

The Italian outstanding dilemma between fossil stocks and renewable resources: two Apulian case studies

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Received: 14 September 2019; Revised: 9 October 2019; Accepted: 14 October 2019;

Published online: 1 November 2019

Abstract: After analysing the trends in the Italian production of photovoltaic energy in the last decade, the study focuses on a contradiction inherent in the strategy papers of the Italian energy framework: in order to achieve the coal phase-out by 2025, such papers provide, on one hand, the consistent implementation of renewable energy generation and, on the other hand, a greater use of natural gas, considered an essential “transition energy” for the national energy security over the medium term. The dilemma between the use of traditional or renewable energy sources is particularly evident in Apulia, “homeland” of the Italian photovoltaics and, at the same time, major producer of coal-based thermoelectric power as well as future EU energy hub for natural gas. Within this region, the research study reviews the cases of two municipalities located in the province of Lecce: Melendugno and Melpignano. Only 17 km away from each other, the two municipalities host diametrically opposed energy projects: in Melendugno a top-down unilateral decision of the national government is allowing the landfall of the TAP (Trans Adriatic Pipeline) on one of the Apulian stretches of coast of greatest environmental value, against the will of the local community. Conversely, in Melendugno a Community Cooperative for the self-generation of photovoltaic energy, aiming at promoting a renewables’ culture, fostering the domestic electricity generation and creating new job opportunities, is making a positive contribution to the improvement of the quality of life of the whole local system.

Key words: Melendugno, Melpignano, Trans Adriatic Pipeline, community cooperative, photovoltaic energy, Italian energy strategy.