

WALKING THE TALK: AN ANALYSIS OF CORPORATE ACTIVISM BY
DUTCH LARGE COMPANIES

by

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Preface

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Abstract

Companies are increasingly pressured to perform corporate activism (CA). Through CA, companies use their power to drive institutional changes within society. Despite the sharp increase in CA, little research investigates its societal relevance. This research is a first step in bridging CA and institutional theory. It aims to investigate the different CA strategies used by Dutch large companies to pursue institutional changes. A content-analysis is performed of 11 companies' annual reports. The research found that companies overwhelmingly use persuasive and bottom-up strategies, by setting the norm for appropriate behavior and trying to convince smaller parties of their norms and values. The data suggest companies may achieve higher impact by pursuing top-down strategies to institutional change.

Key Words: Corporate Activism, Institutions, Social Inequalities, Corporate Social Responsibility, Multi-Level Perspective

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Chapter 1. Introduction

“All of us at Ben & Jerry’s are outraged about the murder of another Black person by Minneapolis police officers last week and the continued violent response by police against protestors. We have to speak out. We have to stand together with the victims of murder, marginalization, and repression because of their skin color, and with those who seek justice through protests across our country. We have to say his name: George Floyd” (Ben & Jerry, n.d.).

In today’s society there is increasing internal and external pressure on companies to fulfil broader societal goals (Aguilera et al., 2007). Through corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies, corporations are responding to these pressures which are forcing them to produce positive impacts on both planet and people. As becomes clear from the statement by Ben & Jerry’s, some companies go a step further, and position themselves within societal debates by participating in corporate activism (CA). These companies aim to use their institutional power to pursue societal change. We are regularly exposed to CA, ranging from companies posting statements in support of the #Black Lives Matter movement, to companies updating their website or logo with rainbows during pride month in support of the LGBTQ+ community. Despite the increase in CA, relatively little research has been done investigating CA behaviors.

Regardless the lack of empirical research, Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020), developed a conceptual framework for different CA influences and strategies. Their framework contains different variables, meant to be able to categorize all different types of CA activities. The current project uses this conceptual framework to answer the following research questions:

- How is CA used by Dutch large companies for overcoming institutional barriers to social justice?
- To what extent is Eilert and Nappier Cherup's (2020) conceptual framework suited to capture and categorize CA activities in the Dutch context?
- Do particular CA strategies and/or influences result in higher perceived institutional impact?

The goal of this research is therefore two-fold: (I) to use the pre-developed conceptual framework to categorize and investigate CA activities and their impact in the Netherlands and (II) to use empirical data on CA in the Dutch context to analyze the comprehensiveness of the conceptual framework.

This research aims to contribute to our knowledge on CA, and more specifically how it relates to social inequalities in our society. Currently, most of the academic research focusses on the business case for CA, lacking societal relevance. These papers investigate under what circumstances corporations are most likely to participate in CA and when it causes profits compared to losses. For the sake of society however, there is much value in research that investigates the different methods companies use for their CA. Companies have great influence over our institutional configurations, and therefore have the potential to use their power to drive positive societal change. Thus, this research contributes to society by investigating how companies are using their influence for furthering societal goals. Such knowledge can help both society, and companies in particular, address some of the institutional barriers that prevent us from achieving social equality.

Academically, this research is relevant since it is one of the few attempts to connect institutional theory with theories on corporate activities. Institutions are defined as the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction (North 1991). These are the formal and informal ways through which our societies are structured. Often, corporate theory

considers firms as entities disconnected from their social surroundings, with maximizing profits as their sole purpose. Using institutional theory, it is clear that the role of corporations is much larger. Firms play a role in shaping both societies formal and informal institutions. Connecting these two disciplines therefore opens the way for more research on corporate impacts on society. By furthering our knowledge on this connection, this research hopes to contribute to a society-centered shift in research on corporate activities.

This project investigates CA in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a valuable study area since the country hosts many businesses with enormous institutional power operating on a global scale. The Dutch are known for facilitating a business-friendly environment, ranking number 4 in the world by the World Competitiveness Ranking 2021 (PWC, n.d.). Such an environment attracts multinational companies such as Unilever, Shell, and Ahold Delhaize. These large companies have/had their headquarters in the Netherlands but global supply chains, meaning their CA can reach many. This project's definition of a Dutch company therefore relates to the location of their headquarters, not necessarily their business activities.

The research takes a deductive and inductive approach to answering the research questions and is grounded in literature on institutional change. Data are collected from 11 large companies with their headquarters in the Netherlands. A content analysis is performed using each of these companies' annual reports, to gather information on their CA behavior. The conceptual framework by Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) is used to deductively code the data. The data are used to empirically test whether the framework is comprehensive enough to capture the different types of Dutch CA activities and influences.

Finally, the research aims to investigate if some CA strategies have higher perceived societal impact than others. Using the Sustainability Brand Index, the research assesses

whether certain strategies of CA relate to a higher ranking. The Sustainable Brand Index is based on a combination of both environmental and social impacts, and is the largest independent study on brand sustainability in Europe.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Chapter 2.1 Institutional Theory

This research is grounded in institutional theory to both understand the reasoning and impacts of CA. Institutions are humanly devised constraints that shape human interactions (North, 1991). Institutions take two different shapes: formal and informal. Formal institutions are written constraints such as property rights, laws, or constitutions (North, 1991). With regards to CSR, this means companies are forced to abide by formal institutions. Informal institutions are slightly more complicated and consist of our cultural values and norms, such as taboos, traditions, and codes of conduct (North, 1991). These informal institutions shape what actors such as employees or consumers consider responsible behavior. Altogether, institutions define what we deem is the appropriate way of doing all things.

