

MONEY, PEOPLE, REPUTATION: OXFORD'S TIES WITH THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY

A Report from Oxford Climate Justice Campaign

2021

Oxford Climate Justice Campaign

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Design	<u>First Avenue Group Limited</u>
Publication Date	20 April, 2021
Revision Date	13 August, 2021

This report was authored and edited by current and past members of Oxford Climate Justice Campaign (OCJC). OCJC is a student-led activist group focused on cutting ties between the University and the fossil fuel industry, and acting in solidarity with the frontline communities most affected by climate change.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

6	Foreword by Benny Wenda
7	Executive Summary
9	Demands
10	Introduction
11	Oxford University & the Fossil Fuel Industry: an Overview
14	Climate Justice
15	About This Report
16	Research
17	Introduction
19	Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences
21	Social Sciences
22	Energy
23	Conclusion
24	Case Study 1 › Oxford Institute for Energy Studies

26	Social Licence
27	Introduction
28	Scholarships & Achievement Prizes
30	Events
31	Funding for sustainability research or other ethical research projects
33	Cultural Capital
34	Conclusion
35	Case Study 2 › BP
36	Revolving Door
37	Introduction
38	Fossil Fuel Industry › Oxford University
39	Oxford University › Fossil Fuel Industry
41	Oxford University and Fossil Fuel Industry Simultaneously
43	Conclusion
44	Case Study 3 › Shell
47	Endnotes

FOREWORD

BY BENNY WENDA

2021

In my homeland, West Papua, my people have suffered ethnic cleansing, mass killing and the destruction of our environment for nearly six decades. The colonising Indonesian military has done the grunt work for the world's resource extraction companies, including BP, Freeport McMoRan and Rio Tinto.

The people of West Papua have lived on the island of New Guinea for tens of thousands of years. We have stewarded the rainforest, one of the largest in the world, and developed sustainable methods of living.

This way of life is being destroyed. Entire villages are being uprooted and forced into model Indonesian settlements to make way for palm oil plantations and gold mines. Vast swathes of our forest, one of the most bio-diverse areas on the planet, are being levelled by fires and machines. Indigenous West Papuans have been reduced to a minority in our land, our very existence threatened as our forest, mountain and river are irrevocably polluted and destroyed.

BP has played a part in this. Working with the illegal occupier, Indonesia, the company has developed the huge liquefied natural gas fields in Tangguh, West Papua. Hundreds were forced off their land to make way for the project, and tax revenues are funnelled back to Jakarta, further increasing the reliance of Indonesia upon its illegally occupied resource bank: West Papua.

As has been the case for six decades, the majority of my people see nothing of the resources that are taken from our land by force.

West Papua's rainforests are a lung of the world. If you destroy West Papua, you are destroying the planet and the possibility of life for us all. Climate change, caused by fossil fuel companies over which Indigenous people have no control, will further eliminate the possibility of life for my people and all others across the Pacific. In West Papua, we are facing the double annihilation of Indonesian colonisation and climate catastrophe.

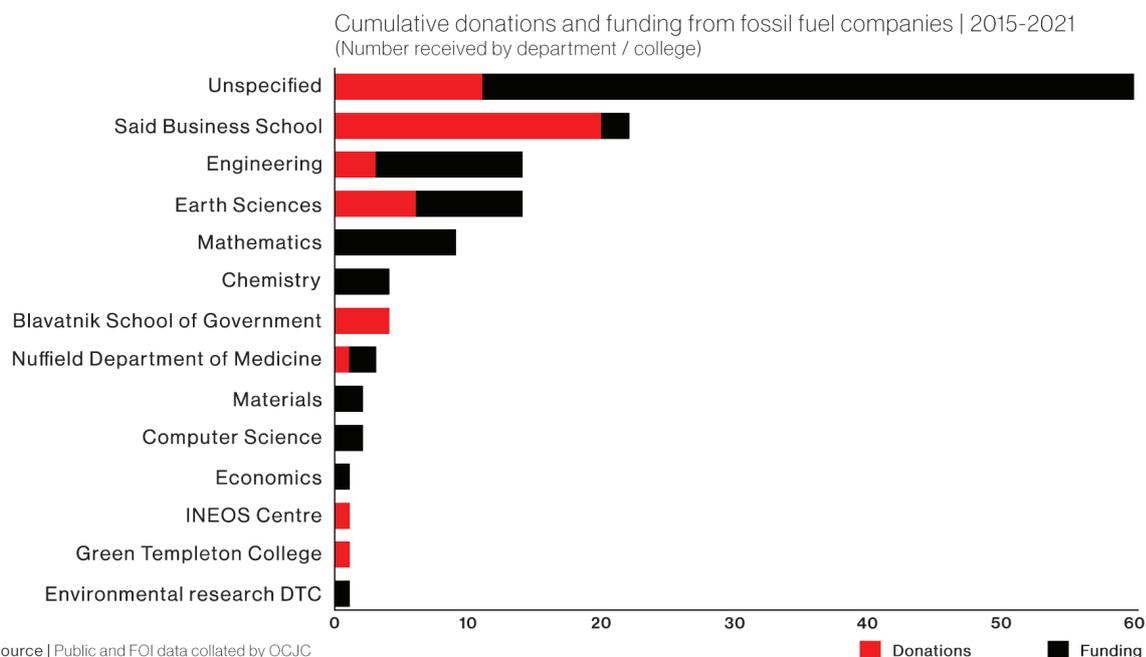
Institutions like the University of Oxford, revered around the globe as a beacon of reason and justice, cannot continue to perpetuate and gain from this pillaging of our land. When genocide is taking place, everyone has a moral responsibility to cease their participation in it. As a recipient of the Freedom of the City of Oxford and a leader of the Indigenous people of West Papua, I call on Oxford University to end its ties with the fossil fuel industry. We have been crying out for justice and freedom for decades. Many are starting to finally hear our cry. We hope those who aid BP and other fossil fuel companies listen to us before it is too late.



Benny Wenda

Chair, United Liberation Movement for West Papua
Interim President, ULWMP Provisional Government
Recipient, Freedom of the City of Oxford

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This shows the minimum number of donations and funding grants given to Oxford University from fossil fuel companies between 2015-2021 that we discovered in our research. Given that not all of this information is publicly available, the actual numbers are likely to be higher than shown in this graph.

Climate change is the greatest threat to humanity and the Earth, and it is largely caused by the burning of fossil fuels.¹ Despite knowing this, fossil fuel companies² are planning to increase extraction and exploration of oil and gas in the coming decades.³ The University of Oxford conducts research on the injustices perpetrated by the fossil fuel industry,⁴ and has recently announced fairly ambitious plans to become more environmentally sustainable.⁵ Despite this, it continues to be deeply enmeshed in the unjust industry itself. As a climate justice group, we emphasise that the effects of the climate crisis are often most felt by those who are politically and socially marginalised. By supporting fossil fuel companies that exacerbate the climate crisis and perpetuate inequality, the University of Oxford knowingly furthers global injustices.

In the 'Research' section of this report, we demonstrate how academics at the University of Oxford carry out extractive research that is of immense value to the

fossil fuel industry. This research is often paid for by fossil fuel companies and conducted in collaboration with their employees. In the 'Social Licence' section of the report, we show that Oxford accepts millions of pounds in donations each year from the fossil fuel industry. These donations allow the industry to divert attention away from its appalling environmental record and instead to parade its ethical credentials. Finally, in the 'Revolving Door' section, we present our findings on how employees of fossil fuel companies are simultaneously employed by Oxford, and how Oxford's Careers Service encourages students to work in the sector through promoting positions for the industry.

The University of Oxford cannot claim innocence in maintaining these connections, and has not been public about important information on these ties.

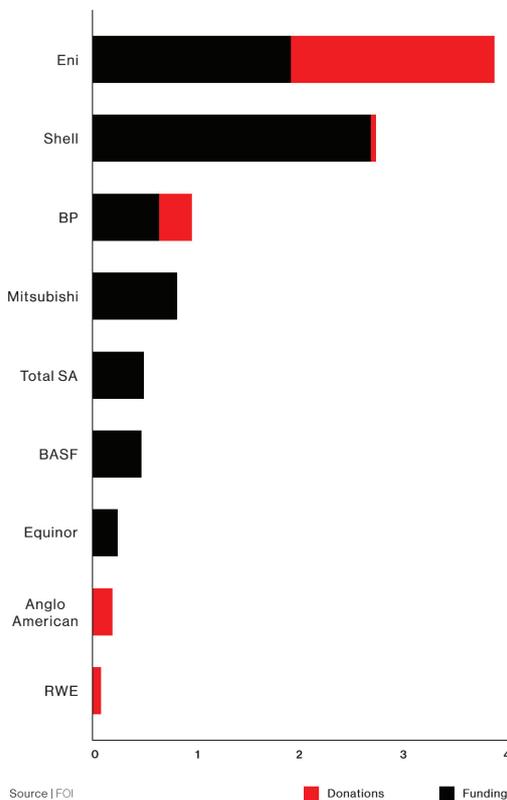
SECTIONS AT A GLANCE

2021

Research

Between 2015 and 2020, Oxford accepted **at least £8.2 million in research grants** from fossil fuel companies.

Cumulative donations and funding from Carbon Underground companies | 2017-2019 (£ million)



Example 1 In 2018, BP gave the Computer Science department £27,150 to fund a studentship into 'AI and Cognitive Computing [...] with Application to the Oil and Gas Industry'. BP is a collaborative partner in the department's Quantum Computing and Simulation hub.

Example 2 The KACST-Oxford Petrochemical Research Centre (KOPRC) focuses on novel oil refinery processes and catalysts, developing higher-value products from heavy oil and finding additives for cleaner diesel combustion. The Oxford Institute

for Energy Studies is heavily funded by multiple fossil fuel companies and carries out research into 'contemporary oil markets, production, consumption and policy'.

Social Licence

Between 2015 and 2020, the University accepted **at least £3.7 million in donations** from fossil fuel companies, and in 2021 the University received **£100 million** in a single donation from INEOS.

Example 1 Undergraduates in STEM and Economics & Management can apply for a number of BP Scholarships. As well as receiving £3,000 per annum, scholars can attend informational events about the oil and gas industry and benefit from a fast track to interviews and internships at BP.

Example 2 In 2002, the Bodleian acquired a unique Arabic cosmological manuscript from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, known as the Book of Curiosities, thanks in part to a donation from Saudi Aramco.

Revolving Door

There is extensive traffic in personnel between Oxford and fossil fuel companies and vice versa, with members of staff simultaneously working for both. Oxford's Careers Service perpetuates this situation by **advertising and promoting** fossil fuel companies.

Example 1 The co-chair of the International Advisory Board of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government was formerly BP's Group Chief Executive and is currently Executive Chairman for L1 Energy.

Example 2 A member of the Steering Committee of Oxford's Business Economics Programme is also Vice President of Shell Global Operations for the Trading and Supply Business.

8

DEMANDS

We ask the University of Oxford and its constituent colleges to:

Immediately

- 1** Commit not to take any further sponsorships, grants, or donations from fossil fuel companies.
- 2** Ensure that Oxford Careers Service stops advertising positions with fossil fuel companies, establishing a policy identical to that existing for the tobacco industry.

