

## Climate: Can We Really Trust the IPCC?

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*"You're turning a blind eye to the IPCC, it's alarming. You have too much trust in science".*

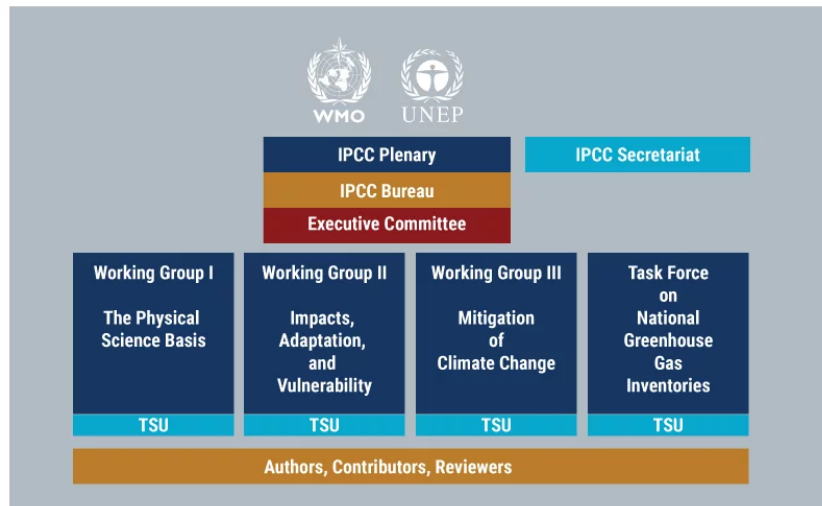
If you thought that climate skeptics were no longer a thing in 2020, you would be wrong. Although it is hard to pinpoint the exact number (<https://www.nationalgeographic.fr/environnement/2019/04/un-quart-des-francais-seraient-climatosceptiques>) of people who deny global warming is a real thing — or that humans have something to do with it —, there are some. Far more than we might think ([https://www.wikiberal.org/wiki/Liste\\_de\\_scientifiques\\_sceptiques\\_sur\\_le\\_r%C3%A9chauffement\\_climatique](https://www.wikiberal.org/wiki/Liste_de_scientifiques_sceptiques_sur_le_r%C3%A9chauffement_climatique)), even.

Sometimes, it only takes one sentence to set the press ablaze. One sentence to undermine years of scientific research. Brandolini's Law (<https://bonpote.com/en/brandolinis-law-should-we-answer-to-jerks/>) states that it is impossible to refute every single one of them, although some have done so brilliantly ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZb-y\\_N4ZwY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZb-y_N4ZwY)). But let's try with this one. Let's go over what the IPCC is, and what it does and does not do, to ensure that its work does not continue to be misused.

## How does the IPCC work?

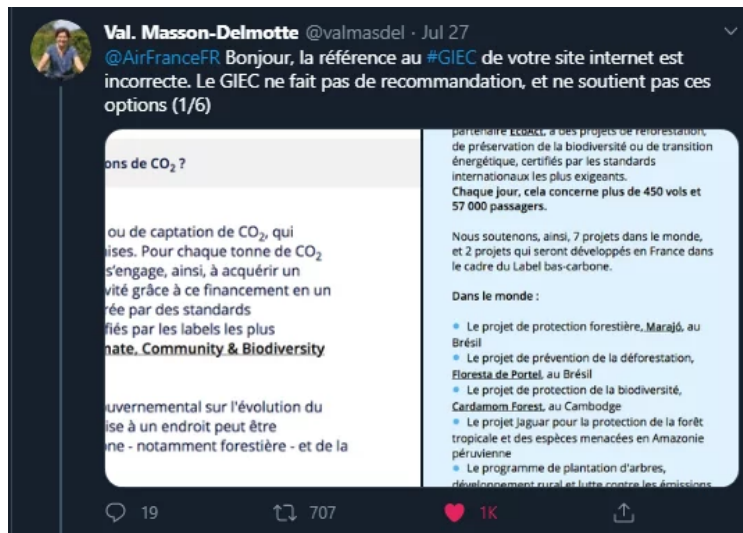
The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established in 1988 to provide comprehensive assessments of the scientific, technical, and socio-economic knowledge about climate change, its causes, potential impacts, and mitigation strategies. **The IPCC is not a coalition of individuals, but an organization made up of countries** i.e., its members are governments, not individuals. Participants in the IPCC plenary sessions simply represent member countries. **There is total transparency in the IPCC.** Everything is on the website (<https://www.ipcc.ch/languages-2/francais/>): from how the authors are selected, to the documents on which their reports are based, how the reports are approved, etc.

