



ISTITUTO
PER L'AMBIENTE
E L'EDUCAZIONE
SCHOLÉ FUTURO
ONLUS

Culture of Sustainability *Culture della Sostenibilità*

International Journal of Political Ecology

ISSN 1972-5817 (print) 1972-2511 (online) web: culturesostenibilita.it

From climate change denial to war-mongering nationalism

Daniele Conversi, Claudia Hassan, Lorenzo Posocco

To cite this article: Conversi D., Hassan C., Posocco L. (2023). From climate change denial to war-mongering nationalism. *Culture della Sostenibilità*, 31. DOI 10.7402/CDS.31.01



2023 · Istituto per l'Ambiente e l'Educazione Scholé Futuro Onlus



Published on line: Maggio 2023



Submit your article to this journal 



From climate change denial to war-mongering nationalism¹

Daniele Conversi, Claudia Hassan, Lorenzo Posocco²

Abstract

This article explores how the interaction between national interests, large corporate interests tied to polluting activities, and disinformation collectively influence international climate change policy, with a specific focus on the 2009 Copenhagen Accords. It highlights the complex relationships between politics and corporations in hindering successful climate change resolutions, the polarizing effects of national ideologies on climate change discourse, and the aspirations of developing nations to reach a similar level of economic development as their developed counterparts, often driven by similar national ideologies. These combined factors significantly hindered the effectiveness of the Copenhagen Accords and undermined the potential of subsequent international climate agreements and summits.

The Copenhagen Accords are identified here as a pivotal moment in history when nationalist and corporate forces formed new alliances and sought novel ways to undermine climate resolutions. The denial machine's ability to hinder cooperative and coordinated efforts between nation-states was demonstrated through an unprecedented attack on the summit using media and social media platforms to disseminate disinformation and fuel denialism. This event also foreshadowed the role of social media in subsequent political events, such as the 2016 American election and Brexit, where public opinion was heavily influenced.

The article argues that the patterns seen in Copenhagen have since been repeated in various countries, with advancements in information technology combined with deregulation offering disruptive forces more powerful tools, such as bots, spammers, and astroturfers. The research underscores the urgent need to address these challenges to forge a cooperative and coordinated global response to climate change in the Anthropocene.

¹ All the Sections of this article have been collegially discussed by the authors. More specifically, Daniele Conversi wrote Section 2. 2.4 a and 3. Claudia Hassan wrote Introduction, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. and Lorenzo Posocco wrote 4.and Conclusion.

² Daniele Conversi, Ikerbasque Foundation.University of Basque Country; Claudia Hassan, University of Rome Tor Vergata; Lorenzo Posocco, University College Dublin, School of Sociology

Riassunto

Questo articolo esplora come l'interazione tra interessi nazionali, grandi interessi corporativi legati ad attività inquinanti, e disinformazione influenzino collettivamente la politica internazionale sul cambiamento climatico, con un focus specifico sugli Accordi di Copenhagen del 2009. L'articolo sottolinea le complesse relazioni tra politica e business, gli effetti polarizzanti delle ideologie nazionali e le aspirazioni delle nazioni in via di sviluppo di raggiungere un livello di sviluppo economico simile a quello dei loro omologhi industrializzati, spesso guidati da ideologie nazionali simili. Questa combinazione di fattori ha diminuito l'efficacia degli Accordi di Copenhagen e minato il potenziale dei successivi accordi e vertici internazionali sul cambiamento climatico.

Questo articolo identifica gli Accordi di Copenhagen come un momento cruciale nella storia recente, in cui forze nazionaliste e industriali hanno formato nuove alleanze e cercato nuovi modi per minare le risoluzioni climatiche. La capacità della macchina negazionista di ostacolare gli sforzi di cooperazione e coordinazione tra gli stati nazione è dimostrata attraverso un attacco senza precedenti utilizzando i media e le piattaforme di social media per diffondere disinformazione e alimentare il negazionismo. Questo evento ha anche prefigurato il ruolo dei social media in eventi politici successivi, come le elezioni americane del 2016 e la Brexit, dove l'opinione pubblica è stata fortemente influenzata.

L'articolo sostiene che dopo Copenhagen, modelli simili si sono ripetuti in vari paesi e diversi contesti, complici i progressi nella tecnologia dell'informazione combinati con la deregolamentazione che offrono a forze già dirompenti strumenti più potenti, come bots, spammers e astroturfers. Si sottolinea l'urgente necessità di affrontare queste sfide per forgiare una risposta globale cooperativa e coordinata al cambiamento climatico nell'Antropocene.

■ 1. Introduction

There is now an extensive body of literature that links climate change with the spread of misinformation (Treen, Williams et al. 2020; Van der Linden, Leiserowitz et al. 2017; ZhouShen 2022), disinformation (Avaaz 2019; Ferreira 2022; Franta 2021; Green, Fielding et al. 2021; Harrison 2021; Henkel 2021), and specifically fake news (Al-Rawi, O'Keefe et al. 2021; Allen and McAleer 2018; Drummond, Siegrist et al. 2020; Prasad 2019). It is also important to consider the 'fake news effect,' whereby political partisans use the term 'fake news' to discredit and disparage their opponents (van der Linden, Panagopoulos et al. 2020).

Many of these works explicitly connect climate change to denialism, or denial of science, as a specific form of manipulative fake news originally emanating from giant corporations, in particular oil corporations, that insist on the need to accumulate private capital by further spreading mass consumerism