

Thank you for organizing this important and inspiring symposium.

Before I tell you more about our campaign and how it came about, let me start with a **quote** by professor Schellnhuber of the Potsdam Institute.

He said: “The *only* way to beat the ever-accelerating climate change is with ever-accelerating changes in society”.

According to professor Schellnhuber, a social tipping point is our only hope of limiting global warming to 1,5C degrees and thereby preventing physical tipping points that cause run-away climate change.

In other words, to beat the climate crisis, climate policy must not focus on technology alone. It must aim for a social tipping point, a snowball effect in changing the norms, values and behaviour in society.

That is exactly what a ban on fossil advertising contributes to.

**And it is not just us saying this.**

Prominent scientific institutions like IPCC are mentioning a fossil ad ban as an effective government measure to bring about mass behavioral change and to stop greenwashing from obstructing climate policy.

Advertising runs deep in our society.

**Ads for air travel**, SUVs and cruises are driving consumer demand and emissions in a time that we should desperately cut back. These ads define what is normal, how to belong and what to desire.

Advertisements from the fossil fuel industry, on the other hand, paint a green picture of a highly polluting industry. And they shape which policy options we find viable. And which not.

For example, the idea of gas as the ‘clean transition fuel’, was carefully constructed through advertising.

Today, it is acknowledged that gas is as harmful as coal, yet investments in infrastructure have been made, contracts have been signed and this is locking-in gas for decades.

You could say: advertisements for fossil ways of transport are securing demand for fossil fuels in the short run. And greenwashing ads by the fossil fuel industry are securing supply for the decades to come, thus creating a lock-in effect.

This is why advertising for fossil fuel products and industries is such a huge roadblock to the transition.

Let me take you back to the origin of our campaign to ban fossil ads in 2019. It was a fossil fuel child marketing campaign that taught us how profound the impact of fossil ads is on our society *and* politics.

**Festival Generation Discover** was this cool and engaging festival aimed at kids aged 6 till 13 years old. This annual festival was all about sustainable energy and SDGs. It was huge and had an even bigger marketing machine, reaching all important national media outlets.

Also noteworthy, Generation Discover took place in The Hague, where the Dutch government is seated. Many politicians, high ranking civil servants and the prime minister visited the festival.

And who do you think was the organiser of the festival? The oil-giant: Shell!

We discovered a few things about this festival:

First: Shell, one of the richest multinationals in the world, received a *subsidy* to organise this festival and second: this festival won an important European prize for best *lobby*-festival.

So... a children's festival wins the prize for the best festival to influence politicians. How did *that* happen?

Well, at the festival Shell poses as a *partner* of the government in solving big societal issues like climate change. Shell knows, as long as the government sees a company as a partner, governments choose self-regulation measures over restrictive regulation.

So this kids festival was in fact a clever piece of *lobby* advertising.

After 3 years of **campaigning** against this festival, we managed to stop the subsidy and we stopped the festival from existing. But while celebrating, we realised a few things. The festival had already influenced politicians and millions of Dutch people. Yes, we had stopped this Shell's festival, yet, the fossil fuel industry is filthy rich and we are not. They could start another festival next month. And another.

We realized, we can't keep running after the facts, we should get ahead of them. We should not fight the ads and marketing when they are already out there. We should prevent them all together.

**We should kick fossil ads out of our lives, before they kick life out of us.**

That is when we took a look at the other lethal industry, the tobacco industry, whose ads have been kicked out very successfully in so many countries.

The tobacco ad ban has proven very valuable in changing norms, values and behavior. The ad ban also opened the way for more tobacco regulations, because norms had shifted and the lobby power of the tobacco industry was weakened.

Then we knew: we need a tobacco-like law for the fossil fuel industry.

We started our campaign with a citizen's initiative for a law in the Dutch government. But, because it was a novel idea at the time in the Netherlands, we decided to invite front-running municipalities to take the lead and show our government the way.

**We wrote a letter to the city of Amsterdam**, stating that they can't expect to reach their climate goals with ads all around that promote behaviour and industries that are wrecking the climate.

Amsterdam became the first city in the world to ban fossil ads. **The news travelled around the world and inspired** many other local governments to do the same. We can hardly keep track of all municipalities banning fossil ads.

This snowball is unstoppable!

But, now more and more cities are banning fossil ads, the advertising industry is starting to react. And their reaction is rather predictable: **self regulation**.

But self regulation was already tried and failed. Also warning messages on advertisements failed. All this delayed an ad ban *and* other effective tobacco control measures - by decades.

We don't have that time with the climate crisis. So let's not repeat the same mistakes as we did with tobacco prevention.

Like trusting self-regulation to solve the problem.

What we *do* need are policy interventions that can bring scale and, to quote professor Schellnhuber, ever-acceleration societal changes. In other words: we need policy interventions that bring about **a social tipping point**.

Today we celebrate the launch of the We Skip Ads campaign, which includes such an important social tipping point intervention, namely, a fossil ad ban.

On the EU scale, this ban has the potential to help bring about ever-accelerating societal change. And it has the potential to inspire the world, as we have seen with the Amsterdam and Haarlem ad ban.

The EU has the power to make the social tipping point spread like a wildfire – before, well, the wildfires catch us.

Thank you.

