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Oil Rig or No Rig

A council-chamber simulation about offshore drilling, economic pressure, and the slow drift of public opinion under a barrage of news.



The fictional coastal town of Radu must decide whether to allow an international oil company to build an extracting rig ten kilometres offshore. Five councillors, a company representative, an environmental NGO, a farmers' union leader, a popular local politician and a restaurant owner, meet in three council sessions. Between sessions, news articles begin to circulate; some accurate, some misleading. The vote is informative for the first two rounds and binding in the third. The game suits a small, articulate group and rewards careful preparation; participants who like to argue thrive in the council format.



CHECKMATE
to Climate Misinformation

Game at a Glance

Theme	Climate change, fossil-fuel economics, media and misinformation
Format	Council-chamber role-play with three sessions and a binding final vote
Duration	Approximately 3 hours including debrief (debrief: 30–45 min)
Participants	5 individual roles, or 5 teams of 2–4 players (10–20 total)
Recommended age	16+
Difficulty	Medium
Space	One room with table arrangement in a semicircle (EU-Parliament style)
Materials	Role packages, place cards, six printed news articles, voting cards, timer, flipchart
Central question	Should the city of Radu allow an oil company to build an extraction rig 10 km offshore?

Learning Objectives

By the end of the simulation, participants will be able to:

1. Identify how an emotionally charged news article can shift the trajectory of a debate, even when the article contains no verifiable facts.
2. Distinguish between misinformation (mistaken), disinformation (intentional) and malinformation (truth used as a weapon) in real-looking content.
3. Argue for a position they may not personally hold, drawing on the role's stated interests, while listening genuinely to opposing voices.
4. Recognise the difference between a public position and a private interest, and the way the gap between the two shapes a vote.
5. Reflect on their own decision-making under information pressure and identify a small habit (the seven-step verification list) they will use afterwards.

The Story

THE CITY OF RADU

Radu is a coastal town of about 50,000 people, with a calm sea, mild weather and fertile land. With over six hundred years of history, it was traditionally an agricultural community famous for vineyards, olive groves and grain fields passed down through generations. In the last century, Radu has transformed into a vacation destination. Its long beaches and relaxed atmosphere brought a growing tourism industry that now supports many local businesses. A large commercial harbour, located away from the main beaches, handles oil and trade cargo but also includes a small tourist pier offering day trips.

Radu is home to a major university specialising in agriculture, technology and environmental science. Students and academics contribute to the city's lively, open-minded atmosphere and often participate in local debates on sustainability. The town has also become a hub for digital nomads who support local cafés, rentals and restaurants. Today, Radu is a mix of old farming families, entrepreneurs, students and newcomers.

THE PROPOSAL

Recently, an international energy corporation called Company X proposed building an offshore oil rig 10 km from the coast. The company claims new technology makes drilling safe and promises jobs and major investment for Radu. Supporters say it could reduce unemployment and bring energy independence. Opponents warn that an oil spill or pollution could destroy tourism, harm wildlife and threaten farming and fishing livelihoods. The community is now divided, and the city council must decide: should Radu allow the oil rig, or protect its coast from industrial development?



Roles Overview

Five council members must reach a decision.

Each role has a public position (the line they take in the council chamber) and confidential personal interests that shape what they secretly want.

Paul Monri	Company X representative - needs the deal to keep his job and a promised bonus.
Lia Ozlavski	Environmental NGO leader - opposes the rig on ecological grounds; ten-year track record.
Maria Mitsaki	Head of the local farmers' union - pragmatic, undecided, hates politics.
Jake Sully	Popular local politician - facing election; has a secret offer from Company X.
Sofia Bersky	Local restaurant owner - anxious mother, undecided, easily moved by emotion.
Facilitator	You. Chair of the council, time-keeper, news-bringer, eventual debrief guide.

Each role has a full character pack (Annex 1A). Distribute them confidentially.

Keep the news articles (Annex 1B) hidden from participants until the scheduled drops.

Step-by-Step Facilitator Flow

Phase 0 - Setup (before participants enter)

- Arrange five tables in a semicircle. Place a name placard for each role on the appropriate table.
- Lay out the role pack face-down on each table (one set per role; keep teams confidential).
- Have the six news articles ready in three batches: Batch A (printed, three articles), Batch B (printed, three articles), Batch C (kept aside for the third round).
- Test the timer and flipchart. Write on the flipchart: 'Should Radu approve the oil rig?'

