

INTERNATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION CONFERENCE 2024

Vilnius, Lithuania

18-21 June 2024

SESSION REPORT

*Please know you may design the structure of this report to better suit the session.
It's important to capture the key outcomes and solutions proposed for the future.*

Session Title: Profit over Planet: Harnessing Data to Expose & Halt Big Polluter Influence in Climate Action

Date: 20 June 2024

Time: 02:30 PM - 04:00 PM (GMT +3)

Report prepared by:

Flora Cresswell

Regional Advisor, Western Europe

Transparency International

Moderated by:

Susanne Kuhn

Executive Director

Transparency International Germany

Panellists:

- Patricia Lerner
Special Advisor to the International Executive Director
Greenpeace International
- Edward Collins
Director
Influence Map
- Raphael Kergueno
Senior Policy Officer: data-driven advocacy
TI EU
- Emily Clough
Head of Data-Investigations
Global Witness
- Guillaume France
Expert Political Integrity
TI Brazil

Share the thematic focus of the session, its purpose and corruption risks?

From policy to the impact on society, the core thematic focus of the session was to discuss and highlight how data can be utilised to challenge system of undue influence that puts profits over the planet. From the COP to the hallways of Parliaments, big polluters are derailing advances in climate action. Corporate lobbyists exploit the path towards a sustainable future through their financial arsenal. Exposing evidence through data is key to holding big corporate lobbyists to account.

The overarching goal of the session was to inspire creative data-driven initiatives and share initiatives tools to combat undue influence in climate action with experts, data scientists, climate activists, investigative journalists, businesses and anti-corruption activists in the room.

The sub-goals were (I) to create a dialogue on how data can be harnessed to highlight corporate impact on climate policies (II) collectively identify actions required to push against undue influence and hold corporate power accountable (whether this is addressing gaps in integrity frameworks or engaging more actors in data-driven approaches).

During the session it was highlighted how public discourse is increasingly turning against recent advances in climate action. While much progress has been done in recent years, particularly in the European Union, current mitigating policies fall far short of the world's stated goal to limit global warming to 1.5 degree. This realisation has alarmed climate scientist world-wide as the window for action is fast closing.

Against this backdrop, civil society raised crucial questions about the role of corporate lobbyists as they deploy their vast resources to keep short-time profits high and delay the inevitable transition to a decarbonised economy. The lack of a firm commitment to phase out fossil fuel at COP28 is the most egregious example of public-private power dynamics putting profit over planet.

While such policy outcomes should be decried, civil society, activists and journalists are increasingly turning their attention to role played by corporate lobbying, gathering empirical evidence to empower society as whole to hold these public-private interactions to account. This session took stock of cutting-edge data-driven initiatives from across the world highlighting weak regulatory frameworks, resource imbalances, greenwashing and instances of undue influence in climate policies.

During the session a full spectrum of data-driven advocacy leading to tangible impact at both regional, national and local level was shared. The panel also reflected on how the use of data does not constitute in itself a silver lining. The panel of experts outlined how data forms part of a broader strategy to the deploy novel approaches for raising awareness on corporate lobbying in climate policy and leads to collective push against undue influence.

Summary of panellists' contributions & discussion points (please be as detailed as possible)

Patricia Lerner – Greenpeace

Patricia introduced the panel sharing concrete case study on corporate lobbying in plastics, linking up to a wider debate on the links between corporate lobbying, political backlash against climate action and undue influence at the global level.

- From influence mechanisms to the fruits of influence.
- Influence mechanisms – examples such as:
 - Revolving door between industry and government e.g. Spain
 - Direct and indirect state ownership in mayor IOCs
- Impact of the influence
 - Subsidies
 - Tax breaks
 - Recent analyse by Somo in the Netherlands
 - Public financing for fossil fuel
 - G7 are producing 257 billion in public finance for fossil fuel
 - General rights of corporations
- Particular case study – UNFCCC COP
 - Plastics negotiations – plastics as the plan B for the fossil fuel industry – resist the phased out fossil fuels
 - Plastics are set to drive nearly have off the oil demand growth by the mid of the century
 - Fossil fuel lobbyists trying to therefore influence plastic policy
 - States with vested interests
 - Harms of plastics to global communities
 - For example flooding clogged by plastic which is also a health issue
 - Scientist have reported instances of harassment from industry lobbyists
 - Case study by Greenpeace
 - Plastic lobbying in the US Kenya trade deal
 - Goal further efforts to ship plastic waste to other countries – would endanger the ban on plastic bags in Kenya
 - Illustrate the breath, depth and reach of the fossil fuel industry

Edward Collins, Influence Map

Edward provided an overview of the work and impact of InfluenceMap's LobbyMap platform, a database that tracks and measures the climate lobbying of over 500 of the world's largest companies, as well as 250 of their industry associations. He focused on the various ways positive actors from the financial, civil society, media and legal sectors have used the data platform to hold powerful, vested interests to account for their opposition to science-based climate policy pathways. He also shared details of a new set of tools leveraging the LobbyMap analysis that are designed to enable a wider community of positive actors to engage with data-driven and science-based climate advocacy.

