

How Activist Groups (try to) Impact Corporate Policies on CSR

Politeia Forum

May 20th 2011

Dr.ir. Frank G.A. de Bakker

vrije Universiteit

amsterdam



Outline

- From corporations to activists
- Private politics & institutional change
- Activist groups tactics & networks
- Challenges





1. From corporations to activists





Changing role of firms

- Firms are entities with considerable influence on social life
- Keith Davis (1960: 74):
“businessmen during the next fifty years will have substantial freedom of choice regarding what social responsibilities they will take and how far they will go. As current holders of social power, they can act responsibly to hold this power if they wish to do so ... The choice *is* theirs.”
- 1960s: State + trade unions as controllers
- Increasingly **other actors** stepped in





Who are these other actors?

- **Non**-governmental, **not** for profit organizations
- Secondary Stakeholders
- Civil Society Organizations
- Interest Groups
- **Activist Groups**

Groups characterized by the “intention to exert influence over corporations, and their willingness to make sacrifices to realize their ambitions, such as investing resources and time, or bearing risk”

(de Bakker & den Hond, 2007)





Activist Group-Firm interactions: Why?

- Increasingly international character of issues
 - Diminishing relevance of national governments / retreat of government
 - Growing focus on self-regulation and soft law
- **Room for activist groups**





2. Private politics & institutional change



Private Politics

Attempts to “influence economic activity ... without reliance on public institutions or officeholders” (Baron, 2003)

- At least two parties: often activists and firms
- Competition for public support
- Bargaining process; sometimes resolution

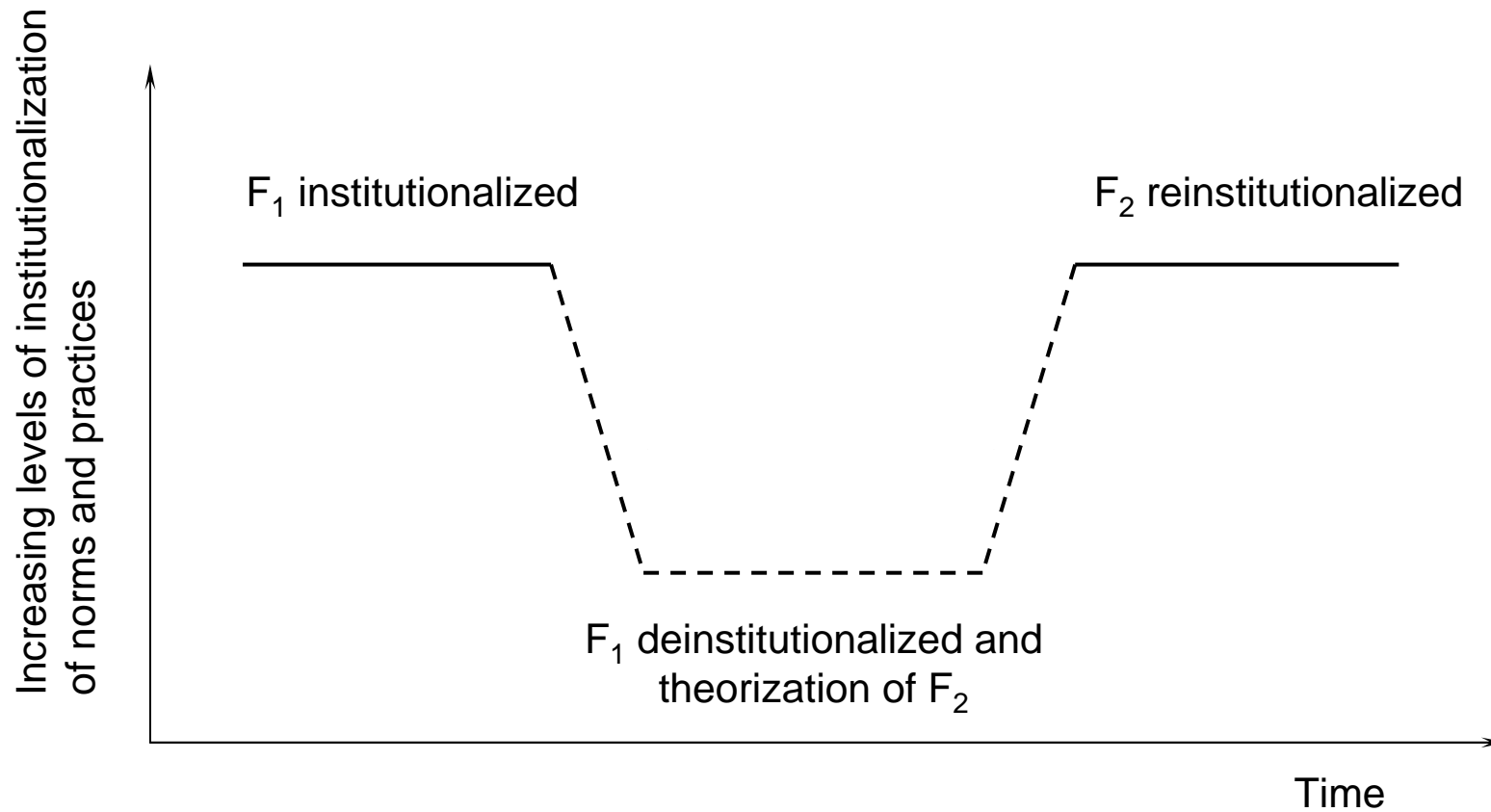




Activist Group (AG) tactics

- AGs have a broader ambition for institutional change
 - Institutionalization is “the product of constitutional struggles – conflicts evoked by social movements over the fundamental character of social, political and industrial order” (Schneiberg & Soule, 2005: 122)
- AGs often operate in networks
- AGs apply a variety of tactics