Phase 1 - Welcome and framing (10 min)

Greet participants. Explain that they are stepping into a city council. Read the central question. Briefly explain what a simulation game is and remind them of the ground rules (Chapter 5 of Part I). Distribute the city info-pack and the role packs. Do not yet mention the news articles, the surprise is the dramaturgy.

Phase 2 - Role preparation (25 min)

Participants read their role package, study the city info-pack, and within their team prepare a maximum two-minute opening statement to be delivered by a chosen spokesperson. Walk around. Check that each team understands their public position and at least one of their hidden interests. Do not coach content; clarify procedure.

Phase 3 - First council session (≈15 min)

Open the council. 'Welcome, councillors. We are gathered to consider the proposal of Company X to build an oil rig ten kilometres from the coast. Each representative will deliver an opening statement of up to two minutes, in the order I call you. After all five have spoken, we will hold an informative vote.'

Call the speakers in the order their placards were raised. Hold the time strictly. After all five have spoken, take an informative show of hands: 'All in favour, raise your placard. Against. Abstaining.' Record on the flipchart. State explicitly that this is informative, not binding.

Phase 4 - Internal discussion + first news drop (20 min)

Dismiss the council. Teams have twenty minutes for internal discussion. After the first five minutes, distribute Batch A - three news articles. Read them aloud one by one, without commentary; hand a copy of each to every team.

Batch A contains

‘The debt cliff: how one oil plan could decide the city's future’ - malinformation.

‘University study warns about oil rigs and sea pollution’ - facts.

‘High stakes, low risk?’ - disinformation.

Phase 5 - Second council session (≈15 min)

Open the second session in the same format. Each representative may give one short statement. Take a second informative vote and record it. Look for any change of position; this becomes part of the debrief.

Phase 6 - Internal discussion + second news drop (20 min)

Dismiss the council. Five minutes in, distribute Batch B.

Batch B contains

‘Oil Company confirms 200 new jobs, not 2,000’ - facts.

‘They already decided?’ - malinformation.

‘Is there something shady about that NGO?’ - disinformation.

Phase 7 - Third (binding) council session (≈25 min)

Open the third session. Now representatives may give multiple speeches; the format is open discussion, with two-minute interventions and the placard queue. The facilitator can call a final five-minute team caucus before the vote. Then announce: ‘We will now hold the binding vote. The question is: should Radu approve the oil rig? All in favour, raise your placards.’ Count, record, announce result. Close the council with a formal thank-you.

Phase 8 - Debrief (30-45 min)

Step explicitly out of the simulation (see Chapter 7). Use the 4Fs framework. The misinformation reveal is central in this game - work through each article in turn, naming the type and explaining why.

TIP - Pacing

The most common mistake in this game is letting the first session run twenty minutes when fifteen would do. The energy comes from the second and third sessions, especially after the news drops. Be ruthless with the early time-keeping.

Debrief - Specific Questions for This Game

Use the general 4Fs questions in Chapter 7 of Part I. The questions below are tailored to the Radu dilemma and are particularly useful in the Findings step.

- Did your vote change between rounds? If so, which article or argument tipped you?
- Look at the article 'High stakes, low risk?' - why did the 80% safety claim feel believable? Who would benefit from you believing it?
- The article about the NGO leader being foreign-funded was disinformation. How did your team respond when it appeared? Did anyone consider its source before reacting?
- Maria, Sofia and Jake each had a confidential interest different from their public position. As an outsider listening to them, did you sense a gap? What signalled it?
- Imagine the council had not had the news articles at all. Would the result have been different? What does that tell you about the role of media in a community decision?

MISINFORMATION KEY (FOR THE FACILITATOR)

Use this list to guide the reveal. Read each article aloud in turn and name what kind of false content it contains.

- 'The debt cliff...' - malinformation. Real economic pressure is exaggerated and stripped of context to imply a single solution. Unemployment is real; the framing turns it into a forced choice.
- 'University study warns...' - facts. Genuine, sourced research, named expert.
- 'High stakes, low risk?' - disinformation. Fabricated 80% safety figure, planted to advance the company's agenda.
- 'Experts confirm: rig could reduce pollution' - misinformation. Mistaken claim, shared as if true, no real source.
- 'Oil Company confirms 200 new jobs' - facts. Genuine correction; cite this as the model of how the press should work.
- 'They already decided?' - malinformation. Real leaked messages selectively quoted to imply something the messages do not actually prove.
- 'Is there something shady about that NGO?' - disinformation. Fabricated rumour, plausibly emotional, designed to discredit a credible voice.