To be clear, the IPCC is not a research organization. It is a body that evaluates and synthesizes the research work carried out by scientists globally. There are 3 main Working Groups and a Task Force, as shown in the graph below:



Source: <https://www.ipcc.ch/about/structure/> (<https://www.ipcc.ch/about/structure/>)

Another thing to remember is that **the IPCC does not make concrete recommendations, but rather, presents projections**. Therefore, anytime you hear someone say “the IPCC says we need more nuclear power” or “we need windmills everywhere, the IPCC says so,” well, it’s false. Valérie Masson-Delmotte, a French climate scientist, recently had to remind Air France that it cannot keep using the IPCC’s name and so-called “recommendations” to move on with its greenwashing efforts:





<https://twitter.com/valmasdel/status/1287714998794551297>  
(<https://twitter.com/valmasdel/status/1287714998794551297>)

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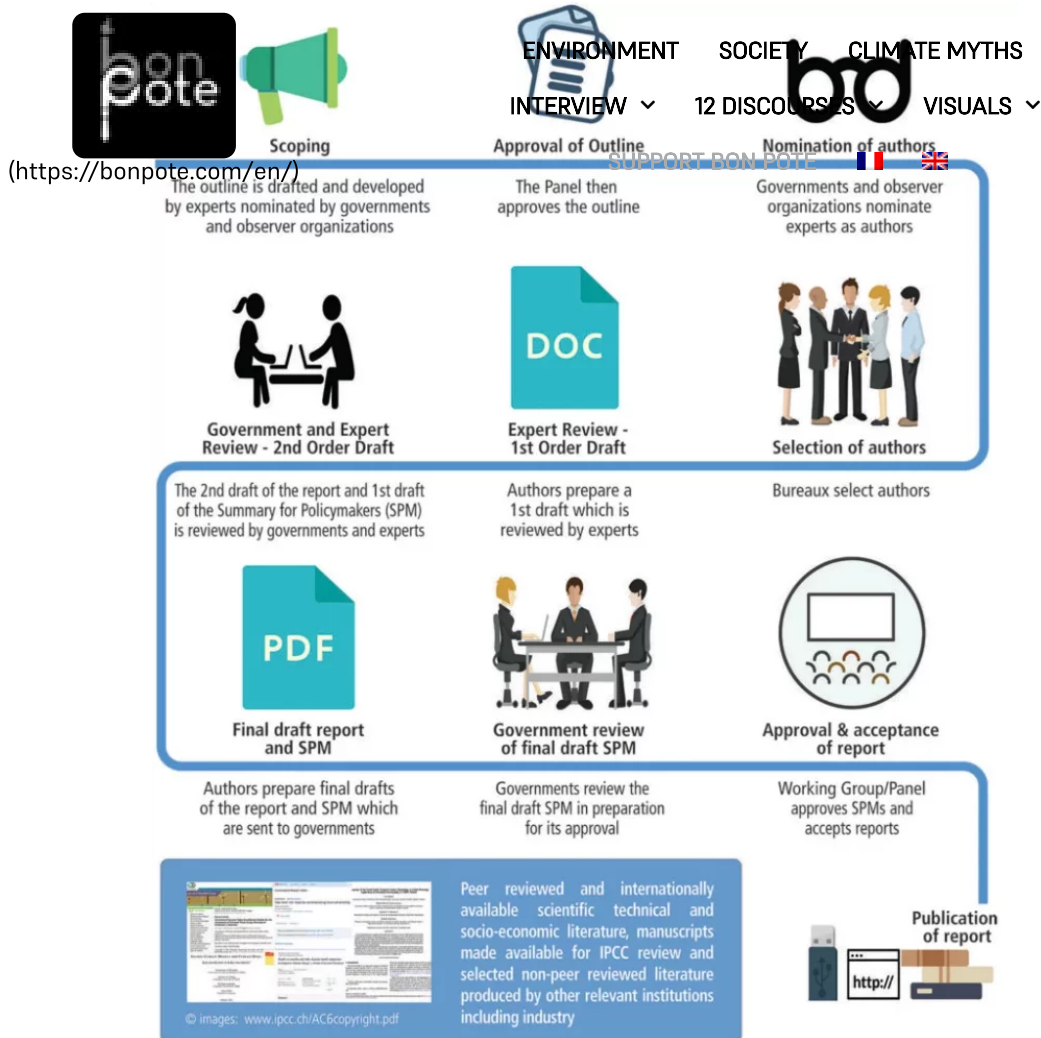
In 30 years, the IPCC has published five multi-volume assessment reports (AR0, the sixth, is expected to be published in 2021) as well as a few special reports, such as the Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 °C (SR15) ([https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/IPCC-Special-Report-1.5-SPM\\_fr.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/09/IPCC-Special-Report-1.5-SPM_fr.pdf)), commissioned by governments following the 2015 Paris Agreement. The video below offers a good explanation of the process that goes into the creation of these reports:

