



Is natural gas really the cleanest fossil fuel

Success or failure? Three possible 'game changers' for the gas market were emphasized on the last day of IGRC2014 in Copenhagen.

Is natural gas really the cleanest of the fossil fuels like gas people everywhere in the world say? The question was raised by Mark S. Brownstein, Associate Vice President and Chief Counsel for US Energy & Climate Program and Environmental Defense Fund, USA.

He represents an interest group that keeps an eye on environmental and climate problems, among other things by driving around and measuring emissions from the gas grid. His point being that the gas world focuses too much on the fact that natural gas is the fossil fuel that emits the least CO₂, while there is not enough focus on the methane in the gas. Methane, which is a much more potent greenhouse gas.

'Gas can be worse than the alternatives,' he said and pointed out that the CO₂ emissions achieved by the USA by replacing oil with shale gas threatens to be overshadowed by the downsides, among other things because the gas is transported in old, leaky cast iron pipes.

Also air pollution, problems with waste water etc. can foil the advantages of gas, if the extraction of gas is not made clean and the transport efficient.

'It is not enough to only focus on CO₂; extensive focus on both CO₂ and methane is required,' he said and asked for much better data.

Another possible game changer came from Shinichi Tada, Head of Energy Technology Laboratories from Osaka Gas in Japan. A totally different kind of game changer: Fuel cells.

Japan was shocked by a severe accident at a nuclear power plant, and that has not only made the Japanese look towards other energy sources, but also towards local solutions.

In short time, Osaka Gas has managed to get 200,000 fuel cells in households and industry. The local heat and electricity generation can mean new potentials for the gas, if the fuel cells are efficient and competitive.

Finally, Alexander Johannes Hurdeman, Sr. Gas Spec. Oil, Gas & Mining, The World Bank Group, USA, invited the delegates to join him on a journey to Africa.

Millions of people in the developing countries are without stable energy sources. Many will demand energy, among other things gas. However, the gas is often extracted in one place and is needed thousands of kilometres away. There is great potential, but it is worth while to construct gas infrastructure, it is possible to have safe transport, were his questions to the audience.

Afterwards, the three speakers participated in a panel debate and had to receive both critical questions and suggestions of totally different game changers from the delegates in the room.