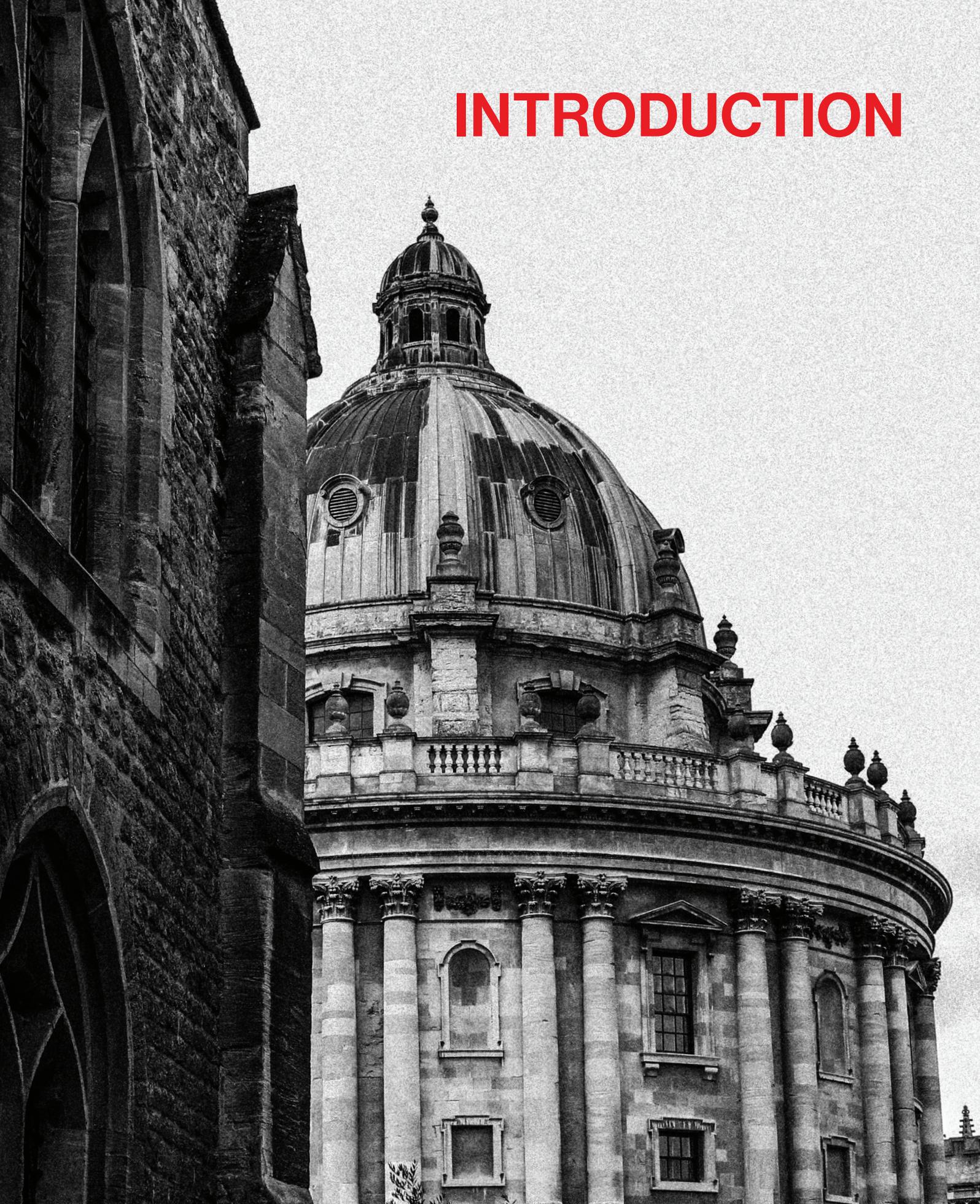
Short Term (In Next Two Years)

- 1** Reform the Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding to create a more robust ethical policy (in line with the existing protocol on the tobacco industry), and to demonstrate greater transparency regarding its decision-making process.
- 2** End all research which directly or knowingly aids in the extraction of fossil fuels, particularly when carried out on behalf of or in partnership with fossil fuel companies.
- 3** Remove the names of fossil fuel companies from buildings, institutes, and positions that are named after these companies.
- 4** Ensure all remaining Oxford colleges and halls fully divest from fossil fuels, in line with or exceeding the University's divestment position.

Mid Term (In Next Five Years)

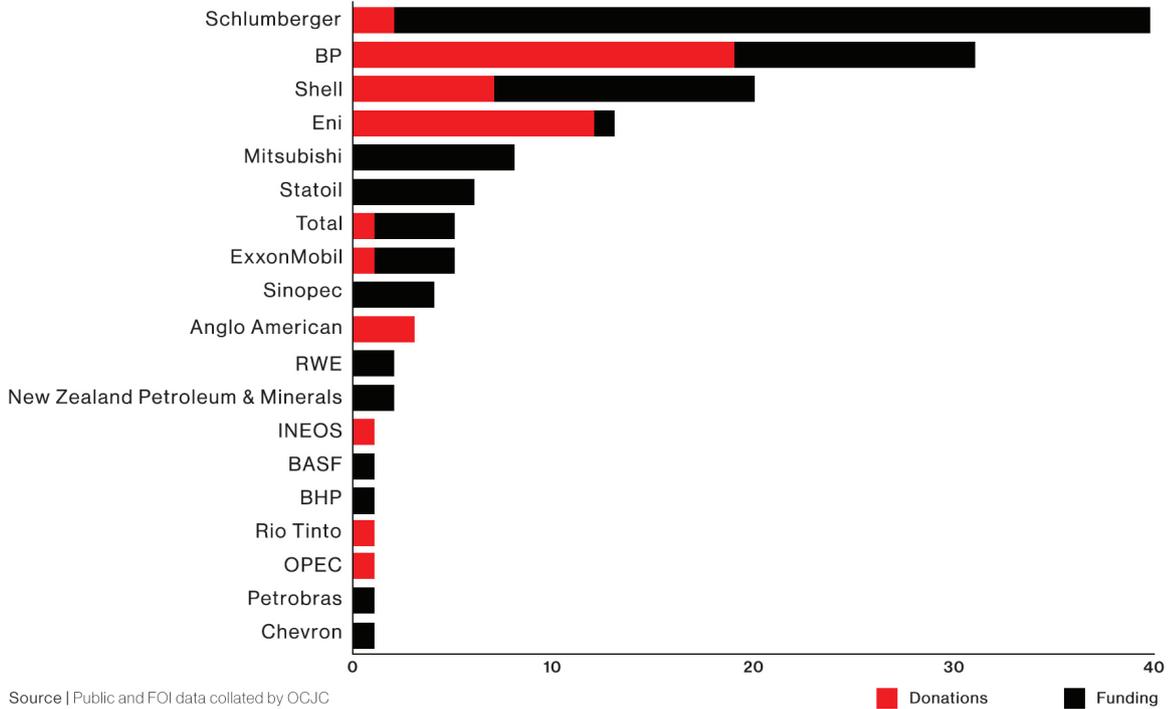
- 1** Eliminate existing ties with the fossil fuel industry, after taking consultation on how to transition away from these relationships.
- 2** Prohibit individuals from holding positions of authority simultaneously at the University or colleges and in a fossil fuel company, where there is a demonstrable conflict of interest; for example, Finance Bursar, Director.
- 3** Promote climate justice, including researching and publicly recognising the ways that Oxford – both currently and historically – participates in colonial processes of exploitation and extraction, to the cost of Indigenous peoples and frontline communities; integrate sustainability and anti-racism policy throughout the University; establish policies to aid students from refugee backgrounds.

INTRODUCTION



Oxford University & the Fossil Fuel Industry: An Overview

Cumulative donations and funding from fossil fuel companies | 2015-2021
(Number by company)



This shows the minimum number of donations and funding grants given to Oxford University from fossil fuel companies between 2015-2021 that we discovered in our research. Given that not all of this information is publicly available, the actual numbers are likely to be higher than shown in this graph.

Climate change is not only a problem for the future: people have been dying and losing their homes for decades, particularly among Indigenous peoples and communities of colour.⁶ The climate crisis highlights and perpetuates some of the greatest injustices of our world (see the 'Climate Justice' section). In 2015, the Paris Agreement was set up with an aim to limit global warming to well below 2°C warming above pre-industrial levels by 2100, and preferably 1.5°C.⁷ We are now on track to at least 3°C warming by 2100.⁸ 1.5°C warming would drastically change the Earth system and humanity's dependence on it, particularly damaging nations in the Global South – let alone anything greater than 1.5°C.⁹ Limiting warming to 1.5°C as an absolute maximum is an obligation and requires rapid decarbonisation of our global

economy. As part of a transition to a decarbonised future, we must decrease global production of fossil fuels by 6% each year between 2020 and 2030.¹⁰ The majority of large fossil fuel companies, however, are planning to increase their production each year,¹¹ leading humanity closer to irreversible climate tipping points.

We define the fossil fuel industry as consisting of the companies and organisations which directly profit from the exploration, extraction, refining, and distribution of fossil fuels and those which directly profit from 'oilfield services', including but not limited to the companies in the Carbon Underground 200.¹² This report, devised by student members of the Oxford Climate Justice Campaign (OCJC), looks at

the staggering number of connections between this industry and the University of Oxford – but it is by no means exhaustive. Rather, it aims to give a sense of the problem in broadly three categories: **Research, Social Licence, and the Revolving Door**. Following the lead of a similar publication produced in 2019 by Cambridge Zero Carbon Society,¹³ this report is to be used both as an informative guide and as a call for change.

Fossil fuel companies are present across a variety of bodies within the University. Subject departments, faculties, and institutes accept research funding from the industry; the Careers Service advertises individual companies, in some cases with enhanced levels of promotion;¹⁴ colleges receive donations, offer industry-funded scholarships, and play host to former or current executives of fossil fuel companies in their highest echelons. All of this occurs against the will of the student body, as evidenced by the Student Union motion passed on the 24th October 2020, which called on Oxford University to end research into the extraction of fossil fuels, not to take research grants, sponsorships, and donations from fossil fuel companies, and to prohibit the Careers Service from advertising positions on behalf of fossil fuel companies not aligned with the Oxford Martin Principles.¹⁵

Many colleges are also tied to the industry through investments. In April 2020, **Congregation voted on a resolution committing Oxford University endowment fund (OUem) to partially divest from fossil fuel companies** and to engage with all investments in line with the Oxford Martin Principles.¹⁶ (The endowment managers have yet to evidence divestment or engagement processes, but are due to release their annual report this Spring.) Individual colleges within the University, though sometimes partially or fully invested in OUem, generally have autonomy over their investment portfolios – and this often means direct and indirect fossil fuel company

exposure. Increasing numbers of colleges have committed to divest their endowments in some way (so far including St Hilda's, Trinity, Wadham, Balliol, and Somerville), or to move the money into ethical funds. **But many have not yet done so**, and consequently are lagging not only behind student expectation but even behind the central University's example. St John's, for example, Oxford's richest college, was targeted by student protestors in early 2020 on account of its £8.1m investments in Shell and BP¹⁷ – at the time of writing, these investments still stand.¹⁸ Though investments are not one of the focus points of this report, we hope that the rationale behind the April 2020 resolution will also be applied to the other ties the University holds with the fossil fuel industry, and to the investments of its constituent colleges.

Many of the fossil fuel industry connections discussed in this report are in the form of donations and research grants from companies. Additionally, the University receives extensive funding from research councils to carry out extractive research. The University has a Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding, which provides guidelines for accepting and refusing financial contributions.¹⁹ Alongside money from sources deemed illegal, funding must also be rejected when it **'might impinge on academic freedom or limit freedom of enquiry'** or when it **'might create conflicts of interest for the collegiate University and/or the individual beneficiaries of the funding'**.²⁰ As we discuss in the 'Research' and 'Social Licence' sections of this report, receiving money from fossil fuel companies arguably influences the direction of research carried out, which limits academic freedom. The Committee also states that funding should be refused if the origins of the money are **'unethical'** or if accepting funding **'would seriously harm the reputation of the collegiate University'**. Furthermore, **'where a funder has a "tarnished" reputation, the University will consider gifts from that funder if the behaviour which led to the funder's reputation**

being tarnished has clearly ceased'. The fossil fuel industry is systematically unethical, and their 'tarnished' reputation still holds; as detailed in our 'Climate Justice' section and Case Studies 2 and 3, the fossil fuel industry actively furthers social, economic, and political inequalities, which is particularly evident in its perpetration of racial injustice. The fossil fuel industry exploits Indigenous peoples, exacerbates existing conflicts,²¹ and, through contributing to climate change, indirectly furthers the death and suffering brought about globally by extreme weather events, food insecurity, and the spread of tropical diseases. The inconsistencies in the University guidelines are furthered by the contrasting treatment of the tobacco industry, which the University does not accept gifts from due to the **'great harm to public health'** that it has caused. Pollution from burning fossil fuels causes at least as many deaths each year as tobacco smoke.²² On the grounds of academic freedom, ethics, reputation, and public health, it is inconsistent for the University to have a blanket policy on the tobacco industry and yet welcome gifts from fossil fuel companies.