<https://vimeo.com/216862602>

## Who approves the IPCC reports?

Once again, the IPCC is fully transparent on this topic ([https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/04/FS\\_ipcc\\_approve\\_fr.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/04/FS_ipcc_approve_fr.pdf)): *"As the culmination of a report's development, IPCC member governments endorse the report. The endorsement process is based on a dialogue between those who will use the report – the governments – and those who write it – the scientists."*

Two comments on this. First, it means that all member countries must endorse the reports, including the U.S.! Donald Trump was not president at the time, but the AR5 report was endorsed by his country. Whatever he may say to pander to his supporters, the scientific facts have been endorsed.



Second, it is noteworthy that all governments must “approve” the summaries of the reports (the reports themselves being the sole responsibility of the authors). France is one of them. And is thus a country that “approves” scientific reports that clearly show that airplanes are an environmental disaster (<https://bonpote.com/pourquoi-arreter-lavion-ne-devrait-plus-etre-un-debat/>), but whose Minister for Ecological Transition and Solidarity, Elisabeth Borne, insists on extending Terminal 4 at Roissy Airport. Funny, isn't it?

Now anytime you hear Emmanuel Macron or Jean Castex, France's PM, say they “listen to scientists” or that “green growth is possible,” think again.

## The IPCC: political or scientific organization?

*“The IPCC is not a scientific organization, but a political organization of the scientist type. They stifle those who do not agree with them (<https://www.contrepoints.org/2012/11/19/104874-climatologie-comment-le-giec-sorganise-pour-etouffer-les-opinions-sceptiques>)”*

This is a common criticism. Another common one is that the IPCC is a ‘consensus’ and that to reach said consensus (<https://bonpote.com/en/did-the-scientific-consensus-on-climate-change-reach-100/>), compromises must be made. While that is true, as we have just seen, IPCC reports are validated by all the member states, which have very different interests. If you don't understand that more than a hundred countries are going to have different interests, I can't really help you anymore...

Moreover, there is a high turnover of IPCC authors, as Valérie Masson-Delmotte explained: *"from one report to the next, at least 50% of the authors, sometimes up to 75%, depending on the report".*



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Besides, the IPCC synthesizes thousands of scientific studies to reach general conclusions. **It is then up to politicians to act**, by deciding between the different possible paths and weighing the pros and cons of each decision. As Étienne Klein, a French physicist and philosopher, said in a recent interview, *"science allows us to say what is, but in no case does it allow us to say what should be"*.

