Shale gas in the Netherlands
Towards an integrated view

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• Two tasks:
  • Research impact of science and technology; and stimulating public and political debate hereon
  • Research the dynamics of the Dutch science system

• Clients:
  • Dutch Parliament, European Parliament
  • Government (National, European Commission)
  • Broader public (incl. NGO’s)
Rathenau Institute (2)

• Funding
  • Primarily financed by Ministry for Education, Culture and Science
  • Also European Commission and European Parliament

• Independence
  • Fully independent: we make our own agenda
  • Open for ad hoc issues
Content

1. Why this research?
2. Methods
3. Results
4. Recommendations
Why this research?

• Shale gas debate dominated by technical aspects.
  • Focus on risks: ‘clean and safe’
• Urge for a broader discussion about shale gas
  • Society
  • Politics
• Polarisation of debate
Methods

• Media analysis
  • Technical discussion
  • Global discussion
  • Local discussion
• Desk research
• In-depth interviews with stakeholders
Results (1) Technological discussion

- Shale gas = natural gas (business as usual; normal procedures)
- Societal unrest: study on risks and safety
- Uncertainties about technical aspects and potential quantities
  - Potential overestimated in Poland
  - Potential underestimated in UK
- Findings mainly based on US and UK cases. In NL strict environmental regulation
- Broader critique by several stakeholders about scope of research
Results (2) Global discussion

• Increasing role for gas, including unconventional gas
  • Europe: liberalization
  • NL: prolongation Slochteren field (small fields)
• Game is changing; US less important in negotiations on gas
• Clean, reliable and affordable
  • Global scale: gas as transition fuel or new industrial cycle?
Results (3) Local discussion

• Urge to take into account local concerns and risks
• Shale gas not always compatible with local ambitions
  • What about local benefits?
• Frustrations at local governments
  • Lack of trust between local and national government
  • Difference in authority subsoil and aboveground activities
Recommendations

1. Broaden the shale gas debate and reinforce trust

2. Be clear and explicit about the role of (shale)gas for sustainability

3. Formalize cooperation between local and national government

4. Regard test drillings as broad socio-technical explorations

Put these recommendations also in the perspective of other energy-related policy issues in the future such as CCS or nuclear waste storage.
Recommendation 1
Broaden the shale gas debate and reinforce trust

• Benefit from societal and political involvement
  • An interesting agenda has been created
  • Open policy process: do not necessarily strive for consensus but open up for different viewpoints

• Ignorance of resistance = creation of resistance
  • Trust is crucial in decision making of controversial problems
  • How to reinforce trust? See following recommendations
Recommendation 2
Be clear and explicit about the role of (shale)gas for sustainability

Increasing role for gas
• Transition towards gas or towards sustainability?

(Shale)gas as a transition fuel
• Replace coal with gas (temporal solution to decrease emissions)
• Use gas revenue for renewables fund
Recommendation 3
Formalize cooperation between local and national government

Local concerns and context
- Mining Law: top-down and government decides
- Increase in subsoil activities (CCS; water; geothermal; shale gas)
- Lack of alignment of subsoil and aboveground activities

A regulatory framework on the subsoil is in the making
- Aligns both subsoil and aboveground activities and interests
- Formal participation of local stakeholders in decision making
Recommendation 4
Regard test drillings as broad socio-technical explorations

• Cooperative design
• Make a cooperative risk protocol
• Monitor foreign developments and keep flexibility to integrate lessons learnt
Challenges for the near future

• Steps forward towards a broader discussion
  • Yesterday evening: announcement of broadening discussion
  • This morning: hearing in parliament, about how to implement recommendations

• Trust is essential to benefit from political and societal involvement
• Think about our future
Questions?