The University's commitment to sustainability is in many ways commendable.²³ Alongside the partial divestment vote, the recently launched **Oxford Sustainability Strategy**²⁴ marks a significant improvement in the University's stance. Furthermore, Oxford's researchers make huge contributions to climate science, with institutions such as the Oxford Martin School and the Smith School producing influential work. OCJC believes that this is all the more reason to sever the ties that undermine these achievements. However impressive the University's sustainability credentials are, it cannot espouse the principles of climate justice while retaining links to the fossil fuel industry.

Climate Justice

2021

'Climate justice' is particularly concerned with the human, social, and political dimensions of the climate crisis. Seeking climate justice means recognising that those suffering most from the effects of the climate crisis are often those who have done least to cause it. It means listening to the voices of those who are already harmed by environmental catastrophe – **frontline communities, Indigenous peoples, and many in the Global South** – and acknowledging that these groupings often correlate with communities that are politically and socially marginalised due to a world history of **colonialism, conflict, and inequality**. Climate justice is inseparable from social and racial justice; we therefore seek to be intersectional, connecting our activism with other struggles such as movements for migrant justice.²⁵

14

The fossil fuel industry creates and upholds global injustice. These companies' influence over the global economy means that the structures of our world are predicated on **exploitation and extractivism** (the practice of extracting natural resources from the Earth for sale on the world market). They continue to wield power despite the immorality of their actions in knowingly causing environmental destruction.²⁶ The industry perpetuates historical cycles of colonialism and racism, frequently exploiting the lands of Indigenous peoples against their will and demonstrating higher degrees of negligence towards human rights in communities of colour and poor communities.²⁷

Naomi Klein, a prominent environmental and social activist, has written: 'Extractivism is also directly connected to the notion of sacrifice zones—places that, to their extractors, somehow don't count and therefore can be poisoned, drained, or otherwise destroyed, for the supposed greater good of economic progress.

This toxic idea has always been intimately tied to imperialism, with disposable peripheries being

harnessed to feed a glittering center, and it is bound up too with notions of racial superiority, because in order to have sacrifice zones, you need to have people and cultures who count so little that they are considered deserving of sacrifice.'²⁸

However, resistance is growing. In a landmark ruling in 2019, the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines ruled that the 47 major investor-owned corporations linked to fossil fuels, including ExxonMobil, BP, Shell, Chevron, and many others, can be legally and morally liable for human rights abuses resulting from climate change.²⁹ In yet another victory, Royal Dutch Shell was found guilty by the Dutch Supreme Court for the damages caused to Nigerian farmers during two major oil spills in the Niger delta in 2004 and 2005.³⁰ These landmark decisions bring hope of justice for billions of people affected by the climate crisis caused directly by these multinational fossil fuel giants. Even international courts are beginning to recognise that fossil fuel corporations are **responsible for human rights abuses and climate injustices**: it is of paramount importance that the University does the same.

To show **solidarity** with those affected, and to promote real climate justice, it is necessary to sever ties completely with the fossil fuel industry. These companies do not hold the answer to the climate crisis: their business model relies on the destruction of the environment, and on the exploitation of land and people. In maintaining relations with the fossil fuel industry, Oxford actively furthers climate injustice, which engenders deep political, social, racial, and economic inequality across the globe. If Oxford is to be an institution of academic and ethical integrity, **it must end these ties**, and redirect its efforts towards creating just solutions for the crisis we are in.

About This Report

The connections between the University and the fossil fuel industry explored in this report are for the most part in the **public domain**. Since May 2020, members of OCJC have been searching for information on University, College, and department webpages, as well as the websites of fossil fuel companies. Some of the data has been acquired through **Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests**, some already existing and some carried out for the purposes of the report.³¹ Our FOIs only requested data for 2015-20, and so there may be other connections established in the last academic year (2020-2021) that are not covered in this report.

FOI Requests can be answered within 20 working days of the request. However, the University's Information Compliance Team (ICT) frequently missed this deadline (for example, the information asked for in an FOI request sent in May 2020 was only received in full in January 2021).³² The ICT tended to only reply with the bare minimum information, and more information was only obtained after we requested internal reviews. Much of this information should have never been difficult to obtain; other universities such as Cambridge University release detailed information publicly every year about how their research is funded.³³ Although we have sometimes asked for very similar information, we were often given incomplete answers and have therefore used information from multiple FOI Requests in this report to give a full picture of the funding, donations, and grants received from the fossil fuel industry.

The ICT also withheld information until we told them we would file a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office. For example, they sometimes redacted project titles and did not provide the exact (or close approximate) amounts of funds, on the grounds that '[it] would be likely to prejudice the University's commercial interests, **by making it more difficult to raise funds from research funders in the future**. To disclose details of the

projects they are funding in breach of their express wishes **would undermine trust in the University and deter prospective funders**'.³⁴ This suggests that the University cannot be held accountable on where they source their fundings, and that the commercial interests of the University are prioritised over transparency and academic freedom. The ICT also stated that it '**would not be in the public interest to impair the University's ability to achieve the best use of public money, and to undermine its relationships with an important funders [sic]**'.³⁵ As an institution partly supported by tax-payer money, it is within the public interest to know how Oxford is aligning with the Paris Agreement. Knowing how the research grants Oxford receives from fossil fuel companies are used outweighs any benefit to the public interest in not disclosing this information. It is a moral obligation for Oxford to show how its research is funded. This information should be readily available and should not have to be obtained through the tedious process of FOI requests. Maintaining the University's relationships with these funders should not be prioritised over transparency, accountability, and sustainability.

Naturally, the University often edits its web pages, to reflect changes and perhaps to avoid controversy. During our research, we archived the pages we were using as well as noting the source in its current form. During the report, we cite static web archives only where there has been a change in the source; otherwise, we provide the links to the current source (and it should be noted accordingly that changes may occur following the report's publication).

Questions or difficulties regarding citations?
Refer to oxfordclimatejustice@gmail.com
Archives can be found under archive.org

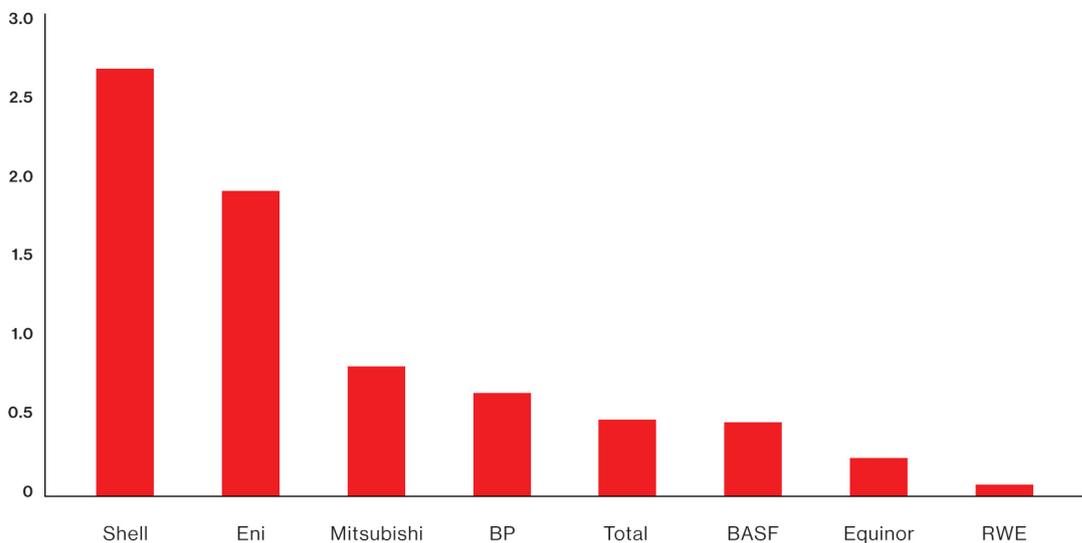


RESEARCH

Introduction

This section demonstrates how the University of Oxford directly contributes to the advancement of the fossil fuel industry through carrying out extractive research. We cover how these companies offer funded studentships and scholarships to Oxford students in order to further their own work. Professorships such as the **BP Professor of Information Engineering**³⁶ and the **Shell Professor of Earth Sciences**³⁷ exemplify the intimate relationship between Oxford's research and the fossil fuel industry. As well as direct collaborations, Oxford also accepts research grants and donations from fossil fuel companies that go towards research that benefits the industry.

Cumulative funding from Carbon Underground companies | 2017-2019
(£ million)



Source | FOI

Oxford runs many fully fledged research centres and programmes that directly contribute to advances in fossil fuel extraction. This section covers the **Shell Geoscience Lab** and the **Oxford Institute of Energy Studies**, a 'Recognized Independent Centre of the University of Oxford' (see 'Case Study 1: OIES'),³⁸ which runs multiple programmes that are sponsored by large numbers of fossil fuel companies.

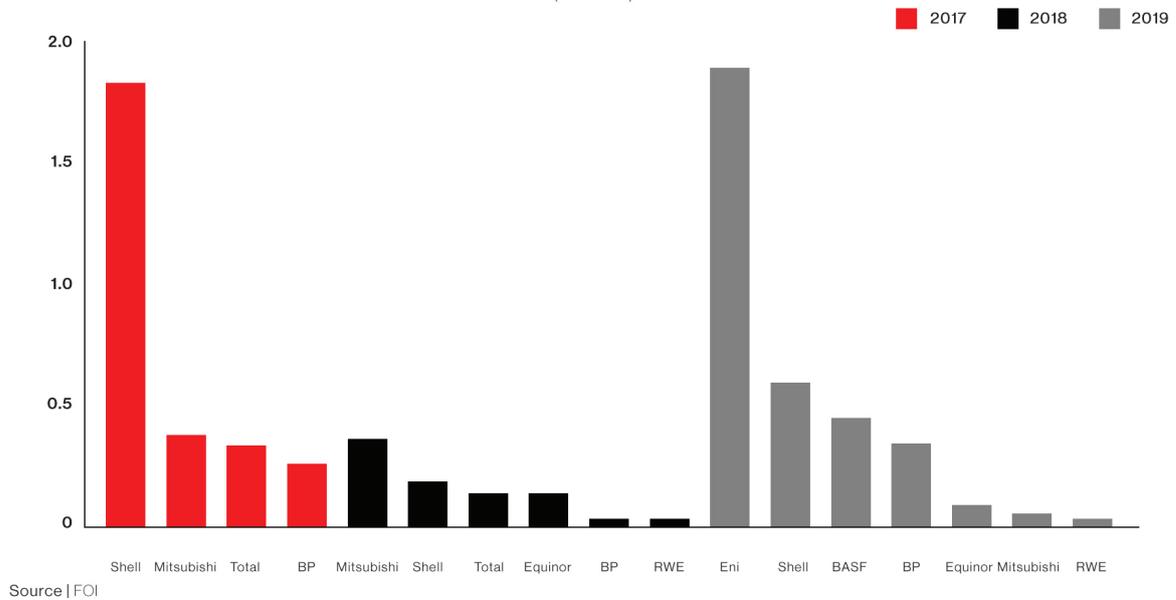
The University cannot claim ignorance when it comes to the nature of the industry they abet. In fact, many of the University's own departments produce damning research, not only on the climate crisis, but specifically on the wrongs of fossil fuel companies. For example,

Oxford Martin school researchers authored a paper surveying a wide range of such companies and **demonstrating that the majority had no concrete plans for achieving net zero**.³⁹ Similarly, an Oxford Martin School academic spoke on the side of California cities in their **lawsuit against large fossil fuel companies**, including Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, BP, and Royal Dutch Shell, for the costs associated with adapting to climate change.⁴⁰ Some areas of University research have even addressed climate injustice. The Oxford Human Rights Hub (OHRH), based in the Oxford University Faculty of Law, has **reported on Shell's insufficient efforts** to combat climate change, directly targeting corporate

failings.⁴¹ The OHRH has also commented on the ruling allowing Nigerian farmers to sue Shell (see 'Case Study 3'), writing that this step 'signals new hope on the horizon for victims seeking a judicial remedy for corporate negligence or human rights abuse'.⁴² The University sees the fossil fuel industry condemned in its own research. To take money from

these companies in exchange for new research – research that facilitates their harmful activities – is negligent and hypocritical.