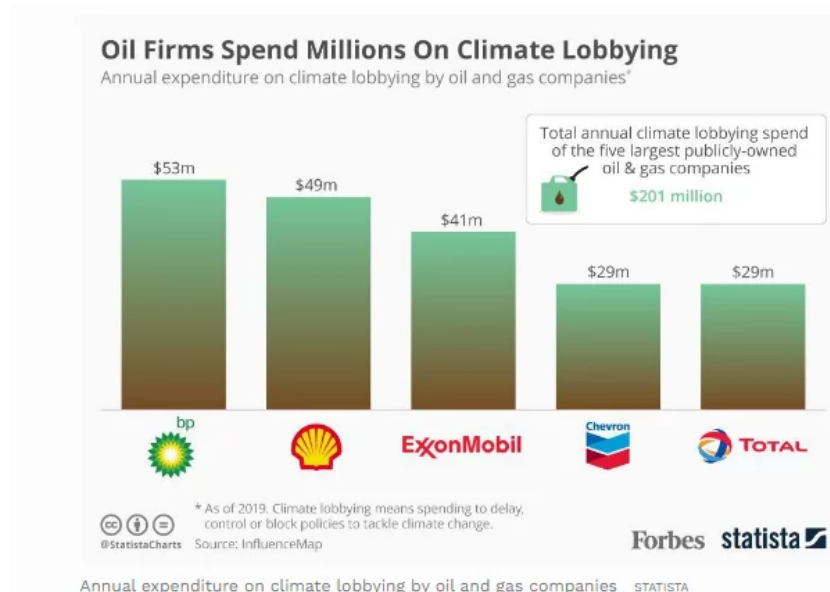
## Is the IPCC funded by lobbies?

Another remark that you may hear from time to time is that *"the authors and contributors of the IPCC are corrupted by lobbies"*.

First, the annual budget of the IPCC varies between 5 and 8 million euros (<https://www.euractiv.fr/section/climat/news/financement-du-giec-une-bonne-action-pour-pas-cher/>), financed by the 195 UN member states that contribute to it in an "independent and voluntary manner". No author or member of the IPCC Bureau is paid for their work ([https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2019/08/02/dereglement-climatique-les-cinq-critiques-recurrentes-adressees-au-giec\\_5495740\\_4355770.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2019/08/02/dereglement-climatique-les-cinq-critiques-recurrentes-adressees-au-giec_5495740_4355770.html)), despite the often significant investments involved in writing such a substantial report. The only people paid for their work are those in the Technical Support Units in each Working Group and who assist the authors and coordinators.

Two remarks on this. First, the U.S. government, whose funding amounted to about 1.6 million euros, decided to suspend it in 2016, following the election of Donald Trump (<https://insideclimatenews.org/news/16032017/us-climate-change-donald-trump-budget-un-unfccc>). To say that the IPCC is "the armed wing of the United States" (heard last week), is complete bullshit. Second, in 2018, France re-evaluated its contribution to 1 million euros until 2022. With one million euros amounting to 15% of the funding, let's just say these amounts are ridiculous.

Ridiculous, because when compared to the amount of money invested by fossil fuel companies into their lobbying efforts, it becomes evident they are not in the same ballpark. I will let you guess who gets my pick between the IPCC's transparency and TotalEnergies' carbon neutrality (<https://bonpote.com/en/who-pollutes-total-or-the-citizen/>).



Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2019/03/25/oil-and-gas-giants-spend-millions-lobbying-to-block-climate-change-policies-infographic/#52912d357c4f>