- Seeing how some of the largest companies in the world try to influence climate policy – documenting that with data
- Measuring a Company's Carbon Policy Footprint
 - Good disclosure of how specific policies are made are hard to come by
 - Influence Map's work goes beyond the 1-1 traditional engagement of lobbyists – expanded definition includes strategic messaging, media, use of intermediaries, in conjunction to directly address policy makers
 - Utilising open source data harvesting techniques – range of different sources for the data sources – websites of the companies, government disclosure, social media, FOIs + scanning and looking at how companies are talking about climate in the media
- What we are interested in?
 - What are companies saying to policy makers and how that compares to the UNs climate targets

- Analyse the standard set by the UN climate body against the companies communication/advocacy
 - Measuring how actively the companies are engaged on the issue
- Corporate Climate Policy Landscape (see graphic)
 - And its alignment with the paris agreement
- Mentality of influence map
 - You cannot address a problem unless you can measure it
 - Work with multitude of actors to address the negative impact on climate policies we are seeing

Rapael Kergueno, TI EU

Raphael shared details of TI's Integrity Watch eco-system of online platforms and how they form part TI EU's data-driven advocacy to raise awareness on the risk of corporate undue influence at EU-level in climate action. He also highlighted how concrete empirically sourced solutions can be used to remedy this. In addition to highlighting the context of an increasingly vocal political backlash against the EU green deal and what it means for EU level climate action after the European elections.

- Brussels as a key player to fight climate change – flagship project in form of the green new deal
- Seeing a lot of influence to backtrack on the goals of the green new deal
- This is shown in the following data analysed through TI EU's Integrity Watch platform:
 - Data on the amount of meetings taking place
 - Amount of money being spend on these activties
 - Robust transparency framework in the EU which is why we now have data on these meeting
 - Integrity Watch as a window to peak into the lobbying activities in brussels
 - What is data driven advocacy for TI EU?
 - Allows us to formulate empirical evidence to base our recommendations on
 - Data being used by multiple organizations and journalists etc.
 - Developing the platform across 15 EU states + soon Balkans
 - Patterns of lobbying of what happens on the EU green deal (see gapic on the data within the PPP)
 - Green deal was the heaviest lobbied policy area by far
 - We only have high level meeting transparency in the commission
 - What is the balance between the organizations – unequal access problem since corporate interest is taking 64% of the EU commission meetings
 - A lot of corporations are extremely networked and use their networks to multiply their impact – reinforcing/hightening the impact of the
 - Loopholes in the current EU laws
 - Companies can hire MEPs – legally they are not allowed to lobby however this regulation is not enforced
 - Weak integrity framework within the EU Institutions
 - Politicians that want to put political profit over planet
 - Goal convince EU decision makers to have strong integrity frameworks so that regulations like the EU green new deal does not get weekend

Emily Clough, Global Witness

Emily highlighted examples of Global Witness' data-driven research to expose corporate influence on climate policy, including open data responses , particularly at the COP. She also

brought in insights of how Global Witness are using AI to enhance data-driven responses to undue influence on climate action.

- Global Witness utilize data to highlight the role of fossil fuel lobbyists on climate policy
 - Looking at delegates that are attending the COP and their ties to fossil fuel companies
 - A lot of state delegations that have state owned fossil fuel companies include their executives in the national delegations
 - COP 2011 – 503 delegates
 - COP 27 – 636 delegates
 - COP 2023 – 2456
- Understanding the impact of the rise in fossil fuel lobbyists at COP (see graphic in the PPP for the data sets)
 - Analysing the deals of fossil fuel deals
 - Alignment of hosting of COP and increase in business activity of ADNOC
- Reflection
 - Doing this work by hand is horribly extensive
 - Delegate lists get published very late in the season – giving civil society and journalists little time to analyse the data by hand
 - Question: finding an AI solution
 - Now piloting an AI approach – looking at the list of organizations, creating a google alert and the asking AI whether or not they have a fossil fuel connections
 - Still needs to be manually checked since the analysis is not yet perfect – however they are using this tool to facilitate their research while still manually checking it

Guilherme – TI Brazil

Guilherme highlighted that even in countries with weak or deficient legislation on transparency and political integrity, it is possible to recruit available, albeit often incomplete, public information to make it clear and use data-driven advocacy to combat corporate interests capturing decision-making processes, which are also not sufficiently balanced as it relates to civil society's participation.