(den Hond & de Bakker, 2007)



3. Tactics and networks





Three protest logics (della Porta & Diani, 1999)

1. the logic of numbers (few people vs. large groups)
2. the logic of damage (violent versus non-violent)
3. the logic of bearing witness (demonstrate commitment)





		Dependence on participatory forms of action is high ('mass')	Dependence on participatory forms of action is low ('elite')
material	...damage	Boycott	Blocking gates; sabotage; occupation of premises; 'hacktivism'
	...gain	'Buycott'	Cooperation
symbolic	...damage	Letter/email writing campaigns; petitions; marches; rallies	Shareholder activisms; street theatre; negative publicity; research
	...gain	Voluntary action	Positive publicity; Cooperation

(den Hond & de Bakker, 2007)





WWF and IKEA
Co-operation on Forest Projects
- a partnership to promote responsible forestry

WWF AND IKEA CO-OPERATION
In 2002, WWF and IKEA began a co-operation in 2002 to jointly promote responsible forestry in priority regions around the world. Together the two organisations have planned and implemented a series of projects in China, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The projects are important steps in implementing IKEA's forest action plan and in achieving WWF's conservation targets.

RESULTS 2002-2005
The overall goal of the Co-operation's efforts has been to promote best practices in forestry and trade, reduce unsustainable logging and strengthen multi-stakeholder based forest certification and management. Here are a few examples of what the WWF and IKEA Co-operation has helped to achieve so far:

- In China, hundreds of forest plots are now being managed in accordance with responsible forest management certification.
- In Estonia, the joint Forestry Priority Action Plan has resulted in 100,000 hectares of forest being planted with deciduous trees.
- In Russia, 12 forest companies - with 42 million hectares of forest under their management - have committed themselves to responsible forest management, joining the WWF Global Forest Trade Network - an initiative to improve forest management and combat illegal logging and trade.
- In Russia, more than 200 indigenous forest dwellers have participated in training courses and seminars on responsible forest management.
- In Romania, 7,000 hectares of forest certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) have been planted with deciduous trees.
- In Romania and Bulgaria, nearly 700 people have been trained in forest certification and responsible forest management.
- In Latvia, five demonstration projects have been established to show forest owners and managers the benefits of responsible forestry, and
- Three pilot tools have been produced and tested in various countries to help identify and manage priority impacts of forest trade - namely - and to provide services for and improve forest management.

WHY BOYCOTT THE BODY SHOP? ☠

PLEASE SIGN THE PLEDGE TO BOYCOTT THE BODY SHOP AT WWW.BOYCOTTBODYSHOP.CO.UK





From tactics to networks

- how do AGs form and use social **networks** to get what they want (= institutional change)?
- attention to ‘private politics’ is increasing but what tactics **do** activist groups use over time and **how** do they coordinate their efforts? How do they deal with conflicts of interest?



www.mvo-platform.nl

Pages

     	    	   <p>INTERNATIONAL RESTRUCTURING EDUCATION NETWORK EUROPE</p>   	      	    
--	--	---	---	---

Attachments

Comments



[BACK TO HOME](#)
[ABOUT US](#)
[OUR DEMANDS](#)
[CASE STUDIES](#)



European Coalition for Corporate Justice

The European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ) promotes corporate accountability (CA) by bringing together national platforms of civil society organizations (CSOs) including NGOs, trade unions, consumer advocacy groups and academic institutions from all over Europe. ECCJ represents over 250 CSOs present in 15 European countries.

To read more, click [here](#).

CREDITS:

PLANNING, CONCEPTION, CREATION AND EXECUTION

SoitairDesign

CREATIVE DIRECTION

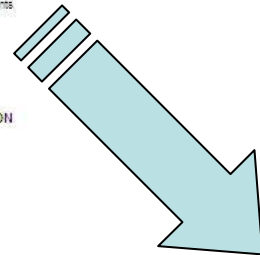
Thomas Huwiler

FILM PRODUCTION

Vaudeville Studios GmbH

SOUND AND ACOUSTICS

Alte Musik



The European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ) promotes corporate accountability (CA) by bringing together national platforms of civil society organizations (CSOs) including NGOs, trade unions, consumer advocacy groups and academic institutions from all over Europe. ECCJ represents over 250 CSOs present in 15 European countries.





4. Challenges



Challenges for firms

- Identify issues and the groups or networks involved
- Consider the media attention these networks (can) get
- Anticipate on activists as potential partners
- Plan ahead...



Challenges for activists

- Issues of legitimacy
- Issues of power and coordination
- Cultural differences
- Anticipate on firms as potential partners