Institutions are hard to change. Societies institutional configurations are path dependent, due to institutional lock ins (North, 1991). Certain institutional configurations reinforce themselves, making it increasingly hard to switch to new arrangements. Activism aims to cause and accelerate a transition towards new institutional configurations, by forcing the deinstitutionalization of certain norms, while introducing the re-institutionalization of a better alternative (Uldam and Vestergaard, 2015). Usually, activists take the shape of NGO's or social movements, but increasingly companies themselves are having a go, becoming more explicit in the values they have, causes they promote and ideologies they support (Adi , 2019; Uldam and Vestergaard, 2015).

Chapter 2.1.1 Institutionalized Social Inequalities

Social inequalities in society are often treated as the result of individual behavior, however, societal injustices are structured into our society and therefore not the result of individual behavior but institutional processes (Albiston, 2010). Institutional configurations allow for the flourishing of some while marginalizing others, based around axes of race, ethnicity, sex, sexuality, and ability. Therefore, to address social inequalities, radical changes in the structure of society are needed.

Unfortunately, this radical change is hard to achieve (North, 1991). With regards to social inequalities, the previously addressed institutional path dependencies are highly apparent. Due to institutions that privilege some over others, the privileged gain increasing institutional power, while others are marginalized. As a result, those with more institutional power can shape institutional configurations in such a way that further privileges them. The result is a feedback loop with increasing privilege to some and further marginalization for others.

This raises the questions how, despite such structural inequalities, activists have been able to drive so many changes. Social movements can cause critical junctures, moments in time during which institutions are relatively prone to change (North, 1991). Activist movements pressure those with power for the deinstitutionalization of structures and the re-introduction of new institutions in support of justice. Institutional theory is crucial to understanding how inequalities are structured into society and how activism contributes to the change of these structures. This research is rooted in institutional theory to understand through which pathways companies use CA to drive change.

Chapter 2.1.2 Corporations and institutions

Institutional theory sheds light on the importance of corporations and societal inequalities. Although there is a clear connection between corporations and institutional configurations, corporate research rarely addresses this connection.

Many institutional theorists describe the increasingly large role of corporations as institutional designers (Babic et al., 2017). However, in many academic disciplines, the power of corporations in shaping our daily lives is greatly underestimated. Corporations have a lot of institutional influence, perhaps most apparent when analyzing firms' lobbying activities. In today's societies, corporate actors find it much easier to promote their interests than more fragmented groups (Woll, 2019). Many lobbying scandals show the extreme power that corporations have in fashioning politics. Despite many efforts to regulate such influences especially in for instance the United States, the political system is still highly shaped by corporate interests (Woll, 2019). Although, there is much discussion as to whether this is the result of lobbying, corruptions, or the quest for maximizing economic efficiency, there is consensus about the large extent to which national institutions mirror corporate interests (Esteban and Ray, 2006; Woll, 2019).

Although not academically researched, it makes sense that corporations not only have impact on the formal institutions, but also play a large role in shaping our informal institutions. Large enterprises are often confronted with informal institutions, for instance having to relate to norms and values of communities when planning to do business with them (Mbalyohere and Lawton, 2022). Informal institutions have major impacts on firms, but I argue firms also shape our informal institutions. Corporations shape our consumer patterns, meaning they influence what products we buy and how we consume them. They regulate

what we are exposed to through branding and commercials and, through CA firms can make consumers more aware or pressure them into behaving in a way that corresponds with certain norms and values.

Thus, companies hold different positions towards institutions compared to many other actors. The multi-level perspective (MLP) is prominent theoretical framework that helps to understand these different positions towards institutions (figure 1) (El Biali, 2020). Although most used in sustainability transitions, the framework has important implications for institutional transitions more generally. The framework posits that change comes about through one of three levels: niches, regimes, and the landscape (El Biali, 2020). On the niche level, innovations are created that are radically different from the mainstream, which is possible since they are situated in a protected environment (El Biali, 2020). The regime is the middle level and comprises of the network of actors that maintain formal and informal institutions (El Biali, 2020). The exogenous landscape refers to broader contextual developments” (Upham et al., 2020, 1).

