



## On How 'Lobbies' Water Down the World's Most Important Climate Report

*The latest complete IPCC mentions the word 'degrowth' 28 times, but mentions it zero times in the summary for policy makers.*

J. Bordera, A. Turiel, F. Valladares, M. García Pallarés, J. de la Casa, F. Prieto, F. Puig Vilar

**T**he dossier of shame. This report is a litany of broken climate promises. Without rapid and deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors, it will be impossible to avoid the climate disaster we are rapidly facing. Climate activists are sometimes portrayed as dangerous radicals, but the truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing fossil fuel production. These statements - which could belong to any social movement spokesperson - are just some of the strongest statements that UN Secretary-General António Guterres has made in the wake of the official release of the latest part of the world's most crucial climate report, that of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).



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This time it is Group III. The one in charge of proposing a concrete mitigation plan, i.e. to reduce emissions and seek viable solutions (technological, economic and social) to the biggest crisis ever faced by humankind. The science has

*The science has never been clearer: we must drastically reduce emissions to have a chance of maintaining the climate stability that allows us to live on this planet... [but] the protocol established by the UN allows countries, often pressured by their business lobbies, to make changes and negotiate line by line on the content of this document.*

never been clearer: we must drastically reduce emissions to have a chance of maintaining the climate stability that allows us to live on this planet. But the Summary for Policymakers and Managers (the SPM), which will be the only thing the vast majority of policymakers and business leaders will read of the report's 2,900+ pages, does not measure up to the science behind it, nor to the challenge of climate change, the ecological crisis and the energy

transition. This document is the only thing that is not strictly scientific. The protocol established by the United Nations allows countries, often pressured by their business lobbies, to make changes and negotiate line by line on the content of this document. This is undoubtedly the part of the report that most reveals the duplicity of souls, the lights and shadows,<sup>1</sup> the true character -extremely bipolar- of the IPCC drafting process.

After the last phase of revision of the report, which took several days longer than expected, and its publication was even

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delayed due to the struggle to modify the summary, one thing is crystal clear: the make-up of the summary of the report by lobbies and governments during the process - also documented by the BBC<sup>2</sup> - is unfortunately and unquestionably real, and the rebellion of a part of the scientific community against this situation is not only more

than justified, but, given the inaction, it is essential to try to remedy the situation.

A few months ago, thanks to a collective of rebel scientists (Scientist Rebellion), we managed to publish the leak of the first draft of this group III,<sup>3</sup> and the global impact was immediate - The Guardian, Der Spiegel, CNBC, Yale University... -. Dozens of media from more than 35 countries echoed the red warning message documented by the IPCC.

To headline their articles, journalists usually chose between two of the pearls included in the first draft, which only the hand of scientists had touched. One of them, that emissions should peak in 2025 and fall rapidly, remains intact in the final version of this summary for policymakers. The other big headline, that all existing gas and coal plants should be shut down in about a decade, has completely disappeared from the summary.

But it is not the only thing that has changed. When comparing the two versions, the surprises are enormous. We have

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found a multitude of examples of changes that soften a report that, if there is one thing it is guilty of from the outset, it is great moderation. And above all, if anything, the world has changed. The works analysed in the compendium have a deadline: October 2021. Since then, we have experienced the first serious shocks of

an energy and supply chain crisis that has been brewing for years. A war has begun that has changed politics and economics perhaps forever, and more and more voices are warning that we are on the verge of a major food crisis. When everything accelerates, the validity of the analysis becomes even more ephemeral.

<sup>1</sup> Juan Bordera and Ferran Puig Vilar: [Lights and Shadows of the IPCC](#) — The Jus Semper Global Alliance, April 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Justin Rowlett & Tom Gerken: [COP26: Document leak reveals nations lobbying to change key climate report](#) — BBC News, 21 October 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Juan Bordera y Fernando Prieto: [El IPCC considera que el decrecimiento es clave para mitigar el cambio climático](#) — CTXT, 7 de agosto de 2021.

This is probably the last major work of the IPCC that comes in time to guide our societies to manoeuvre and avoid

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collapse. Some believe that the direction set out in the report is clear, but reading the summary for policymakers, the sense it conveys is more of a civilisation that is teetering unsteadily as it lurches forward; a civilisation that is sustained by dwindling oil,

which has to be phased out, and a glacier that is melting faster and faster. Both climate and energy stability depend on our ability to accept this situation.

In the process, between the version of the summary leaked in August and the one finally published, the most notable changes are the following:

- ➔ No mention of the closure of gas and coal plants within a decade. Fossil industry lobbies have managed to tone down the overall narrative of the summary directed against their industry. It is known that the delay in the publication of the report was mainly for this reason. Interested countries - notably Saudi Arabia<sup>4</sup> - lobbied to remove this recommendation.

