

Abstract

In an effort to prevent and dilute climate-related actions, climate change countermovements (CCCM) shifted from discourses denying climate change to discourses delaying climate action in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Within the countermovement, trade associations played a central role. This research analyses the frames and climate obstruction strategies mobilised by Avenergy Suisse, the Swiss petroleum trade association formerly known as the Swiss Petroleum Union, from 1990 to 2023. Three questions guide this work: 1) How have the dominant frames adopted by Avenergy concerning climate change and related policies evolved over time? 2) How did Avenergy utilise websites as tools to promote and advance its views on climate-related policies? 3) How do the dominant frames mobilised by Avenergy fit into broader climate obstruction strategies? By analysing 122 magazines, 25 annual reports, and 11 websites, this study finds that Avenergy opposed climate policies threatening the Swiss oil industry by presenting fossil fuel corporations as responsible actors, advocating for free-market solutions, and emphasising technological innovations, while also framing climate policies negatively. Furthermore, websites emerged as crucial tools in these efforts, serving both as advocacy platforms and as means to amplify Avenergy’s public relations campaigns. Finally, Avenergy’s dominant frames fit into three long-term climate obstruction strategies: petro-pedagogy, academic steering, and greenwashing. This study highlights the value of combining online investigation techniques with traditional archival research to study environmental obstructionism and underscores the need for developing tools for future research.

Keywords: Climate obstruction; Climate delay; Greenwashing; Framing; OSINT



Figure – Avenergy’s effort to rebrand CO₂, and by association, oil. The text reads “*What is CO₂? Invisible, colorless, odorless, non toxique - and essential for life.*”

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