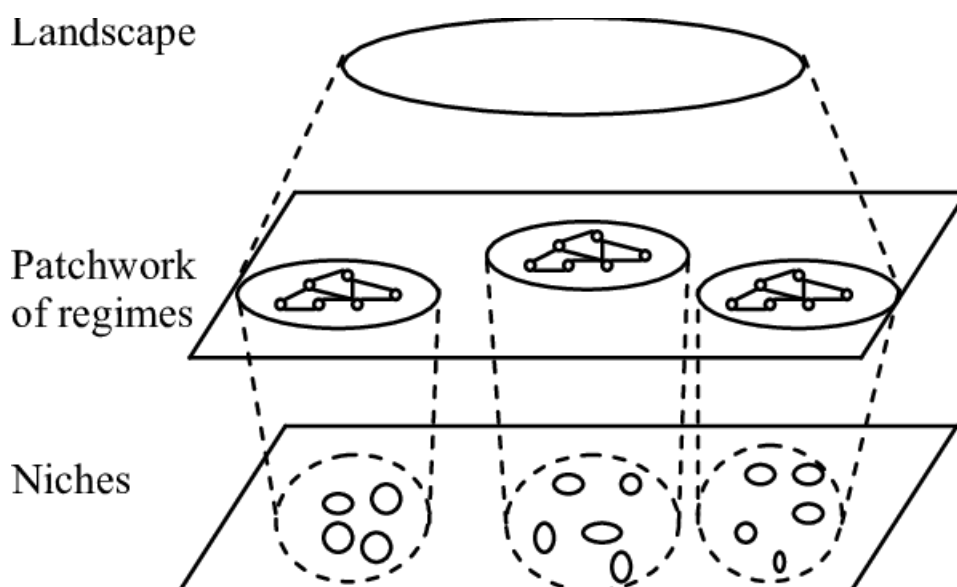


Figure 1: The Multi-Level Perspective (El Biali, 2020).

As displayed by the multi-level perspective, general social activists hold niche positions in society allowing them to create innovative new institutional proposals and fiercely battle existing institutions. On the other hand, large companies are part of the regime and thus find themselves being one with institutions (figure 1). In short, companies shape institutions and institutions shape companies. Considering the interplay between these two, it is of interest to analyze CA as a corporate method for changing institutions.

Chapter 2.2 Corporate Activism

While there is much research on CSR, academics have spent relatively little attention to CA and its influences on our institutional environment.

CA cannot possibly be understood without a comprehension of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). While they may seem similar, an understanding of its separation is crucial. Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020), argue that CSR is a company's response to its societal obligations, which are influenced by its institutional environment (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020). CSR is mainly driven by actors ranging from employees to customers, but also external stakeholders such as communities or governments (Eiler & Nappier Cherup, 2020). These actors use their institutional power to emit pressure onto companies, forcing them to respond. These responses take the shape of CSR, which "involves actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and which is required by law (Eilert & Nappier Cherup, 2020, 463).

On the other hand, CA is defined as: "a company's willingness to take a stand on social, political, economic, and environmental issues to create societal change by influencing the attitudes and behaviors of actors in its institutional environment" (Eiler & Nappier Cherup,

2020, 463). A couple of differences between the two concepts are immediately apparent. Where CSR is a response to institutional pressures, CA is an attempt to create institutional pressure, meaning that a company aims to alter the social status-quo. This necessarily means that the activities fall outside of what society expects from the company. Thus, CA goes a step further than CSR, in that it is more goal-oriented toward transforming the social status-quo, without it being expected or even appreciated by the whole of society (Bhagwat et al., 2020; Eiler & Nappier Cherup, 2020).

Chapter 2.2.1 Trends in Corporate Activism

While there is much research on corporate responsibility, most of it revolves around the business case for such activities, rarely on their societal impact (Brammer et al., 2012). On top of that, empirical research on CA and its influences is even scarcer. Brammer et al. (2012) found that the lack of research on the connection between business and society is not only apparent in CSR literature, but management literature in general. Often corporations are seen as passive players in global economies whose sole aim is to maximize profits with little relevance outside of the corporate world (Brammer et al., 2012).

Since the last two decades, there has been increasing pressure on companies to take stances that can be considered CA (Aguilera et al., 2007). Due to an increase in attention on business influences on for instance indigenous people, horrifying working conditions in low-income countries, environmental harm and even political campaigns, companies are pressured into reflecting the social values of both their workforce and customers (Davis and White, 2015; Brammer et al, 2012). Today, consumers can use apps such as Boycott to determine whether the product they are planning to buy aligns with their personal values

(Davis and White, 2015). Indeed, research found that in 2018, 64% of buyers are belief-driven, stating that the brands they buy are an important factor in expressing their own beliefs (Edelman Earned Brand, 2018). All in all, this increasing awareness has resulted in more companies publicly stating their values and taking actions in support of those values. Examples are Ben & Jerry educating consumers about police brutality, Calvin Klein featuring transgender model Jari Jones in its pride campaign, or Nike releasing their bold advertising campaign with Colin Kaepernick (Eiler and Nappier Cherup, 2020; Duarte, 2020).

While the business case for CA seems to be clear, research finds that it is much riskier for a company to participate in CA compared to the more institutionally accepted CSR strategies (Neilert and Nappier Cherup, 2020). Indeed, many firms face major backlash from participating in CA, possibly from both sides of a partisan sociopolitical issue. Bhagwat et al. (2020) found that the further removed from institutionally set values and norms CA is, the larger the risk of financial backlash.

Despite the increase in CA, literature on the topic is still limited, especially that focused on the social impact of this new phenomenon. This research aims to add onto this gap in research. It is different from pre-existing research since it analyzes the topic from the societal perspective, not from the corporate. Due to the business-case focus of previous research, we are unaware of the more general macro trends in CA strategies and their societal influence. Such knowledge can help companies use their institutional power to contribute to de- and re-institutionalization most effectively. The research takes an innovative approach by empirically studying CA strategies. Where previous research relies on case studies to provide frameworks of CA using anecdotal examples, this research undertakes a macro analysis to draw generalizable findings on CA activities and their institutional influence.

