

Fuelling change

How the energy transition in the 1960s in the Netherlands impacted changing intergovernmental relations

Rik Ploeg, 5734584
MA Thesis History of Politics and Society
Word count: 11727
Thesis supervisor: Irina Marin
Utrecht University
August 12, 2024

Abstract

During the 1960s, the Netherlands went through a large and swift energy transition. The discovery of natural gas from Groningen resulted in the transformation of the energy system from a regional organisational structure towards a centralised national system. This had an impact on the government system in the Netherlands, which was up until then characterised by pillarisation, corporatism and consensus-democracy. Based on the analytical framework for intergovernmental systems by Toonen et al., this research shows how the energy transition of the 1960s reflects the changing power relations between central and local governments. The central government took a more active and coordinating role in the new energy system. Local governments lost a degree of local agency and had more executive tasks in the new system. These developments have to be seen in the context of the period of economic growth and the emerging welfare state during the 1960s. Therefore, the energy transition from coal to gas can be seen as a reflection and an important part of the changing intergovernmental relations during this period.

Table of contents

Abstract.....	1
List of abbreviations	3
Introduction.....	4
Bibliographical survey.....	4
Theoretical framework.....	6
1. From discovery to implementation: How national and local governments in the Netherlands worked towards making natural gas from Groningen the main energy source for households	9
A new energy source; how to deal with it?.....	9
Growing concerns at the municipalities.....	11
Struggle for control; negotiations between SROG and Gasunie.....	12
SROG and Gasunie move towards common ground	14
Neglect for local interests at the national level.....	16
2. The government system in the Netherlands.....	18
The decentralised unitary state.....	18
Pillarisation, corporatism and consensus-democracy	19
Analysis of the government system in the Netherlands.....	19
3. How colliding interests affected intergovernmental relations	22
Functions, discretion and access	22
Analysis of the intergovernmental system.....	23
Adjustments to the decentralised unitary state.....	24
Conclusion	26
Bibliography	28
List of primary source material.....	30
Sources from the database of Delpher.nl.....	30
Sources from the archives of the Ministry of Economic Affairs	30
Sources from the archives of the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities.....	30
Other sources.....	32

List of abbreviations

VNG	Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten
SROG	Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening
NAM	Nationale Aardolie Maatschappij
DSM	De Nederlandse Staatsmijnen
LGA	Local Government Association

Introduction

In the 1960s the Netherlands went through a large and swift energy transition. After the discovery of a vast natural gas supply near Slochteren in the Northern province of Groningen, there was a huge opportunity to provide Dutch households with a new form of energy.¹ Within the timespan of a decade, nearly all households in the Netherlands shifted from using coal for warming their houses to natural gas.²

Before the transition from coal to gas, energy supply was mainly a concern of municipalities. City gas supply also provided local governments with revenue. The new energy system was a central coordinated system with large commercial parties involved. The Dutch Oil Company (NAM), owned by Esso and Shell, discovered the gas supply and sought to monetize this discovery. The NAM partnered with the Dutch government to organise a national system of gas supply and set up a distribution company called *Gasunie*.³ This meant that energy supply was no longer just a concern for municipalities, but a system with national interests and different needs than the previous system. Still, municipalities were crucial for the implementation of the gas network.

The swift transition towards a new energy system posed a challenge and a change of course for the existing intergovernmental relations in the Netherlands.⁴ Interests of national government often conflicted with local interests. Several municipalities reported a large shortage of finances to realize the new gas network. Others thought the gas prices for households were too high or complained about the lack of willingness at the national level to connect remote areas to the gas network. The national government however, was concerned with the economic risks of the gas transition. The business case for a national gas supply system required a sharp rise in household consumption and the commercial parties involved are less concerned with local interests than local governments.⁵

The case of the Dutch energy transition in the 1960s, and in particular the early phase in which the first negotiations took place, provides an interesting perspective on the changing intergovernmental relations in the Netherlands in this time period. It not only raises questions on how central and local governments cooperated and what the system of public administration looked like, but also on how this national period of transition brought institutional change to these systems. Therefore, this research will aim at answering the following research question: How does the energy transition in the 1960s in the Netherlands reflect changing relations between central government and local governments?

Bibliographical survey

The literature used for this research can be split into two categories. First, there is both primary and secondary source material on the Dutch energy transition case itself. Second, there is literature on intergovernmental relations and the Dutch system of government.

The case of the Dutch energy transition is relatively well documented. A recent non-academic publication is *De Nederlandse aardgastransitie* by Sven Ringelberg.⁶ In this book Ringelberg extensively describes the coal to gas transition from 1959 onwards. The goal of this

¹ Parlementaire enquêtecommissie aardgaswinning Groningen, 'Groningers boven gas. Rapport parlementaire enquêtecommissie aardgaswinning Groningen' (February 24, 2023), 134.

² Parlementaire enquêtecommissie aardgaswinning Groningen, 'Groningers boven gas', 141.

³ Sven Ringelberg, *De Nederlandse Aardgastransitie: Lessen voor de energietransitie van de 21^{ste} eeuw* (Utrecht 2021), 18-26.

⁴ Aad Correljé and Geert Verbong, 'The transition from coal to gas: radical change of the Dutch gas system', in: Boelie Elzen, Frank W. Geels and Ken Green, *System Innovation and the Transition to Sustainability: Theory, Evidence and Policy* (Cheltenham 2004), 114-134, here: 118-119.

⁵ Ringelberg, *De Nederlandse Aardgastransitie*, 69.

⁶ Ringelberg, *De Nederlandse Aardgastransitie*.

book is to learn important lessons on policy making for the 21st century transition to sustainable energy. Another source is *Natural Gas in the Netherlands. From Cooperation to Competition* by Correljé, Van der Linde and Westerwoudt.⁷ This book provides an extensive history on the role of Dutch gas since 1959 and the policy development processes involved. This work by Oranje-Nassau Group is aimed towards professionals and policy makers in the future.

In ‘The transition from coal to gas: radical change of the Dutch gas system’, Correljé and Verbong describe the energy transition in the 1960s.⁸ They argue that this was not at all a smooth process, but required extensive planning and a large institutional framework. Also, they argue that the national government was a key actor who pushed and steered the process on many different levels.

In 2023 the parliamentary research commission on natural gas extraction in Groningen published its report ‘Groningers boven gas’ which is also an important source for this research.⁹ The goal of this research was to analyse the decision making process at the central government of natural gas extraction in Groningen and find out whether recent earthquakes are caused by this. This publication provides an extensive facts account of the buildup process and the political decisions from 1959 onwards. However, this publication is mainly aimed towards the correlation between natural gas extraction and earthquakes and the implications for current policy making processes regarding restoration and responsibility. Still, it provides an extensive timeline and important contextual information for the case of this research.

In *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw*, Schot et al. provide a detailed historical account of the technical developments in the Dutch energy sector.¹⁰ Within this vast body of work they also pay attention to the case of the transition to natural gas from Groningen in the 1960s. This source is mainly focussed on technical details and developments, but still provides important information on the context of intergovernmental cooperation and the negotiations that were played out to realise this technical megaproject.

In addition to these publications, this research is based on a set of archival material and other primary sources. One important source is the 1962 ‘Nota inzake het aardgas’, the Bill regarding natural gas, which first introduced the upcoming national system of gas extraction, sales and distribution and became the starting point for further institutional developments.¹¹ In addition, original newspaper articles are used to provide the context of the day to day reality of the energy transition and the public debates that were part of this.

Other crucial information comes from archival material from various main stakeholders in the energy transition. Archival material from overarching institutions such as the Association of Netherlands’ Municipalities (VNG) and the commission for regional cooperation on gas supply (SROG), as well as the Ministry of Economic Affairs give insight in important correspondence between stakeholders. These archives also possess internal documents such as strategies, opinions and meeting reports, which were not being published at the time. In this research, these sources are used to distinguish which stakeholders, what interests and which relations were at play, and what strategies were used by stakeholders to achieve their goals.

Even though the history of the Dutch energy transition of the 1960s is relatively well documented, there is a clear gap in the source material. Most sources focus on technical historical accounts or on learning lessons from the past for current policy development. Other

⁷ Aad Correljé, Coby van der Linde, and Theo Westerwoudt, *Natural Gas in the Netherlands: From Cooperation to Competition?* (The Hague, 2003).

