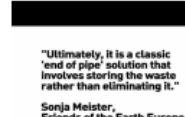
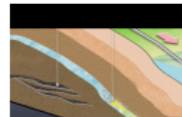




The ongoing EU project 'NearCO₂' studies public reaction to CO₂ capture, transport and storage. CO₂ capture and storage is increasingly being considered as a serious option to mitigate climate change. Industry and governments, mostly in North Western Europe, have taken on the effort of realizing large scale CCS operations. Meanwhile, the option has started to attract the attention from the larger public as well. To enable the public to form a fully considered opinion on a technology as complex as CCS, access to factual, comprehensive, and reliable information is required. The NearCO₂ project studies the information needed by the public, as well as the mechanisms that may affect the formation of public opinions, and how this interacts with current participation and communication practices. In the coming months the project will investigate development of participation and communication strategies that suit the needs of all stakeholders. In January- February, a large scale survey among both local and national public and stakeholders will be administered near five CCS demonstration projects in Poland, Spain, Germany, the UK and the Netherlands.



DVD screenshots

The results of NEARCO₂ European Focus Groups

A report on the results of the NEARCO₂ European Focus Groups is published on the NearCO₂ website www.communicationnearco2.eu (see 'Public perceptions of CCS').

The report presents findings on European public perceptions of CCS as elicited in six focus groups, one held in each of the UK, the Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Belgium and Spain. The development of opinion and the emergence of concerns were observed via phased exposure to a specially-commissioned DVD, which provided an overview of CCS technology, its rationale and associated debates, supplemented by additional information on national energy mixes. The DVD can be viewed on the website as well.

The general results show a high level of commonality in opinion and concerns across the six countries, with only minor differences. The concerns that emerged were not allayed by the information provided, which explained the rationale for CCS. On the contrary, there was evidence of a shift from initial uncertainty about CCS to negative positions on the technology. CCS was generally seen as an uncertain, end-of-pipe technology that will perpetuate fossil-fuel dependence. Furthermore, the participants were far from convinced that CO₂ can be stored securely for thousands of years. The focus

group format that we used in the NEARCO₂ work was designed to elicit opinion in response to the level and type of information that the public may be exposed to through the media (in fact the information was very likely more neutral than this). The responses elicited should therefore be illustrative of responses in everyday situations. Forthcoming quantitative work under NEARCO₂ (a large scale survey and experimental work) will complement this by examining opinions in a more controlled settings. In addition, an online forum using a 'dialogue board' design will further probe qualitative views.

It seems unlikely that information on the reasons and consequences of CCS will be sufficient for acceptance of onshore storage, particularly where residents perceive that they stand to gain little from CCS. Most participants in the focus groups were sceptical of information that they consider to originate from industry or government. Separately, we also know that objectors at onshore storage sites can have additional reasons for objection (e.g. relating to procedural justice or perceptions of over-industrialisation). These issues are unlikely to be resolved via information provision alone: developing and maintaining the level of trust between affected local publics and those advocating CCS will typically need to be a priority.



CCS in Germany

Germany still does not have legislation on CCS. A first draft has been withdrawn for revision in summer 2009. A revised draft that focused on demonstration and research projects and included an evaluation period for CCS has been presented in summer 2010. This proposal has been subject to discussion and criticism by industry as well as NGOs. Recently, the German government has postponed taking a final decision on the new draft. Thus, clarity on Germany's future CCS-strategy is still lacking.

The project led by Vattenfall which has been subject to analyses in the NEARCO₂ project in work package 1 is still ongoing: Vattenfall wants to explore the area around Beeskow and Neutrebbin (Brandenburg, Eastern Germany) regarding its suitability for commercial storage. However, the project has been met by strong opposition by the local public and several stakeholders. In order to provide a platform for further discussion the "Regionaler Erkundungsbeirat" has been established. This group includes diverse stakeholders, e.g. from local governments, NGOs, science.

Dutch government cancels Barendrecht CCS project

Early November 2010 the Dutch government cancelled plans for a Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) site near the city of Barendrecht.

According to the Dutch Minister of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, one of the main reasons for this decision is the fact that the project has encountered a delay of more than three years by now, thus reducing the added value of realising the project. Meanwhile projects that are important to the large-scale deployment of CCS are also conducted elsewhere in the world. Moreover, the Minister argues that a large part of the envisaged learning effects (procedures, judicial, permits, etcetera) has already been realised during the preparatory stage of the project. Therefore, the project

is no longer essential for further development of CCS in the Netherlands. On top of that, the press message mentions the lack of local support to be an important aspect in the decision process on a CO₂ storage project.

As for the local communication process in Barendrecht, the NearCO₂ project has delivered a case study for the project period until November 2009 in more detail. You will find this report published on the NearCO₂ website www.communicationnearco2.eu. (See the report "Review of the public practices for CCS and non-CCS projects in Europe" in appendix G. On the base of the case study a conference paper has been published as well).



Figure 2: Dutch government buildings



Project partners



Energy research Centre of the Netherlands (ECN)
Petten, The Netherlands



Institute for European Environmental Policy IEEP
Brussels, Belgium



Judge Business School
Cambridge, United Kingdom



Tyndall Centre Manchester
Manchester, United Kingdom



ISI Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation
Research
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