



Dear {{voornaam}},

This is the Scientists4Future NL newsletter of October 2023, this month coordinated by S4F Leiden. To subscribe, click [here](#). To unsubscribe, use the link at the bottom of this email.

In this newsletter:

- **Editorial: Leiden University Debates Cutting Ties with the Fossil Industry**
- **School Strike for Climate**
- **A successful outcome from the A12 blockades**
- **Open Letter to KNAW and NWO**
- **Project Self-Censoring or Not?**
- **Book review**
- **Upcoming events**
- **Local groups** (including updates from Utrecht and UvA)
- **Get involved!**

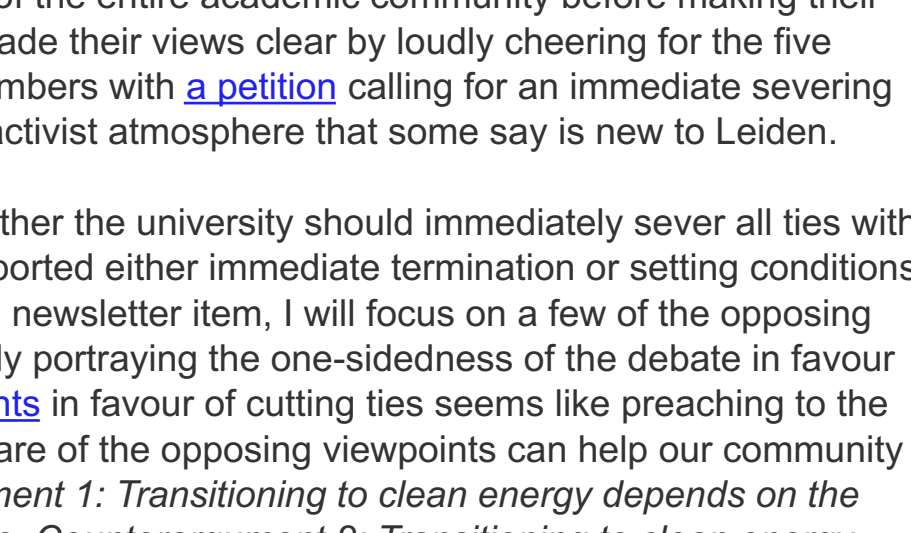
Editorial

This month's newsletter is hosted by Team Leiden!

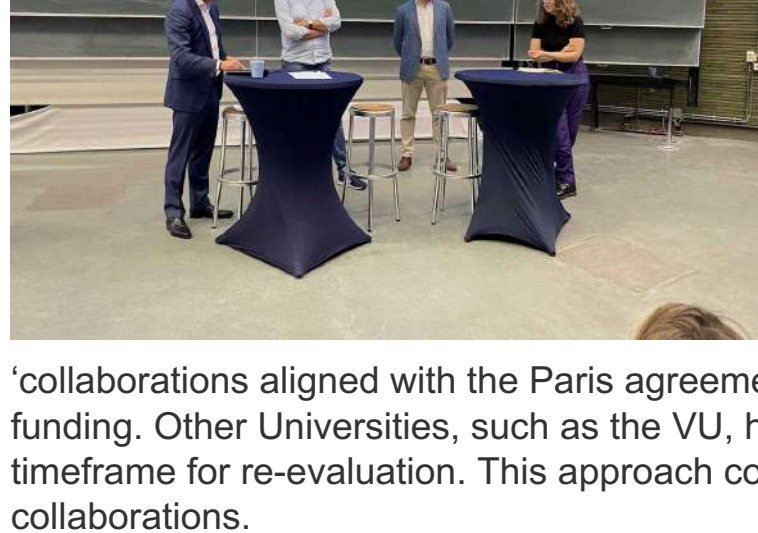
Leiden University Debates Cutting Ties with the Fossil Industry

By Julie Hall

A historic moment: The debate on the collaboration between Leiden University and the Fossil Fuel Industry (FFI) attracted over 600 (academic) staff, students, and alumni. This high turnout in a traditional (some might even say conservative) university underscored the significance of the topic, which has also been covered in several news outlets (see [Leiden University](#), [Mare](#), [Leidsch Dagblad](#) and [Sleutelstad](#)). The primary concerns are the ethical aspect of granting a social license to operate, and the hindrance of the transition to clean energy. The FFI has a long history of undermining climate science and continues to mislead the public about its commitment to clean energy. Given the urgency of climate change, for many in the audience these arguments are sufficient reason to cut ties with industries obstructing climate policies. However, the Executive Board of the University wants to listen to the insights of the entire academic community before making their decision. This community, 600 strong, made their views clear by loudly cheering for the five academics who presented the board members with [a petition](#) calling for an immediate severing of ties with the fossil industry. It was an activist atmosphere that some say is new to Leiden.