Funding from Carbon Underground Companies (£ million)



Mathematical, Physical, & Life Sciences

The **Mathematics** department has a specific centre for doctoral training on **Industrially Focused Mathematical Modelling (InFoMM)**. This centre is partnered with at least twelve companies that are involved in either direct extraction of fossil fuels or providing services to extractors; **BP and Schlumberger** are notable examples.⁴³ All students at the InFoMM conduct mini-projects based at a partner company. Recent examples include modelling 'water/brine/surfactant mixtures' at Schlumberger and 'Oil droplet formation using dispersants' at BP.⁴⁴ These then lead to a three-year collaborative research project. Currently three projects are carried out at BP, entitled 'Modelling the Use of Dispersants on Oil Spills', 'Fines Migration in Oil Reservoirs' and 'Bargaining Under Uncertainty'. Schlumberger is working with an Oxford student on 'Preconditioning for Reservoir Simulation'.⁴⁵

Other research groups in Mathematics have also collaborated with fossil fuel companies. Examples include research on 'optimal oil well placement' in collaboration with a software engineer at Schlumberger as well as 'Hydrodynamics and species transport during gel formation for converging flows' in collaboration with a Schlumberger Gould researcher.⁴⁶ **PDS Petrotechnical co-authored** a paper with a postdoc on 'Exsolving two-phase flow in oil wells',⁴⁷ while **BP has funded a group of researchers' extractive research papers** at least three times between 2018 and 2020, with titles such as 'Modelling Low-Salinity Oil Recovery Mechanisms'.⁴⁸

The **Computer Science** department receives financial support from and collaborates with fossil fuel companies. **Statoil are industrial partners** to the department and many papers written by Oxford researchers are in **collaboration with employees of Statoil**.⁴⁹ For example, a 2016 paper on 'Shallow plumbing systems' (relevant to hydrocarbon flow) was co-authored by Oxford and Statoil researchers

and acknowledges Statoil for use of their '3D seismic data'.⁵⁰ A senior lecturer in Computer Science is also a **principal investigator on a collaboration project with Schlumberger** on optimising supply chains.⁵¹

The **Earth Sciences** department receives extensive funding from fossil fuel companies for research into geological analysis. Research themes include 'distribution of resources in sedimentary basins' and 'hydrocarbon migration and flow'.⁵² In 2013, **Shell gave £5.9m to set up the Shell Geoscience Laboratory**, in a Shell-Oxford Research Partnership lasting at least 5 years⁵³ and the Shell Geoscience Laboratory director holds the title of '**Shell Professor of Earth Sciences**'.⁵⁴ The current sponsors of the Shell Geoscience Laboratory also include Anadarko, BG, BP, Chevron, Eni, Petrobras, Schlumberger, Statoil and Total.⁵⁵ Saudi Aramco, BG, BP and Petrobras have also provided funding within the department.⁵⁶

Shell geochemists have also collaborated with academics at the department of Earth Sciences on projects such as 'The Oxford-Shell Metal Isotopes' project to research 'widespread, organic carbon burial in the geological record',⁵⁷ a research project funded by Shell.⁵⁸ **Petrobras also partners with the department**, sponsoring one of its own staff members for a DPhil in the department and supporting 'several small-scale collaborative projects, as well as visits' between Petrobras and Oxford labs.⁵⁹ Petrobras also directly funded at least one postgraduate student in Earth Sciences, with the department stating that 'Industrial links such as these provide university researchers with access to data and samples that would be otherwise denied to them, whilst also providing the companies with new insights'.⁶⁰ The same company, alongside BP and Saudi Aramco, **funded equipment** for X-ray diffraction capabilities, and more generally provides funding to the faculty under the Earth Resources research theme.⁶¹

The Earth Sciences department also conducts

research into the geology of the South China Sea, a disputed area which China has claimed, largely due to the potential for fossil fuel exploration.⁶² The Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague has ruled that China's territorial claims there have 'no legal basis'.⁶³ Academics in the department have collaborated with employees of PetroChina on papers investigating seismic data of the South China Sea.⁶⁴ Some of these papers also thank China National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC) for 'permission to release the data'.⁶⁵ PetroChina's parent company, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and CNOOC are both controlled by the Chinese military.⁶⁶ Apart from exploring for fossil fuels in a highly disputed area, CNOOC has also been accused of exploitation of workers and disregard for local land rights in Myanmar.⁶⁷ Collaboration in any form with companies such as these should not occur in a University which prides itself on leading by example.

The **Engineering department's** Invensys University Technology Centre for Advanced Instrumentation focuses on technology used for 'upstream well testing... enhanced oil recovery and metering of marine fuel' while another part of the department focuses on the design of 'offshore structures for oil and gas applications'.⁶⁸ Within Engineering, academics also collaborate with fossil fuel companies, through providing **consultancy on projects with clients such as DONG Energy, Repsol Nuevas Energias UK, and Statoil**.⁶⁹ **BP in particular has made numerous contributions** to the department. In 2016-2017, BP provided £300,000 for membership into the Oxford Robotics Institute.⁷⁰ In 2019, this membership was renewed with a grant of over £250,000.⁷¹

Within the Robotics Institute, **BP and Schlumberger fund the Centre for Doctoral Training in Autonomous Intelligent Machines and Systems** which involves promoting 'internships and studentships', providing short lectures, 'proposing first-year research grants' and being members of

the steering committee.⁷² In 2017-2018, **BP gave the department a grant** worth £27,150 for a fully funded DPhil studentship, carrying out research into 'AI and Cognitive Computing [...] with Application to the Oil and Gas Industry'.⁷³ BP provided another grant of £12,000 for research into 'AI and the Future of Work',⁷⁴ with AI having significance for the oil and gas sector in geological and market analysis.⁷⁵ BP is also a collaborative partner in the department's Quantum Computing and Simulation hub.⁷⁶

The **Physics, Chemistry, and Materials Science** departments have all conducted research that will be of direct use in fossil fuel extraction. For example, **the Physics department has conducted research into optimising exploration** of geological structures; it plans to 'promote this idea to potential industrial partners'.⁷⁷ The Chemistry department's project on 'Colloidal Interfaces in Microfluidics', which involved **discussions with Schlumberger**,⁷⁸ will improve oil recovery from oil wells. The Materials Science department's project on 'Durable High Temperature Electronics Packaging' stated that it will help 'the oil and gas industries [...] maximise recovery of reserves'.⁷⁹

These departments have also collaborated with or received funding from fossil fuel companies. In 2017-2018, **BP granted the Materials Science department £232,580** for a 'collaborative project'.⁸⁰ In the Chemistry department, **the Wolfson Catalysis Laboratory has been supported by Saudi Aramco**,⁸¹ while **Sinopec has funded projects and employees have co-authored** papers with academics in the department.⁸² A researcher in the department has also **jointly patented a project with Saudi Aramco**.⁸³

Social Sciences

The **Economics** department's **Oxford Centre for the Analysis of Resource-Rich Economies** (OxCarre) was established in 2007 with a **'generous donation from BP'** to fund at least 5 years of research. OxCarre focuses on understanding the performances of 'resource rich economies', in particular those rich in fossil fuels.⁸⁴ BP itself states that a 'significant part of our UK commitment in 2005 was our endowment of a BP chair and creation of [OxCarre]'.⁸⁵ The director of the department was given the title **'BP Professor of Economics'** in a now deleted page of the Economics department website.⁸⁶ It is clear from acknowledgements in more recent papers that BP continued to fund the centre beyond the 5-year period.⁸⁷ Other fossil fuel companies have also supported research at this institute. For example, OxCarre's 2019 paper 'To Build or Not to Build? Capital Stocks and Climate Policy' acknowledges **funding from Statoil**.⁸⁸

However, we could not determine the exact number of papers funded by fossil fuel companies at OxCarre due to paywalls.

We know from FOI requests that **the Saïd Business School is heavily supported by fossil fuel companies**, although information on funding and donations is generally concealed. In 2019-2020, **Eni gave a research grant** of £1,903,759 for the 'Renewal of the partnership between Eni SpA and Oxford's Centre for Corporate Reputation',⁸⁹ research that may help increase Eni's attractiveness to investors. **Shell is another donor**, providing a total of £60,000 to the Centre for Corporate Reputation between 2016 and 2019 and funding the School's Centre for Business Taxation (which also received £60,000 from BP between 2016 and 2019).⁹⁰

Energy

2021

The **King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST)**, a Saudi Arabian science and technology centre, created a joint research centre with Oxford, the **KACST– Oxford Petrochemical Research Centre (KOPRC)**. It focuses on novel oil refinery processes and catalysts, developing higher-value products from heavy oil and finding additives for cleaner diesel combustion. The projects are intended to further advance the profitability and scope of the Saudi Arabian petrochemical industry, ensuring continued demand for the nation's oil and gas reserves. According to the centre's website, more than 20 joint papers were published by KOPRC and 10 joint patents relating to oil refining were filed.⁹¹

22

Oxford is an **academic partner in the Centre for Doctoral Training in Oil and Gas**.⁹² The industry partners of this centre include BP, Cairn Energy, ConocoPhillips, Equinor, ExxonMobil, Shell, Total, Versus Petroleum and Schlumberger.⁹³ As part of this, Oxford agreed to support two new PhDs with NERC paying for a third new PhD at Oxford in oil and gas each year from 2014 to 2016. The scheme was extended to also cover 2017 as part of a deal by the UK Government to help support 'the UK oil & gas sector in a time of oil price challenge'.⁹⁴

Despite claiming that 'Environmental Impact and Regulation' would be one of the four key areas of research funded, only 15% of PhD projects were in this area with the rest focusing on **research into fossil fuel extraction**.⁹⁵

Alongside funding from fossil fuel companies, Oxford also carries out extractive research with funding that comes from UK research councils. For example, the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) provided £101,050 to the Engineering Science department between 2017 and 2018 for research into 'Controlling viscous fingering with fluid-structure interactions'. It was stated that this project would be of '**particular relevance to the oil industry**' and would enable Oxford to build 'stronger connections' with the industry.⁹⁶ Likewise, the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) provided £86,078 to the Physics department between 2014 and 2015 for research into 'Magnetotellurics with SQUIDs', which it stated would help 'map the geological structure of the ground underneath our feet' so as to assist with further '**oil and gas exploration**'.⁹⁷ These examples only represent the tip of the iceberg; research councils fund innumerable other projects into fossil fuel extraction.⁹⁸

Conclusion

We are disappointed that so many of Oxford's brilliant minds are currently focused on extractive research for fossil fuel companies. The **Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding** (see 'Oxford University and the Fossil Fuel Industry: An Overview') claims to reject grants that impinge on academic freedom or present conflicts of interest. Yet despite potential conflicts of interest, research for the fossil fuel industry is still supported.⁹⁹ More distressingly, Oxford's extractivist research makes our University directly complicit in a damaging and exploitative global system that is endangering our world and its people. Oxford is world-renowned for its research, and is part of a global intellectual community. As an international institution that relies on academics and students from across the world, our University needs to fully acknowledge the impact of the fossil fuel industry on its global neighbours. If Oxford truly cares about using its influence ethically, it needs to cut ties with the companies that undermine global justice while destroying the planet. Oxford University must immediately stop carrying out new research intended to help in the extraction or processing of fossil fuels.