Chapter 2.2.2 A conceptual framework for Corporate Activism

Despite the lack of empirical research on CA and its institutional impacts, Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020), propose a comprehensive framework of CA, which highlights the different ways through which companies can be activist. Their framework centers around institutional barriers (Eilert and Nappier Cherup, 2020). They identify different barriers that prevent societal challenges from being solved: a lack of awareness and actors' attitudes and subsequent behaviors. Using corporate activist strategies, they argue companies aim to overcome some of these barriers. Thus, CA specifically targets the attitudes and behavior of actors in a company's institutional surrounding (Eilert and Nappier Cherup, 2020).

Building on this theoretical understanding of CA, Eiler and Nappier Cherup (2020) developed a typology of influences and strategies that companies use to address institutional barriers to change (figure 2). Starting with types of influences, they argue CA can cause normative, memetic and coercive influences. Normative influences are those that cause a change in what is societally deemed appropriate. Mimetic influences are the result of competition, where a company feels pressured into being socially responsible since their competitor is doing so as well. While the previous two influences do so indirectly, coercive influences directly target attitudes and behaviors of institutional actors, for instance through boycotts or protests. Eiler and Nappier Cherup identified two different influence strategies through which companies can drive pressure: persuasive tactics or disruptive tactics. Persuasive tactics aim to convince targets about the societal need for change. This is done by either directly targeting individuals with for instance information or simply by normalizing market issues thereby moving them into the mainstream. On the other hand, disruptive tactics center around threats of creating material or reputational damage, thereby pressuring

actors to change. While disruptive tactics are high in coercive influence, persuasive tactics are more task oriented: “attempts to achieve its ultimate objective indirectly through altering the target’s perceptions regarding the inherent desirability of the intended behavior” (Eiler and Nappier Cherup, 2020, 466).

Finally, their framework includes a typology of two different change strategies used in CA. Companies can either target change top-down or bottom-up. Through top-down strategies, companies use their power to directly alter large institutions. Companies can for instance pressure governments to alter policy and law. This change in law subsequently influences society as a whole. Bottom-up strategies specifically target actors that make up institutions. These strategies aim to normalize certain issues thereby accelerating a change in societal value systems. This change can subsequently pressure governments to alter their formal regulation. Thus, companies can target either institutions or actors that make up those institutions, but the goal of CA is to change both.

The developed framework is grounded in theory on institutional change but lacks empirical evidence. Throughout their article, Ellert and Nappier Cherup (2020) mainly refer to case studies as examples for the different categories of strategies. However, no research has tested the comprehensiveness of this framework using empirical data with a larger number of cases, within a particular context such as the Netherlands.

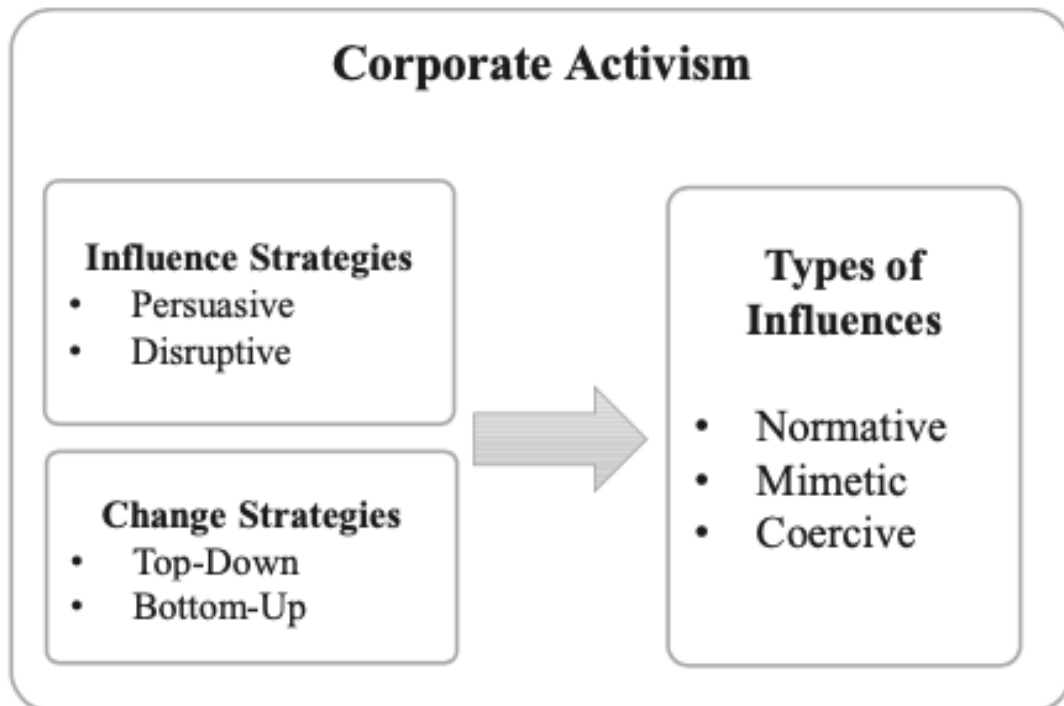


Figure 2: Conceptual Framework Corporate Activism

Chapter 2.2.3 The impact of Corporate Activism

While more and more companies are getting involved in CSR and CA, measuring the impact of these activities is still very challenging. Most research focusses on calculating the business impacts of CSR and CA, such as profit gains, reputation gains or employee satisfaction but rarely aims to calculate the impact on the firm's social surroundings. Still, increasingly more corporate impact indexes are being developed. However, these indexes are limited in their effectiveness since CA impact is simply complicated to measure.