⁸ Correljé and Verbong, ‘The transition from coal to gas: radical change of the Dutch gas system’, 114-134.

⁹ Parlementaire enquêtecommissie aardgaswinning Groningen, ‘Groningers boven gas’.

¹⁰ J.W. Schot, H. Lintsen, A. Rip and A. De la Bruheze, *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. Deel 2: Delfstoffen, energie, chemie* (Zutphen 2000).

¹¹ Staten-Generaal digitaal, Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1961-1962, catalog number 6767, Nota inzake het aardgas..

sources focus mainly on the changing daily lives of citizens. Within the body of academic sources for this particular case there is very few attention for the role of local governments in relation to the role of the central government. Still, the above mentioned sources provide crucial background information for the case in this research.

Theoretical framework

In *Changing Government Relations in Europe: From Localism to Intergovernmentalism*, Goldsmith and Page provide a framework for analysing intergovernmental power relations.¹² They already published their framework in 1987 but have updated their theory based on a series of critics. Their first framework suggested a three-variable model; intergovernmental power relations are largely determined by the functions or tasks of local governments, the discretion in which they operate, and their access to the central government.¹³ Therefore, you can derive the position of local governments in a certain country by looking at how much a local government does. In that regard, Goldsmith and Page suggested that there is a North-South distinction between Northern European countries with high levels of local autonomy and Southern European countries with lower levels of local autonomy.

Goldsmith and Page argue that the first publication was a too simplistic view. For instance, the North-South distinction between decentralised Northern-European countries and centralised Southern-European countries was no longer valid.¹⁴ Intergovernmental relations and local governance have changed over time due to internal and external developments. For instance, local governments do not necessarily have more influence or power when they have more executive tasks. Top-down regulation severely influences the discretion of local governments. The level of regulation can vary widely, for example between unitary and federal states or the financial framework under which local governments operate.

Goldsmith and Page therefore conclude that the three-variable model still is a useful model to help understand central-local power relations, but cannot be seen as a complete picture of the variety that exists between countries.¹⁵ The context in which local governments operate has changed significantly over time and this change follows different paths in different countries. It is highly important to look at specific aspects of national government systems in order to better analyse intergovernmental power relations. Therefore, to better understand the context of the Dutch energy transition in the 1960s, we must first paint a picture of what characterizes the system of Dutch government.

According to Frank Hendriks, the Netherlands are a ‘decentralised unitary state’ in which central government, the provinces and the municipalities act as three layers, or components, of government.¹⁶ The term ‘unitary’ does not refer to the Netherlands as being a centralised state, but as a government system in which different layers of government have to work together and find consensus. Walter Kickert further interprets this system by defining three central characteristics of the Dutch state system around the 1960s; pillarisation, corporatism and consensus-democracy.¹⁷ These characteristics define the particularities of the Dutch state system with regard to other systems.

¹²Michael J. Goldsmith and Edward C. Page, *Changing Government Relations in Europe: From Localism to Intergovernmentalism* (Oxford 2010).

¹³ Goldsmith and Page, *Changing Government Relations in Europe*, 1.

¹⁴ Ibid., 1-7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 260.

¹⁶ Frank Hendriks, ‘The Netherlands: Reinventing tradition in local and regional democracy’, in: J. Loughlin, *Subnational democracy in the European Union: Challenges and opportunities* (New York, 2001), 143-173.

¹⁷ Walter Kickert, ‘Changing European States, changing Public Administration: expansion and diversification of Public Administration in the postwar Welfare State: the case of the Netherlands’, In: Eric E. Otenyo and Nancy S. Lind, *Comparative Public Administration* (2006), 793-797.

To explain the decentralised unitary state, Toonen, Steen and Van de Meer further elaborated the model of Goldsmith and Page towards a framework that provides a more detailed analysis of the many variations that can exist within individual countries.¹⁸ In their framework they analyse countries based on the concepts of intergovernmental constitution, intergovernmental relations and intergovernmental management. They use this three layered framework to analyse how various ‘model’ countries, England, France and Germany, relate to each other and what position the Dutch system of government takes in relation to these countries. They conclude that the Netherlands take a unique middle position on all three layers. The Dutch system contains elements of all three model countries but has a unique take on central-local power relations.

Steen and Toonen argue that the tensions within intergovernmental relations in the Netherlands can be illustrated through the concepts of co-governance and autonomy.¹⁹ With co-governance they mean the executive function of national laws and policies and with autonomy they mean the possibilities of local governments to create own laws and policies. In this sense, the Netherlands would be a problematic case for the original framework of Goldsmith and Page due to these two seemingly contradicting elements.

However, Steen and Toonen argue that these concepts do not necessarily contradict, but provide a picture of the interwovenness of local, provincial and national governments. Local governance in the Netherlands has historically had a large degree of autonomy next to acting as executive bodies of national legislation.²⁰ However, during the growth of the welfare state in the 1960s the government sector expanded largely. This led to an increase in co-governance and executive functions of local governments. Steen and Toonen argue that this does not necessarily lead to a decrease in autonomy, as it is not a zero sum game.²¹ Increasing co-governance can also provide municipalities with agenda-setting opportunities and leverage to pursue local interests in national policies.

Another critical addition to the above mentioned analytical framework is made by De Widt and Laffin, who argue that the role of Local Government Associations (LGA) is left out of the picture by Goldsmith and Page.²² They argue that LGAs are a key element in power relations between central and local governments. LGAs pursue the collective interests of local governments and have closer ties to the central government than the municipalities themselves. While this is an important addition, it overlooks the fact that local governments not only work together in LGAs, but also through more policy-focused cooperative institutions which also keep close ties to central government institutions.

In short, the intergovernmental power relations in the Netherlands during the energy transition of the 1960s can be analysed through the lens of the three-variable model of Goldsmith and Page and the more elaborated framework provided by Toonen et al. Following these frameworks this research will focus on the specific characteristics of the system of government in the Netherlands and how these characteristics play a role in the energy transition of the 1960s. The concepts of co-governance and autonomy provide the tools to analyse the relation between national and local governments during this period. The role of VNG and other institutions representing the interests of local governments is an important aspect of this relation.

¹⁸ Theo Toonen, Trui Steen and Frits van de Meer, ‘Local Government Finance and Intergovernmental Relations: Comparative Institutional Analysis’, *Department of Public Administration Leiden University* (2007).

¹⁹ Trui Steen and Theo Toonen, ‘The Netherlands’, in: Michael J. Goldsmith and Edward C. Page, *Changing Government Relations in Europe: From Localism to Intergovernmentalism* (New York, 2010), 145-162.

²⁰ Steen and Toonen, ‘The Netherlands’, 147-151.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 153.

²² Dennis de Widt and Martin Laffin, ‘Representing territorial diversity: the role of local government associations.’ *Regional Studies* 52 (2018) 11, 1585-1594, here: 1585.

Within this body of academic material, this research aims to contribute to the existing source material by combining the relatively well documented case of the energy transition of the 1960s to the analytical frameworks for intergovernmental relations. As mentioned, the case of the Dutch energy transition is relatively well documented, but not in the context of intergovernmental relations. On the other side, the theoretical frameworks for analysing intergovernmental relations can be explained through a practical case such as this. The period of the Dutch energy transition was a challenging time for intergovernmental relations and can therefore shed light on how the distinctive character of the Dutch government system materialised in this case. This research therefore aims to contribute to the existing academic literature by adding the perspective of intergovernmental relations to this case and by using this case to illustrate the analytical frameworks at hand.

To answer the main question, this research is divided into three chapters; each answering a specific sub-question. Firstly, how did national and local governments in the Netherlands work towards making natural gas from Groningen the main energy source for households during the 1960s? Secondly, what was the existing system of government and intergovernmental relations in the Netherlands in the 1960s? Thirdly, how did colliding local and national interests during the implementation of the new energy system affect the intergovernmental relations? Lastly, the concluding chapter will connect these building blocks towards answering how the energy transition in the 1960s in the Netherlands reflected changing relations between central government and local governments.

1. From discovery to implementation: How national and local governments in the Netherlands worked towards making natural gas from Groningen the main energy source for households

In order to gain insight in the changing government relations in the 1960s, this chapter provides a detailed account of how national and local governments work towards a new national system of natural gas. This account is built up by correspondence, internal documents and public policy documents from VNG, SROG, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and other stakeholders. These sources, combined with secondary source material, provide the necessary pieces of the puzzle to create a detailed narrative of institutional and administrative developments of the energy transition of the 1960s.