Annex 1A - Character Packs

Print each character pack on a separate sheet.

Distribute confidentially – do not let other teams see another team's pack.

The packs are written in the second person; participants 'become' their character.



Paul Monri - Company X representative

You spent the last seven years at Company X. You have an engineer's master's degree, and during your university years you wanted to work for a company developing wind or solar energy, but at the time of your graduation an economic crisis hit, and the only work you could find was for an oil-extracting and transporting company. You have seen the negative environmental impact of oil spills and rigs on regions and communities, but also the fast economic growth they bring.

You were tasked with persuading the local council to approve the project. If the deal goes through you have been promised a raise, a better office, and a packet of shares of Company X. Your daughter is about to choose which university she wants to attend, so this raise would let her pick even the most expensive option. You did not get to attend the university you wanted because of finances; giving your daughter that chance means the world to you.

What the company tells you about the rig

- Real data from previous rigs show that extracting oil has environmental risks, spills and leaks damage marine life and human health.
- PR has given you the company's official line: 'New technology reduces risk by 80%.' You know this is a PR scam.
- If the city refuses, the company may pull out, and you could lose your position.

Your public stance

- This project will bring hundreds of jobs to the region.
- Average regional income and energy independence will rise.
- Modern rigs are 80% safer and certified by independent engineers.
- The company will invest in local infrastructure for years after construction.

End goal

Convince the council to approve the project - without being caught lying.

Your private feelings

- You know the environmental risks are higher than the company states; most of the gain goes to Company X.
- You do not like to lie to the council, but your family's wellbeing depends on this deal.
- You have influence with local news outlets that the company has secretly funded.

Behavioural profile - how Paul speaks

Confident, polished, professionally measured. Uses corporate language: 'stakeholder value', 'risk-managed framework', 'mutually beneficial outcome'.

Smiles often; appears approachable. Cites figures with authority even when uncertain. Avoids direct lies but allows misleading impressions to stand.

Defensive when challenged on specifics, pivots to job-creation numbers and 'the bigger picture'.

Watchwords: 'Investment', 'partnership', 'modernisation', 'responsibility'.

Lia Ozlavski - Environmental NGO leader

You have spent the last decade working to protect the environment and raise awareness about preserving local ecosystems. You studied geography at a local university and have a deep understanding of how delicate the balance of nature is, especially in coastal areas like Radu. After seeing how pollution and overdevelopment damaged other regions, you decided to dedicate your career to preventing similar mistakes here.

You are now a leading member of a respected NGO focused on marine and coastal conservation. You have run projects with the local university, organised clean-up campaigns, and regularly speak at public events. You are known for clear arguments and passion, but some people see you as overly idealistic or resistant to progress.

The proposal to build an oil rig 10 km offshore feels like a direct threat to everything you have worked for. You are sure even small leaks or accidents could destroy marine habitats, harm fish populations and drive away tourists, one of the city's main sources of income. You have seen companies promise safety and sustainability and then cause irreversible damage. You know the council might be swayed by promises of jobs and money.

Your public position

The oil rig must not be built. If a total veto cannot be reached, push for more scientific research and delayed construction. You do not want to stop progress; you want progress to be thoughtful and responsible.

End goal

Block approval, or, failing that, extract a binding commitment to delay and to commission independent research before any vote.

Your strongest arguments

- Oil rigs pose constant risks of spills and leaks, which spread rapidly through ocean currents.
- Routine drilling waste releases toxic substances even without accidents.
- Company X has a record of safety violations elsewhere.
- The 80% risk-reduction claim has no published scientific backing you have been able to find.

The city should invest in renewable energy and sustainable jobs instead..

Behavioural profile - how Lia speaks

Passionate, well-prepared, slightly impatient. Quotes studies, names experts, uses precise scientific language alongside everyday metaphors.

Direct and uncompromising on red lines; can sound preachy if she does not pace herself. Tends to interrupt when she hears something factually wrong.

Reaches for evidence quickly: 'According to the Aegean study...', 'There is no peer-reviewed source for that claim.'

Watchwords: 'Irreversible', 'evidence', 'the science is clear', 'future generations'.