Part of the struggle with regards to measuring corporate impact is due to the multi-faceted nature of CSR and CA activities (Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010). CSR initiatives and their impacts vary widely, ranging from volunteering programs to marketing initiatives. Furthermore, the impact of these activities varies widely between regions, with higher

perceived impact on for instance human rights in low-income countries (Lindgreen and Swaen, 2010). On top of that, measuring social impact is hard due to its larger scale: "It can be done, but it requires a longer time horizon and an effort to understand the contributions of many organizations working in the same place at the same time," (Hanna, 2010). This makes it complicated to isolate the impact of CA by one company in a particular timeframe.

Chapter 3 Methods

This research takes an inductive and deductive approach to answering the research questions. It relies on a content-analysis of Dutch firms' annual reports. An annual report is a corporate document disseminated to shareholders that spells out the company's financial condition and operations over the previous year. The reports describe all the business's activities from the previous financial year, and are therefore a great tool for gaining an overview of the different activities which companies rely on for their CA.

Chapter 3.1 Data Collection

Data are collected from 11 companies with their headquarters in the Netherlands (in 2021) participating in CA. The Sustainability Brand Index (SBI), the largest independent study on brand sustainability in Europe, is used as a ground for case selection. The ranking of the SBI is based on a combination of perceived performance with regards to environmental as well as social responsibility. The aim of the data collection was to achieve a broad vision of businesses in the Netherlands. Therefore, multiple companies were selected from different industry sectors, as defined by the SBI. The research includes only large companies due to their larger institutional influence and likelihood of contributing to the destruction of barriers to change. Size of company was established based on the ranking by Brand Finance on total monetary value of the company (Brand Finance, 2022). From the different companies incorporated in the Sustainability Brand Index, the largest companies from a multitude of sectors were selected for the research. This way, the research investigated large companies, but not only relied on energy or insurance companies, which occurred by solely relying on brand size. In a multitude of cases, the research had to rely on mother companies, instead of

the companies listed in the Sustainability Brand Index. For instance, bol.com, an e-commerce company officially owned by Unilever. Furthermore, the SBI included companies with headquarters outside of the Netherlands. These were excluded from the research. Tony's Chocolonely and Hema were selected not due to their size, but since they are commonly known for creating important activist influences and are significant in size. These were included as potentially exemplary case references.

Table 1: Company Case Selection

Sector	Company names
Mobility	KLM
Banks	ING & ABN AMRO
Beverage	Jacobs Douwe Egberts
Retail	Unilever
Energy	Eneco
Food	Tony's Chocolonely & Friesland Campina
Supermarkets	AholdDelhaize
Retail	Hema
Telecommunications	KPN

The research analyzes data from annual reports. Within those reports, everything that the research considers CA is used for analysis. The research only considers those CA activities that address social issues thereby excluding environmental activism. While research on environmental activities is equally as important, including these topics would make the scope

of this research too broad. On top of that, environmentally sustainable activities are often considered CSR, since they find less institutional resistance.

Relying on annual reports has both advantages and disadvantages. The advantage of using annual reports is their comprehensiveness. Firms write the reports themselves and use them to inform society of all their activities. The reports are a platform for companies to express their environmental and social governance (ESG) activities, meaning all the company's activities aimed at driving societal change will be explained. The drawback of companies writing these reports themselves is the subjectivity that it comes with. Companies are often scrutinized for woke-washing by making ambitious CA statements in their reports which fail to match their actions. For the purposes of this research, however, the subjective component is less of a disadvantage. This research is not meant to be a critique on companies' activities, instead it aims to investigate companies positions towards activism and their different strategies for pursuing societal change.

Chapter 3.2 Data Operationalization

The collected data are operationalized into categorized observations using the previously discussed framework by Eiler and Nappier Cherup (2020). For each annual report, the framework is used to deductively establish a company's CA strategy.

The CA strategy is divided by three variables: influence strategy, change strategy and type of influence. The influence strategy is either persuasive when tactics aim to convince targets of the merits of the claims made by the company, or disruptive when they are geared towards causing reputational damage and threats. The change strategy is either top-down when the company targets social institutions directly related to the social inequality

addressed, or bottom-up when the company targets individuals' actors that make up those institutions. Finally, the type of influence is normative when it influences the acceptability of certain behaviors, mimetic when institutional actors feel forced to respond to stay competitive, or coercive when the activities are geared towards withholding resources thereby facilitating behavior change in institutional actors (Eilert and Nappier Cherup, 2020).

Chapter 3.3 Data analysis

Chapter 3.3.1: How is CA used by Dutch large companies for overcoming institutional barriers to social justice?

To answer the first research question, the collected data are deductively coded using Atlas.ti software, for which the conceptual framework by Eiler and Nappier Cherup (2020) is used as the coding tree. For each report, the research established what type of CA change strategy, CA influence strategy and CA influence de company creates for their activism. Through this analysis, the research can find patterns in strategies among Dutch firms and draw conclusions as to what CA looks like in the Netherlands.

Chapter 3.3.2 To what extent is Eiler and Nappier Cherup's (2020) conceptual framework suited to capture and categorize CA activities in the Dutch context?

