

Unconventional Gas and Ethics

- Unconventional Gas produces **money for some** people and **risks and harms for others**.
- People are confronted with difficult choices between **immediate personal interests and obligations** to the wider society and to the environment.
- There is a great **temptation to deny** these dilemmas exist.



Ethical Dilemmas confronting Gas Industry Staff and Shareholders

When your job, income and ability to pay the mortgage, to support your partner and children, depend on drilling there will be a great reluctance to admit that things go regularly wrong in gas fields.

It's **not common to admit** that what one does might damage other people's lives. Geology and engineering training may bring pride in personal competence and sophisticated science skills so that the last thing staff will want to admit is that their **processes can fail** and that **communities can get hurt**.

The professional peer group can form a common interpretation that communities have **exaggerated fears** because they are uninformed – and when damage to communities becomes too evident to ignore, it is **justified as “collateral damage”** – paying the cost for natural gas.

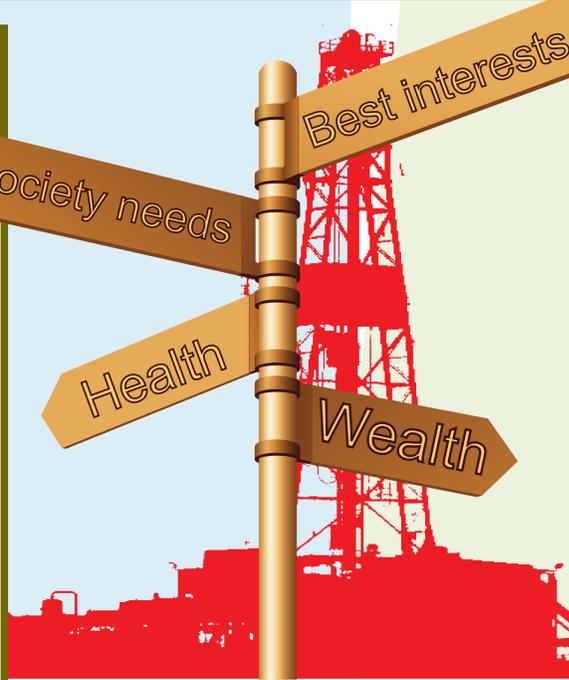
The psychological mechanisms involve **looking the other way** and/or rationalisation. Now and then though, gas industry insiders are personally affected and must take a decision.

Ask Rex Tillerson, CEO of Exxon...

7 Rationalisations

1. **Denial of responsibility**
'Safety is the job of the regulators, if they allow us then it's OK'.
2. **Denial of injury**
'There has never been a case of damage to health'.
3. **Denial of victim**
'It's collateral damage, there's only a few people live there'.
4. **Condemnation of critics**
'they would say that, they're extremists'.
5. **Appeal to higher loyalties**
'the country needs the gas'.
6. **'If we don't drill, another company would'**.
7. **Entitlement**
'We've trained to do this, we're risking our money and it's so far underground you have no right to stop us'.

Derived from Joseph Heath's '7 rationalisations for unethical action.'



Yes, fracking “is safe” ...

in an ideal world, where you *don't look* for contrary evidence, *refuse to hear* anything to the contrary and *keep your mouth shut*....

Faith Communities

Faith communities might find the new ethical issues of fracking challenging - as there is a lack of previous precedent for judging the ethical questions. **Won't taking up fracking divide communities?** Bewildered by seemingly complicated questions, it's tempting to stand on the sidelines and claim to be 'neutral'.

EXXON CEO CLAIMS FRACKING IS SAFE



Ethical Dilemmas for Planners and Regulators

The British government has said that fracking can be made safe because we have the best regulatory system in the world!

So the officials working in local authority planning or in the Environment Agency or the Health and Safety Executive are supposed to keep us safe....**while the government is busily undermining them.**

Many of them cannot **fail to recognise** that they have been set up. Being unable to tell this truth, that the dangers are real and having **little time, resources and power to do enough** - is the big ethical dilemma that the government has put them under.

Members of Local Communities

Members of local communities are faced with ethical dilemmas too. **Should landowners take the gas companies' money? Would their business suffer?**

Should people get involved in campaigning?

It takes time in a busy life and the **controversy might upset** neighbours and powerful people. Local newspapers might mock and misrepresent opposition. Getting friends and neighbours to look at difficult issues can involve being the bearer of news which might not be welcome. It might involve struggling to understand unfamiliar ideas and getting to know unfamiliar people. **It might also prove successful!**

Politicians.

As decision makers on every issue, politicians are principally concerned to be seen to be competent, active and, above all, **the centre of attention**. With little time to consider any issue in depth they **may live and work in a bubble** in which powerful people and corporations who are well connected, well resourced, well represented, well publicised, and, when needed, well protected and well hidden, often get their way.

There are few more powerful lobbyists than the energy companies who provide the fuel to power all the devices of a technological society.

In politics ethical considerations rarely come into play – politicians think instead using economic criteria in the belief that money measures benefits and costs – whereas of course it really measures what the most powerful players think are important and **how much political support they can get.**



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