Maria Mitsaki - Head of the farmers' union

You were born and raised in Radu, as were your parents and grandparents. You have been a farmer your whole life; for the last ten years you have been head of the local farmers' union. You are practical, level-headed, and dislike politics, though you understand you must take part in it to look after the farmers you represent.

The past few years have been tough. Serious freshwater shortages nearly ruined several harvests, and many farmers had to borrow money to keep their land. You want stability, fair income for farmers, and security to plan ahead without constantly worrying about drought or debt.

You have not made up your mind about the rig. Some people say it will bring jobs, money and investment; others warn it will harm the sea, the land and the air. You want to understand both sides before you vote. Recently, people connected to the project have approached you suggesting the farming community could receive lease payments or infrastructure support if the project goes through. You are not sure how serious or trustworthy these offers are.

Your priorities

- Make sure no decision harms local farmers, their land or their water.
- Understand whether the project will bring stable income or new problems.
- Represent ordinary working families, not corporations or politicians.
- Stay neutral and fair-minded until you have clear facts.

Behavioural profile - how Maria speaks

Slow, measured, plain-spoken. Suspicious of jargon. Asks practical questions: 'How will this affect our water? What happens if there is a leak?'

Listens more than she speaks; her silences are weighty. When she does intervene, the room tends to listen.

Cautious about taking sides; allergic to political theatre. Will flip toward whoever offers the clearest, most credible facts.

Watchwords: 'In practice...', 'What does that actually mean for us?', 'Show me, don't tell me.'

Jake Sully - Local politician

You are a popular politician from the city's main party. Long-time resident, in local politics for over a decade, first as a council member, once proposed as mayor though it didn't stick. People often describe you as someone who can 'get things done.'

When you first ran, you promised to bring new jobs, modernise the city and help Radu become more self-sufficient, especially in energy. For years you have tried to attract investors, but most companies showed little interest in such a small coastal town. The arrival of this big proposition could be the breakthrough you have been waiting for. The next election is soon.

Privately, your finances haven't been great lately, campaign costs, family expenses, a few bad investments. Success with this project could help politically and personally

The secret offer

Recently a secret offer was made to you by Company X. They will cover your party's election costs and secure your role as mayor if the rig is built, plus 300,000 in personal funds if the council votes yes without delay.

Your priorities

- Your popularity and reputation.
- A decision that benefits the city short and long term.
- Avoid scandals; the next election is very soon.
- Be alert to opportunities for personal financial stability.
- Maintain a neutral public stance for as long as possible, locals dislike a politician who appears bought.

Behavioural profile - how Jake speaks

Charismatic, warm, story-driven. Greets everyone by name. Tells anecdotes about 'a young couple I met last week' to humanise his points.

Strategically vague on details until he has read the room. Strong on vision; weak on specifics. 'We need bold action, but action that brings everyone with us.'

Will pivot positions mid-debate if he senses public mood shifting; you can almost hear him recalculating in real time.

Watchwords: 'Together', 'a bright future', 'the people of Radu deserve...', 'opportunity'.

Sofia Bersky - Local restaurant owner

You have lived in Radu all your life. Your family has run La Brisa, a cosy seaside restaurant, for almost twenty years. The place is known for fresh seafood, friendly service and beautiful ocean views. Most of your income comes from tourists, digital nomads who live in the city, and locals who visit on weekends. You know almost everyone by name.

You have a young child, and your life revolves around your restaurant, your family and the community. The economy isn't as strong as it used to be, and tourist numbers have dropped slightly over the last few years. You have read online that oil platforms can cause pollution and increase health risks for children. You have also heard such projects can bring construction workers, engineers and higher demand for local services - possibly more customers.

What you know so far

- Company X says the rig will bring hundreds of jobs and new income.
- The environmental NGO warns of leaks, water pollution and bad smells driving tourists away.
- Your restaurant depends on a clean beach and the city's reputation.
- Your child's schoolteacher mentioned 'toxic air and chemicals' from oil rigs.
- You're not sure if it's true, but it frightens you.

Your stance

You have not taken a firm side. Everyone knows you want what is best for your child and for Radu. You are open to listening to arguments from both sides, but you expect people to be honest.

Behavioural profile - how Sofia speaks

Warm, anxious, unguarded. Speaks in everyday language and personal stories: 'My boy was coughing again last week and I started wondering...'

Easily moved by emotional appeals from any side; visibly affected when articles mention children's health.