A new energy source; how to deal with it?

After the discovery of the natural gas supply near Slochteren on the 29th of May 1959, it was not yet known how large and profitable the gas supply could be.²³ Only a few first drills had been completed by the NAM and the results were not publicly known. Initially, the municipality of Slochteren discussed whether the gas supply could be used for local supplies.²⁴ In the following months and years much more would become clear about the magnitude of this discovery and many discussions and negotiations would follow in order to put it to the right use.

The estimations of the volume of the gas supply kept growing and growing in the first years after the discovery.²⁵ After several cautious guesses, the NAM, owned by Shell and Esso, informed the Ministry of Economic Affairs of a very substantial amount of natural gas in 1960. Subsequently, Minister of Economic Affairs Jan de Pous set up a commission of experts to inquire the possible issues related to the extremely large amount of natural gas that was found.²⁶ In 1960 the gas supply was estimated to be around 60 billion cubic meters and in 1963 the Ministry of Economic Affairs thought it to be around 470 billion.²⁷

One of the main reasons for concern at this point for Mr. De Pous was the old Napoleonic mining law of 1810, which was still in place. This law determined that the mining companies are the rightful owners of the natural gas supply.²⁸ At the same time, a previous mining concession from the state to the NAM from 1953 involved an obligation of the state to purchase the gas.²⁹ This meant that the gas discovery could potentially become a financial disaster for the state. Both the state and the NAM acknowledged that this was a problematic situation and entered into negotiations about the acquisition and distribution of the gas supply.

²³ Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 'Rijke aardgas-ader in Slochteren ontdekt', September 25, 1959.

²⁴ Winschoter Courant, 'Aardgas in Slochteren?', September 26, 1959.

²⁵ Parlementaire enquêtecommissie aardgaswinning Groningen, 'Groningers boven gas', 137-141.

²⁶ Ibid., 139.

²⁷ Ibid., 140.

²⁸ Ringelberg, *De Nederlandse Aardgastransitie*, 22-23.

²⁹ Parlementaire enquêtecommissie aardgaswinning Groningen, 'Groningers boven gas', 220-221.

The new structure for the extraction, selling and distribution of gas was put down in the *Nota inzake het aardgas*, the bill regarding natural gas, in 1961.³⁰ Here, Minister De Pous explained and elaborated on the choices made in the new organisational structure.

In this bill, an extensive reconstruction is provided on the process up until that point, the current state of affairs regarding natural gas in the Netherlands and the consequences of the discovery of the gas supply in Slochteren. In addition to the concerns surrounding the Mining Law of 1810, Mr. De Pous expressed his determination to put the gas supply to proper public use and prevent overexploitation for pure financial gains.³¹

These concerns are mentioned as the main reasons to work with the oil companies towards a new organisational structure for the extraction and distribution of gas. In this structure, a division was made between the extraction, the distribution and the selling of gas. The concession for extracting the gas in Slochteren was granted to the NAM. However, all extracted gas would have to be sold to a new company, formed by Shell, Esso and the Staatsmijnen (DSM). After the publication of the above mentioned bill, this organisation had no name yet. Later, it would become Gasunie.

Mr. De Pous explained in the bill how these parties would join together in a new gas distribution company in which the oil companies and the state both had fifty percent control.³² For him it was non-negotiable to give the oil companies a majority in the control of such a large public utility. In terms of profit, the oil companies did get a majority share. It was negotiated that DSM would get forty percent profit share and Esso and Shell both thirty percent.³³ The company responsible for the sales of the gas would also get a fifty-fifty division in shares between the state and the oil companies.

Mr. De Pous was very much focused on protecting government influence in the new organisational structure and expressed his satisfaction about the deals made with the oil companies.³⁴ Next to a preferred shareholding division he also mentions that next to Esso, Shell and DSM, the Ministry of Economic Affairs could also appoint multiple positions in the directorate of the new company. In the outline of the new organisational structure the interests of other decentralised governments are not mentioned.

However, these interests are not entirely absent. To sell and distribute the gas, existing physical and organisational gas infrastructure was crucial. Gas infrastructure was already largely existing because municipal gas companies already produced and distributed smaller amounts of gas to households throughout the country.³⁵ These local distributors were crucial in making the national gas network successful, but were kept out of the negotiations. However, Mr. de Pous argued that their positions would hardly change in the new system and that they would maintain their positions as local distributors.³⁶

³⁰ Staten-Generaal digitaal, Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1961-1962, catalog number 6767, *Nota inzake het aardgas*.

³¹ Staten-Generaal digitaal, Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1961-1962, catalog number 6767, *Nota inzake het aardgas*, 4-5.

³² *Ibid.*, 6-7.

³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

³⁵ Schot et al., *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw*, 215.

³⁶ Staten-Generaal digitaal, Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1961-1962, catalog number 6767, *Nota inzake het aardgas*, 9.

Growing concerns at the municipalities

Local authorities were well aware of the negotiations between the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Shell and Esso. Based on correspondence between the Commission of Enterprises of VNG and local authorities, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and other stakeholders, an important image can be drawn of local concerns about the new gas infrastructure and Gasunie. This correspondence and other internal documents reflect how a power struggle initiated between the commercial parties within Gasunie, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the local governments and local government institutions about profitability, representation and ownership.

The VNG protects and represents the interests of all municipalities in the Netherlands. Therefore, when discussions about the new natural gas were still ongoing, the VNG Commission of Enterprises started working on gathering information regarding the position of, and consequences for, local governments. In a letter to the Minister of Economic Affairs in December 1961, the commission expressed the hope that the Minister would respect the promise his predecessor had made that local public institutions would be involved in matters such as this gas discovery.³⁷

The VNG commission also contacted the Association of Local Gas Utilities in a letter in which the commission expressed its concern that the Ministry of Economic Affairs would not involve municipalities and local gas utilities in the new gas system.³⁸ They proposed that all the mentioned local and regional stakeholders would jointly approach Minister De Pous regarding this issue. In a response to this letter, it became clear that these local gas utilities had already jointly approached Minister the Pous on this matter.³⁹ The concerns were shared and expectations rose that the ministry would neglect the interests of local governments.

In a letter from October 30, 1962, the VNG board of directors was pointed to another overlooked concern. In a private letter from Mr. C.J. Oosterholt, a former director of a public gas utility, the VNG board was warned that interests of municipalities were at stake and that time was limited to address these interests because of the still ongoing negotiations about the new gas company.⁴⁰ He warned that municipalities which were not currently producing gas were at risk of being exposed to the new Gasunie as a monopolist to which they individually had no bargaining position. These municipalities were not represented in a regional gas organisation as they were not involved in gas production until that time and were therefore not represented in any shape or form in the negotiations about the new national gas system. The risk of being exposed to Gasunie in a very weak negotiation position could result in unfavourable gas prices for these municipalities and their inhabitants.

³⁷ Nationaal Archief, The Hague, (hereafter: NL-HANA), 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated December 19, 1961, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to His Excellency the Minister of Economic Affairs in The Hague.

³⁸ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated December 19, 1961, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to the Association of Local Gas Utilities in The Hague.

³⁹ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated January 9, 1962, from Openbaar Lichaam Gasvoorziening Noordoost-Nederland in Zwolle, to the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague.

⁴⁰ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated October 30, 1962, from C.J. Oosterholt in Eindhoven, to the board of the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague.

VNG acknowledged that this was a current threat which needed to be addressed.⁴¹ The Commission of Utilities was now aware and concerned about the weak representation of a large portion of municipalities. In an internal meeting, the commission also discussed other consequences of this issue.⁴² Smaller municipalities with a large ground surface could have serious trouble creating and maintaining gas infrastructure, as it would be more expensive for them. The commission agreed in this meeting that Gasunie needed to be pointed at their public responsibilities and the position of smaller local governments. In another internal meeting, the commission agreed that the strong monopoly position of Gasunie could be slightly attenuated if municipalities acted as one front.⁴³ The people on the opposite side of the table were hard businessmen to which they needed to bring a strong and united opposition.

