of oil and gas, deep injection of waters for geothermal power, or underground storage of carbon dioxide and radioactive waste, many communities are having to confront the ramifications of geological interventions beneath their backyard. In turn, professional geologists are increasingly being encouraged to communicate what they do and what they know to the public, and even to advocate more directly its policy dimensions with stake holders and decision makers. Yet how can we do that when, for most people, geology is about 'stones' and stones are 'boring'! It is a problem compounded by the fact that many of our most acute geo-issues pertain to the unfamiliar realm of the deep subsurface. The result is that geology is largely out of sight and out of mind. To counter this, this talk will use a decade of experience in popularising geoscience for mainstream television programmes to explore ways in which geologists can make our subject connect better with the dissonant public, and in doing so forge more effective strategies for meaningful public engagement.