

Interactive comment on “The Takeover of Science Communication – Science Lost its Leading Role in the Public Discourse of Carbon Capture and Storage Research in Daily Newspapers in Germany” by Simon Schneider

Anonymous Referee #2

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Interactive Comment on “The Takeover of Science Communication – Science Lost its Leading Role in the Public Discourse of Carbon Capture and Storage Research in Daily Newspapers in Germany” by Simon Schneider Anonymous Reviewer

Re: Research article "The Takeover of Science Communication – Science Lost its Leading Role in the Public Discourse of Carbon Capture and Storage Research in Daily Newspapers in Germany" by Simon Schneider.

General comments: The following article provides a content analysis of the German

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newspaper coverage on CCS, using a quantitative approach for headline analysis as well as a qualitative content analysis of selected articles. The author's goal is to gain a better understanding of the role of science PR in the media coverage of CCS in Germany. Altogether, this approach promises to represent a substantial contribution to scientific progress within the scope of Geoscience Communication, as it is a suitable method to analyse/discuss the impact of science PR on media coverage. However, the current article reads more like an opinion paper and lacks an in-depth discussion and referencing in various sections. Therefore, in order to assure that the article will be relevant and insightful to an international and interdisciplinary readership, I suggest major revisions. I very much agree on the points raised by the reviewer Jen Roberts, and will only add some additional remarks.

Specific comments: 1. There are several sections where the author seems to describe a personal view without including appropriate references and without embedding his views into the wider discussion on the role of science PR within the media discourse on controversial energy technologies. For example, on page 3 the author writes "Research institutions and energy providers have tried to promote CCS as a transitional option to minimize the effects of climate change through the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. (...) In contrast, the political arena in Germany has shown no great interest in contributing content and insight to the debate around CSS." Here, sound references that support this quite provocative claim would be helpful for the reader. Furthermore, the author outlines on page 5-6 in several sections that communication from CCS opponents is mainly using storytelling strategies and emotions to guide the audience's own reflections and interpretations. When the author writes on page 3 that "The allegation that CCS has been misused to improve a company's image can be found in the recurring argument that the otherwise climate-wrecking business activities of the energy providers are being "greenwashed" (Smid, 2009), and that "some NGOs nevertheless support research into and the development of CCS as a transitional measure", one might interpret that the author relates scientific integrity mainly to proponents of CCS. Similarly, it is not clear what the author exactly means by "harmful" (p.8,

line 19) or “negative” communication (page 11, line 11). Criteria for such categories would be needed to counter potential biases. Also, I find it problematic to describe four general stakeholder groups without differentiating the plurality of opinions within these groups. For example, the author writes on page 3 that “Research institutions and energy providers have tried to promote CCS as a transitional option to minimize the effects of climate change through the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. Therefore, they seek to achieve public acceptance (...)” This can be perceived as misleading against the background that a variety of research institutions did not explicitly strive to achieve public acceptance for CCS, but rather wanted to provide the scientific basis for an open dialogue. On page 9-10, the author outlines that a lack of media resonance on the withheld study of the BGR (Federal Institute for Geo-Sciences and Raw Materials) shows that this study “was not considered to be of the utmost importance by journalists throughout Germany.” Why doesn’t the author further explore possible reasons for this lack of media coverage? The BGR is one of the most important consulting institutions of the German Federal Government but has also been subject to public criticism. This criticism was among others based on the fact that the energy company RWE financed staff positions in a research project of the BGR, which aimed to develop proposals for a binding set of rules for the use of CCS technology. I would appreciate if the author, given the controversial theme of interest-led science funding and its possible impact on scientific objectivity, more closely examines the theme of scientific independence. In the current version of the paper, one might think that the author sees science communication as entirely unbiased. Also, the author writes on page 12, that “it seems that the scientific field is unable to establish itself as a relevant source of information for journalists. Whether this is because of limited resources for outreach within scientific bodies or due to a misconception of how journalists seek out their sources remains unclear.” I think this thought should be further explored. I cannot see sufficient evidence of the current study that journalists didn’t consult scientifically reliable sources or the information from science PR. The main reason is that I do not understand which criteria the author used to choose the articles for his qualitative content analysis and how

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the content analysis specifically took place. How does the author know that journalists didn't consult reliable scientific sources? In my opinion, the criteria that the author outlines (lack of mentioning of scientists, conferences and studies) doesn't necessarily mean that journalists didn't do proper research about the scientific basis of CCS. Furthermore, it would be good if the author could be more explicit about the scientific findings that he sees unrepresented. In the conclusion on page 14 (line 10) the author writes "If science wants to reestablish its position as a strong and constructive communication partner for journalists, science PR has to move toward a more intense deployment of emotion. Without such a change, journalistic communication will focus on actors from NGOs and PIGs because of the greater newsworthiness attributed to emotions and conflict." Regarding this finding, I find the way the author uses "emotion" as a general category very vague and risky, not only because it lacks a clear definition by the author, but also because it seems that the author suggests using "emotion" as a tool to create media attention. Here, I miss a critical reflection of the consequences of such an approach and also an exploration of other means for improving the communication/knowledge exchange between science PR and journalism.

Technical corrections: - Page 2, Line 24: focus instead of focuse

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