The local gas utilities, who were being neglected during the formation of Gasunie, started cooperating in six regional cooperating committees and a national Committee for Cooperation of Regional Gas Utilities, the *Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening* (SROG).⁴⁴ This committee would become the main representative body for local authorities in the negotiations with Gasunie. Initially, SROG was not yet representing all municipalities. As mentioned before, municipalities without current gas utilities were not represented in the regional committees and were therefore excluded from the negotiations. If Gasunie would approach these municipalities individually and negotiate individual deals, this could result in the weakening of the collective bargaining position of other municipalities.

VNG highlighted this issue regarding the representation of municipalities in a letter to SROG.⁴⁵ They had already urged municipalities to join a regional committee and requested SROG to cooperate with this. SROG responded that they shared this opinion and urged regional committees to involve municipalities in further technical and administrative processes.⁴⁶ In this way, VNG and SROG worked towards a more complete representation of municipalities and consequently towards a stronger and more united opposition towards Gasunie.

Struggle for control; negotiations between SROG and Gasunie

At the time of this letter, the negotiations between SROG and Gasunie about the gas tariffs for municipalities had already started. At the start of this process, SROG had already identified another point of concern regarding the position of local governments and reached out to higher powers for support. In a letter towards the Minister of Home Affairs from May 28, 1963, the

⁴¹ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated September 30, 1962, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to Mr. C.J. Oosterholt in Eindhoven.

⁴² NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, Minutes of the meeting of the Commission of Utilities on December 18, 1962.

⁴³ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, Minutes of the meeting of the Commission of Utilities on September 10, 1963.

⁴⁴ Schot et al., *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw*, 215.

⁴⁵ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated July 1, 1963, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening in Rotterdam.

⁴⁶ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, letter dated July 22, 1963, from Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening, Rotterdam, to the Board of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities in the Hague.

commission informed the Minister that they had already experienced how the monopoly position of Gasunie and their strong ties to the Ministry of Economic Affairs materialised during the negotiations.⁴⁷ The commission presented itself in this letter as the main representative actor for municipalities in the gas negotiations and highlighted the high stakes and large responsibilities for municipalities. If the negotiations would turn out negatively for local governments because of the monopoly position of the Gasunie, they needed help from the Minister.

These were not entirely overstated concerns regarding the fact that Shell, Esso and DSM had regular meetings with the Ministry of Economic Affairs in the Coordinating Commission Gas. In these meetings, the commission members discussed a wide variety of issues regarding the formation of Gasunie, the development of new institutions, negotiations and internal affairs such as staff and finances.⁴⁸ In one of their meetings the Gasunie parties expressed their discontent with the rigid negotiation style of SROG and their reluctance to work towards common ground.⁴⁹ If SROG would remain as resisting as they did, the Minister should step in and use his power as leverage to make SROG accept their terms, the commission argued.

The two main points of concern for SROG in the early negotiations were the tariffs municipalities would pay to Gasunie and the gas supply to large industries. After a meeting between SROG and the Coordinating Commission Gas, both parties agreed that the Commission would work out their views in a memorandum.⁵⁰ This memorandum was sent to SROG on February 13, 1963, and provided an extensive outline on how the gas distribution ought to be organised according to Gasunie.⁵¹ Among others, Gasunie argued that gas supply to large industries should be done by them directly. If municipalities would be the sellers to large industries, it would become hard to prevent discriminatory and varying prices and conditions across the country, they argued.

SROG responded to this with their own memorandum in which they expressed their discontent with the memorandum from Gasunie on a detailed level.⁵² The commission expressed very clearly their point of view that gas supply to large industries is, and should remain, a responsibility of municipalities. Municipalities, they argued, already have the

⁴⁷ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, letter dated May 28, 1963, from Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening, Rotterdam, to Minister of Home Affairs in the Hague.

⁴⁸ NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Agenda's en notulen van vergaderingen van de Coördinatie Commissie Aardgas, met bijlagen.

⁴⁹ NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Report of the director's meeting of March 27, 1963 in Vught regarding Gasunie matters.

⁵⁰ NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Verslag van de bespreking tussen de Coördinatiecommissie Aardgas en de Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening op 30 november 1962 te Vught.

⁵¹ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, NOTITIE ten behoeve van de Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening.

⁵² NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, Memorandum der Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening (S.R.O.G.) ten behoeve van de N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie.

physical infrastructure and many other contracts with large industries, which would make it very complicated if Gasunie would become a third party in this process. Additionally, it would be economically unattractive for municipalities if they could only supply to households and small buyers.

Other issues to which the SROG memorandum extensively responded paint a picture of a struggle for control over regional and local gas markets. The commission argued strongly against Gasunie's preference to bypass SROG and regional cooperation committees and directly contract individual municipalities.⁵³ In addition, SROG strongly argued that local and regional gas infrastructure should not be handed over to Gasunie but remain in the hands of municipalities and local parties.⁵⁴ The strong formulation of their objections and the vast amount of counterarguments reveal the great concerns of SROG towards the vision of Gasunie.

In an internal document from VNG, dated August 1963, it becomes clear that VNG strongly agreed with these complaints formulated by SROG.⁵⁵ Initially, VNG decided not to be involved in the negotiations with Gasunie and let SROG be the negotiating party. Due to the monopoly position of the Gasunie, their ties to the Ministry of Economic Affairs and their pursuit for more control over the local gas market, VNG was convinced that it was needed to give SROG a more solid backing. A passive approach was no longer in their interest.

At this point in time, a new cabinet was installed under the leadership of Prime Minister Victor Marijnen.⁵⁶ The new Minister of Economic Affairs, Mr. Andriessen, announced a Gas Advisory Commission, VNG took their chance to take a step forward. The mayor of Rotterdam informed VNG in a letter that the Minister had sent an invitation to the mayors of the three largest cities and the members of SROG to take part in the commission.⁵⁷ VNG was not invited. In a response, VNG approached Minister Andriessen with a request to be added to the commission.⁵⁸ Should they not be part of this commission, VNG argued, smaller and rural municipalities, who also had large stakes at hand, would not be represented. The high stakes at the local level required a strong representation of local authorities in this commission. However, the Minister refused this request.⁵⁹ With one local administrator from one of the large cities and the members of SROG, the field of decentral governments was represented more than enough.

SROG and Gasunie move towards common ground

The negotiations between SROG and Gasunie were broadly covered by regional and national newspapers, albeit that several details were kept secret or were only published months after the

⁵³ Ibid., 3-4.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 4-6.

⁵⁵ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, Nota inzake de distributie van het aardgas.

⁵⁶ Parlement.com, 'Kabinet-Marijnen (1963-1965)'

www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvwd/kabinet_marijnen_1963_1965 (August 3, 2024).

⁵⁷ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3017, letter dated September 16, 1963, from Ministry of Economic Affairs in The Hague, to the mayor and aldermen of Rotterdam, in Rotterdam.

⁵⁸ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3017, letter dated September 18, 1963, from Association of Netherlands' Municipalities, to His Excellency the Minister of Economic Affairs in The Hague.

⁵⁹ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3017, letter dated November 25, 1963, from the Minister of Economic Affairs in The Hague, to the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague.

agreements were made. Newspapers informed people not only about speculations about the possible benefits of the new household warming fuel, but also about more administrative issues such as the heated negotiations about the gas supply to large industries. Fuelled by many opinions and news articles, the negotiations became a public debate.⁶⁰

In the *Nieuwe Eindhovense Krant* an SROG report was discussed in which it became clear that the price proposal of Gasunie would mean that people at home would not at all profit from the immense gas provisions in Groningen.⁶¹ Chairman of SROG and mayor of Gouda, Mr. James, complained in the *Leeuwarder Courant* that municipalities had made losses for years by supplying large industries and that they would not accept losing this opportunity to finally make a profit.⁶² This public approach by Mr. James was not appreciated by Gasunie and fuelled their discontent with SROG's negotiating style.⁶³

Despite the obstacles they had to take and the public debate in the media, the negotiating parties bit by bit worked towards agreements. In October 1963, SROG and Gasunie made an agreement on standardised gas prices for local and regional gas distribution companies.⁶⁴ The agreed tariff system was forwarded as an advice to local gas distributors, who used these tariffs in their contracts with Gasunie.⁶⁵ About the gas supply to large industries, both parties agreed to a compromise. Municipalities would supply businesses up to one million cubic meters of annual gas consumption and Gasunie would directly supply the larger consumers. This compromise was also pushed forward by the Minister of Economic Affairs as it was coherent with previous contracts with industrial partners.⁶⁶

Additionally, SROG and Gasunie started cooperating in the Transition Planning Commission.⁶⁷ Within this commission, plans were jointly developed to realise the transition to natural gas at the level of local gas distributors and at the household level. The commission inquired what the distributors needed and which mechanical adjustments needed to be made in houses. Additionally, the commission worked towards an extensive information campaign for the public in order to prepare them for the changes that were coming to their homes.