Genuine; her uncertainty is not a tactic. Asks plain questions: 'But is that actually true? How do you know?'

Watchwords: 'My family', 'our community', 'I'm just a person who...', 'I want to do the right thing.'

Annex 1B - News Articles

Print these on plain paper, and cut out one article per sheet if possible. The articles below are PARTICIPANT-READY, there are no facilitator labels on them. Use the facilitator cheat-sheet on the next page for your own reference.

FACILITATOR CHEAT-SHEET - keep this for yourself

Batch A (Phase 4):

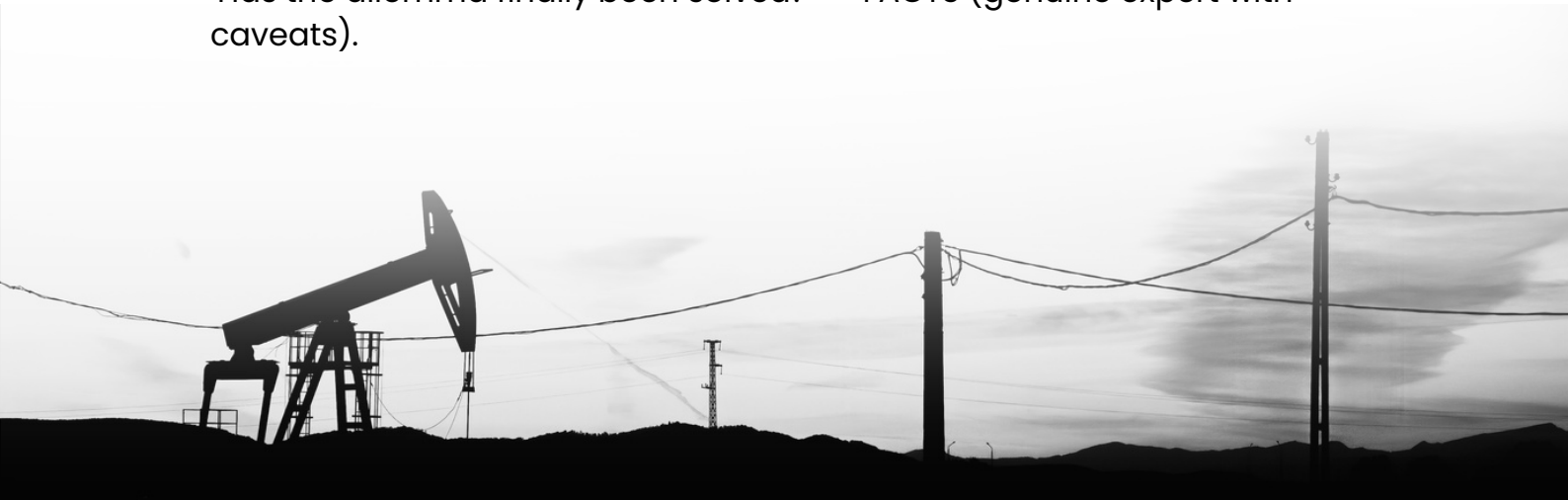
- 'The debt cliff...' → MALINFORMATION (real economic pressure exaggerated, framed as forced choice).
- 'University study warns...' → FACTS (genuine sourced research; named expert).
- 'High stakes, low risk?' → DISINFORMATION (fabricated 80% safety figure, planted by Company X).

Batch B (Phase 6):

- 'Does Company X have alien technology?' → FACTS (named professor; debunks the 80% claim).
- 'They already decided?' → MALINFORMATION (real leaked messages selectively quoted).
- 'Is there something shady about that NGO?' → DISINFORMATION (fabricated rumour, designed to discredit).

Batch C (optional, Phase 7):

- 'Powering the modern world in no time' → MISINFORMATION (mistaken claim, no real source).
- 'Has the dilemma finally been solved?' → FACTS (genuine expert with caveats).



BATCH A - Distributed five minutes into Phase 4

Article 1 - "The debt cliff: how one oil plan could decide the city's future"

Facilitator note:

Malinformation. Real economic pressure (35% unemployment is a true figure for this fictional city) is exaggerated and stripped of context to imply a single solution. The "thousands of jobs" claim from "sources close to the project" is unsourced and contradicted later in Batch B. The closing framing is a forced binary choice, exactly the rhetorical move malinformation specialises in.