On top of the deductive analysis, an inductive analysis is performed using Atlas.Ti software to answer the second research question. The ESG reports are inductively coded with the aim to create an overview of CA activities performed by the companies.

Based on this inductive analysis of the data, the research can draw conclusions regarding the fit of Eillert and Nappier Cherup's (2020) conceptual framework in the Dutch context. This

analysis could find patterns and themes of CA strategies that Eiller and Nappier Cherup failed to incorporate into their framework.

Chapter 3.3.3 Do particular CA strategies and/or influences result in higher institutional impact?

Finally, to answer the third research question, the research compares the categorization of CA strategy with perceived societal impact as defined by the Sustainability Brand Index. Doing so, allows to research to draw conclusion as to whether particular CA strategies result in a higher societal impact.

Chapter 3.4 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This research is limited in both its spatial scope and due to its unit selection. As suggested within the literature, CA is highly dependent on its institutional environment. A framework in other countries than the Netherlands will therefore most likely be different due to the varying institutional setting. Furthermore, this research is limited since it solely addresses large companies. Although these companies have the most institutional influence, there is no denying that smaller companies such as start-ups or social enterprises are highly influential. Further research should also include such smaller enterprises.

Since the research only contains publicly available data, published by the companies themselves, no breaches of ethical guidelines are expected. No personal data are used for this research.

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 4.1 How is CA used by Dutch large companies for overcoming institutional barriers to social justice?

In this chapter the analyzed data are summarized, providing an overview of the different activities Dutch companies use for their CA. The activities are then categorized using Eilert and Nappier Cherup's (2020) conceptual framework as a type of influence strategy, change strategy and type of influence.

Chapter 4.1.1 CA participation

The research found that all 11 companies participate in some form of CA. Although some are more ambitious in their goals and strategies, all companies express a desire to drive institutional changes in society. Companies are aware of their social role and acknowledge they can no longer fully separate themselves from societal debates:

The growing prominence of ESG signals a broader societal development in which companies are accountable, directly or indirectly, for more than just their financial performance or only to their shareholders. They're accountable to society itself. This means engaging with stakeholders, governments and NGOs to find the right balance. It's a process that will take time and won't always be easy (ING, 2021, 200).

Some companies are very explicit in their CA statements, acknowledging their side in societal debates and expressing a vision for a more inclusive society:

"Win with our brands as a force for good, powered by purpose and innovation; contribute to a fairer and more socially inclusive world" (Unilever, 2021, 14).

“We have the courage to take a stand in the social debate, to act on our principles and to speak up against wrongdoing. We are working to create positive change and we’re not afraid to say ‘no’ if it is in the client’s best interests” (ABN Amro, 2021, 13).

Other companies are less explicit in their statements. Regardless, they still behave in ways which Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020) define as corporate activist, for instance by introducing gender quota’s and providing anti-bias training. Thus, all companies use their powerful position within society to actively contribute to institutional redesign. They are participating in societal debates promoting their own ideals and persuading actors around them to change their behavior.

Besides the common desire to be activist, this research found patterns of commonality in the companies’ strategies to drive institutional change. Based on an inductive analysis of the 11 different annual reports, the research developed an overview that captures the existing CA strategies by large Dutch companies. The data show a firm’s CA activities can target three domains: (I) the company domain, (II) the supply chain domain or (III) the broader societal domain.

Chapter 4.1.2 CA in the company domain

By far the most common CA activities occur at the company level through Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) efforts. Activities at this domain are present in all analyzed companies but differ in the extent to which they can be categorized as activist.

Diversity

Starting with diversity, all companies argue they actively pursue a higher level of diversity that better reflects Dutch society. Programs are put in place to ensure diversity in hiring often at all levels of the company:

In 2020, we established a bold aspiration for diversity and inclusion across Ahold Delhaize and all of the brands and businesses. We aspire to achieve 100% gender balance at all levels, to be 100% reflective of the markets we serve (as defined by each local brand), and to strive for 100% inclusion, every day (Ahold Delhaize, 2021, 83).

The extent to which such activities are activist is debatable, especially after the introduction of the Gender Diversity Act introduced into Dutch law in 2022, requiring all companies to set ambitious targets for improving gender diversity. Given that all reports analyzed were created in 2021, the companies' diversity activities were not institutionally required. Eilert and Nappier Cherup do consider diversity effort CA, as there is no societal obligation and companies set new norms about hiring and searching for diverse employees. Some companies have more ambitious targets than others, for instance Ahold:

Our aspiration is to have a workforce that is 50/50 gender balanced at all levels. We have increased the proportion of women in management positions from 39% in 2020 to 40% in 2021, while our Director-level representation has remained the same. (Ahold, 2021, 85).

Other forms of diversity targets are less activist as they are closer to societal obligations by law:

We also actively worked to increase the number of women in management positions (N-1 to N-4) through recruitment and promotion within the organisation, and succeeded in increasing the proportion from 27.5% in 2020 to 30.2% by year-end 2021. (Eneco, 2021, 45).

Whereas most companies prioritize diversity in gender and background, some companies such as Unilever go a step further and prioritize "diversity of gender, race and ethnicity, people with disabilities and LGBTQI+ communities":

“5% of our workforce to be made up of people with disabilities by 2025” (Unilever, 2021, 14).