With these agreements, the gas transition could make its next step. In the following years, vast amounts of gas infrastructure was constructed. After the first real gas production in December 1963, it took only five years for the last parts of the country to be connected to the gas network.⁶⁸ This did not mean that every household was connected yet. At VNG there were

⁶⁰ Ringelberg, *De Nederlandse Aardgastransitie*, 50-54.

⁶¹ *Nieuwe Eindhovense Krant*, 'Rapport van gemeenten op komst. Aardgas zou aanmerkelijk goedkoper kunnen zijn', August 22, 1963.

⁶² *Leeuwarder Courant*, 'Gemeenten en Gasunie zijn het eens: Goedkoop vastrecht voor aardgas als warmtebron', June 25, 1963.

⁶³ NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Report meeting of the Coordinating Commission Gas of February 26, 1963 in Vught.

⁶⁴ Schot et al., *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw*, 216-218.

⁶⁵ Peter van Overbeeke, *Kachels, geisers en fornuizen : keuzeprocessen en energieverbruik in Nederlandse huishoudens 1920-1975* (Hilversum 2001), 228.

⁶⁶ NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Report meeting of the Coordinating Commission Gas of February 26, 1963 in Vught.

⁶⁷ Van Overbeeke, *Kachels, geisers en fornuizen*, 217.

⁶⁸ Correljé, Van der Linde and Westerwoudt, *Natural Gas in the Netherlands*, 54.

strong concerns regarding the connection of rural municipalities.⁶⁹ Contrary to these areas, many urban areas already had a majority of households with a physical connection to a local gas distributor.⁷⁰ The costs of the infrastructure for rural areas were much higher, and Gasunie was not always willing to invest in these rural households.

However, local gas companies wanted to connect as many households as possible to the gas network and expanded their information campaigns to the outer areas as well.⁷¹ Even though Gasunie initially did not want to engage into these investments of less economical value, they did eventually connect the rural areas as well when the larger part of household connections was being finalised.⁷² In the end, more connected households to the grid resulted in more income for Gasunie and local gas companies often subsidised rural household connections.⁷³

Neglect for local interests at the national level

The national transition from coal to gas required a complete overturn of the energy system and with that also a new area of intergovernmental cooperation of central and local authorities in the Netherlands. The transition was quick, but far from smooth regarding the central-local power relations and cooperation.

The formation of Gasunie and the negotiations about ownership and profit were kept at the national level, which excluded the vast amount of municipalities and local gas companies who were important stakeholders in this system. On the other hand, commercial parties Shell and Esso obtained a high level of control and profit over the domestic energy market. Additionally, the Ministry of Economic Affairs obtained more control and profit in the domestic energy market relative to municipalities, who traditionally produced and distributed gas in local networks.⁷⁴

This resulted in challenging negotiations for the municipal umbrella institutions. The strong ties of Gasunie to the Ministry of Economic Affairs, their monopoly position, and the profit-seeking strategies that aimed at obtaining control over pricing and infrastructure, made the alarm bells ring at VNG and SROG. Their efforts to unite as many municipalities as possible during the negotiations resulted in a stronger bargaining position of local governments. VNG and SROG aimed at the Ministry of Home Affairs for assistance and positioned themselves as hard negotiators, in order to represent local interests the best way possible.

The initial period of opposing views and struggles to maintain as much control as possible was followed by a period in which compromises were found and deals were made in 1963 and 1964. Part of the compromise can be attributed to the leverage the municipalities managed to achieve in the bargaining process. Part of the compromise can also be assigned to the Ministry of Economic Affairs who added the perspective of public administration as counterweight to the profit-seeking strategy of Shell and Esso.

Still, it cannot be said that the ministry kept a close eye on decentral representation and local issues regarding gas. Municipalities had to present themselves as a strong party in the

⁶⁹ NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated March 3, 1963, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to Mr. G.J. Oosterholt in Eindhoven.

⁷⁰ Van Overbeeke, *Kachels, geisers en fornuizen*, 236-238.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁷² Ringelberg, *De Nederlandse Aardgastransitie*, 87-90.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ Correljé, Van der Linde and Westerwoudt, *Natural Gas in the Netherlands*, 34-37.

negotiations and had to work themselves into positions of representation. VNG and SROG faced competitiveness on the fields of profit and control, instead of cooperation. Their concerns about local gas prices and municipal control over the local gas market had to compete with larger national interests of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Only in the period of implementation after the period of negotiations, it can be said that central and local authorities worked together towards a smooth energy transition.

2. The government system in the Netherlands

To shed light on the power relations between central government and local governments during the energy transition of the 1960s, we first have to get a picture of what public administration and intergovernmental relations in the Netherlands looked like in this period. This chapter will therefore explain the historical background of the the government system in the Netherlands, which concepts determine this system and how this system relates to government systems in other countries.

The decentralised unitary state

The Netherlands is generally described as a decentralised unitary state.⁷⁵ This term can be placed somewhere in between the meaning of federal states and unitary states. A decentralised unitary state means that there is a unitary state with generally a larger degree of autonomy on the decentralised level. Decentralised authorities have a strong degree of agency within their administrative border relative to the national government.

The layers of government within this decentralised unitary state consist of municipalities, water boards, provinces and central government. All four layers of government have a council or parliament with regular elections. Around the 1960s there were eleven provinces, around a thousand municipalities⁷⁶ and around 2600 water boards.⁷⁷ Provinces differ in their role from municipalities by acting as area managers. Their responsibilities lie in spatial planning, regional infrastructure and nature management, while municipalities have a wider range of tasks, such as public order, welfare, education and housing.⁷⁸ Decentral governments cooperate in local government associations. Municipalities are united in the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities (VNG), in which all municipalities take part. The water boards are united in the Union of Water Boards (Uvw). In the 1960s, provinces did not yet have an umbrella organisation like the other decentral governments.

This system originates from politician and statesman Johan Rudolf Thorbecke, Prime Minister of the Netherlands in the mid-nineteenth century and one of the founders of the Dutch constitution of 1848. He identified the state not just by the central government, but by the complex, consensus-based, cooperation between different layers of government.⁷⁹ According to his vision the unitary state should not be about centralising power, but about making the different parts of the government system work together and evolve towards problem solving adjustments. Thorbecke wanted interdependency and dynamic interactions instead of a hierarchical system of separated layers of government.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Steen and Toonen, 'The Netherlands', 145.

⁷⁶ Duncan Beeckman and Ronald van der Bie, 'Een eeuw gemeentelijke herindelingen', *Bevolkingstrends: 2^e kwartaal 2005*, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, (June 2005).

⁷⁷ Unie van Waterschappen, 'Tijdljn', www.waterschappen.nl/ontdek-ons/ (August 1, 2024).

⁷⁸ Martijn Groenleer and Frank Hendriks, 'Subnational mobilization and the reconfiguration of central-local relations in the shadow of Europe: the case of the Dutch decentralized unitary state', *Regional & Federal Studies*, 30 (2020) 2, 197-198.

⁷⁹ Theo Toonen, 'The unitary state as a system of co-governance: The case of the Netherlands', *Public Administration* 68 (1990) 3, 283-284.

⁸⁰ Toonen, 'The unitary state as a system of co-governance', 293-294.

Pillarisation, corporatism and consensus-democracy

The system of government in the Netherlands in the 1960s cannot be explained without shedding light on the context of the post-World War II recovery and rebuilding period. The devastation from the war had to be repaired and a period of increased economic welfare arrived during the 1950s.⁸¹ During this period the welfare state emerged in the Netherlands, just like in many other Western European countries.⁸² This also meant an increased level of state intervention in many aspects of society. Up until that period, the Netherlands had relatively low welfare expenditure and a relatively low degree of central government coordination.⁸³

This can be explained through three concepts that characterize public administration in the Netherlands up until the 1960s. According to Walter Kickert, professor of public management at Erasmus University Rotterdam, public administration in the Netherlands can be described by the concepts of pillarisation, corporatism and consensus-democracy.⁸⁴ These concepts explain why central government was relatively weak and private initiative was stronger.