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- ➔ The tone is lowered regarding the responsibility of the wealthiest 10%. The leaked summary noted that they pollute ten times more than the poorest 10%.
- ➔ Many references to direct emissions from aviation, the car industry and meat consumption have disappeared. In fact, the word "meat" disappears from the new summary. These emissions are reflected in the newly published report in association with other emissions from the sector, and their importance is therefore diluted.
- ➔ The first draft warned of "vested interests" as one of the factors hindering progress on the energy transition. That mention, which appears in the report, has been dropped from the summary, a victim of precisely those same vested interests that pressure governments. Who says there is no poetry in scientific reports?
- ➔ One of the sentences that most confronted the report's absolutely predominant techno-optimism is removed: "the cost, performance and adoption of many individual technologies has progressed, but overall deployment and implementation rates of technological change are currently insufficient to meet climate goals"; a statement that clashed squarely with the logic of voluntary carbon markets and big business.
- ➔ On the Carbon Capture and Sequestration mechanism: Saudi Arabia, again, along with other countries such as the UK, has fought to strengthen this controversial point that allows them to continue business as usual, demonstrating utter frivolity. The prevailing techno-optimism believes that a yet-to-be-developed technology will magically come to the rescue and even allow "continued use of fossil fuels". Much material on these technologies has been introduced to justify the idea of net-zero emissions that has little or no scientific basis yet underpins the report's central thesis.
- ➔ Any faint mention of the problems with the materials needed for the energy transition, which are indispensable for developing renewables, batteries or the electric car, is missing from the summary. This was present in the first draft.

<sup>4</sup> Chloé Farand: [Saudi Arabia dilutes fossil fuel phase out language with techno fixes in IPCC report](#) — Climate Home News, 4 April 2022.

- ➡ Also gone is the mention of participatory democracy as one of the main tools to unblock and accelerate a transition for which there is hardly any time left.
- ➡ The point that "ambitious mitigation and development goals cannot be achieved through incremental changes" has disappeared altogether. The make-up is applied to the references that seek to emphasise that individual and incremental changes are not enough.

Fortunately, by analysing the full report - free of pressure - we can find a path that leads us to nothing less than a

*The Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) and its investor-state dispute settlement mechanism pose an [obstacle] for the development of climate change mitigation policies... can we move away from fossil fuels without first moving away from ECT?*

revolution in our energy and socio-economic systems, giving a glimpse of the emerging commitment of part of the scientific community to degrowth. This is the only way left to us to tackle the multiple emergencies in which our societies are immersed. The word "degrowth" is mentioned 28 times - less and less taboo - in the full

report, compared to zero in the summary for politicians. The sentence referring to the unsustainable nature of capitalist society is also retained,<sup>5</sup> demonstrating the report's sleekness.

For the first time, the IPCC echoes what civil society has been warning about for years and warns, in chapters 14 and 15, of the obstacle that the Energy Charter Treaty (ECT) and its investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism pose for the development of climate change mitigation policies. Having gone unnoticed for three decades, today, this international agreement for the energy sector continues to protect investments in fossil fuels. It allows investors and multinationals - precisely those who have brought us to this crossroads - to sue states when they consider that they have legislated against their economic interests, present or future. The numbers speak for themselves: in Europe alone, the fossil infrastructure protected by the treaty amounts to 344.6 billion euros.

The question is, can we move away from fossil fuels without first moving away from ECT? And why has it not been included in the summary for politicians?

At this point, it is no longer enough to include bold mentions in reports whose summaries are then watered down by lobbyists. It is not only natural for a part of the scientific community to rebel and take action: it is more than desirable. This is precisely what we need to provoke a debate we seem to avoid. This debate, the elephant in the room, is that we need to change the socio-economic model, and fast. We need to act, take risks, and maybe, hopefully, inspire society to mobilise again. We need to abandon fossil fuels before they abandon us.

<sup>5</sup> Juan Borda y Fernando Prieto: [El IPCC considera que el decrecimiento es clave para mitigar el cambio climático](#) — CTXT, 7 de agosto de 2021.

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- ❖ **About the author:** **Juan Bordera** is a scriptwriter, journalist and activist in Extinction Rebellion and València en Transició. **Antonio Turiel** has a PhD in Theoretical Physics and a degree in Mathematics; he is also a Research Scientist at the Institute of Marine Sciences of the CSIC and the author of the essay Petrocalipsis. **Fernando Valladares** is a research scientist at the CSIC and the author of more than 450 publications in ecology, ecophysiology and the impacts of global change on terrestrial ecosystems. **Marta García Pallarés** is an environmentalist, co-coordinator of the No to Trade and Investment Treaties campaign and member of Ecologistas en Acción. **Javier de la Casa** is a researcher at CREAL. **Fernando Prieto** holds a PhD in Ecology from the Observatory for Sustainability. **Ferran Puig Vilar** is a qualified Telecommunications Engineer and a practising scientific and technical journalist.
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