The central debate revolved around whether the university should immediately sever all ties with the FFI. About 90% of the audience supported either immediate termination or setting conditions for these collaborations. However, in this newsletter item, I will focus on a few of the opposing arguments, with the risk of not adequately portraying the one-sidedness of the debate in favour of cutting ties. Laying out all the [arguments](#) in favour of cutting ties seems like preaching to the choir in an S4F newsletter, but being aware of the opposing viewpoints can help our community prepare for similar events. *Counterargument 1: Transitioning to clean energy depends on the FFI for upscaling fundamental knowledge. Counterargument 2: Transitioning to clean energy depends on the FFI infrastructure. Counterargument 3) We cannot compete internationally if we stop working together with these powerful industries.* Oil and gas companies are indeed very well situated to generate, store and transport hydrogen, but funding for fundamental research doesn't always come from the primary stakeholders. If the FFI were genuinely committed to accelerating the transition, it could leverage the fundamental knowledge generated at universities, akin to government-funded projects (which so far it has made no sincere effort to). The above counterarguments also raise the question of whether our thinking is stuck in a traditional paradigm, hindering exploration of new, innovative paths beyond those we have historically taken. Lastly, recent [scientific and economic research](#) shows that transitioning to renewable technologies can replace the vast majority of the energy that we currently get from fossil fuels. I invite all academics to further explore these arguments.



BOYCOTT THE QUESTION:

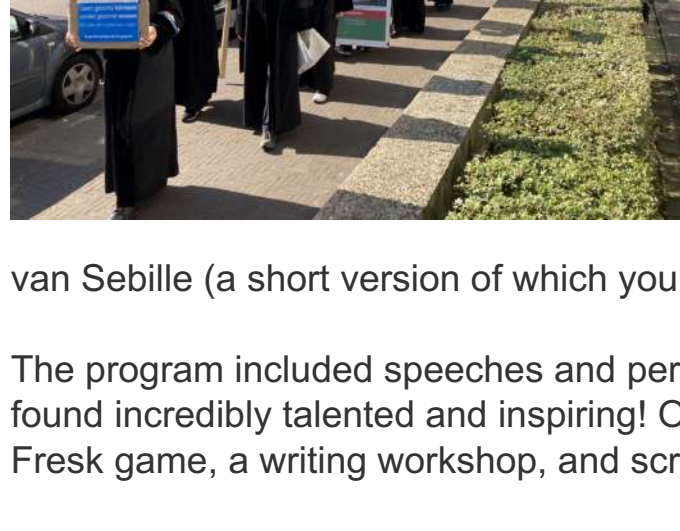
A notable moment was when the overwhelming majority of the audience called to "BOYCOTT THE QUESTION" about possible restrictions on the collaborations indicating their demand to cut ties altogether. A powerful signal from the audience, as well as showing the digital 'creative' skills of Gen Z that the organisation had not accounted for! I do call upon our perspectivist flexibility as we also need to think about early academics whose PhDs rely on those funds. Among the few readable suggestions offered by the audience was 'collaborations aligned with the Paris agreement', as well as a call for future ethical reviews for funding. Other Universities, such as the VU, have pledged to cut ties with the FFI with a timeframe for re-evaluation. This approach could provide a clear and measurable goal for FFI collaborations.

Whether or not Leiden University follows the example of VU, is now up to the Executive Board. They have promised to decide in due time in continued consultation with the academic community. Leiden students, employees and alumni have given a resounding message to the board, one they can no longer ignore. But as long as no decision has been made that helps to combat climate change effectively, the call for action must continue.

Photo credits: Top, Patrice Berger, Leiden University. Bottom, Thomas Fossen

School Strike for Climate

By Sarah Leslie



On September 15, Scientists 4 Future joined the national education strike for a better climate in The Hague, organised by Teachers for Climate, Scientist Rebellion, Fridays for Future and XR Education.

