

Critical Review of *Geotechnical and Environmental Coupled Models Involving Unsaturated Soils and Rocks*
by Prof. Sebastià Olivella

Jaume Betran

31 of January 2018

Professor Sebastià Olivella presented his work *Geotechnical and Environmental Coupled Models Involving Unsaturated Soils and Rocks* on the 31st of January in front of an audience of engineers and students at the CIMNE premises in the Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya in Barcelona.

The speaker quickly introduced the title of the conference and himself with his name and position, but a deeper exposition of his and his team's research background would have helped the attendees to balance his current contribution and introducing the topic of the conference at the same time.

Professor Olivella uses, as customary, a slides' presentation as visual aid for his exposition. This is obviously used to transmit ideas to the audience but it is also an aid for the speaker. In this case, an undue weight was given to the latter, resulting in a poor assertion-evidence approach and leading sometimes to bullet lists with small font size and direct reading from the slides. In addition, some slides were skipped on the fly, giving an impression that either the visual support or the chosen pace didn't fit.

During the whole session the speaker showed a restless attitude which helped capture the attention of the audience but didn't fully use the available space, moving only from the laptop to the screen and back, therefore displaying a somehow hectic performance and a high distance with the observers. He, however, improved his body language in sections, for instance explaining the application of his work to the disposal of nuclear waste, showing his life experience.

As most of contemporary engineering research, the presented work lays in a highly specialised topic and it is expressed in a particular jargon and complex mathematical language. The speaker assumed that the audience was familiarised with that and only occasionally introduced specialised terms. Besides, a number of slides show long, complex equations that does not contribute to the delivery of the message during the exposition. On the other side, he carefully highlights most relevant concepts and recapitulates several times as the presentation moves forward.

In conclusion, Professor Olivella's presentation features many elements to correctly transmit the message to a given educated audience, but it may be improved by focusing on the receiver and putting the message into forms closer to the public.