## "The IPCC picks and chooses its sources"

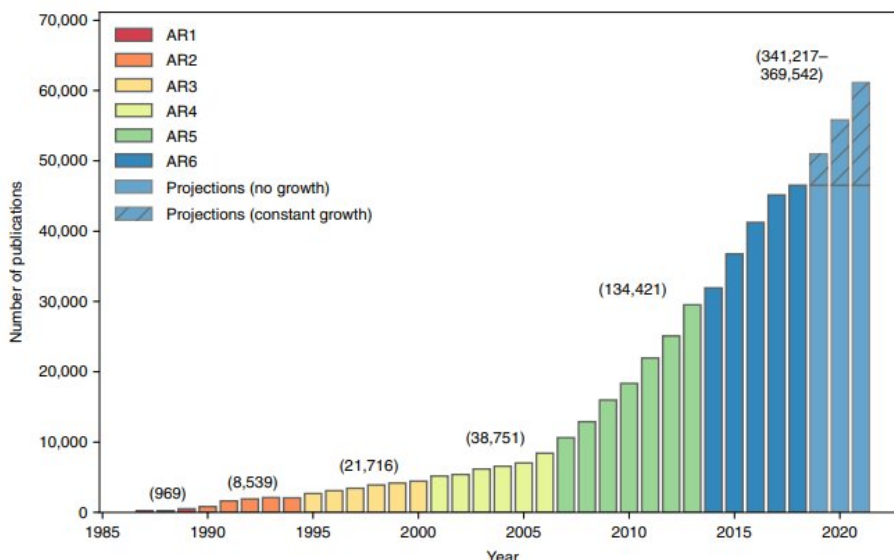
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Another lie taken up by climate skeptic folks is that the IPCC picks and chooses its sources by "*systematically excluding 'skeptical' studies*". This is not true. Yes, as long as a study has been peer-reviewed (<https://bonpote.com/peer-review-et-publications-scientifiques-definition-et-limites/>) and published in a scientific journal, the IPCC will consider all kinds of studies. Even those that attempt to challenge the impact of human activities on climate. No, you can't just appear on any television news channel and say that global warming does not exist for your opinion to be taken into account by the IPCC. Although some try to convince us otherwise, there is now a consensus (<https://bonpote.com/en/did-the-scientific-consensus-on-climate-change-reach-100/>) that human activities are responsible for global warming.

Another pseudo scandal: Climategate. It turns out that Climategate, one of the most widely publicized alleged manipulations of climate data, can in fact be attributed to specific temperature readings (obtained from tree rings) being replaced with more reliable data measured by thermometers. Despite the investigations into this scandal unanimously concluding that the researchers were honest and that the results published were accurate (<https://www.futura-sciences.com/planete/actualites/developpement-durable-climategate-rapport-independant-blanchit-giec-24400/>), Climategate has done a lot of damage to the scientific credibility of the IPCC. If you want to dig further into the topic, the Wikipedia page ([https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incident\\_des\\_courriels\\_du\\_Climatic\\_Research\\_Unit](https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incident_des_courriels_du_Climatic_Research_Unit)) and the skeptikalscience (<https://skeptikalscience.com/Climategate-CRU-emails-hacked-intermediate.htm>) website are good resources.

To give you some sense of scale, here is the evolution of the number of publications taken into account for the 6th IPCC report (AR6):



**Fig. 1 | Number of climate change documents in the Web of Science each year.** A total of 406,191 documents matching the query in ref. <sup>5</sup> were published until the end of 2018. The number of publications in each assessment period is shown in brackets. For 2019-2021, we project the number of papers, either assuming there is no more growth or assuming that growth continues at the same rate as over the past 5 years.

Source: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-019-0684-5> (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-019-0684-5>)

# Shellenberger "Expert"



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If you missed the Shellenberger saga, it is worth going back over for a couple of minutes. This self-proclaimed "climate activist" and environmentalist for 30<sup>years</sup> released a book two months ago called *Apocalypse Never*. I have not read the book (yet) will not read it. The one excerpt ([https://environmentalprogress.org/big-news/2020/6/29/on-behalf-of-environmentalists-i-apologize-for-the-climate-scare?fbclid=IwAR2M4FicmgbAGmbykqdO9nDwo6ltpj3qcF-8iLHaNrybs7-dAXZsc\\_Q6Va4](https://environmentalprogress.org/big-news/2020/6/29/on-behalf-of-environmentalists-i-apologize-for-the-climate-scare?fbclid=IwAR2M4FicmgbAGmbykqdO9nDwo6ltpj3qcF-8iLHaNrybs7-dAXZsc_Q6Va4)) I managed to read was enough to grasp his character. See for yourselves:

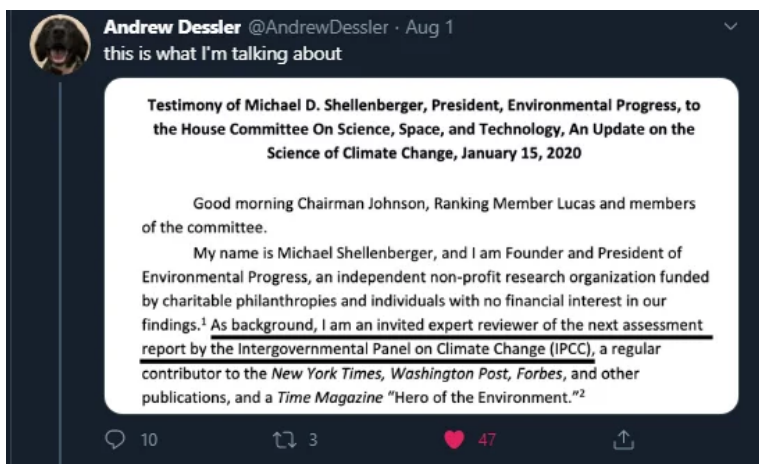
Some highlights from the book:

- Factories and modern farming are the keys to human liberation and environmental progress
- The most important thing for saving the environment is producing more food, particularly meat, on less land
- The most important thing for reducing air pollution and carbon emissions is moving from wood to coal to petroleum to natural gas to uranium
- 100% renewables would require increasing the land used for energy from today's 0.5% to 50%
- We should want cities, farms, and power plants to have higher, not lower, power densities
- Vegetarianism reduces one's emissions by less than 4%

Sophism, whataboutism (<https://bonpote.com/en/12-climate-delay-discourses-and-how-to-debunk-them/>), blatant lies, it's all there. Some people have taken the time to read this book and refute the nonsense it contains. If you want to know more, I invite you to read the reviews by Giorgos Kallis (<https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1280630209050546180.html?fbclid=IwAR1Uu1MzEFvhjKSbXTOGR8dHVIsxdB0TdNnIPzXjtA5-riMzM8TnpAW54>),

Peter H. Gleick (<https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2020/07/review-bad-science-and-bad-arguments-abound-in-apocalypse-never/?fbclid=IwAR03ODmyJn91HyrWftrlOTnJUOKVGx3neasPGtNi6EQB8XQM87Z2P6xFC-s>), and Michael Tobis (<http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2020/07/shellenbergers-op-ad/?fbclid=IwAR0cnVyb4wquzMKoeHdroSnclottEEZBS7H64S5vsU3YXI0jp6GSDmeEiMA>).

The problem for the IPCC is that Shellenberger uses his role as an IPCC report reviewer as an argument to grant himself more authority on these topics. It is not the first time something like this has happened. François Gemenne and Andrew Dessler recently took to Twitter (<https://twitter.com/Gemenne/status/1290202243354959874?s=20>) to remind us of Shellenberger's sham:



## What's all the fuss about?

To avoid silo thinking (<https://bonpote.com/le-danger-de-la-pensee-en-silo/>), let's try to understand what the fuss about the release of this book is about.

First, is the extensive media coverage. I think Michael E. Mann made the best comment:

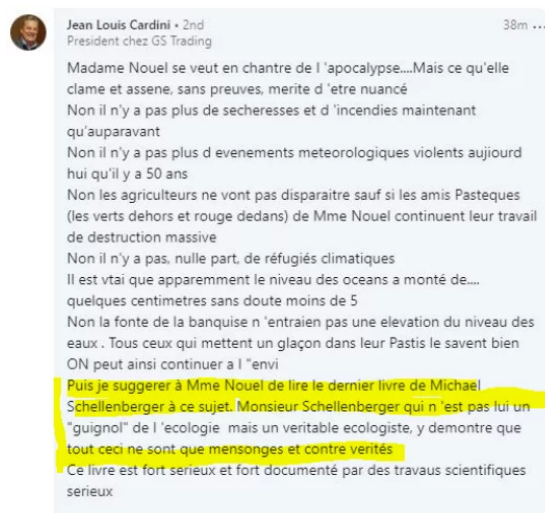


Source: <https://twitter.com/MichaelEMann/status/1285917880886996993?s=20>

The press media was eager to relay Shellenberger's messages. Well, not just any press: the neoliberal, often right-wing or conservative press. The same press that compares environmentalists to "green Khmers (<https://bonpote.com/ce-que-traduisent-les-reactions-a-la-convention-citoyenne-du-climat/>)". The kind that jumps on any opportunity to discredit the impact of human-induced climate change.

Second, and as expected, these writings are picked back up by climate skeptics. Shellenberger should have known that climate skeptics would appropriate his book, but he denies he did ([https://environmentalprogress.org/big-news/2020/6/29/on-behalf-of-environmentalists-i-apologize-for-the-climate-scare?fbclid=IwAR2M4FicmgbGmbykqdO9nDwo6ltpj3qcF-8iLHaNrybs7-dAXZsc\\_Q6Va4](https://environmentalprogress.org/big-news/2020/6/29/on-behalf-of-environmentalists-i-apologize-for-the-climate-scare?fbclid=IwAR2M4FicmgbGmbykqdO9nDwo6ltpj3qcF-8iLHaNrybs7-dAXZsc_Q6Va4)). Here is a recent example from



LinkedIn, under a post by Juliette Nouel:



Source: LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jean-louis-cardini-85675645/detail/recent-activity/>)

Climate inaction is already costly enough (<https://bonpote.com/en/12-climate-delay-discourses-and-how-to-debunk-them/>). Shellenberger should have thought about the impact of his book before writing/publishing it.



Last but not least, the power generally does not receive very positive press in France. Anti-nuclear (🤔❌!!) activists did not  before picking up the information. They accused Shellenberger of carrying the “voices of nuclear (https://www.lesnucleaire.org/conseil-actualite/12-discourses-demain-nucléaire-revend-à-nucléaire/)” as a result. It is  someone like that in your ranks. It only gives further arguments to anti-nuclear activists who never say no to one or two sophisms or intellectual shortcuts to win their case.

Despite claiming to be an environmentalist, Shellenberger has done more harm than good to the environmental cause with his book. It is not worth it to claim to be a “reviewer of the IPCC” and IPCC authors have called him out for it. Hopefully, we will never hear from him again.

## Concluding thoughts

To my great surprise, climate skeptics are still a thing. Albeit under a new form of climate skepticism (https://bonpote.com/en/12-climate-delay-discourses-and-how-to-debunk-them/). Today, the role of human activities in global warming no longer needs to be proven. Yet some, like Shellenberger, continue to minimize it to increase book sales. The situation is far too grave for things like this. We do not need any more people pouring water on a drowning man.

**If it was not clear yet, the answer to “can we trust the IPCC?” is obviously YES.** As a reminder, the IPCC only synthesizes the available scientific knowledge on the various subjects of climate change. This synthesis is a consensus and is validated by all member governments. To criticize the IPCC’s conclusions is to criticize hundreds of scientists and is, quite simply put, climate skepticism.

Given its mode of functioning and its transparency, I trust the IPCC’s data. I have obviously not read all the thousands of pages of the AR5 report or the hundreds of associated sources (which would amount to me reading 200,000 pages). But others have, and the data has been validated. Of course, everyone is free to think whatever they want. No, it is not forbidden to believe that the Earth is flat. But it is stupid. As stupid as believing that the IPCC reports have no value and that their members are puppets. Every month counts. There is no time to dither anymore.

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The new report of Group I came out on August 9, 2021. Please take five minutes to read the synthesis (https://bonpote.com/en/synthesis-and-analysis-of-the-new-ipcc-report/)

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