Professors in gowns led a solemn cortège, followed by supporting scientists and academics, from Den Haag campus of Leiden University to the Marlieveld, where a stage, stalls, and workbenches had been set up for the days' activities. As the XR musicians played Beethoven, students, teachers, scientists, and supporters gathered in front of the stage. The cortège ended in a speech given by Professor Erik van Sebille (a short version of which you can [read here](#), (in Dutch)).

The program included speeches and performances by young activists and musicians, who I found incredibly talented and inspiring! Other activities for the students included the Climate Fresk game, a writing workshop, and screen printing.

During breaks in the program, we started an IPCC reading marathon - using a report translated into Dutch (thank you Marthe Wens and Detlef van Vuuren) using accessible language.

Seeing the passionate teachers and school kids helped me reflect on our roles as educators, to not only educate, but also stand in solidarity with and provide hope to the children and young people who will be amongst the most affected by the major consequences of climate change.

Photo credit: Marjan Smeulders

A successful outcome from the A12 blockades

By Sarah Leslie

After 27 consecutive days of blocking the A12 led by Extinction Rebellion, on October 10, the Second Chamber voted for the cabinet to come up with scenarios for phasing out fossil subsidies (amounting to 39.7 to 46.4 billion euros per year). Of course we will be keeping an eye on what is actually being done, and will be ready to take to the streets again if needed!

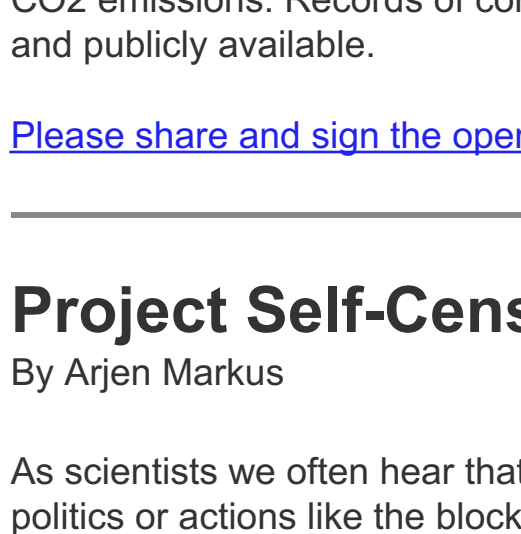


Thank you to everyone who was involved in making the A12 blockades possible. Many of us at S4F participated with Scientist Rebellion, on the street, in the support demo, and behind the scenes — congratulations to all! Please take some time to reflect and celebrate this achievement.

Photo credit: Thomas Fossen

Open letter to KNAW and NWO

By Nicole Bale



Members of Scientists For Future NL have prepared an open letter to the boards and directors of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the Dutch Research Council (NWO), appealing that they critically evaluate collaboration between researchers in the Netherlands and the fossil energy sector. The letter, undersigned by scientists and academics working in Dutch universities and institutes, calls on NWO and KNAW, to **only allow and fund new collaborations with companies from the fossil energy sector that demonstrably commit, in the short term, to the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.**

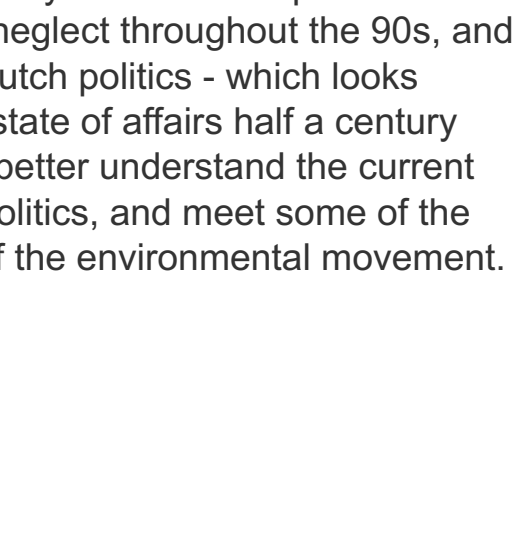
While the effects of climate change are visible everywhere and are increasing in severity, fossil fuel firms openly prefer shareholder profits to credible climate policies. Their policies and activities go directly against the conclusions and requirements of the international science community, as laid out in the IPCC reports. In 2023, for instance, Shell and BP have abandoned previous commitments to decarbonisation and are instead preparing new oil and gas production. They are also putting pressure on governments to roll back clean energy policies, rather than using their own unprecedented profits to invest in renewable energy and technologies to reduce CO2 emissions. Records of corporate wrongdoing and harm by the fossil fuel firms are clear and publicly available.

