

Thank you for inviting me! Let me start with a little film about social tipping points.

This is our campaign video. We use it to press the government to create the conditions that will induce mass behavioral change, a social tipping point.

Before I tell you all about that, let me start with a confession.

This is my first science conference ever. And although I was very honored to be invited, I had to ask one question before I said 'yes ofcourse!'

It was a hard question to ask, but I had to, because my civil society group has made a vow.

We vowed to not share platforms with the fossil fuel industry. And to not participate in any event that is sponsored by the fossil fuel industry.

This is very important to me, as accepting money from the fossil fuel industry sows doubt about who is the culprit in this crisis, who is still throwing oil to the fire.

We can't afford any doubt, because doubt about vested interests hampers a social tipping point and makes way for physical tipping points.

Luckily Tim Lenton could reassure me. There are no fossil fuel sponsors at the Global Tipping Point Conference.

This is how it should be.

I will now give you a civil society perspective on social tipping points.

For me, 7 years ago, learning about the climate tipping points was an important motivation to turn my "normal" life upside down and become a full time climate activist at the Fossil Free movement.

In 2020 our group launched a new campaign for a national law that bans fossil advertising and sponsorships because these ads are a huge obstacle in the transition. Amsterdam became the first city in the world to ban fossil ads. Many cities followed.

In the famous PNAS-paper by professor Otto, we saw that a fossil ad ban was identified as one of the social tipping point interventions. Because it changes norms, values and behaviour.

What's more, we saw that the campaigns of our fellow activists were also named in Otto's paper. Like the divestment campaign, campaigns by teachers and children that plea for climate education and neighborhood corporations that are building local energy networks.

Thanks to Otto's paper, we realized our campaigns were even more connected than we thought: together our campaigns are building towards a social tipping point.

This was such an empowerment for us!

History has proven that small groups can change the world. However this takes time. And with climate disruption there's this clock ticking...

We thought, if a social tipping point is *this* important to prevent a cascade of physical ones. If a social tipping point is our only chance to prevent a Titanic scenario... Why are we the ones campaigning for it?

Shouldn't the *government* do all it can to try to induce a social tipping point? They have a Duty of Care, they have the means and they can really scale things up.

Traditionally, social movements are in opposition to the government, but now we decided to offer them our help. So we wrote our then forming government a letter to invite them to co-create a strategy to induce a social tipping point.

In our letter we stressed that the government can't nudge society into the necessary change. Instead they should create the *conditions* for change.

We suggested starting with a package of 5 measures from Otto's paper, which we were already campaigning for and that the government was in the position to scale up. You saw those in the video, like an ad ban.

Apart from potential triggers for social tipping points, these interventions are really no-regret no-brainers.

Those measures could change norms and values, shift prices, shift supply, shift demand, remove legal barriers and thus create the conditions for mass behavioral change.

Furthermore, we insisted in our invitation to the government - and this will not come as a surprise to you - to exclude vested interests from designing a social tipping point strategy.

Many influential people signed on to our letter. The press was thrilled by our letter. A national newspaper chose to make it frontpage news.

So, how did the government react?

Of course we are very aware of vested interests. In the Netherlands Shell and our government are like so [gebaar].

Yet, we thought, our country is binded by Paris and still lagging behind. So, there might be a chance that the government will embrace social tipping point measures because, after all, they *will* help them reach their climate goals...

They answered with a short letter in which they stated that their government policy is very much aligned with a social tipping point already.

Yeah right.

They invest 35 billion in delay technology, like carbon capture and storage. And when it comes to social tipping point measures, they typically back out.

The ban on fossil ads, for example, that is so important to denormalise fossil fuels and to reduce emissions, is a no go for now. The government pulls all registers of excuses to prevent such a measure from being imposed.

As a comparison: a ban on advertising for gambling passed in a blink of an eye.

For us a ban on fossil ads is like a yardstick. As long as governments do not even dare to tackle advertising that promotes fossil fuels, they will never turn off the tap.

So what's next?

As we all know, without public pressure the government won't listen. One way to make them listen is for respected organizations, like universities, like news outlets, cultural institutions, city boards, to set an example and take social tipping point measures themselves.

For example, by publicly refusing money from big polluters and banks that finance pollution. Or by banning fossil advertising from their streets or newspapers.

*We have a shared responsibility to do so. And many of you are in the position to exert influence in these respected institutions. This is your circle of influence. This is where you can make the change. Activist organisations will be more than happy to help you.*

When respected organizations support social movements by taking a stance against the polluting industry, this will help change norms and values. The sooner this happens, the sooner our governments will follow. And the more chance there is for a social tipping point to outbeat the physical ones.

Let's start in Exeter!

Thank you.

-----

Femke Slegers, Global Tipping Point Conference, University of Exeter, 14 september 2022