Inclusion

Besides diversity, all companies use inclusion as a ground for CA. Through inclusion efforts, companies aim to create an environment of equality where everyone feels valued, and no one is marginalized. These efforts aim to create a work environment that is separated from the institutionalized inequalities in larger society. Such activities are easier to define as CA, since they are not societally expected and there is a clear aim to change institutions.

The data show a common CA strategy addressing inclusion is anti-bias trainings and spreading awareness. Through these strategies the company is driving change in informal institutions, aiming to create an environment without discrimination and biases:

Alongside hard objectives set for the gender and culture pillars, in 2021 effort was devoted to creating awareness about unconscious bias, mental health and well-being, invisible disabilities and in creating an LGBTQI+ support community (Campina, 202, 61).

Another found CA activity is the investment in employee lead initiatives. Company sub-groups are created that aim to drive change within the firm and outside. These initiatives can help vulnerable groups feel included, and they can contribute to a more inclusive company overall. These groups can drive major bottom-up institutional change by empowering vulnerable communities and creating normative pressures:

Inclusion is part of our Orange Code, which encourages us to help others to be successful. We have more than 30 employee networks and employee-led diversity initiatives. The Lioness network, for instance, aims to help women realise their ambitions; Enable is an

inclusion network for all abilities; BEING is ING's Black Employee Inclusion Group... (ING, 2021, 78).

Finally, some companies are activist by creating affirmative policies aimed at driving inclusion. Such strategies target change in formal institutions by setting an example for how policies could be more just and inclusive:

Since 1 August 2020, employees with a new baby in the family as a result of for instance adoption or surrogacy, have been able to take special parental leave. They are given four extra weeks of leave beyond the standard existing (adoption) leave of six weeks. This applies to LGBTI+ families welcoming a child into the family for example. In this way, we want to help ensure that these children and their parents have sufficient time to bond. (Hema, 2021, 30).

We will introduce a pilot in which employees can swap two public holidays for two days off that are of significance to their religious or philosophical beliefs. (ABN Amro, 2021, p239).

Table 2: CA Company Domain

Company Name	Diversity	Inclusion
ING	X	X
Unilever	X	X
ABN Amro	X	X
KPN	X	X
Tony's Chocolonely	X	X
Eneco	X	X
Jacobs Douwe Egberts	X	X
Ahold Delhaize	X	X
Friesland Campina	X	X
Hema	X	X
KLM	X	X

All the above-mentioned company domain CA actions have a persuasive influence strategy, a bottom-up change strategy and create normative pressures. Although they may not be meant as activist, D&I activities have high normative influence by setting the norm for how businesses should behave. In combination with D&I activities' mimetic influence, driven by rewards and ranking that companies receive, competitors feel pressured to become more diverse and create a safe environment of inclusion and empowerment. By introducing fair paternity leave for LGBTQ+ parents a company creates a new norm, thereby persuading other companies to do the same and driving bottom-up change for institutional redesigns.

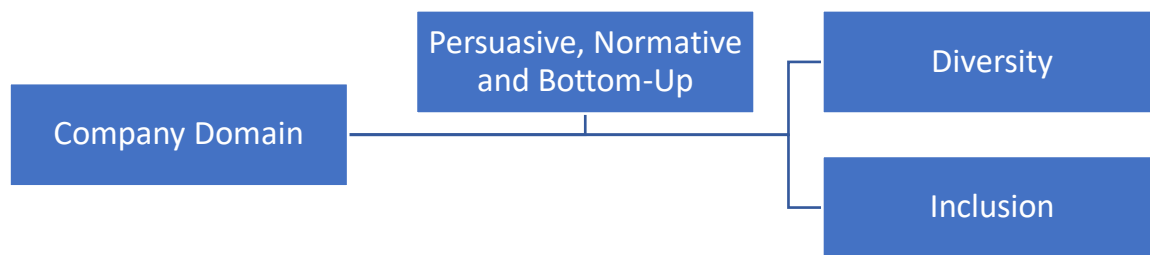


Figure 2: Overview CA strategies Company Domain

Chapter 4.1.3 CA in the supply chain domain

Many of the companies' CA strategies occur outside of the company itself and target institutions in its supply chain. Large companies have very high influence in their supply chain and therefore hold a great position for being activist and driving institutional change. The data show companies use CA to target either other businesses or communities within their supply chain.

Businesses

Starting with other businesses, the large influence that a company holds in its supply chain is most noticeable. This type of CA targets the institutions in the suppliers' countries. These activities mainly revolve around human rights.

FrieslandCampina makes an active contribution to banning human rights violations, including child labour and forced labour (Campina, 2021, 75).

Although in the Netherlands it is societally obligated to comply with human rights, businesses in many other countries do not feel the same pressure still institutionally tolerating forced- or child-labor (Tony's Chocolonely, 2021). The analyzed Dutch companies require businesses in their supply chain to uphold human rights. These activities are therefore more disruptive in nature since they force businesses to comply. By ensuring human rights are upheld, the companies are contributing to many institutional changes within the supply chain, allowing children to go to school instead of work and abolishing forced labor:

Respect for human rights is at the heart of our business and the responsibility of every person in Unilever. We work with suppliers, peers, industry bodies, trade unions and civil society to address human rights impacts so that everyone connected to our value chain is treated with respect, dignity and fairness (Unilever, 2021, 34).

