

Sparks all over the world - Update from the COP19 Warsaw, Poland

by Carbon Trade Watch
Monday, 18 November 2013

I arrived to an overcast, cold Warsaw eager to get to my residence, drop off my things and get to work. As I was walking I noticed 15 fire engines and police cars blocking off the wide street ahead. While I got closer the gas fumes began making my eyes water and I realized that across the street there was a major gas leak. I wanted to run. At that moment I realized that the tiniest spark could set this whole area aflame.

As of April 2013, there were 109 concessions for shale gas in Poland, covering 88,000 km², with 43 exploration wells, of which nine carry out hydraulic fracturing and four have horizontal sections, according to the Ministry of the Environment.ⁱ With the largest reserves among EU countries, the government affirms that there are no risks associated with "properly conducted" shale gas exploration.ⁱⁱ However, local populations are strongly resisting the governmental push in order to "determine by themselves what is being done to their lands."ⁱⁱⁱ

Thursday night I had the honor of meeting members of one of the communities resisting shale gas in Poland at a film screening of the excellent documentary by Lech Kowalski, "Drill Baby Drill". Members of the community located in the far east of Poland arrived to the screening late because they were stopped by Police, again. The film follows a small farming community in Poland, who start out curious about the gas drilling prospects but become outraged with Chevron mounting a full action to block the drill. The film outlines negative health risks associated with living near shale gas extraction through interviews with farmers in Pennsylvania. Today, several of the community members face a court case on the 4th of December and are calling for international solidarity. See more information here.

The Philippine Movement for Climate Justice is planning solidarity actions on Sunday and Monday. Across the world people are joining Yeb Saño, the chief negotiator of the Philippines at UN COP19 to fast for climate justice. Today at the demo people will wear red dots that say "We stand with you" and post photos on the Facebook page of the same name. People fasting will wear large red dots with the same message.

Meanwhile, the European Youth for Climate Justice are creating sparks in Warsaw. In solidarity with Yeb Saño who is currently still on hunger strike, three activists from Earth in Brackets were kicked out and had their badges confiscated. Clémentine Hutin, one of the activists chucked out, sent a letter to Christina Figueres, the UNFCCC Executive Secretary, expressing her outrage to which Ms. Figueres replied flippantly that if they wanted to do something about climate change they should consume responsibly. They have been made to promise not to send any tweets to her about this. But you can!

Later tonight Polish groups will link up on-line with activists in Durban, South Africa to share experiences. The Durban communities have set up a climate camp to resist a new port that will ship out large amounts of coal and damage the livelihoods of local farmers. See more information at: <http://www.groundwork.org.za> The Polish groups will share their reality living in a coal-fired country with a new campaign called STOPEP.org with hopes of stopping any more power plant construction.

Poland is the 10th largest consumer of coal in the world and produces 92% of its electricity from coal, according to the World Coal Association. Its energy strategy includes plans to increase energy production by around 40% through to 2030 with coal as the backbone of electricity generation. Two new coal mines are planned in the eastern region of Lublin in addition to Polish utilities exploiting new coal deposits.^{iv} Poland is planning to spend EUR 24 billion in the energy sector over the next eight years with much of that earmarked for 11,300 Megawatts of new coal plants.^v

Monday the big Coal Summit begins in Warsaw to run parallel to the COP hosted by the Polish Government. Local communities and other groups will express their outrage with a Cough for Coal action accompanied by a eight meter set of lungs making the important link between environmental destruction and human health impacts. You can sign the Philippine Movement for Climate Justice's Resist Coal! statement before Sunday night.

Human health and environmental destruction are gaining more momentum but not only from local communities fighting for environmental justice but on a legal level as well. Researcher Rachel Tansey is calling for a meeting Sunday to explore how the UN World Health Organisation (WHO) managed to pass a decree forbidding ANY lobbying or participation from the tobacco industry. Cigarettes are like tiny coal-fired power plants so why shouldn't the UNFCCC also forbid polluting industries? Good question! Especially because communities are not given a choice whether or not they want to smoke emissions. If you are in Warsaw, go to Rachel's talk tomorrow, Sunday at 11am at the alternative space. Keep your eyes out for this debate in the future.

Inside the COP19 Japan stated that they will drastically reduce their emission reduction target from the previous 25% to 3.8% based on 2005 levels by 2020. Japan stated that it would instead focus on increasing climate finance. Japan is an Annex I country and has been very active in the carbon markets and will likely continue to concentrate on furthering bilateral and multilateral agreements while using expanded carbon markets.

Meanwhile, Australia stated yesterday that it would not support any financial agreements that would move money from the North to the South by blocking the "Loss and Damage" mechanism currently being debated. Canada is supporting Australia and Japan.

Australian activists are calling for a National Day of Climate Action tomorrow, Sunday, 17 November with a whole day of various exciting activities.

Plans for the MRV at the moment are being pushed by the Northern countries to set up a platform to share information, but the idea will be to follow this up in the next year (or so, still not clear) to create standards and finally a future global carbon market. Some Southern countries are saying, not until the "Loss and Damage" mechanism is agreed upon.

There are 30 corporate sponsors at the COP this year. Ironically, the UN Global Compact released guidelines for corporate lobbying which reads more like a users' guide to corporate lobbying. See updates on CEO Corporate COP blog. And please sign the Statement against the corporate COP takeover [here](#).

Next week things will heat up with (wrong turn on) REDD+ plans and more on MRV and Loss and Damage inside.

Meanwhile in Edinburgh, Scotland next week big corporations are coming together for the first ever World Forum on Natural Capital to discuss linking up biodiversity offset schemes this 21-22 November. Groups will come together to

create a counter-summit with the Forum on Natural Commons on the 21st of November. If you are in Edinburgh please come along. If not please sign the statement against biodiversity offsetting. See more information on plans for the Forum on Natural Commons in Edinburgh.

Next week on Wednesday CTW will launch a new publication, "Extractive Energy: How the ETS exacerbates climate change" and an exciting new photo essay with FASE-ES, "Like Oil and Water: Struggles against the Brazilian green economy" that will also be exhibited at the Forum on Natural Commons in Edinburgh.

More next week "off to the climate demo!"

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i Ministry of the Environment, "Update on Hydrocarbon Law and Projections of Shale Gas resources", April 2013.

www.usea.org/sites/default/files/event-/Shale_Gas_2_Ministry_of_Environment_Marta_Wagrodzka.pdf

ii Shale Gas Europe, Poland, Accessed November 2013.

www.shalegas-europe.eu/en/index.php/resources/shale-opportunities-in-europe/poland

iii DW, "Polish town says NO to shale gas", June 2013.

<http://www.dw.de/polish-town-says-no-to-shale-gas/a-16911687>

iv Aleksandra Tomczak, Europe not turning away from coal, World Coal Online, 22 March 2013.

<http://www.worldcoal.org/extract/europe-not-turning-away-from-coal-1303/>

v Joel Stonington, "'Coal-aholics': Poland Wages War on Efforts to Save the Climate", Der Spiegel, 21 December 2012.

www.spiegel.de/international/europe/poland-stands-in-the-way-of-european-global-warming-efforts-a-874344.html

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