



## CAN WE BREAK OUR ADDICTION?

### DISCUSSION GUIDE

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*‘Effectively, we’re living inside an oil machine. Oil has shaped our life for decades and also our thinking and feeling.’ – James Marriott, co-author Crude Britannia*

*‘I believe that what we do over the next five years will determine the future of humanity for the next millennium.’ – Sir David King, UK Government’s former chief Scientific Advisor*

*The Oil Machine* explores the complexities of how oil is embedded in our society, from high finance; to cheap consumer goods, and brings together a wide range of voices to consider how this machine can be tamed, dismantled, or repurposed. We are at once trapped within this machine and compelled to break out of it. Nothing about this process will be simple, or predictable, but we believe that the film can help spur rational and meaningful dialogue on one of the greatest challenges that humanity has ever faced.

If you’ve seen the film, we hope you agree it is particularly suited to act as a tool to crack open the silos and echo chambers that too often define debates about the transition away from an economy based on fossil fuels.

We want these post-screening discussions to do the same. If there is one thing that we’ve learned in the process of making *The Oil Machine*, it is the advantage of having all parties talk freely and with candour. We now want to take this opportunity to have that cross-community dialogue in real time. In order to facilitate this, we have provided some guidelines, prompts and questions in this document.

It’s important to remind audiences that *The Oil Machine*, while not standing aloof from the moral aspects of this debate, is about bringing opposing voices into dialogue. We hope that these discussions will allow us to think afresh about how we will all live together After the Oil Machine. Here are some ideas that we think can help facilitate this.

### BEFORE THE FILM

- Ensure that there is a clearly identified person who will moderate the discussion. It’s always helpful if this person provides a quick introduction at the start of the event to remind people about the post-screening discussion.
- If there are experts appearing at the screening on a panel, introduce them at this point, if not, you might want to pinpoint one or two people in the audience who will be willing to open up the discussion by offering the first contributions from the floor.
- For audiences in the UK, who are often quite shy when it comes to speaking in public, it can be useful to provide a small sheet of paper and pen to allow them to write down comments and ideas as a crowdsourcing exercise. A good way to frame this exercise is to ask people to write down one aspect of the film that surprised them. Or, if you’d like the exercise to be more fun and participative, audience members could be asked to simply complete the sentence: ‘After the oil machine I/we will ...’ the moderator can then read out a selection of these sentences in order to open up the discussion. This is recommended as an inclusive practice for audiences who might be anxious about contributing, or who might be unfamiliar with the topic.



...the member of the panel from dominating the discussion at the outset. If you're conducting the exercise with slips of paper, remind people to complete their sentences and hand them back in to front of house staff or volunteers.

- It's a good idea to open questions to the floor as early as possible and try to scan the audience for contributions from diverse perspectives (women, people of colour, different age groups). If possible, try to ensure that no more than two men are allowed to speak in succession.
- Allow some time for discussions between panellists so that dialogue flows naturally, and don't be frightened to ask the audience if there is anyone who is able to bring a different perspective on a key point. For example, if the issue of just transition is raised, you might ask 'are there any trade unionists here tonight?'
- It is often a good idea to repeat a question, to ensure that everyone in the room has heard it. If time is short, you might want to take more than one question in succession and then put them to the most suitable panellist.

## DISCUSSION PRINCIPLES

- If the discussion becomes too heated or involves personal ad hominem attacks, the moderator should feel confident in politely intervening in order to re-frame the discussion.
- If the venue has a code of conduct or safe space policy for live events, you may wish to refer to this at the outset. For a large audience, a quick, relaxed, reference to the broad behaviours that will not be tolerated is advisable. Glasgow Film's Code of Conduct for Digital Spaces offers a good template: <https://glasgowfilm.org/code-of-conduct-for-digital-spaces>
- Everyone deserves a chance to speak and while the issues might be emotive, it is important that participants are able to finish making their point, are not interrupted and do not feel harassed or intimidated because of a contribution they have made.
- Be wary of attempts to monopolise the discussion, if someone from the audience wants to make more than one contribution, use your judgement to determine whether what they say is really going to be the most valid and relevant contribution. A good moderator can stop this happening by acknowledging that the very keen questioner has their hand up, that their contribution is still valued, but that new speakers have priority within the remaining time.
- If there is a microphone for audience contributions at the event it should remain in the hand of the assistant(s) roaming the auditorium and not be passed around, if possible. This helps deter speakers who want to talk at great length while disregarding others.
- The decision whether or not to involve a panel with specific knowledge or insights lies entirely with you, the community organiser. There are advantages and disadvantages inherent in both models. We'd suggest that, if there isn't going to be a panel, think about introducing some of the soft methods mentioned above to add more structure to proceedings.

## SUGGESTED TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

### (1) Five years to repurpose the oil machine - what has changed?

The film was completed just prior to the COP26 summit in Glasgow. Various developments since then, such as the war in Ukraine and the cost of living crisis, have profoundly altered the debate on oil and energy security. However, the issues raised in the film remain constant, especially the matter of urgency: we still have only five years to determine the future of humanity for the next millennium.