Case Study 1 › Oxford Institute for Energy Studies

2021

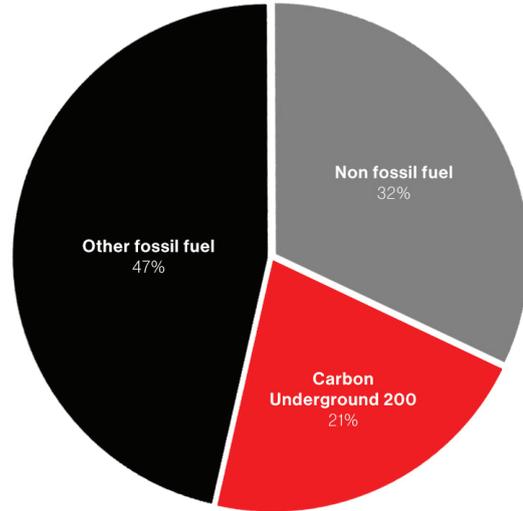
The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (OIES) is a Recognised Independent Centre: it is not part of the University, but 'work[s] with the University in research and teaching'.¹⁰⁰ The OIES 'is a world leading independent energy research institute specialising in advanced research into the economics and politics of international energy across oil, gas and electricity markets.' They have three programmes which directly relate to the fossil fuel sector: **Oil & the Middle East Research Programme, Gas Research Programme, and China Energy Research Programme.** Oil & the Middle East Research Programme, established in 2009, 'is dedicated to the advanced study of contemporary oil markets, production, consumption and policy'. The Gas Research Programme focuses on local and international markets; from 2011 to 2016 it was involved in the EU-Russia Gas Advisory Council. The China Energy Research Programme, launched in 2019, analyses how China's energy policies are influenced and their role in international energy markets.¹⁰¹

24

Because it is not a public authority but a registered charity and company limited by guarantee, it is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act nor the Environmental Information Regulations.¹⁰² It was impossible to find information on the exact amounts of funds and donations they receive from fossil fuel companies. However, from their website and annual reports,¹⁰³ we have been able to gain an insight into the funding of their research and specific programmes.

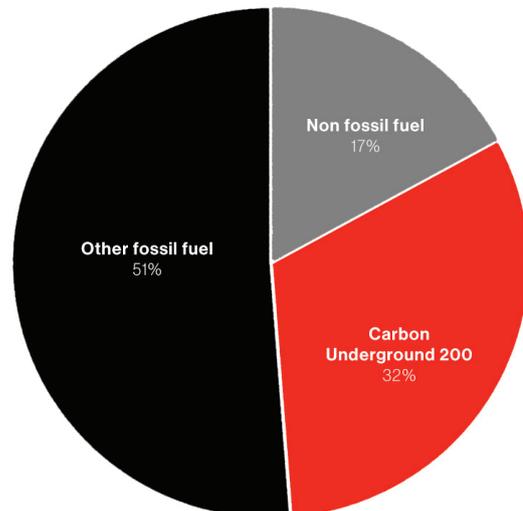
We found a **systemic relationship between OIES and the fossil fuel industry.** OIES is sponsored by a range of fossil fuel companies, including BP, Cheniere, Eni, Equinor, ExxonMobil, Mozambique LNG, Sedigas, Shell, Total, OMV, Marathon Petroleum Corporation as well as other energy technology and services companies. Other fossil fuel companies have also funded studentships and professorships at the Institute. For example, Saudi Aramco provided £7,019 in 2019 to fund the OIES-Saudi-Aramco Fellowship.¹⁰⁴

Number of current and past benefactors to OIES 1983-2019



Source | OIES website and annual reports

Number of sponsors of Gas and/or China Energy Research Programmes



Source | OIES website and annual reports

They also support PhD fellows at the OIES¹⁰⁵ and fund researchers carrying out research into oil and gas.¹⁰⁶ We have collated all the companies and organisations which provided funding, sponsorship, and grants to the OIES since their establishment in 1983 and subdivided these organisations and companies into 3 categories: those which are in the Carbon Underground Top 200,¹⁰⁷ other fossil fuel companies and organisations (such as OPEC and Delonex Energy), and other organisations which do not operate principally in fossil fuel extraction.¹⁰⁸ Companies and organisations in the third category may also have major interests in increasing fossil fuel extraction, such as banks which invest in it heavily (e.g., JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup and Barclays).¹⁰⁹

Apart from funding and donations, the Institute's researchers have also co-authored papers with employees of fossil fuel companies. The director of OIES co-authored 'Peak oil demand and long-run oil prices' in collaboration with BP,¹¹⁰ while 'Petroleum Investment in the Arabian Gulf' was published by a researcher at OIES and received input from employees at BP.¹¹¹ In our 'Revolving doors' section we detail the large numbers of professors and staff at OIES formerly or currently employed by the fossil fuel industry.

SOCIAL LICENCE



Introduction

As we have seen from the research ties, fossil fuel companies expect something from the University in return for their money. The term **'greenwashing'** is used to describe the process by which environmentally damaging organisations present a sustainable public front (often through disinformation). This section deals with greenwashing in its wider context, not only considering the sustainable research at Oxford funded by fossil fuel companies, but also the ways in which fossil fuel companies use Oxford to **bolster their reputation** and maintain their social licence (the degree of public acceptance needed for an organisation to operate), even in a world that can no longer ignore the effects of the climate crisis.

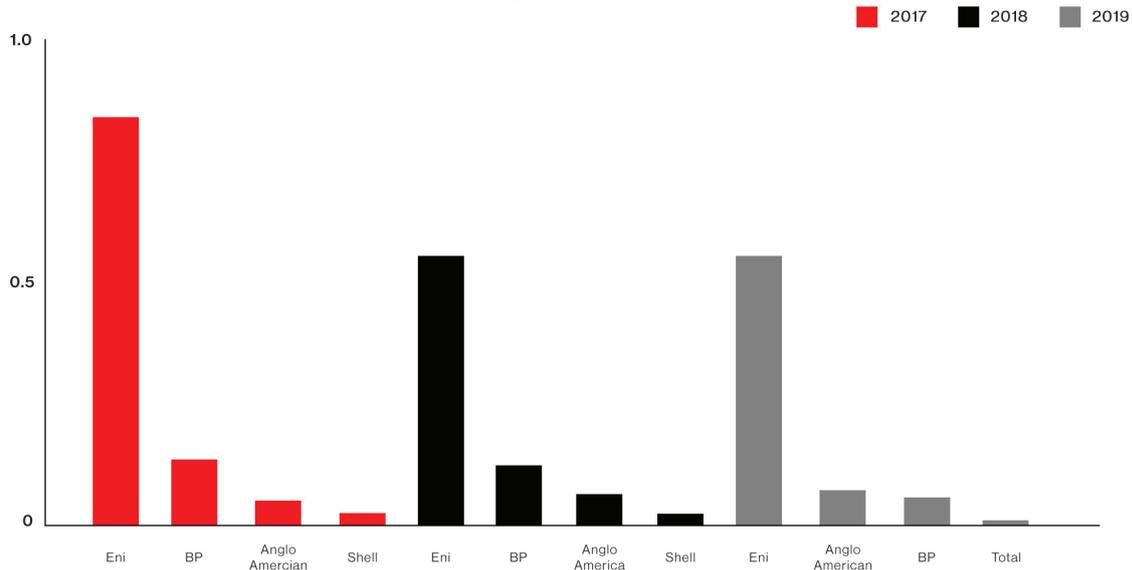
Maintaining the social licence of the fossil fuel industry directly contravenes the principles of climate justice. A shift to a just space for humanity means **listening to the voices of communities on the frontlines of climate change** – and no longer allowing the voices of multinational fossil fuel companies to drown them out. When viewed in the overwhelming context of the climate crisis these companies are perpetuating, their small philanthropies are self-serving and strikingly hypocritical. The donations discussed in this section are, in isolation, often beneficial contributions to the life and research outcomes of the University. But by accepting and welcoming them from the fossil

fuel industry, rather than from other sources, Oxford plays a large and knowing role in sustaining these companies' social licence and makes itself complicit in a sinister and widespread public image scam.

The fossil fuel industry is all around us in Oxford University, sometimes unseen and sometimes right in front of our eyes: the Saïd Business School includes an **Eni Lecture Theatre**, thanks to Eni's donations in support of the Oxford University Centre for Corporate Reputation;¹¹² the University's Engineering students are greeted with a **BP logo** on the front of their textbook.¹¹³

By paying for prestigious events, sponsoring scholarships and achievement prizes, engaging in the cultural life of the University, and funding academic projects in the field of sustainable development and other ethical research, the fossil fuel industry builds up an image of itself as a beneficial, philanthropic, and necessary sector – an image which it can paste over the horrific scenes of damage and destitution. And by accepting these donations, naming the companies as benefactors, and also by granting awards and honorary degrees to members of the fossil fuel industry (such as the **Honorary Doctorate held by a non-executive director of BP**),¹¹⁴ the University delivers loud and clear the message that this harmful industry is not only necessary, but worthy of celebration.

Donations from Carbon Underground Companies (£ million)



Source | FOI

Scholarships & Achievement Prizes

2021

28

By funding scholarships and prizes at Oxford, fossil fuel companies strengthen their bond with the University, and, crucially, make positive contributions that can be used to bolster their social licence. Students in the past have received the **BP Award for the Best Project Exhibit** within the Engineering Science department (whose newsletter was for several years running also sponsored by **BP**).¹¹⁵ Prospective undergraduates in STEM or Economics and Management can apply for one of Oxford's **BP Scholarships**, a programme which began in 2012 and continues today. This scholarship offers £3,000 per annum to students from their second year of study and opportunities to take part in 'a two to three day interactive event designed to help students understand more about the oil and gas industry. [Scholars] will also receive a fast track to an internship or graduate interview'.¹¹⁶ This scholarship not only whitewashes BP's ethical record, but scholars are also encouraged to start their careers working at BP.

Students in Earth Sciences are awarded £700 thanks to the **Shell Prize for Best Overall Performance** in Fourth Year at Final Honours School. The same sum is awarded to the third year geochemists through the **Shell Prize for Geochemistry**,¹¹⁷ while **Schlumberger's £600 Prize for Best Performance in Geophysics** is awarded to fourth-year students.¹¹⁸ At Pembroke College, the **Paul Martins BP Prize** can be awarded to an Engineering student achieving the best result in Part 1 Engineering Finals.¹¹⁹ Similarly, second-year students at St Edmund Hall can receive **The Chevron Award for Earth Sciences**.¹²⁰ Although not specific to a scholarship, the Blavatnik School of Government also accepted £8,000 from Total in 2019-2020 for their Scholarship Fund.¹²¹

Instead of achievement prizes, some fossil fuel companies secure their image by funding scholarships for students of nationalities that are underrepresented at Oxford. Eni supplies the money for a range of **scholarships at the Saïd Business**

School. For example, Eni provided between £100,000 and £150,000 each year (2015-2018) for the Saïd Business School Development Fund, and £540,600 in 2017 and £405,450 in 2018 and 2019 to the Saïd Business School Centre for Corporate Reputation.¹²² Eni also funds scholarships **for African students at the Saïd Business School**, where Eni 'has supported postgraduate students since the introduction of its first scholarship in 1957'.¹²³ In 2020, the Saïd Business School announced a further set of MBA and DPhil scholarships for African students, funded by Eni, with certain stipulations for applicants to the MBA scholarship: 'Candidates for the Eni-Oxford Africa Scholarship must be resident in one of the African countries in which Eni operates: Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Libya, Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, South Africa and Tunisia'.¹²⁴ At a College level, there are also up to three fully funded **Eni scholarships for African students at St Antony's**.¹²⁵ Eni's contribution towards increasing opportunities at Oxford for African students is, in isolation from their other actions, certainly laudable, and supports anti-imperialist and social justice goals. It sits at odds, however, with its record in those students' countries of origin. Amnesty International has accused Eni (along with Shell, see 'Case Study 3: Shell') of serious negligence regarding oil spills in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, and the damage they wreak on settlements there.¹²⁶ While Oxford University is academically enriched by an increase in African students, it conveniently ignores the social and environmental impact that Eni is having on the countries from which the students come.