Article 2 - "University study warns about oil rigs and sea pollution"

Facilitator note:

Facts. Genuine peer-reviewed research, named expert with real qualifications, methodology disclosed, caveats included, sources verifiable. This is what a credible article reads like, and your participants should notice the contrast with the others.

Article 3 - "High stakes, low risk? Company X unveils new safety platform"

Facilitator note:

Disinformation. The 80% figure is fabricated, there is no such reduction, as Batch B's Professor Shein article will reveal. The technology name, the audit claims, and the "tens of millions" are all designed to sound impressive without being verifiable. The "spokesperson" is unnamed; the "industry analyst" is anonymous; the "leading international bodies" are not named. Every authoritative-sounding hook leads nowhere when traced.

"The debt cliff: how one oil plan could decide the city's future"

By Markus Voren, City Affairs Correspondent - Radu Daily

The city of Radu, once a beacon of progress, is now on the verge of economic collapse, with unemployment rates soaring past 35%. Local authorities have begun rationing electricity to keep the lights on for a few more months. The municipal pension fund, according to figures circulated last week, is operating at a deficit not seen since the 1990s.

Walk down Harbor Street at midday and you understand why people whisper that the city is dying. Storefronts are boarded. The fish market closes by eleven. "I haven't had a full day's work in two months," says one dock worker who asked not to be named. "My kids ask me when things will get better and I don't have an answer for them."

Yet, despite the despair, there is a single hope in sight: an oil platform that will serve as a "turning point" and flood Radu with much-needed new jobs and revenue for everyone. Sources close to the project say construction alone could employ "thousands" in the first year.

The choice the council faces, observers say, could not be clearer: approve the project, or watch the city become another statistic.

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"University study warns about oil rigs and sea pollution"

Aegean Environmental Review, peer-reviewed publication, March issue

According to a report published this month by the University of Thessaloniki Environmental Sciences department, oil rigs operating within fifteen kilometres of populated coastlines pose a measurable long-term risk to marine ecosystems and to public health. The study examined twelve coastal extraction sites across the Aegean basin over a five-year period.

Researchers measured chemical traces, including hydrocarbons, heavy metals and traces of drilling additives, in fish tissue, sediment samples and seawater. Detectable contamination was found in nine of the twelve sites within six months of operations beginning. In four of the sites, contamination persisted at levels exceeding EU thresholds for human consumption.

Professor Dimitra Kallergi, who led the research, told the Aegean Environmental Review: "Even small leaks can have a big impact when they happen near coastal ecosystems. The mistake we keep making is assuming that the absence of a major spill means the operation is clean. It rarely is."

The study acknowledges that newer rig technologies have reduced, though not eliminated, leak risks, and that outcomes vary considerably by depth, sediment type and wave dynamics. The full paper is available open-access at the university's repository.

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"High stakes, low risk? Company X unveils new safety platform"

Energy Today - Industry News Desk

Company X has announced that, according to newly developed proprietary technology, the risks associated with offshore oil extraction near coastal ecosystems are reduced by 80%. The announcement was made yesterday at the company's annual investor conference in front of an audience of stakeholders and journalists.

The new system, branded "AquaShield 2.0", combines what the company describes as "next-generation seal monitoring" with "AI-driven leak prediction" and "real-time biodegradable response protocols". A spokesperson for Company X said: "AquaShield represents a new era of responsible extraction. Communities can have full confidence that the operations we propose meet the highest possible environmental standards."

The technology has, according to the spokesperson, been "extensively tested" and "audited by leading international bodies", though specific certifications and audit reports were not provided to attendees. Company X has invested "tens of millions" in the AquaShield system over the last three years.

Industry analysts welcomed the announcement. "If the figures hold up," one commented, "this could be a game-changer for the sector." Company X confirmed the technology will be deployed at the proposed Radu site if approval is granted.

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BATCH B - Distributed five minutes into Phase 6

Article 1 - "Does Company X have alien technology?"

Facilitator note:

Facts. Named expert with verifiable affiliation, methodology disclosed (47 rigs, three regions), peer-reviewed framing, second corroborating expert, caveats included. Notice the structural contrast with the Company X "AquaShield" piece in Batch A: this article names its sources and cites methods. The other names a brand and quotes nobody.

Article 2 - "They already decided?"