#### Suggested questions for panellists:

*What does energy security mean when planetary systems are becoming increasingly unstable?*

*What do we think the immediate future for North Sea oil and gas reserves ought to be, given that they mostly remain traded on the global market rather than used here in the UK?*

*What are the headline actions that the UK Government needs to take in order to ensure that these crucial five years are not wasted?*

#### Questions for an audience discussion:

*What action on climate change do you think we should expect from our governments?*

*Do you think our government does enough to protect people from climate change?*

*What message would you give to our UK leaders about the impacts of climate change?*

### (2) Generational divides - who will shoulder the burden?



perspectives. If the mood is right, it could be fun to ask for the oldest and the youngest person to identify themselves and offer contributions as a way to draw the discussion to a close. In some situations, this method might work best if the grandparents/children are asked to prepare a short statement in advance.

#### **Suggested questions for panellists:**

*Young people have been front and centre of the movement for climate justice, and Greta Thunberg has gathered an enormous amount of media attention, but has it really worked? What else could we be doing?*

*What do you think the planet will look like in 10 years' time?*

*How did you feel when confronted with the words of young climate activists in the film?*

#### **Questions for an audience discussion:**

*Are people in the room familiar with the issue of climate anxiety, does anyone know friends or family affected by this?*

*What gives your hope or despair about escaping the oil machine?*

*Has anyone had a discussion within their own family about these issues?*

### **(3) Uncomfortable truths - who is accountable?**

A major obstacle to the broadening of debates about ending dependency on fossil fuels is the sheer scale and complexity of the oil economy. It is hoped that the film will have helped explain some of the less well-known aspects of what oil means for the financial systems that govern our lives, and in the consumer goods we use every day. But if oil touches everything from pensions to plastics, aren't we all implicated in keeping the oil machine running? It's important to stress that we don't want to instil guilt or doom in the audience - but it is vitally important not to shy away from the complexity of the challenge; of living inside something that is ultimately destroying life. This can be a particularly challenging area to touch on within a discussion and can lead people to switch-off and simply accept oil as inevitable.

#### **Suggested questions for panellists:**

*If everyone here could resolve to make one change after today: whether it's personal, financial or political, or a combination of all three, what would your change be?*

*Are companies doing enough to lead the way in sustainable investing?*

*How can we put pressure on companies to make positive changes?*

*Was there anything that surprised you about the role of oil in the economy, beyond its obvious uses as an energy source and raw material?*

#### **Questions for an audience discussion:**

*Do you know how your pension is invested?*

*What does a "just transition" mean to you?*

*In what ways do you think the climate crisis is an issue of global justice or fairness?*

*Have your perceptions changed about North Sea oil since seeing this film?*

### **(4) Common ground - what do all the different views mean?**

We want everyone to leave a screening of *The Oil Machine* having considered the views of people who they might intuitively feel a sense of opposition to. It is likely that most audience members will support our own proposition that we need to safely, ethically, and justly dismantle the oil economy. However, oil is so imbricated in the functioning of today's systems that it cannot simply be switched off tomorrow. While there is evidence that the fossil fuel sector is not serious about its plans to decarbonise, there are surely some issues that we would all agree upon. For example, no one wants to see mass unemployment as a result of a rush to close down oil and gas infrastructure. It is hoped that the film will raise more unexpected areas of common ground that can then inform tools for policy makers and campaigners.

#### **Suggested questions for panellists:**



### Questions for an audience discussion:

*What character in the film most struck you and why?*

*Who did you find yourself siding with and why?*

*Was there something particularly unexpected that you heard from a contributor?*

## **(5) Making change in our community – what can we do?**

Creating real and meaningful change starts in the place where we live. Communities everywhere are coming up with innovative ideas and solutions and making a difference. This could be tackling concerns about local transport, energy, housing, food, wildlife, or any topic that's vital to your group. For example, could you push your local bus or train company to go electric? If you're on the coast, where do you think the new tide line will be from rising sea levels, and how can you prepare for this? In a city, how could you get ready to shelter more climate refugees?

### **Suggested questions for panellists:**

*What most concerns you about the future impacts from climate change in this area?*

*What plans are already in place that people should know about which will make a change (good or bad) to our local environment?*

*What can people do to help build a sustainable future for everyone here? How can we get involved?*

### **Questions for an audience discussion:**

*Have there been any severe weather changes over the last few years where you live, changes that have been attributed to climate change?*

*How are the issues raised in the film connected to local struggles in your community?*

*What are some things your community could do to reduce its environmental impact within the next year?*

*What resources or infrastructure is available to your community or needs to be created to do so?*

## **GENERAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

You might find that it's more useful to take a more general approach to the post-screening discussion rather than selecting themes listed above. Smaller community screenings may also prefer to focus on how the issues within the film impact on their own locale.

With that in mind, here are some suggestions for generic and community-focused questions:

*What did you know about North Sea oil production before seeing this film? What was most surprising?*

*What moments in the film stood out for you the most? Why do you think these moments stood out for you?*

*How can we become better at working together?*

*Do you feel more or less empowered to make change because of the film? If so, in what way? If not, why?*

*How would you reach out to your family, friends and community to raise awareness of these issues?*

*What did you learn from the film that you wish everyone knew? What could change if everyone knew it?*



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