[Please share and sign the open letter.](#)

Project Self-Censoring or Not

By Arjen Markus

As scientists we often hear that we should not get involved in politics or actions like the blockades of the A12 motorway in The Hague. The arguments vary but basically they boil down to: if you do that, then you cannot be objective in your work. Period.



You may also feel uncomfortable about participating because it may have consequences for your career. You employer or your clients might take offence.

On the other hand, there are also many arguments in favour of participating and even participating openly as a scientist. For instance, because you are a scientist you can appreciate the consequences of climate change or the deterioration of the natural environment.

To help you decide whether engaging in actions, we have written a document about such self-censoring. It is in the final stages and we will post it on the website when done, but in the meantime, just ask for a copy if you are interested.

Book Review



We waren gewaar-schuwd - by Jaap Tielbeke (in Dutch only)
Review by Anne Urai.

Tielbeke traces us to 1972 publication of the Limits to Growth report, and traces its initial enthusiastic reception (and especially that in Dutch politics at the time), criticisms and neglect throughout the 90s, and the current state of Dutch politics - which looks suspiciously like the state of affairs half a century ago. Great primer to better understand the current moment in national politics, and meet some of the crucial figureheads of the environmental movement.

Upcoming events

1 November, EW Klimaattop

EW are hosting their first Climate top at AFAS theatre in Leusden with Henri Bontenbal, Rob Jetten and others.

October 15 & 23, Mapping Fossil Ties

Belgium and the UK are now also looking into fossil ties of universities - spread the news! ([Link](#))

4 November, national meeting (in-person)

It's almost 4 November, which means that it's almost time for another in-person national meeting! On the (preliminary) agenda: a workshop on actions and activism, Scientists4Future's communication and introduction for the new members. Do you have more ideas? Contact the coordination group and let them know (via Slack or contact@scientists4future.nl), or just bring them with you to the meeting!

We'll be meeting at Buurtcentrum Rosa

(Malakkastraat 6, Utrecht). Feel free to walk in from 13:00, the meeting will be from 13:30 to 17:30 after which we can have dinner together there, or elsewhere.

12 November, March for Climate and Justice

Temperatures are soaring and global health and wellbeing are declining, with multiple heatwaves and floods leading to many casualties just in these past few weeks and months. We find the victims of these climate catastrophes all too often in countries that contributed the least to the current crisis. Therefore, we call for international solidarity and fair policy. We need to stop using fossil fuels and instead transition to a sustainable economy and society. Those that profited from the fossil economy need to help others make it through this transition, and the Dutch government needs to act its part.

Therefore, we take to the streets of Amsterdam, 1.5 weeks before the Dutch elections. Support human rights and a just future for people in the Netherlands and beyond, and join us on 12 November! Read more on <https://klimaatsmars.nl/en/about/>.