Facilitator note:

Malinformation. The quoted message is real - it was actually sent. What is stripped out is the context: it was about a different unrelated vote, not the oil rig. The post even acknowledges this in a passing line ("about something else entirely") and then immediately dismisses the relevance. That dismissal is the malinformation move: the truth is technically intact, but the framing makes it function as a lie. The "WHY HAVEN'T THEY DENIED IT?" closing is the rhetorical inversion of the burden of proof.

Article 3 - "Is there something shady about that NGO?"

Facilitator note:

Disinformation. Every authoritative-sounding hook leads nowhere. "GreenHorizon Trust" is fabricated - invent a foreign-sounding name and a tax-haven jurisdiction and the rumour borrows credibility for free. The "blurry screenshot" is the universal alibi of disinformation: it gestures toward evidence without producing it. The "I'm just asking questions" disclaimer is the rhetorical fig leaf. The closing call to share is what propagates the lie. None of it is true; all of it is designed to look like the truth is one click away.

"Does Company X have alien technology?"

By Sven Halburg, Science Desk – Coastal Sciences Quarterly

Yesterday, Company X claimed that its newly unveiled "AquaShield 2.0" platform reduces offshore extraction risk by 80%. Today, that figure is being directly challenged by researchers in the field. Professor Elizabeth Shein of the University of Callington, who has spent over two decades studying offshore extraction and is widely cited in the literature, told this publication that the 80% claim "does not reflect any peer-reviewed evidence I have seen – anywhere."

According to Professor Shein's own modelling, drawing on operational data from forty-seven rigs across the North Sea, the Gulf and the Aegean, the maximum risk reduction theoretically achievable with the best current technology is approximately 20%, and reaching even that figure would require sustained investment over several decades, alongside a regulatory and monitoring environment that does not yet exist. "Industry has been promising 'safe drilling' for forty years," Professor Shein said. "Every generation produces a new acronym and a new press release. The fundamentals don't move as fast as the marketing."

A second researcher, Dr. Helena Mar of the Coastal Risk Institute, said that risk reduction varies by depth, sediment and proximity to sensitive ecosystems, but added that "an 80% figure announced by an operating company at an investor conference is not science." Both researchers stressed that meaningful improvement is possible, but only with independent monitoring, transparent data and time.

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By Sven Halburg, Science Desk – Coastal Sciences Quarterly

Yesterday, Company X claimed that its newly unveiled "AquaShield 2.0" platform reduces offshore extraction risk by 80%. Today, that figure is being directly challenged by researchers in the field. Professor Elizabeth Shein of the University of Callington, who has spent over two decades studying offshore extraction and is widely cited in the literature, told this publication that the 80% claim "does not reflect any peer-reviewed evidence I have seen – anywhere."

According to Professor Shein's own modelling, drawing on operational data from forty-seven rigs across the North Sea, the Gulf and the Aegean, the maximum risk reduction theoretically achievable with the best current technology is approximately 20%, and reaching even that figure would require sustained investment over several decades, alongside a regulatory and monitoring environment that does not yet exist. "Industry has been promising 'safe drilling' for forty years," Professor Shein said. "Every generation produces a new acronym and a new press release. The fundamentals don't move as fast as the marketing."

A second researcher, Dr. Helena Mar of the Coastal Risk Institute, said that risk reduction varies by depth, sediment and proximity to sensitive ecosystems, but added that "an 80% figure announced by an operating company at an investor conference is not science." Both researchers stressed that meaningful improvement is possible, but only with independent monitoring, transparent data and time.

"They already decided?"

@jasmine_radu_real - 2 hours ago • Public post

Okay, this is going viral and I need to share it. Someone leaked WhatsApp messages between Mayor Jake and a politician on the city council. ONE OF THE MESSAGES LITERALLY SAYS: **"We will vote yes, no matter what."**

Like, what is the point of this whole council then? They made it look like everyone's voice matters, but it's all fake. I'm so tired of this city. People deserve to know the truth.

The leaks (dropped by what looks like a former staffer, no official confirmation yet) come from a long conversation. Some people are saying the messages were in a private group chat about something else entirely, a different vote on a totally unrelated issue, but honestly, does that matter? They SAID IT. And now they're going to pretend they're listening to us during the public meeting in three days.

Share this. The vote is on Friday. People deserve to know what their leaders actually think before they pretend to listen.

Update (1 hr ago): Some are saying the screenshots have been edited. Either way - WHY HAVEN'T THEY OFFICIALLY DENIED IT?

[1.4k likes • 890 shares • 312 comments]

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"Is there something shady about that NGO?"