The **Charlie Perkins Scholarships for Indigenous Australians**, offered at Colleges such as Green Templeton College, until recently provided a similar example, as the scholarships were partially funded by Rio Tinto: a gesture that did not undo the destruction (past and projected) of Aboriginal sites by the company

as part of their mine expansion in Australia;¹²⁷ or, more broadly, the destruction caused by climate change-induced wildfires, again in the scholars' home country.¹²⁸ The fact that, in 2015, the Charlie Perkins Scholarship Trust (which sponsors students to study at Oxford and Cambridge) dropped Rio Tinto as a funder¹²⁹ is proof that beneficial programmes can continue without the financial help of the fossil fuel industry: a lesson from which our University should learn.

Graduates applying to study at the Blavatnik School of Governance can have their studies supported by OPEC's fund for International Development (OFID),¹³⁰ while graduate applicants to Oxford's Centre for Tropical Medicine and Global Health are automatically considered for the **ExxonMobil Scholarships in Global Health**, provided they come from one of the following countries: Angola, Cameroon, Chad, China, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Turkey, United Arab Emirates or Vietnam.¹³¹ Though, again, ExxonMobil's decision to fund these scholarships was beneficial in isolation, its inadequacy as a gesture becomes clear when one considers the impact that the climate crisis is having in many of the countries specified, such as the horrific damage caused by Cyclone Amphan in Indonesia in 2020¹³² and Cyclone Idai in Mozambique in 2019.¹³³ Furthermore, funding a scholarship in global health is ironic considering that climate change may increase the geographic distribution of tropical diseases, such as malaria.¹³⁴ Fossil fuel companies' public shows of benevolence will continue to be insufficient – and indeed hypocritical – as long as they continue to operate on an extractivist model. Rather than facilitating this façade, Oxford should seek its money for these much-needed awards and scholarships from other sources.

Events

2021

30

MONEY, PEOPLE, REPUTATION:
OXFORD'S TIES WITH THE FOSSIL FUEL INDUSTRY

While fossil fuel companies greenwash by offering grants and donations, they have also been invited by members of the University to give speeches, fund events and attend conferences and seminars. These events give representatives from fossil fuel companies a unique platform to improve their public image. This was especially clear when **BP's Refining and Marketing Chief Executive** was invited to speak about a 'pragmatic' energy future for BP at Oxford,¹³⁵ only two months after the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill in April 2010, the largest and most devastating marine oil spill in history.¹³⁶ Subsequently, this Chief Executive was invited again to speak at The Oxford Energy Seminar in 2012 where he stated that 'many people in BP have benefitted from their experiences [at the Oxford Energy Seminar]¹³⁷ and 2013, where **Group Chief Executive** boasted about BP's development of then the world's second-largest oil field in Iraq.¹³⁸ Outside of the Oxford Energy Seminar, **BP's Strategy and Regions Executive Vice President** was invited to speak at the University of Oxford's Analytica Global Horizons conference in 2014, stating the benefits of fossil fuel companies for societies,¹³⁹ while **BP's chief scientist** spoke at The British Institute of Energy Economics hosted by St. John's college in 2016.¹⁴⁰ Meanwhile, BP was being charged for 'gross negligence'¹⁴¹ and 'conscious disregard of known risks'¹⁴² and employees were charged of manslaughter and lying to federal investigators after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.¹⁴³ Oxford not only helped BP redeem their reputation but celebrated them by providing these unique opportunities to speak at Oxford.

Representatives of **Shell** have also been invited to speak at Oxford University. A **Chief Executive Officer at Shell** delivered a speech on 'The three keys to a successful global energy transition' to Rhodes Scholars at Aurora Spring Forum in Oxford in 2017,¹⁴⁴ while **Shell's Health, Safety, and Environmental Engineer at the Majnoon Oil Field** was invited to The Transport Studies Unit's seminar 'Al Nashwa

to Antarctica: An Unlikely Story about Sustainable Energy' in 2016.¹⁴⁵ It is strikingly hypocritical for Oxford to invite Shell's Health, Safety and Environmental Engineer to speak about sustainability in 2016 while Shell was being sued for contaminating Nigerian water supplies with cancer-causing compounds like benzene.¹⁴⁶

Although many of these events are connected to petrochemicals and energy futures, some are not directly related to the fossil fuel industry. For example, The Oxford Institute of Population Ageing invited the **Chief Human Resources and Corporate Officer at Royal Dutch Shell** to speak at their 'Transforming Ageing Economies' event in 2011.¹⁴⁷ **Saudi Aramco** also supports the Cambridge Chemistry Challenge, run by academics based both at the University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford. Saudi Aramco states that this programme reaches out to over 8,500 high school students in the UK, 'developing their knowledge of chemistry, an area of strategic importance to [Saudi Aramco]'.¹⁴⁸ Although Saudi Aramco provides generous 'support' to Oxford and high school students, the intent of these programs is clear: by appearing to do charitable work, Saudi Aramco (which is the world's single largest emitting company)¹⁴⁹ covers up its environmental damage and human rights abuses.

Funding for sustainability research, or other ethical research projects

While the projects discussed in the 'Research' section of this report clearly show Oxford aiding and abetting the fossil fuel industry's continued operations, some research ties are more morally complex. By funding work on the science and technology of sustainability and other positive ethical projects at Oxford, the fossil fuel industry acquires a coat of greenwash. Companies can point to this funding as a demonstration of their values, without taking the key steps needed to secure our fossil free future in the incredibly short time we have available.¹⁵⁰

There are many examples of fossil fuel company donations for sustainability research at Oxford. Some of these aim to improve energy efficiency within fossil fuel-based systems, while others support research into renewable energy. **Shell and BP both fund research into energy-efficient Gasoline Direct Injection Engines.**¹⁵¹ Shell partnered with the Engineering department in the research 'Laminar Burning Velocity Measurements Over Wide-Ranging Temperatures and Pressures for Renewable and Conventional Fuels'.¹⁵² The results of this research would help determine the combustion performance of ethanol when mixed with other types of fuels. **Shell has also partnered with the Environmental Research Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP),** with Shell stating that 'Shell Research will provide support for training within the DTP [...] through joint research project development'.¹⁵³ While the research may be towards environmental sustainability, there is undoubtedly a conflict of interest for the DTP to partner with one of the most environmentally damaging companies in the world.¹⁵⁴ Another example of this is **Total and Equinor's funding of MarineLEFT** (Marine Local Ecological Footprint Tool) which is used to map patterns of biodiversity, with Equinor donating at least £136,000 towards its development in 2018.¹⁵⁵

MarineLEFT claim they 'have worked closely with the oil and gas industry, especially Statoil [now

Equinor], to develop the web-based Local Ecological Footprinting Tool (LEFT) which allows industry to minimise ecological risks associated with land use decisions'.¹⁵⁶ This is clearly greenwashing, funding research into minimising local biodiversity loss without actually being part of the solution to the global biodiversity and climate crises.

Fossil fuel companies also donate to fund research into renewable energies. For example, **Equinor** is one of three companies to have contributed 'the bulk' of the £8.1m invested into a spin-off company from the University of Oxford, Oxford Photovoltaics.¹⁵⁷ **BP** '[brought] their expertise in physical oceanography and offshore structural analysis' to the Engineering department's project 'SMARTY - Supergen MARrine TechnologY challenge', a project that seeks to ensure survival of devices used in generating renewable energy at sea.¹⁵⁸ In 2016, Oxford University students from the Engineering department exhibited a car at the **Shell's Eco-Marathon Europe**, with the department stating that the event 'provides a platform for innovation, collaboration and conversation around the global energy challenge: **the need for more energy and less CO2 emissions** [sic].'¹⁵⁹ The department admits the need to reduce carbon emissions, yet undermines this statement by competing in a programme sponsored by Shell. These companies' steps in the direction of renewables are inadequate in comparison with their main business model.

Schlumberger, an oilfield services company, has funded multiple research positions at Oxford. Schlumberger funds PhD projects in the Physics department through the **Schlumberger CASE Awards** and the **Schlumberger Cambridge Research Centre**.¹⁶⁰ Oxford partners with **The Schlumberger Foundation's 'Faculty for the Future Programme'**, which supports positions for women in STEM, funding 5 positions at Oxford in 2014, 7 in 2015 and 9 in 2018.¹⁶¹ Although Schlumberger projects an image of supporting gender equality both

within the workplace and more broadly, this must be viewed with a degree of heavy skepticism in light of an ongoing lawsuit by current and former employees charging their business with enabling and ignoring systemic sexual harassment.¹⁶² More broadly, climate change disproportionately harms women*,¹⁶³ and Schlumberger's claims of supporting gender equality are in this light distinctly hypocritical.

Much of the research carried out by Schlumberger's funded positions at Oxford are unrelated to fossil fuels, such as the project entitled 'Ethno-ornithology and conservation: traditional ecological knowledge of birds among the Mushere and the conservation of the Dulu forest in Mushere, Plateau state, Nigeria'.¹⁶⁴ Other projects include the Robotics department's 'Betrayed by Motion: Camouflaged Object Discovery via Motion Segmentation'¹⁶⁵ and PhD projects such as 'Application of Mesoporous Silica Nanoparticles for Biocide Delivery to Plants to Prevent Pre-Harvest Losses'¹⁶⁶ and 'Electrochemical Reduction of Oxygen'.¹⁶⁷ **BASF**, the largest chemical producer in the world with the subsidiary oil and gas exploration company Wintershall Dea,¹⁶⁸ funded research grants worth £449,283 to Oxford in 2019-2020 for research into 'Decoding and Eliminating Obstacles in Long Distance Assimilate Transport with the Goal to Improve Crop Yield'.¹⁶⁹

Similar to BASF, **INEOS** is a chemical manufacturing company with a large portion of its business in exploring and refining fossil fuels.¹⁷⁰ They donated £100 million on 19th January 2021 to Oxford University to build the **Oxford INEOS Institute for Antimicrobial Resistance**.¹⁷¹ Though the benefit of these research facilities cannot be denied, this is a clear example of greenwashing: INEOS is an environmentally damaging organisation but presents an ethical public front through this donation. On top of the emissions inherent in the production of petrochemicals and plastics, INEOS is responsible for numerous accidents, oil spills, gas leaks and fires all over Europe.¹⁷² INEOS also continues to spread misleading information about the environmental safety of fracking, with their CEO dismissing the dangers of fracking as myths and railing against UK restrictions.¹⁷³ The acceptance of their donation and the inclusion of their name gives INEOS a legitimacy they do not deserve and allows them to use Oxford's reputation to rebuild their own.¹⁷⁴