- Difficulty of having limited data to analyze corporate lobbying?
- How do you deal with the situation when you do not have good integrity regulations?
- Resource issue of organizations that are smaller are sometimes difficult
- The solutions of TI Brazil doing “data for dummies” is:
 - Looking into the public hearings – looking into whether or civil society was actually present and being heard on climate issues
 - Federal senate: using a FOI to get access to who has access to the federal senate building
 - Energy ministers schedule – who has meetings?
- Representation in public hearing – findings (see slides)
 - Civil society representation are often “token” meeting to allow for participation – a lot of meetings did not have civil society representatives present
 - Senate – FOI – underrepresentation of civil society having access to the senate in Brazil – access to decision makers is a lot easier if you do have access (2 people?)
- Energy ministers schedule
 - Civil society only makes up 2%
- Difficulty to get data
 - It took almost 10 years for public officials to make the data on their meetings accessible – there are a lot of schedules that are still blank when you access the

platform – however even with little data you can tell the story of how corporate interests control and impact climate policy processes

Main outcomes of the moderated component of the session (include quotes/highlights and interesting questions from the floor)

Challenges to utilizing data-drive approaches to exposing lobbyists:

- Funding inequality – There is a David and Goliath challenge between corporate lobbyists and civil society. Corporations have more resources to continue to develop their influencing approaches (Influence Map)
- Loopholes in integrity frameworks - Loopholes and weaknesses in the EU's integrity framework have led to multiple scandals in recent years. Corporate lobbyists take advantage of the loopholes in regulation. The consequence of this is that no sanctions are taken, meaning there are limitations in the protection of institutions from undue influence. This is putting the European green deal at risk (TI EU)
- Social media advertising and misinformation - we can start to see reverse engineering and tactics that companies are using to spread disinformation about climate change online. For example, through Influence Map's research, which has exposed how large agricultural lobby groups are creating a polarized narrative around climate policy.
- People and corporations don't want to be held accountable, as more data-driven approaches advance, companies and lobbyists will put their data in formats that are not easy to read. Companies are becoming more advanced in reacting to advanced tools in AI .etc.

Opportunities for data-driven approaches to expose undue influence in climate action:

- Regulators and civil society need to work more closely together – Influence Map have used this approach when it came to exposing the influence of automated manufacturers in California.
- More evidence is needed - Particularly when exposing the relationship between national oil companies and governments. Global organisations developing data-driven approaches need to share their approaches with national organisations (TI Brazil). There is currently little public scrutiny of national oil companies, and this needs to be exposed by organisations at the country level.
- There has been a lot of advancement in organisations utilizing data driven advocacy. Data powered advocacy are giving civil society and investigative journalists new tools to plan and push back against invasive lobbying.
- There are so many new interesting ways data can be brought to life – and we need to utilize this to scandalize invasive lobbying against climate action.

Solutions moving forward / Key recommendations for the future and concrete follow-up actions

- Shifting the focus of fossil fuel companies to renewal energy, build and work with networks of indigenous communities, push for strong legislations, such as the European equality directive, utilizing OPEC .etc. (Greenpeace)
- Countries need to develop their integrity frameworks so lobbying data is available to understand better the patterns of influence, and for those that have these regulations they need to be enforced and defended.
- We need to continue to connect the environmental, academia anti-corruption community to drive forward stronger lobbying regulations.

- Holding the private sector accountable – It is the role of civil society to monitor the implementation of lobby regulations and utilize evidence based advocacy to address loopholes that corporate lobbyists expose to hinder effective climate action and policy.
- The impact of corporate interests on inequality needs to be better communicated to the public. Media and civil society organisations need to work together to engage in data driven approaches. Particularly with investigative journalists to utilize and scandalize findings through data.
- We also need to support better meaningful inclusion of people in climate action – for example using approaches such as movement lawyering (green peace). In addition to utilising citizen data to expose loopholes in integrity.
- Businesses and investors need to be exposed. There is lot of discussion around lobbying regulation > but we also need to expose businesses and investors using evidence-based advocacy to strengthen integrity and compliance.
- Organisations working in data-driven advocacy also need to ensure the right data is used to expose big industrial lobby groups. In particular, to scandalize the evolution of how types of influence are happening. To showcase how legislations are being influenced on a real time basis.

What can be done to create opportunities for scaling up the solutions discussed in the session? And by whom?

- Allyship & counter power - we have to expose who are the villains and the good guys. We need to come together (the anti-corruption community, data scientists, environment activists) to put the fossil fuel companies on the back foot. Utilising counter power, and aligning on countering the impact polarizing societies are having on climate action.
- We need to continue to connect the environmental, academia anti-corruption community to drive forward stronger lobbying regulations and data-driven approaches
- Vitally we need to continue to utilize new approaches and technology, such as AI to map and expose influence even more effectively. Learning from each other's approaches is crucial in order to keep up and expose the approaches used by corporate lobbyists.

Rapporteur's name

Flora Cresswell
Regional Advisor, Western Europe
Transparency International

Date submitted

21 July 2024

Action! This report needs to be emailed to iacc-av@transparency.org within 24 hours of the session. If you wish to update the report, please do so by 21 July. Thank you.