Pillarisation characterised the Netherlands from the 1930s until the 1960s and meant that civil society in the Netherlands was strongly divided by religious and political beliefs.⁸⁵ This meant that the central government had less agency to act and that pillarised civil society institutions regulated many government tasks separate from other pillars. This also correlates to the second characteristic; corporatism. Many semi-government agencies practiced public tasks and represented the interests of several different groups in society.⁸⁶ The state recognised these institutions and kept a distance from performing these public tasks itself. Corporatism, according to Kickert, can be seen within the Dutch history of pragmatic thinking and subsidiarity; central government should not be involved in matters that can be resolved by lower entities.⁸⁷ The third characteristic, consensus-democracy, illustrates the Dutch tradition of coalition governments formed by minority parties. Compromise, consensus and cooperation were crucial in this political system and required a pragmatic approach by political leaders to solve problems.⁸⁸

Analysis of the government system in the Netherlands

In a research essay for the Netherlands' Ministry of Home Affairs, Toonen, Steen and Van de Meer provide a framework for the analysis of intergovernmental systems.⁸⁹ They have based their framework on the three variables that determine intergovernmental relations provided by Page and Goldsmith.⁹⁰ These variables are the functions or tasks local governments perform, the discretion they have to perform these tasks, and their access to influence or intervene with

⁸¹ Walter Kickert, 'Beneath consensual corporatism: traditions of governance in the Netherlands', *Public administration* 81 (2003) 1, 120-121.

⁸² Ido de Haan, 'The Western European Welfare State beyond Christian and Social Democratic Ideology', in: Dan Stone, *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History* (Oxford 2012), 305-310.

⁸³ Robert E. Goodin and Anneloes Smitsman, 'Placing Welfare States; the Netherlands as a crucial test case', *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis, Research and Practice* 2 (2000), 42-45.

⁸⁴ Kickert, 'Changing European States, changing Public Administration', 794-796.

⁸⁵ Goodin and Smitsman, 'Placing Welfare States; the Netherlands as a crucial test case', 43.

⁸⁶ Kickert, 'Changing European States, changing Public Administration', 795-796.

⁸⁷ Kickert, 'Beneath consensual corporatism', 127-129.

⁸⁸ Kickert, 'Changing European States, changing Public Administration', 796.

⁸⁹ Toonen, Steen and Van de Meer, 'Local Government Finance and Intergovernmental Relations', 2-17.

⁹⁰ Toonen, Steen and Van de Meer, 'Local Government Finance and Intergovernmental Relations', 6-7.

central government.⁹¹ Based on these variables, Toonen et al. have built their framework around a three-layered analysis. First, intergovernmental constitution is explained on the contrast of federalism and unitarism. Second, intergovernmental relations are explained by the contrast of local self-governance and administrative deconcentration. Third, intergovernmental management is explained by the contrast between statutory control and administrative control.

In this framework the Netherlands can be defined in relation to other countries. Toonen et al. define England, Germany and France as models for different systems of government. England stands for the Westminster model of a strong unitary state, France for a Napoleonic strong central rule with direct involvement of central government in local affairs, and Germany for the system of cooperative federalism in which there is a strong division between central policy making and local execution. These models cannot be seen as rigidly uniform. Local governments across Europe showcase a variety of functions, political roles and cultural and historical backgrounds.⁹² Therefore, it is important to view this framework with an eye for the variety local governments have, also within national borders.

Within this framework and these models, Toonen et al. describe the Netherlands as the middle way in all three dimensions.⁹³ The unitary system provides central government with more power than decentral governments, but decentral authorities have considerable room to develop own policies and agency of local budgets. The strong executive role of local governments also creates a system of strong intergovernmental relations due to the many forms of cooperation it requires. Therefore, the Netherlands is less centralised than the Anglo-Saxon Westminster model but without the strongly formalised separation of governments layers as in the federalist model of Germany. The Netherlands is also positioned as a middle way between the strong involvement of central government in local affairs in France and the formalised central-local distinction in Germany.

Next to the explanation as provided in this model, the tension and interwovenness between central and local governments in a decentralised unitary state is also further explained by Steen and Toonen through the concepts of autonomy and co-governance.⁹⁴ They explain that municipalities enjoy a degree of autonomy over their territory in which they can develop policies and take initiative, but always under the influence of the provincial and central governments which are higher in the hierarchical order.

The term co-governance explains the Dutch system in which decentral government carry out policies, but are not merely institutions of policy implementation for the central government. Municipalities and provinces have a strong interwovenness with the central government and maintain a large share of the public budget. This means that decentral governments also have a share of agency over how public policy is implemented, instead of merely carrying it out in service of higher authorities. Still, they are dependent on high layers of government for their budgets. But central government is likewise dependent on local governments for the implementation of their plans. Without willing local partners, enabled with the right means and funding, central government departments can struggle to make their projects successful.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Goldsmith and Page, *Changing Government Relations in Europe*, 1.

⁹² Colin Copus, 'The Role of Local Governance in Europe', *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs 2* (2012), 39-48.

⁹³ Toonen, Steen and Van de Meer, 'Local Government Finance and Intergovernmental Relations', 16-17.

⁹⁴ Steen and Toonen, 'The Netherlands', 151-154.

⁹⁵ Hendriks, 'The Netherlands: Reinventing tradition in local and regional democracy', 151.

Therefore, Steen and Toonen argue that the case of intergovernmental relations in the Netherlands explains how co-governance and autonomy are not contradictory concepts, but can go hand in hand. Multiple layers of government can be interwoven and interdependent without a one-dimensional hierarchical order or a strictly decentralised federal system.

3. How colliding interests affected intergovernmental relations

After the detailed account of how municipalities and the central government worked towards the new gas system and the analytical description of the system of government in the Netherlands, this chapter now takes the next step to answer the main research question. In order to do that, an analysis is made of how the developments described in chapter one affect the changing intergovernmental relations. This analysis is based on the three variables that determine intergovernmental relations provided by Page and Goldsmith; functions, discretion and access to central government. These variables provide insights on how the changes can be positioned in the three-layered framework of intergovernmental systems of Toonen et al. Additionally, the concepts of autonomy and co-governance provide with the tools to further interpret this analysis.

Functions, discretion and access

In terms of functions of local governments, Page and Goldsmith argue that the more a local government does the more important they are.⁹⁶ This can be indicated through the variety of tasks or the size of the budget they maintain. As indicated before, the period of the energy transition was also the period of the growth of the welfare state. Across the field, governments took up much more societal tasks. In the case of the energy transition however, local governments already performed multiple tasks in the field of public energy supply. Some municipalities did not have gas production utilities, but others did. In several municipalities, local gas production facilities were shut and streams of local revenue for municipalities dried up.⁹⁷

Therefore, the new gas system did not necessarily result in more tasks or budget, but very much resulted in a changing set of tasks and changing budgets. Municipalities did preserve ownership over local infrastructure, but had to buy gas from Gasunie. During the period of the implementation of the gas system, municipalities did perform a set of tasks such as the physical connection of all households to the grid and public information and awareness campaigns. This gave municipalities a large public executive role in the new gas system.

Regarding the discretion of local governments, Page and Goldsmith describe this as the degree to which local governments can make their own policy choices or are subject to strong central regulation about policy implementation.⁹⁸ On this variable, it is hard not to argue that municipalities lost a degree of discretion regarding the task of public energy supply. Local gas production and regional distribution contracts between municipalities were dissolved and replaced by a centralised national system. Municipalities had less agency over the local energy market and were subjected to negotiations on the national level and central price policy decisions.

However, it can be argued that municipalities remained a degree of discretion by uniting local governments under a single representative institution in the negotiation process. By doing so, local governments created a stronger leverage towards Gasunie and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and had a degree of agency over the price policy, distribution agreements, and the ownership of the local gas infrastructure.

⁹⁶ Goldsmith and Page, *Changing Government Relations in Europe*, 5.

⁹⁷ Ringelberg, *De Nederlandse Aardgastransitie*, 67-71.

