Shale gas in the Netherlands
Towards an integrated approach for the subsoil

Annick de Vries
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Agenda

• Rathenau Institute
• Setting the scene: shale gas in the Netherlands
• Strategies by national government
• Conclusions
Rathenau Institute (1)

• 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
Setting the scene: shale gas in NL (1)

- 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
Setting the scene: shale gas in NL (2)

- 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
Setting the scene: shale gas in NL (3)

• 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?
Setting the scene: shale gas in NL (4)

- Urge to take into account local concerns and risks
- Shale gas not always compatible with local (sustainability) ambitions
  - What about local benefits?
- Frustrations at local governments
  - Lack of trust between local and national government
  - Difference in authority subsoil and aboveground activities
Strategies national government (1)

• General strategies for placement problems:
  • *Independent actions*: acting independently and ignoring potential opposition
  • *Government enforcement*: enforcing national policies and thus passing local interests
  • *Risk communication*: risk communication to inform concerned citizens
  • *Compensation*: using economic compensation
Strategies national government (2)

• **Strategy 1: following legal procedures**
  - Mining Law: subsoil activities belong to state
  - Shale gas: business as usual
  - Consessions to do exploration drillings

• **Resistance**
  - ‘Stories’ from abroad: risks for health and environment
  - Permit / conssession was cancelled

• **Conclusion**
  - Strategy necessary as starting point (legal framework)
  - Shale gas ≠ business as usual: does not fit in legal framework
Strategies national government (3)

- **Strategy 2: Participatory risk research**
  - Independent research on risks
  - Feedback group; take into account various viewpoints
  - Could also enhance trust

- **Resistance**
  - Research design became the topic of discussion
  - Lack of trust

- **Conclusion**
  - Flaws in process crucial
Strategies national government (4)

• **Strategy 3: Prolongation by introducing new rules**
  • Risk research: “shale gas can be developed safely and the associated risks are manageable”
  • New rules:
    • Environmental impact assessment for drilling company
    • Local effect should be taken into account; (structural plan)

• **Responses:**
  • New rules are not enough
  • ‘Mining Law is old fashioned’ → revision of Mining Law
  • ‘Other activities in the subsoil are ignored’
Strategies national government (5)

• **Strategy 4 (futuristic): integral framework for the subsoil**…???

• 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

• Integral framework on the subsoil:
  • Aligns both subsoil and aboveground activities and interests
  • Formal participation of local stakeholders in decision making
  • Reinforces trust
Conclusions

• Strategies for decision making on shale gas ≠ NIMBY strategies

• An integral framework for the subsoil is crucial for:
  • Reinforcing trust between national and local government
  • Future developments in energy-related projects
Questions?

Ideas for further research?

Experiences from other countries?

Annick de Vries: a.devries@rathenau.nl
Arnoud van Waes: a.vanwaes@rathenau.nl