Cultural Capital

There are many smaller and more insidious ways in which the fossil fuel industry infiltrates the intellectual life of the University. These companies often crop up in unexpected places, not only in scientific research funding lists, but in historical archives, Colleges, and societies. For example, in 2014, **Glencore was listed as one of the donors to Brasenose College.**¹⁷⁵ **A Chairman at Norilsk Nickel donated £10,000 or more consecutively for over five years to the Rhodes Trust;**¹⁷⁶ as a former Rhodes scholar at Oxford, this individual was also **invited to speak in 2017 at a Rhodes Venture Forum.**¹⁷⁷ Similarly, **BP's former head of crude made a donation worth at least £1,000,000 to Oxford University in 2019-2020.**¹⁷⁸ Somerville College benefits from a donation scheme whereby certain companies promise to match contributions gifted by their employees; **match donors for Somerville include fossil fuel companies BP, ExxonMobil, Shell and Texaco.**¹⁷⁹ Involvement in elite academic circles helps sustain the prestige of fossil fuel companies. **Shell and Saudi Aramco's membership of Oxford University Innovation Society** grants them networking and advertising perks.¹⁸⁰

Similarly, the **Saïd Business School's Corporate Affairs Academy Members for 2018 included Eni personnel** (VP Press Office and VP International Government Affairs).¹⁸¹ This Academy is run by the **Oxford University Centre for Corporate Reputation, which itself carries Eni Research Fellowships:** here, the link with social licence is explicit.¹⁸² These companies also have their foot in the door when it comes to one of Oxford's most famous assets: its historical archives and collections. In 2002, the Bodleian acquired a unique Arabic cosmological manuscript from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, known as **the Book of Curiosities, thanks in part to a donation from Saudi Aramco.**¹⁸³ This same company in 1972 **gifted the papers of St John Philby to the Middle East Centre Archive at St Antony's College;** the documents comprising

the St John Philby Collection, which were bought by Saudi Aramco from the explorer's Saudi heirs and presented to the College in exchange for microfilm copies, are a valuable resource for scholars in Oxford studying Saudi history.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, **Shell granted the same Centre £5,000 to support the work of cataloguing the Oman Archive.**¹⁸⁵ Facts such as these demonstrate the fossil fuel industry's monopoly within the global academic community. Aided by Oxford, these companies are doing their level best to appear on the 'right side of history', imbricating themselves deeply within the University's networks and stamping their seals on every aspect of the University's intellectual life. This is testament to the power, wealth, and global influence of the fossil fuel industry. We hope that, one day, these too will be a thing of the past and a matter for the historians.

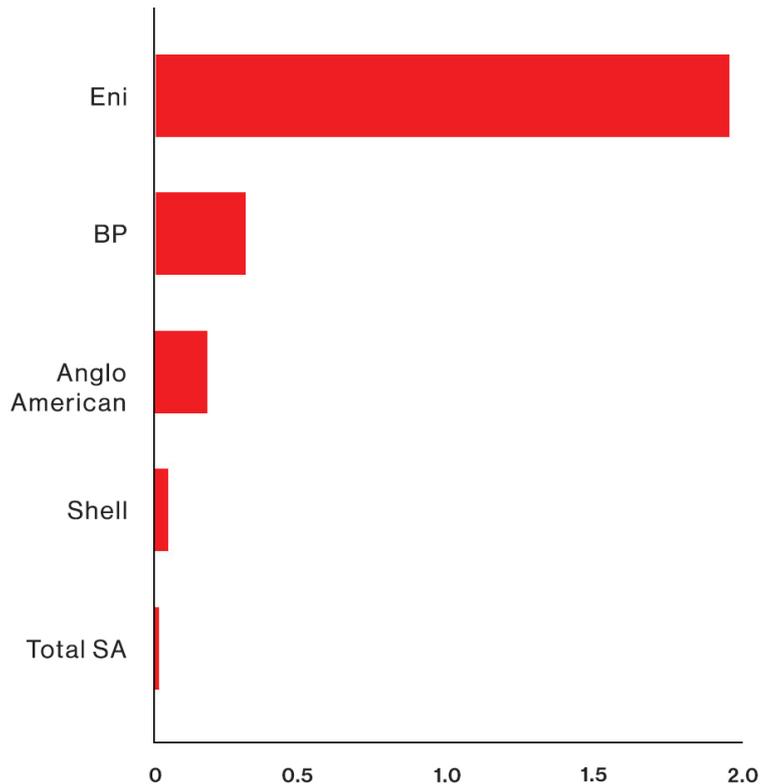
Conclusion

As this section has revealed, fossil fuel companies are present in many aspects of Oxford University, sometimes conspicuous but often unseen. By inviting speakers from fossil fuel companies and accepting these donations and sponsorships, Oxford shows the world that it has no qualms about being supported by fossil fuel money and bolsters the reputations of these companies. This undermines the work Oxford and its researchers do to promote sustainability and justice as the University nurtures ties with the very companies that make this work so necessary. Fossil fuel companies are currently able to dole out huge donations because they are wealthy and powerful, monopolising the global market. While this monopoly continues, however, there can be no progress towards a just and healthy planet.

We call for the University to be honest with the money it receives, representing these companies in an unbiased way and revealing the very real environmental damages and human rights abuses that they perpetuate. We call for greater transparency from the University's Committee to Review Donations and Research Funding, and we ask for evidence that the committee is taking action on this pressing ethical issue. Safely severing financial ties with fossil fuel companies cannot happen overnight: but we believe that with due thought, effort, and prioritisation it can and should happen as soon as practically possible. We also call for an end to sponsored advertising for fossil fuel companies in the form of named lecture theatres, institutes, and professorships.

Oxford's status makes it hugely influential. If our University wants to brand itself as a leader in addressing climate change, it must do much more than committing to partial divestment as it did in April 2020.¹⁸⁶ Oxford must make a concerted effort to square its financial connections with its ambitious sustainability goals.

Cumulative donations from Carbon Underground companies | 2017-2019 (£ million)



Source | FOI

Case Study 2 › BP

As we have seen, BP funds scholarships and extractive research at the University. The 'Revolving Door' section will show that there is also considerable traffic in personnel between the company and Oxford, and that BP has appeared several times at Careers Service events.

Climate Plans

BP has *no* plans to

- stop exploration in countries where it currently operates,
- stop approving new extraction projects,
- commit to an explicit end date for oil and gas extraction.

While pledging to reduce carbon emissions in 2018, BP spent \$13 million on advertisements which falsely claimed that a carbon tax would force consumers to pay more, playing a key role in blocking the passage of a carbon tax in Washington.¹⁸⁷ BP have made few commitments to stop this type of advertising.¹⁸⁸

Indonesian Occupation (see foreword by Benny Wenda)

Under illegal Indonesian occupation, West Papua has been suffering corporate exploitation by BP for decades. BP works with the Indonesian government to extract profit from West Papuan land, colluding with the violent regime that has resulted in the murder of over 500,000 West Papuans.¹⁸⁹ Benny Wenda, Chairman of the United Liberation Movement for West Papua, has said: 'BP have never recognised that they operate in the middle of a genocide. They only call it a "complex situation". Is it complex that every day my people are shot by Indonesian security forces, that every day they are tortured? BP never talks about human rights, never recognises how it helps support an illegal occupation of Papuans' land. This British company has a responsibility to tell the truth about what is happening in West Papua – but they just want to make quick money.'¹⁹⁰

Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill

BP operated Macondo Prospect during the time of the Deepwater Horizon spill in April 2010. This was the largest marine oil spill in history, with environmental impacts still felt today.¹⁹¹ BP was 'reckless' and acted with 'conscious disregard of known risks';¹⁹² it was ruled that several crucial BP decisions were 'primarily driven by a desire to save time and money, rather than ensuring that the well was secure.'¹⁹³ BP was sued for 'gross negligence and willful misconduct', while employees were charged for manslaughter and obstruction of justice for lying to federal investigators.¹⁹⁴



REVOLVING DOOR



Introduction

The University of Oxford supports the fossil fuel industry through a revolving door: people from the University move to work in the fossil fuel industry and vice versa. This revolving door phenomenon creates a cosy relationship in which **the interests of the fossil fuel industry are brought to the centre of the University**, and the **academic expertise** from the University is fed directly into the fossil fuel industry. Our research, whilst not exhaustive, shows that this phenomenon is very active at Oxford. We have also found numerous cases of individuals having positions of authority within the University whilst simultaneously holding positions of power within fossil fuel companies.

We are not arguing in favour of a total ban on University employment for applicants with previous fossil fuel ties, but rather against allowing individuals to hold influential positions in both simultaneously. In this section, we demonstrate the way in which personal loyalties play into the wider structural connections between Oxford and the fossil fuel industry. In an institution with such multifaceted links to companies which actively work against climate justice as part of their business model, progress inevitably stalls. We also demand an end to the **Careers Service advertising for fossil fuel companies**. Such a ban would offer a significant step towards ending the toxic relationship between our University and the fossil fuel industry.

« This revolving door phenomenon creates a cosy relationship in which the interests of the fossil fuel industry are brought to the centre of the University, and the academic expertise from the University is fed directly into the fossil fuel industry »

Fossil Fuel Industry

› Oxford University

2021

Former fossil fuel company executives work in the University in a variety of roles. For example, the University's **Director of Finance** formerly held a directorial position at Centrica.¹⁹⁵ Sometimes the phenomenon occurs at College level. For example, an Honorary Fellow of St Edmund Hall was a board member and later a non-executive chairman of **Shell**.¹⁹⁶ The **Bursar of University College** was previously the global head of BP's in-house executive management education in financial disciplines; and has also been the managing director of a number of oil and gas companies.¹⁹⁷ The Bursar controls the financial practices of the College, including investment – and divestment – decisions. Similarly, the **Campaign Officer at St Hilda's College** had an international career with Royal Dutch Shell.¹⁹⁸

38

The revolving door phenomenon manifests among the University's academic staff too. A **Visiting Professor in the department of Earth Sciences** worked for Royal Dutch Shell for 35 years in which they were Chief Scientist Geology, VP of Exploration New Ventures, and VP Emerging Technologies.¹⁹⁹ Another **Visiting Professor** in the same department was formerly Vice-President of Exploration at BP and brings experience and 'industry contacts' for those

working at the NERC Oil and Gas Centre for Doctoral Training.²⁰⁰ A **Visiting Professor in Engineering Science** worked for 31 years at Shell Research followed by eight years in Saudi Aramco.²⁰¹ Another individual alternated between academia and industry, having worked for Mexican petroleum company Pemex and acted as special advisor to the Venezuelan minister of Energy and Petroleum on refining ventures abroad, as well as being Senior Research Fellow of the **Oxford Institute for Energy Studies** (OIES) from 2000-2004; they are now a Research Associate in the Institute.²⁰² At OIES, a research associate was previously the Acting General Secretary and Research Director for OPEC.²⁰³ Another senior research fellow at the Institute has a history at APICORP; in their research position, as well as 'informing policy decision-making, [they] regularly share [their] research findings as a speaker, discussant and peer reviewer'.²⁰⁴ A former **Head of Macroeconomics at BP** is a Research Associate of OxCarre.²⁰⁵ Sometimes the personnel concerned act in an advisory capacity unrelated to science and technology: a former **member of the Rothermere American Institute's board of advisors** has played a senior role in companies including Royal Dutch Shell and BP America.²⁰⁶

Oxford University

› Fossil Fuel Industry

Apart from the links discussed above, people who have studied at the University of Oxford also work for fossil fuel companies. The Chairman and Area Business Manager for Egypt, North Africa and the Levant for Chevron used to work as a Global Strategy Leader for Royal Dutch Shell, and completed their Executive MBA at Oxford.²⁰⁷ Another individual earned their PhD in Economics at Oxford and now **serves on the board of Chevron**.²⁰⁸ Glencore also has many Oxford Alumni high up in its ranks including their **Director of Oil, Co-director of Nickel-Marketing, Director of Agriculture and Co-Director of Zinc-Industrial**.²⁰⁹ Similarly, multiple high ranking individuals in BHP Billiton are Oxford alumni including one of their **Non-executive Directors**,²¹⁰ their **Vice President for Governance**²¹¹ and one of their previous **market analysts**.²¹²