⁹⁸ Goldsmith and Page, *Changing Government Relations in Europe*, 5-6.

Looking at the access local governments had to central government and their ability to influence central government, it can be argued that this has increased during the 1960s regarding this case. During the initial phase of the energy transition, it was clear that local governments were not heard about their view on the formation of the new national gas system. Looking at the correspondence of VNG and SROG with the Ministry of Economic Affairs in the first chapter, it becomes clear that local governments had to be well organised to be able to penetrate into the decision-making processes of the national government. Local governments had very little options on an individual level. Working together in local government associations or other representative bodies can result in easier access to the central government and national political arena's, as well as in a stronger leverage in national political discussions.⁹⁹

The period of the energy transition in the 1960s can therefore be seen as a period of increased access for local governments. Before this period, local governments were not collectively organised in the field of public energy supply and had no say in the initial negotiations. During this period, local governments went through a process of development and strengthening of representation and cooperation, which resulted in local governments becoming a serious negotiation partner on the national level.

Analysis of the intergovernmental system

If we look at the three layers in the framework provided by Toonen et al., we can make several important observations about the position of public administration in the Netherlands during the 1960s. The layer of intergovernmental constitution describes the legal characteristics of a state system, as well as the cultural or historical context which determine the relation between state institutions and civil society.¹⁰⁰ In this layer two extremes determine the field; unitarist systems and federalist systems.

It can be argued that the Netherlands started leaning more towards unitarism during the period of the energy transition. The tasks local governments execute on the field of public energy supply were becoming more streamlined in a national energy system. Discretion decreased because of the strong role of the central government in the new national energy system. Access to central government was only achieved by unifying local governments in national representative institutions.

On the second layer, the relations between various elements of the state system, such as political, administrative or executive institutions, are described by intergovernmental relations.¹⁰¹ State systems can have strong vertical or hierarchical relations or have horizontal relations with more decentralised connections.

It can be argued that the Netherlands has obtained aspects of a more vertical type of administration with regard to the energy transition. In traditional vertical state systems, such as the French Napoleonic model, the central government takes the initiative to determine the course and also execute this course on the local level.¹⁰² Of course, the Netherlands did not transform into a purely vertical state system. The description in the previous chapter of the changing role of the state in the 1950s and 1960s from a passive stance towards civil society

⁹⁹ Dennis de Widt and Martin Laffin, 'Representing territorial diversity: the role of local government associations', *Regional Studies* 52 (2018) 11, 1585-1594.

¹⁰⁰ Toonen, Steen and Van de Meer, 'Local Government Finance and Intergovernmental Relations', 13-14.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 10-12.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 10-11.

institutions towards a more active role in a wide range of societal functions, indicates how the state was more and more involved in local and regional matters. The Ministry of Economic Affairs took initiative to set out the course towards a new energy system and involved local governments only in the later phase in order to work towards implementation. The local horizontal ties of the previous energy system were replaced by more vertical, central coordinated, relations.

Lastly, the layer of intergovernmental management, describes the set of problem solving activities, procedures and techniques government institutions perform in a state system.¹⁰³ On this layer, state systems can vary between statutory control, in which local government manage tasks according to their jurisdiction, or administrative regulation, in which local governments experience a high level of central government intervention.

On this layer it is more difficult to derive a clear change of course for the state system in the Netherlands. The set of possible activities and procedures local governments could work with changed. However, this does not necessarily indicate a move towards either more statutory control or administrative control. It can be argued that local governments experienced a higher degree of administrative regulation due to the national standardisation of the gas system, but this also has to be attributed to the deals made with Gasunie on the national level in which local governments had a say through SROG.

Adjustments to the decentralised unitary state

Within the framework of Toonen et al., the Netherlands is described as a decentralised unitary state; a compromise between the three model states in which autonomy and co-governance characterise central-local power relations. The concepts of pillarisation, corporatism and consensus-democracy of Walter Kickert define the state of affairs of the government system up until the 1960s.

When applying the history of the energy transition of the 1960s to this framework, changes can be distinguished within the characteristics of the state system. The role of the central government changed towards a more active and intrusive entity in the system. Local governments, who had a large degree of agency in the local energy sector now had to deal with a national energy system with central coordination and strong commercial interests. This left local governments with the need to provide a strong counterweight. Local governments were pushed towards abandoning local systems and regional ties and worked towards national representations of local government interests.

Therefore, the new national energy system resulted in several adjustments. The most important one being the observation that the Netherlands moved more towards a unitarist government system with more vertical power relations. However, these changes have to be toned down a bit. Within the move towards more unitarism, it can clearly be observed that local governments maintained local agency over multiple aspects of the energy system. They were not subjected by strong central coordination and were able to influence the course of the energy transition. The same goes for the more vertical characterisation of the new energy system. Even though it was a system of central coordination, local governments preserved a degree of control and influence over the local implementation and expansion of the energy system. The connection of rural areas to the grid proves this point, as this was pushed by local governments even though it was against the interests of the large commercial players.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 12-13.

In conclusion, the traditional description of the Netherlands as a decentralised unitary state based on nineteenth-century Thorbeckian ideas cannot be dispatched, but was subject to change during the energy transition of the 1960s. The new energy sources required an overhaul of the national energy system, which consequently led to new government system approach towards public energy supply. These changes occurred mostly on the constitutional and relational level and less so on the management level. The traditional pillarisation and corporatism of Dutch public administration were fading as the system showed more signs of central control. During this process it is clear that the concept of consensus-democracy was a strong feature. Compromises were found between SROG and Gasunie in order to create consensus-based cooperation in the further process.

Conclusion

The history of the energy transition from coal to gas in the Netherlands in the 1960s proves to be an important historical case to illustrate the changing relations between central and decentral governments. By assessing primary and secondary sources reflecting on the energy transition and the system of government in the Netherlands, this research worked answering the question: How does the energy transition in the 1960s in the Netherlands reflect changing relations between central government and local governments?

The historical account in chapter one has shown that the gas discovery in Slochteren in 1959 led to a national energy revolution, which needed to be managed by both central government and local governments. Based on public policy documents, correspondence between local and central government institutions and internal government documents, a clear picture has been drawn about the challenges to which the government system was exposed. The Ministry of Economic Affairs saw excellent opportunities to materialize the discovery into an energy source which would benefit the entire country, but needed a revolutionary approach regarding the existing energy system. Local governments saw their interests being neglected when a new national energy system was thought out and realised stronger representative institutions. Through the cooperation of local governments, they managed to put a significant weight in the balance and successfully preserved significant ownership and control over the local gas market and infrastructure.

These historical developments had their impact on the government system in the Netherlands, which is described as a decentralised unitary state. This system can be characterised by the concepts of autonomy and co-governance, which explain the interwovenness of central and local governments. Local governments are autonomous entities in the state system and not merely executive institutions for central government. They are subject to certain obligations towards higher levels of government but maintain a degree of influence and agency over the implementation process.

An important further characterisation of the government system in the 1960s is illustrated through the concepts of pillarisation, corporatism and consensus-democracy. These concepts show that the central government has traditionally had a passive approach towards many public functions. Civil society interest groups often performed these tasks within their specific pillar in society and worked towards consensus at the national level. This changed in the 1960s, during the period of economic growth and the emergence of the welfare state. The central government took a more and more active role in a broad range of societal tasks.

The historical account of the energy transition shows the changing tasks, discretion and access to central government that local governments had. The tasks changed significantly towards a strong executive function for local governments in the implementation of the new gas system. Local governments lost a degree of discretion in the field of public energy supply. Local governments also had very little access to the central government individually. The collective bargaining approach local governments developed later created an increase on this variable.

The analytical framework for intergovernmental systems provided by Toonen et al. showcase the constitutional, relational and managerial changes within the decentralised unitary state due to the energy transition. The new system was composed of centralised coordination and strong linkages with the Ministry of Economic Affairs, as opposed to the local agency and regional organisational structure of the previous system. Local governments were subject to

stronger centralised decision making than before and had to abandon their traditional regional approach to public energy supply for collective representative institutions. In comparison to the three international model systems, the Dutch government system changed towards a slightly more unitarist and vertical system on the scales of intergovernmental constitution and intergovernmental relations.

