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The trouble with fossil fuels: CSR and the future as Russian Roulette

di David McQueen

In che modo le industrie che producono e commercializzano combustibili fossili devono cambiare per diventare socialmente responsabili e assicurarsi un futuro in cui l'intero settore energetico possa operare in condizioni differenti? Partendo dalle analisi sull'impatto delle industrie del petrolio sull'ambiente, sulle istituzioni politiche e sulle comunità, sono stati identificati fattori chiave che richiedono un'azione immediata perché queste organizzazioni possano assicurarsi un futuro. Cambiamenti che riguardano la sicurezza sul lavoro, le infrastrutture per l'estrazione del petrolio, l'impatto sulle comunità, la lotta alla corruzione e all'evasione fiscale. Ridurre gli investimenti sulle energie fossili e reinvestire sulle energie rinnovabili è l'unico modo per continuare a operare in considerazione delle reali minacce agli ecosistemi date dall'uso di combustibili fossili.

How can fossil fuel industries become more socially responsible? The question is pertinent to gas, oil and coal industries, never more so than now, with the evidence and impacts of global warming mounting in ways which are alarming scientists (see Bulkeley and Newell 2015). This chapter focuses, briefly, on the oil industry and offers a snapshot of some of the CSR and sustainability issues currently at play. Surveying the field realistically, rather than idealistically, we might ask where to begin. An industry with such a negative reputation in so many areas poses enormous challenges for those genuinely interested in improving the industry's image, and, more importantly, the oil sector's social and environmental impacts around the globe. What significant changes would the industry have to make to become 'sustainable', even by the most modest understanding of that term? Here are five changes that demand immediate action.

First - Safety. In order to prevent another environmental catastrophe such as Deepwater Horizon in 2010 (see Balmer et al 2011), oil industry giants such as BP must spend far more than they currently do on drilling and pipeline technologies, worker safety and inspections. BP has to pay out \$20 billion dollars in compensation to five states, but no amount of compensation can make up for the harm done to the Gulf of Mexico's marine life. Hundreds of miles of coastline were devastated by the release of around five millions barrels of crude oil and the use of chemicals in the clean-up operation that followed. Such disasters can never be allowed to happen again.

Second - Communities. The destruction of fragile ecosystems, as well as the livelihoods of people in the Niger Delta in Nigeria and elsewhere, requires that multinational oil companies such as Shell ston their irresponsible behaviour

immediately. Without massive investment in those communities and regions where it operates, the oil industry cannot continue to extract resources at the expense of the people who live by its failing wells and leaking pipelines. Shell and Chevron are amongst the many companies that lost the trust of 'stakeholders' in Nigeria over many decades. Their wilful failure to act responsibly engendered resistance, particularly in Oginiland in the 1990s (see Okonra 2003). Following the execution of poet and community leader Ken Saro Wiwa in 1995, the fight against Shell spread and was taken up in international protests which were damaging to the company's reputation. The subsequent breakdown in law and order in parts of the Niger Delta since the mid-nineties has compounded the misery of local populations enduring continuous oil pollution. The refusal of Shell and other oil companies to pay the \$1 billion clean-up costs in the Delta recommended in a 2011 United Nations Environment Programme (Unep) report seems an added insult to an already unendurable injury.

Thirdly - Lobbying. Exxon and other oil companies' history of underhand efforts to 'manufacture doubt' (Michaelis 2008) about global warming, is evidence of the need for 'Big Oil' to rein in lobbying activities, cut political campaign finance, and stop covert funding of climate denial groups and think tanks. The damage they have done in skewing political discourse, particularly in the US amongst the Republican Party and their supporter is hard to measure. To take one example, the failure to ratify the 1997 Kyoto protocol in the US and Australia can be placed squarely at the door of oil companies and their successful efforts to sow doubt around climate change science.

Fourthly - Corruption. French multinational Total's record of bribery and corruption in Iran and Iraq (amongst countless examples from the industry), underlines the necessity for oil companies to stop bribing and treating political elites for influence in the developing (and developed) world (see Dobers and Halme 2008).

Fifthly - Corporate tax avoidance. Oil corporations such as Shell and BP must pay their fair share of tax. Countries such as the Republic of Ireland and the UK are amongst many where oil companies are indulged by governments and pay a fraction of their profits in tax. This is in addition to the various subsidies, as well as military and diplomatic support, which enable oil companies to operate relatively unhindered abroad. Around the world, extractive industries have been shown to undermine good governance and impact negatively on economies in what has been described as the 'resource curse', by, for instance, stifling non-resource sectors such as agriculture and industry (Brynas 2010).

With enough money, will and determination the oil industry might manage all five of these changes in order to become less 'socially irresponsible'. However, a sixth impact is less easy to address. That impact is climate change. This should be blindingly obvious by now, although the free pass the extractive industries are given around the world suggests it is still not obvious enough. In short, there are certain (scientific) realities that have been catching up with us for some time now and which mean that fossil fuel industries are, by their nature, incapable of being described as environmentally responsible.

