

Big oil, gas, and chemical companies produce huge amounts of plastic. They operate drilling rigs, plants to break down key chemicals such as ethylene, plastic pellet factories, and the infrastructure to transport oil, gas, and plastic. For their investments to pay off, they need to push ever more plastic onto the market. And these are their main strategies:

»It's always someone else's fault.« In their opinion, it's consumers who are responsible for the plastic waste mountain. These companies try to hoodwink the public into believing that plastic waste just needs to be sorted and recycled better. What they don't say, though, is that many countries don't practice waste separation or offer good recycling facilities. It would be better if they didn't produce so much plastic in the first place, or used more healthy and ecological materials instead. After all, industry has always known about the problems with plastic waste.

**Greenwashing** Companies that make or use plastic are at pains to tell us that its low weight means transporting it is low on emissions. Beverage companies, for example, use this argument to defend their use of plastic instead of glass bottles. Other firms point out hygienic aspects or the durability of plastic. These few plus points are played up as very important to society and the environment. The downsides of plastic production and use, such as the toxic additives required, are ignored, denied, or only admitted under mounting pressure from the public.

**Lobbying** Plastic companies have their own special interest groups. These groups try to exert influence on governments, authorities, and politicians. They carry out their work worldwide. Some employ lawyers to block environmental legislation or circumvent environmental laws.

The fact that companies represent their interests at a political level is not in itself reprehensible, as democracy guarantees everyone the right to voice their opinion. There is, however, a big difference between standing up for the common good or just your own interests and profit. Moreover, there is a lack of balance between the influence that can be exerted by industrial associations and civil society, which covers environmental, health, and human rights organizations as well as, say, people who live in a fracking area – and ultimately all of us. Industry simply has the personnel and resources to influence laws and regulations in a way that we don't.

Some of its lobbyists even take on different, seemingly incompatible, roles. They are employed by their companies, but at the same time work for a government agency or political organization. This allows companies or special interest groups to directly or indirectly influence decision-making processes and legislation to further their own interests.

Lots of money - with products that cause climate change.