This revolving door phenomenon is not merely coincidental – it is actively perpetuated. **Oxford University Careers Service**, though officially demurring to advertise ‘positions posted by or on behalf of **tobacco companies**’, has no such policy for other industries whose business model is based on exploitation.²¹³ Through appearing at Careers and Internship Fairs and holding recruitment events, the fossil fuel industry has access to Oxford’s bright young minds. In 2019 and 2020, these companies have included **BP, Equinor, and Schlumberger**.²¹⁴ The Careers Service, and by extension the University, presents the industry as a viable, commendable career path. Certain companies even receive or have received in recent years the enhanced advertising benefits that come with being a **Recruiter’s Group Associate**; companies currently in this elite group (as of 2021) include **BP and Glencore**.²¹⁵

The Careers Service has refused to change despite the opposition of the Student Body. A motion was passed by the Oxford Student Union in 2019 calling on fossil fuel extraction to be excluded from career recruitment at Oxford²¹⁶ and another motion was

passed in 2020 calling on the Careers Service to be prohibited from advertising positions on behalf of fossil fuel companies not aligned with the Oxford Martin Principles.²¹⁷ We at OCJC have also repeatedly asked the Careers Service to stop advertising positions on behalf of fossil fuel companies, and have carried out direct actions to have our voices heard. We also emailed an open letter to the Vice Chancellor Louise Richardson in December 2020,²¹⁸ and a follow up email in response to another careers event in March 2021. All responses from the Careers Service and from the Vice Chancellor’s office have involved the same copy and pasted reply, claiming that ‘[the] Careers’ Service do not actively promote or recruit on behalf of any organisation. They post a role or event and thereby allow students to make informed decisions. Some students may wish to work for such organisations.’ Acknowledging the severity of the climate crisis in their emails, they claim that ‘over 1,000 employers have answered ‘Yes’ to recognising the science of the crisis, and 350 have provided more details of their activities.’ This resource does not go far enough even within its own parameters: **Shell has not provided an answer to several questions**, and those fossil fuel companies that do, give **no evidence of their alleged plans** for achieving net zero. Asking whether ‘the organisation recognises the climate crisis’ is scarcely worthwhile. There is not enough information on the website to understand how these companies align with the Paris Agreement, and these single-word answers do not allow students to make ‘informed decisions’ about their career choices.

Though the Careers Service is a large part of the problem, it is not the only route through which students are encouraged to go into the fossil fuel industry. **Hellenic Petroleum partners with Oxford University** to offer employment opportunities through their Young Graduates Employment Program.²¹⁹ This ‘creates and offers opportunities for work experience, professional and personal development, rewarding excellence and high performance’.²²⁰

The student **Chemistry Society is partly funded by BP** and holds 'informative networking sessions with industry leaders'.²²¹ Similarly, the student Energy Society is also partly sponsored by BP,²²² and holds 'career events with [their] sponsors'.²²³ The studentship funded by EPSRC on 'Zintl-ions as Molecular Analogues of Liquid Alloys for C-H Activation', includes a 3-month **placement at the Shell Technology Centre**,²²⁴ and the **BP scholarship** mentioned in 'social licence' allows scholars a fast-track into internships with BP.²²⁵

Oxford University & Fossil Fuel Industry Simultaneously

Many individuals hold powerful positions in both fossil fuel companies and Oxford University simultaneously. This is particularly concerning, as it means people who have **direct interests in the success of the fossil fuel industry** also wield influence within the University. The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (OIES) has the most links with the fossil fuel industry. Alongside Governors appointed by Oxford and its Colleges, the **OIES' Governors are also appointed** by the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), Energiforskningsnämnden (Sweden), The Secretary of State for Energy, and Institut Français du Pétrole (France). Furthermore, OAPEC and the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) can each appoint two additional Governors for OIES.²²⁶ Apart from these highly influential decision-making positions, **OIES also collaborates with other members from fossil fuel companies.** A former chairman worked for OIES whilst also being one of the directors of Schlumberger.²²⁷ Similarly, a Senior Research Fellow at OIES is also a member of the Schlumberger board of directors.²²⁸ The director of OIES is a member of the editorial board for the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Energy Review,²²⁹ a quarterly editorial publishing research 'on energy issues in general and petroleum related matters in particular' by the OPEC Secretariat in Vienna.²³⁰

We acknowledge that career paths can vary, that people can change their values, and that in many cases the individuals mentioned participate in ethical initiatives alongside their fossil fuel industry allegiances.

The founding Dean of the Blavatnik School of Government as well as Founder and Director of the Global Economic Governance Programme and Professor of Global Economic Governance is an independent **Non-Executive Director at Rio Tinto**,²³¹ while an **Independent Non-Executive director at Rio Tinto** is a board member of the Saïd Business

School.²³² A member of the Steering Committee of Oxford's Business Economics Programme is also **Vice President of Shell Global Operations for the Trading and Supply Business**.²³³ The co-chair of the International Advisory Board of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government²³⁴ since 2013²³⁵ used to work

as **BP's Group Chief executive**,²³⁶ then worked as chairman of oil and gas company **Cuadrilla**²³⁷ where they stated that they would defy environmentalists and 'invest whatever it takes' in UK fracking.²³⁸ Currently, they are **Executive Chairman of fossil fuel company L1 Energy**.²³⁹ The Director-General of the OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID)²⁴⁰ was also simultaneously a member of the Oxford Energy Club.²⁴¹

High ranking members of fossil fuel companies operate at every level of University life. For example, former **Chief Scientist at BP** and Chief Scientific Adviser at the Ministry of Defence is currently a MPLS visiting professor of Chemistry at Oxford.²⁴² The **Chief Executive Officer of Versalis** (a subsidiary of Eni)²⁴³ is also a committee member for the Oxford University Business Economics Programme.²⁴⁴ Eni's links with Oxford also include two **visiting fellows** at the Oxford University Centre for Corporate Reputation (Saïd Business School): their CEO²⁴⁵ and their **Communications Director**.²⁴⁶ Notably, the CEO has recently been suspected of corruption in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo.²⁴⁷ It is wrong for Oxford to continue these relationships, celebrating these companies' economic power while conveniently ignoring the troubling allegations.

Some academics at Oxford also work simultaneously for fossil fuel companies. Multiple individuals work for **both Oxford University and Saudi Aramco**, for example, in the departments of Computer Science²⁴⁸ and Earth Sciences.²⁴⁹ An expert in project risk management for Saudi Aramco also received the Program Directors Award for Academic Excellence

after completing a masters from the Saïd Business School while working for Saudi Aramco.²⁵⁰ A Doctoral Student of Law in the University of Oxford was an Attorney in Chevron Nigeria Limited²⁵¹ and a postgraduate at the department of Earth Sciences has been working for Petrobras since 2002, focusing on 'structural geology and geomechanics applied to reservoir modelling'.²⁵²

Conclusion

By having former and current employees of the fossil fuel industry hold influential positions at Oxford, such as Board Members, Chairpersons, Bursars, and Directors, the University is inevitably tied to prioritising the decisions favoured by the **financial interests of oil and gas companies** over those of climate justice. We call on the University to **prohibit individuals from holding positions of authority simultaneously** at the University or colleges and in a fossil fuel company where there is a demonstrable conflict of interest; for example, Finance Bursar or Director. We also call on the **University Careers Service to immediately stop advertising positions on behalf of fossil fuel companies** in the same way as they have banned tobacco companies.

Case study III › Shell

2021

You can find more detail on funding and donations given by Shell to the University in each section of the report, but here is a closer look at the company itself:

Climate Plans

Shell claims that it will 'become a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050' and that it is in line with the Paris Agreement.²⁵³ To align with the Paris Agreement though, fossil fuel extraction must decrease each year. Oil Change International's 2020 report²⁵⁴ shows that Shell's ambitions are at best 'grossly insufficient' as they plan to increase extraction of oil by 22% and gas by 1% between 2019 and 2030. They have made no plans to stop lobbying and producing advertisements that obstruct climate solutions, and they will rely on as yet undeveloped technologies to remove carbon from the atmosphere, justifying their continued extraction of fossil fuels.²⁵⁵

44

Shell's oil pollution in Ogoniland, Nigeria

Between 1976 and 1991, Shell was responsible for 2,976 separate oil spills in Ogoniland, Nigeria, equivalent to over two million barrels of oil.²⁵⁶ These spills contaminated soils, significantly reducing crop yields and leading to hunger. Oil spills have also polluted rivers with carcinogens, posing risks to Ogoni people's health²⁵⁷ and killing fish, further reducing food security in Ogoniland.²⁵⁸ After persistent grassroots environmental activism, Shell's oil extraction has now ceased in the area. However, major Shell oil pipelines still cross through Ogoniland, and oil spills, mostly due to corrosion of oil pipes, continue to affect the region.²⁵⁹ Furthermore, Shell has repeatedly tried to walk away from cleaning up the Niger Delta.²⁶⁰ In 2020, an investigation found that Shell has only begun to clean up 11% of planned sites and no site has been entirely cleaned up.²⁶¹ As vast areas of the Niger Delta remain heavily contaminated, hundreds of thousands of Ogoni people continue to face serious health risks.²⁶²

Shell's environmental racism

Environmental racism describes how negative environmental impacts, such as pollution, disproportionately affect people of colour and low income communities.²⁶³ Shell profits from environmental racism, having lower drilling standards in Africa than elsewhere (40% of all Shell oil spills worldwide have occurred in Nigeria).²⁶⁴ Shell also pays significant rents to local councils in the UK's Shetlands but pays nothing comparable in the Niger Delta.²⁶⁵

As well as its less visible violence towards communities, Shell's environmental racism has more directly cost lives. In November 1995, the Nigerian government executed nine Ogoni men, collectively known as the 'Ogoni Nine', after falsely accusing them of murder. The men were in fact put on trial due to their involvement in challenging Shell's impacts on Ogoniland.²⁶⁶ Shell knew of these violations, encouraged and solicited military intervention, and even reminded the government of the protests' economic costs to Shell.²⁶⁷ Shell's then-chairperson for Nigeria also secretly bribed Owens Wiwa, brother of Ken Saro-Wiwa (one of the Ogoni Nine), promising to provide aid or even to release Ken if Owens 'soften their official stance [...] against Shell for royalties and reparations.'²⁶⁸ Shell was not only complicit in the murder of the Ogoni Nine, but also tried to protect Shell's own public image through bribery and spread of misinformation.

Ken Saro-Wiwa said: **'I accuse the oil companies with prospects for oil in Ogoni of encouraging genocide of the Ogoni people. I accuse Shell and Chevron of practicing racism against the Ogoni people because they do in Ogoni what they do not do in other parts of the world where there are prospects for oil.'**²⁶⁹



Photo Credits

US Coast Guard - 100421-G-XXXXL- Deepwater Horizon fire, Source: Wikimedia Commons, Photo: The Deepwater Horizon rig the day after the oil spill [Page 1 & 35]

2021

Zbynek Burival, Source: Unsplash. Photo: Pump-jack mining crude oil with the sunset [Page 3]

Nikita Ti, Source: Unsplash. [Page 10]

Curioso Photography, Source: Unsplash. Black coal deposits. Exploration and machine. View from above. [Page 16]

Thomas Richter, Source: Unsplash. [Page 26]

Annabelle Barker, Source: OCJC, Photo: OCJC held a 'Colleges for Climate Action' rally in June 2018. [Page 36]

46

Amelia Collins, Source: Friends of the Earth International, Photo: Wooden Boats in Bogo City sink into the oily mud following as a result of Shell's oil spill [Page 44]

Endnotes

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