In conclusion, this analysis shows that the energy transition of the 1960s reflects the changing relations between central government and local governments because of the changing nature of the energy system towards a more unitarist and federal system. These system changes had their impact on the roles of local governments and the way they positioned themselves towards the national government. These changes have to be seen in the context of the economic growth and the emergence of the welfare state in the 1960s, which generally led to a more active and intrusive approach of the central government in society. Therefore, the energy transition of the 1960s cannot be seen as a catalyst of this development, but is a reflection and important part of a larger movement during this period in time.

This conclusion adds to the existing body of literature by providing a perspective of intergovernmental relations to the transition from coal to gas. The changing central-local relations were a crucial component of the history of the energy transition and are underexposed in the existing literature. Simultaneously, the analysis in this research has shown that the Dutch energy transition provides an important historical case to the academic literature on the broader changes in the government system in the Netherlands during the 1960s. Therefore, this research can be used in future academic inquiry by showcasing how the energy transition impacted and reflected changing intergovernmental relations.

Bibliography

- Beeckman, Duncan and Ronald van der Bie, 'Een eeuw gemeentelijke herindelingen', in: *Bevolkingstrends: 2e kwartaal 2005*, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (June 2005).
- Copus, Colin, 'The Role of Local Governance in Europe', *Panorama: Insights into Asian and European Affairs* 2 (2012), 39-48.
- Correljé, Aad, Coby van der Linde and Theo Westerwoudt, *Natural Gas in the Netherlands From Cooperation to Competition?* (The Hague, 2003).
- Correljé, Aad and Geert Verbong, 'The transition from coal to gas: radical change of the Dutch gas system', in: Boelie Elzen, Frank W. Geels and Ken Green, *System Innovation and the Transition to Sustainability: Theory, Evidence and Policy* (Cheltenham 2004), 114-134.
- Goldsmith, Michael J. and Edward C. Page, *Changing Government Relations in Europe: From Localism to Intergovernmentalism* (Oxford 2010).
- Goodin, Robert E. and Anneloes Smitsman, 'Placing Welfare States; the Netherlands as a crucial test case', *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis, Research and Practice* 2 (2000), 39-64.
- Groenleer, Martijn and Frank Hendriks, 'Subnational mobilization and the reconfiguration of central-local relations in the shadow of Europe: the case of the Dutch decentralized unitary state', *Regional & Federal Studies*, 30 (2020) 2, 195-217.
- Haan, Ido, de, 'The Western European Welfare State beyond Christian and Social Democratic Ideology', in: Dan Stone, *The Oxford Handbook of Postwar European History* (Oxford 2012), 299-318.
- Hendriks, Frank, 'The Netherlands: Reinventing tradition in local and regional democracy', in: J. Loughlin, *Subnational democracy in the European Union: Challenges and opportunities* (New York 2001), 143-173.
- Kickert, Walter, 'Beneath consensual corporatism: traditions of governance in the Netherlands', *Public administration* 81 (2003) 1, 119-140.
- Kickert, Walter, 'Changing European States, changing Public Administration: expansion and diversification of Public Administration in the postwar Welfare State: the case of the Netherlands', In: Eric E. Otenyo and Nancy S. Lind, *Comparative Public Administration* (Oxford 2006), 793-810.
- Overbeeke, Peter, van, *Kachels, geisers en fornuizen : keuzeprocessen en energieverbruik in Nederlandse huishoudens 1920-1975* (Hilversum 2001).
- Parlementaire enquêtecommissie aardgaswinning Groningen, 'Groningers boven gas. Rapport parlementaire enquêtecommissie aardgaswinning Groningen', February 24, 2023.
- Parlement.com, 'Kabinet-Marijnen (1963-1965)' www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhronvwd/kabinet_marijnen_1963_1965, accessed on August 3, 2024.
- Ringelberg, Sven, *De nederlandse aardgastransitie. Lessen voor de energietransitie van de 21^{ste} eeuw* (Utrecht 2021).

Schot, J.W., H. Lintsen, A. Rip and A. De la Bruheze, *Techniek in Nederland in de twintigste eeuw. Deel 2: Delfstoffen, energie, chemie* (Zuthpen 2000).

Steen, Trui and Theo Toonen, 'The Netherlands', in: Michael J. Goldsmith and Edward C. Page, *Changing Government Relations in Europe: From Localism to Intergovernmentalism* (Oxford, 2010), 145-162.

Toonen, Theo, 'The unitary state as a system of co-governance: The case of the Netherlands', *Public Administration* 68 (1990) 3, 281-296.

Toonen, Theo, Trui Steen and Frits van de Meer, 'Local Government Finance and Intergovernmental Relations: Comparative Institutional Analysis', *Department of Public Administration Leiden University* (2007).

Unie van Waterschappen, 'Tijlijn', www.waterschappen.nl/ontdek-ons/, accessed on August 1, 2024.

Widt, Dennis, de, and Martin Laffin, 'Representing territorial diversity: the role of local government associations', *Regional Studies* 52 (2018) 11, 1585-1594.

List of primary source material

Sources from the database of Delpher.nl

Nieuwsblad van het Noorden, 'Rijke aardgas-ader in Slochteren ontdekt', September 25, 1959.

Winschoter Courant, 'Aardgas in Slochteren?', September 26, 1959.

Nieuwe Eindhovense Krant, 'Rapport van gemeenten op komst. Aardgas zou aanmerkelijk goedkoper kunnen zijn', August 22, 1963.

Leewarder Courant, 'Gemeenten en Gasunie zijn het eens: Goedkoop vastrecht voor aardgas als warmtebron', June 25, 1963.

Sources from the archives of the Ministry of Economic Affairs

Nationaal Archief, The Hague, (hereafter: NL-HANA), 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Agenda's en notulen van vergaderingen van de Coördinatie Commissie Aardgas, met bijlagen.

NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Report of the director's meeting of March 27, 1963 in Vught regarding Gasunie matters.

NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Verslag van de bespreking tussen de Coördinatiecommissie Aardgas en de Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening op 30 november 1962 te Vught.

NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Report meeting of the Coordinating Commission Gas of February 26, 1963 in Vught.

NL-HANA, 2.06.098 Inventaris van het archief van het Ministerie van Economische Zaken: Directoraat-Generaal voor de Industrialisatie en Energievoorziening, taakgedeelte Energievoorziening, (1936) 1946-1965 (1966), Catalog number 197, Report meeting of the Coordinating Commission Gas of February 26, 1963 in Vught.

Sources from the archives of the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, letter dated July 22, 1963, from Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening, Rotterdam, to the Board of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities in the Hague.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, letter dated May 28, 1963, from Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening, Rotterdam, to Minister of Home Affairs in the Hague.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, NOTITIE ten behoeve van de Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, Memorandum der Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening (S.R.O.G.) ten behoeve van de N.V. Nederlandse Gasunie.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3013, Nota inzake de distributie van het aardgas.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated December 19, 1961, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to His Excellency the Minister of Economic Affairs in The Hague.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated December 19, 1961, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to the Association of Local Gas Utilities in The Hague.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated January 9, 1962, from Openbaar Lichaam Gasvoorziening Noordoost-Nederland in Zwolle, to the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated October 30, 1962, from C.J. Oosterholt in Eindhoven, to the board of the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated September 30, 1962, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to Mr. C.J. Oosterholt in Eindhoven.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, Minutes of the meeting of the Commission of Utilities on December 18, 1962.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, Minutes of the meeting of the Commission of Utilities on September 10, 1963.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated July 1, 1963, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to Commissie Samenwerking Regionale Organen Gasvoorziening in Rotterdam.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3014, letter dated March 3, 1963, from the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague, to Mr. G.J. Oosterholt in Eindhoven.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3017, letter dated September 16, 1963, from Ministry of Economic Affairs in The Hague, to the mayor and aldermen of Rotterdam, in Rotterdam.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3017, letter dated September 18, 1963, from Association of Netherlands' Municipalities, to His Excellency the Minister of Economic Affairs in The Hague.

NL-HANA, 2.19.185 Inventaris van het archief van de Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten (VNG), (1908) 1912-1989 (1993), catalog number 3017, letter dated November 25, 1963, from the Minister of Economic Affairs in The Hague, to the Association of Netherlands' Municipalities in The Hague.

[Other sources](#)

Staten-Generaal digitaal, Kamerstuk Tweede Kamer 1961-1962, catalog number 6767, Nota inzake het aardgas.