@radu_truth_seeker - 3 hours ago • Public post

So... I don't know if it's true, but a friend sent me a post saying Lia, the woman from the environmental NGO, is actually getting money from a foreign company that wants to stop all oil projects in the area.

The post is circulating in different groups now. The company is apparently called something like "GreenHorizon Trust", supposedly registered in Liechtenstein?, and they have been funding anti-oil campaigns in coastal towns all over Europe for years. The screenshot I saw showed a "donor list" with Lia's name on it but it was kind of blurry.

If this is real, it's pretty messed up, she's acting like she really cares about the environment. I used to really like her, but now I'm not sure what to think.

I tried to find the original source and I couldn't, but everyone is saying the same thing. That can't be a coincidence, right? Why would so many people say the same thing if it wasn't true?

I'm not saying she's guilty. I'm just asking questions. Maybe she has nothing to do with this. But maybe the council needs to know before the vote.

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BATCH C - Optional, for advanced groups (use during Phase 7)

Article 1 - "Powering the modern world in no time"

Facilitator note:

Misinformation. Almost everything in the article is wrong - no realistic offshore project completes in twelve months, "low-vibration drilling" is not an established technical category, "near-negligible" seabed disruption is not how marine engineering works. But unlike the AquaShield piece in Batch A, this isn't a deliberate corporate plant. The journalist has spoken to a single anonymous source ("a contact familiar with the project") and reproduced their claims without verification. No named expert, no methodology, no second source, no hedge. The company didn't return their call, and they ran the story anyway. This is what misinformation looks like when it spreads in good faith.

Article 2 - "Has the dilemma finally been solved?"

Facilitator note:

Facts. Named expert with disclosed methodology (100+ sites, 15-year window, four indicators), peer-reviewable conference presentation with a forthcoming journal publication, real caveats (a third of projects fail outright; another third produce mixed outcomes), and a conclusion that refuses to give participants a clean answer. This is what credible evidence looks like in a real-world dilemma, it does not tell you what to do. Use this article in the debrief to ask: "Which of the seven news articles in this game told you the truth most clearly? Why was it harder to draw a quick conclusion from it than from the disinformation pieces?"

"Powering the modern world in no time"

By Tomás Reiniger, Business & Industry - Coastal Herald

The proposed Radu offshore platform may be operational sooner than most residents have been led to believe. According to inside information shared with this paper, construction of the rig, from planning to full commissioning, will take no more than one calendar year.

The compressed timeline, if accurate, would set a new standard for European offshore projects. "Under the previous generation of regulations, this kind of build-out would have taken three or four years," a source familiar with the project told the Herald. "What we are looking at here is the future of energy infrastructure - fast, lean and clean."

The same source confirmed that the operation will involve "the least amount of environmental interference possible," with new low-vibration drilling methods reducing seabed disruption to "near-negligible levels." Atmospheric impact during construction is similarly expected to be minimal.

If the council approves the project on Friday, the first stages of preparation could begin as early as next month, the source added. Operations could be running by the same time next year, bringing jobs, energy independence and a long-overdue boost to the local economy.

Company X has not yet released a formal construction schedule. Calls to the company's regional press office were not returned in time for publication.

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"Has the dilemma finally been solved?"

By Anna Krasniewski, Urban & Regional Affairs – Baltic Quarterly Review

The dilemma between economy and environment remains one of the most polarising debates in coastal planning. New work by city-development expert Janis Balodis, presented this week at the Baltic Urban Conference in Riga, offers a measured contribution. Balodis, whose research database includes operational and economic data from over one hundred coastal extraction sites across Europe and North America, has compared GDP growth, employment, public-health outcomes and ecological indicators across the sites over a fifteen-year window. The study is due to be published next quarter in Urban Planning Studies.

"In the right conditions, an oil rig improves a city's economic situation, sometimes considerably," Balodis told the conference. "But the conditions matter enormously. Placement, regulation, the local ecosystem, the existing economy, the sequencing of investment in alternatives, all of these determine whether the project becomes a long-term gain or a long-term liability."

The data suggests that approximately one in three projects produce sustained net-positive outcomes. Another third produce mixed results, with localised gains offset by long-term ecological costs. The remaining third leave the host community economically and environmentally worse off than they were before construction began.

"There is no general answer to whether to build," Balodis concluded. "There is only the specific case in front of you, and the question of whether the safeguards being promised are actually credible."

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