First of all, how many industries are responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people each year? Tobacco, perhaps. The arms industry certainly. Neither could reasonably be said to be socially responsible. Perhaps the alcohol industry, or sugar giants such as Tate and Lyle cause similar harm? In fact, the impacts of these industries on human well-being pale next to the scale of destruction of people and environments of coal, oil and gas. In the UK alone, the government estimates 50,000 people die prematurely each year due to pollution from diesel and petrol engines (Vidal 2015). Yet that number is nothing compared to the threat to millions and perhaps billions of lives, possibly the future of mankind itself, posed by continued fossil fuel use.

The science is clear: to avoid runaway global warming we need to keep three-quarters of the known fossil fuel reserves in the ground (Yauhan 2015). Without that, the planet is likely to become uninhabitable over the next century. As Heede and Oreskes (2016) note, man-made climate change 'presents a serious threat to the health, prosperity, and stability of human communities, to the stability and existence of non-human species and ecosystems, and to international political and military stability' (p.12). Slavery, the Nazi holocaust and the Black Death did not pose this extinction-level threat. Yet why does the general reaction to this situation seem so inexplicably sanguine?

The fossil fuel industry is the most destructive industry on earth, bar none. A thousand Rana Plaza collapses, a century's worth of mass shooting and terrorism, 9-11 or Bhopal every day for a millennium come nowhere near the menace of species extinction posed by oil, gas and coal. And yet we subsidise continued fossil fuel extraction and happily encourage the exploitation of the Arctic region enabled by the ice melting away due to man-made climate change. If these words sound mad, it is because the situation is mad.

Reflecting on the role of chance, scientists estimate we have a 50-50 chance of avoiding runaway climate change if we engage in an immediate crash course to keep temperature rises below 2%. That crash course would involve an immediate and fundamental shift away from fossil fuel exploration, extraction and use, in order to achieve a low/no carbon economy within decades. It means an enormous resource shift away from fossil fuels towards renewables and the only socially responsible course for the fossil fuel industry is to lead that shift. Anything less is not only socially irresponsible, but genocidal. This is not the time for the niceties or academic sophistries of corporate social responsibility and terms like 'greenwashing' fail to capture the scale of the emergency.

The contemporary Seven Sisters (BP, Chevron, Shell, ExxonMobil, Aramco, Sinoppec, China National Petroleum Corporation) and other gas and coal industries have but one social responsibility. That is to cease oil production and shift to renewables. CSR practitioners who claim otherwise are complicit in mankind's destruction.

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Towards the legitimacy of deliberate image-building of a country

di Enric Ordeix e Pavel Slutskiy

Nel mondo contemporaneo l'immagine di un paese diventa un elemento cruciale della strategia di comunicazione: influenza infatti tutti gli aspetti della performance del paese inteso come soggetto di relazioni internazionali, attore economico in una competizione globale, destinatario di investimenti etc. L'immagine di uno stato è derivata dalla percezione generale (costituita da convinzioni e sentimenti) che un individuo ha di un paese. Questa definizione presuppone componenti razionali e logiche (che derivano da preconcetti e convinzioni) ed emotive (basate sui sentimenti). In questo senso è diversa dalla reputazione che ha invece più a che fare con caratteristiche come autenticità, onestà, responsabilità che vengono supportate anche attraverso l'esperienza in prima persona. Questi valori condivisi dal pubblico influenzano la fiducia, l'accettazione, la responsabilità e la rilevanza di un paese nell'opinione pubblica.

Introduction

The image of a country is constructed via several processes. Image of a country is a result of deliberate communication activity of the state (external information policy), non-government information activities, public activities and other governments' information policies. All of these messages coexist in the mind of the target publics.

Another, more simplified approach, sees the image of a country or a state (or any given territory, in that case, and we can use the terms «country» and «state» as synonyms in this context) as a multi-layered structure, in which at least two elements are open for observation: that is, spontaneous image on the one hand, and «scientifically-based, balanced image <...>» which in essence is a projection of basic ideological conceptions of the elites¹ – on the other hand.

This juxtaposition of «natural» and «artificial» in image-building process is a traditional approach in the theory of PR, which examines spontaneous image as a natural result of actions of an actor, while artificial as a deliberately created result of continuous efforts in PR, advertising, sociology and applied psychology².

Prosperous countries employ various sophisticated methods to build positive

1 Gavra D. (2009), «Vneschniy Imidz Gosudarstva: Ponimanie Kategorii i Strukturnye Modeli. *Imidz Gosudarstva i Regiona: Sovremennye Podoby*», *Novaa Idei d Teorii i Praktike*, (trad. eng. «External Image of A State: Understanding Categories and Structural Models», *Image of the State and Region: Contemporary Approaches. New ideas in Theory and Practice*), Saint-Petersburg, p.12.