

Abstract: Against the background of structuration theory this paper discusses public affairs communication as an instrument of strategic political action. It aims at structuring the social sphere through assigning meaning to social issues. When (re-)framing the problem, e.g. its moral evaluation or treatment recommendation, corporations often adopt to values of public weal while at the same time using measures of economic power to (trans-)form social structures according to their economic interests. This has led to severe greenwashing accusation against different industries – a rather contraproductive effect. Using the example of climate campaigns of the German energy industry, expert interviews have been conducted with public affairs and corporate communications managers to shed light on the relevance, risks and opportunities of environmental public affairs communication. The focus was laid on reconstructing the managers' implicit organizing theories about the effects of different types of public affairs communication and their personnel credibility strategies. Considering the growing number of issue advertising campaigns that address corporate stakeholders in a rather direct way and do not aim at agenda setting effects through press coverage the analysis also focused on a possible shift of the ratio of traditional PR instruments and forms of direct public affairs communication.

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