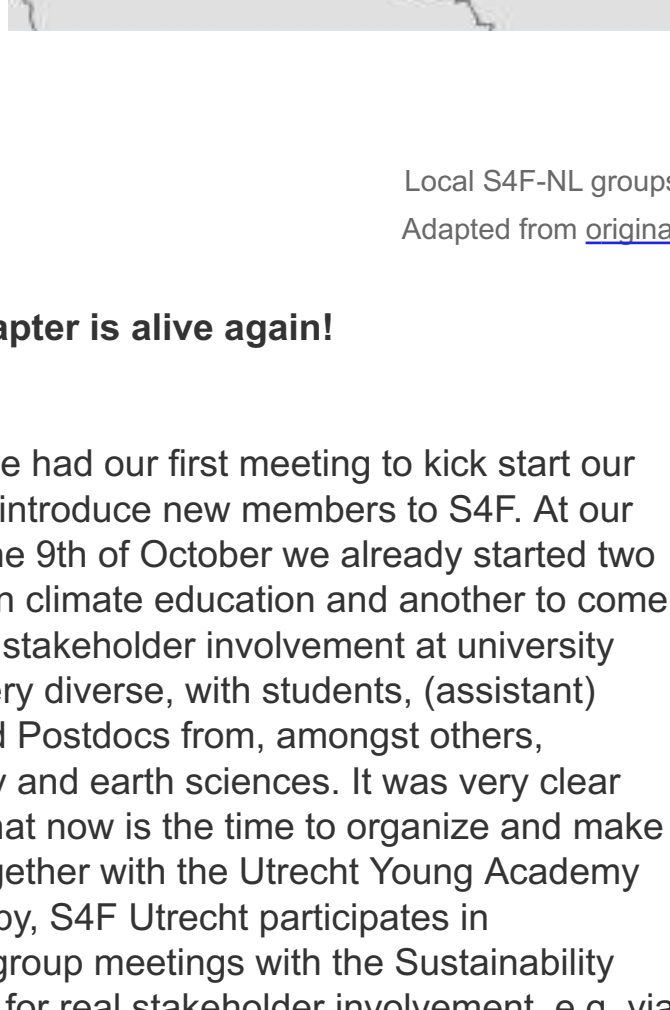


Local groups

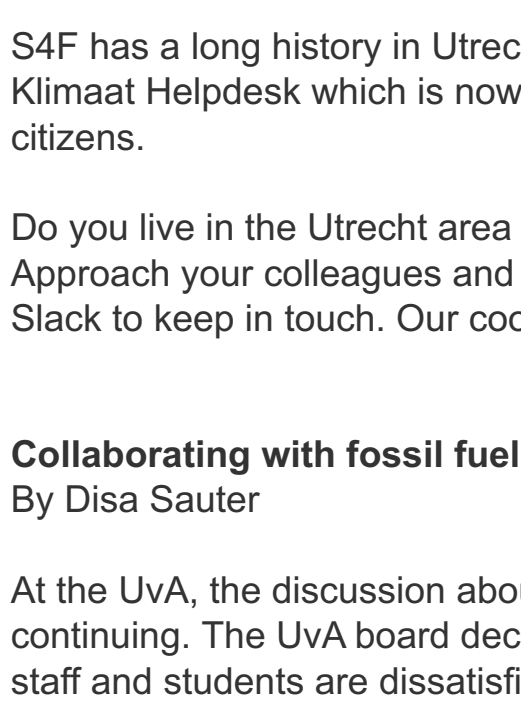
- [Amsterdam](#)
- [Utrecht](#)
- Leiden
- [Delft](#)
- [Twente](#)
- Nijmegen
- Deventer/Zutphen
- Groningen
- Maastricht
- NIOZ (Texel and Yerseke)
- Wageningen

Starters Guide for new active members

Follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#) where we share national and international news regarding the role of scientists in times of the climate crisis.



Local S4F-NL groups
Adapted from [original](#)



The S4F Utrecht chapter is alive again!

By Ina Vollmer

On September 7th, we had our first meeting to kick start our chapter again and to introduce new members to S4F. At our second meeting on the 9th of October we already started two new initiatives: one on climate education and another to come up with proposals for stakeholder involvement at university level. The group is very diverse, with students, (assistant) professors, PhDs and Postdocs from, amongst others, economics, chemistry and earth sciences. It was very clear that everyone feels that now is the time to organize and make our voices heard. Together with the Utrecht Young Academy and End Fossil Occupy, S4F Utrecht participates in Sustainable Interest group meetings with the Sustainability Office of Utrecht University. One of the goals is to push for real stakeholder involvement, e.g. via a citizen assembly. And we built an initiative around coming up with proposals for this. Our second initiative will come up with ideas and actions to include climate education in the curricula of all departments and organize outreach activity for example for students.

S4F has a long history in Utrecht. For example, Utrecht-based S4F members spearheaded the Klimaatt Helpdesk which is now the go-to address for climate related questions by curious citizens.

Do you live in the Utrecht area or do research there? Then come and support our local group. Approach your colleagues and bring them along. Also join #team-utrecht on our national S4F Slack to keep in touch. Our coordination group consists of Ina, Eva, Judith and Daniel.

Collaborating with fossil fuel companies: discussions ongoing at UvA.

By Disa Sauter

At the UvA, the discussion about research collaborations with fossil fuel companies is continuing. The UvA board decided to continue collaborations under certain conditions. Some staff and students are dissatisfied and the Central Student Council recently sent an unsolicited letter of advice to the UvA board on the topic of third party collaborations, highlighting the risk for greenwashing. Read more [here](#).

Get involved!

Are you a subscriber to this newsletter who is not yet actively involved in S4F NL? Curious to find out more about what S4F does and how you can contribute? Get in touch via contact@scientists4future.nl or email Disa at d.a.sauter@uva.nl