Besides human rights, some companies participate in activism by using their influence to empower and invest in diversity of the supply chain. These CA strategies are either persuasive by helping businesses to become more diverse or investing in diverse companies, or disruptive by requiring a certain level of diversity from companies:

In 2021, we made great strides in engaging diverse-owned suppliers. For example, Peapod Digital Labs (PDL) launched an Accelerator program, designed to share knowledge from Ahold Delhaize USA's brands and businesses with their networks of certified, diverse-owned suppliers (Ahold, 2021, 85).

Finally, the data show a CA strategy in which companies invest in a living wage, ensuring an income that is not institutionally required in the supplier's country. Such strategies can accelerate transitions in formal institutions of minimum wage, but also contribute to changes in informal institutions by driving higher levels of prosperity:

In 2021, we made a groundbreaking commitment that everyone who directly provides goods and services to us will earn at least a living wage or living income by 2030 (Unilever, 2021, 33).

Communities

Besides businesses, the analyzed companies also use CA to target communities within their supply chain. There's a wide variety of ways through which companies practice CA in their supply chains' communities. The data show companies either aim to accelerate the development of these communities more generally, relying on the Sustainable Development Goals set out by the United Nations:

We are proud to embrace the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We operate in, and source raw materials from, many developing and emerging markets, and we are committed to their socio-economic development (JDE, 2021, 35).

Others outsource their CA and invest in initiatives that empower marginalized people or aid vulnerable people through foundations and donations:

The pandemic exposed and deepened existing inequalities. Our new approach to community investments reflects the changing needs of our local communities and the long-lasting social and economic challenges they face (ING, 2021, 36).

We support the communities our brands operate in by providing information on healthy living and well-being, making donations, funding sponsorships and through partnerships that contribute to better living (AholdDelhaize, 2021, 39).

Table 3: CA Supply Chain Domain

Company Name	Supply Chain Businesses	Supply Chain Communities
ING	X	X
Unilever	X	X
ABN Amro	X	X
KPN	X	
Tony's Chocolonely	X	X
Eneco		
Jacobs Douwe Egberts	X	X
Ahold Delhaize	X	X
Friesland Campina	X	X
Hema	X	
KLM		

Both methods of CA targeting supply chain communities are persuasive in strategy. The companies are not forcing any actors to change, instead nudging them towards certain behaviors. These strategies cause normative influences by setting a standard for firm's responsibilities towards the communities they operate in. Again, there is a bottom-up approach to change without targeting larger institutional actors.

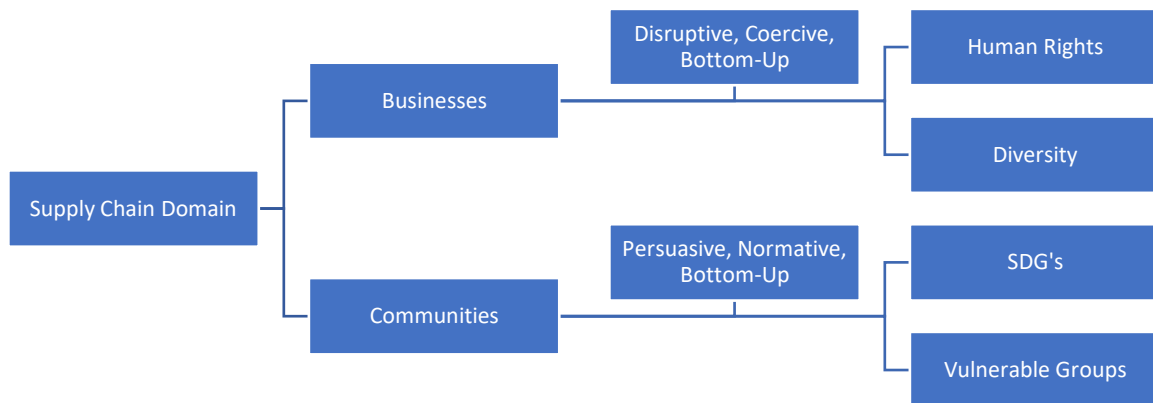


Figure 3: Overview CA Strategies Supply Chain

Chapter 4.1.4 CA in the broader Societal Domain

Some CA activities go outside of the company's direct area of control and aim to influence society more generally. Companies do this by empowering marginalized communities in society. For instance, ABN Amro providing financial support to disadvantaged groups looking to join the labor market. Other companies instead invest in change-making organizations such as social movements or social enterprises, even though these organizations are disconnected from their supply chain:

As part of our strong commitment to diversity and inclusion, we proudly support external diversity and inclusion organizations, both through global partnerships as well as local partnerships that are managed by the Ahold Delhaize brands and businesses. (Ahold Delhaize, 2021, 85).

Finally, some companies influence society through their marketing. These companies aim to change people perceptions of societal issues by discussing them through their commercials and creating inclusive product designs. An example is Unilever increasing the

representation of diverse groups in their commercials and designing deodorant that is easier to use for people with disabilities (Unilever, 2021, p14-24). Hema also uses this strategy for their CA using their product design to promote inclusivity in Dutch society (Hema, 2021, 8). This type of CA strategy is often scrutinized, claiming that companies are woke-washing, promoting certain ideals in their marketing but not actually using activism to contribute to a societal shift towards those ideals.

Table 4: CA in the Broader Societal Domain

Company Name	Broader Societal Domain
ING	X
Unilever	X
ABN Amro	X
KPN	X
Tony's Chocolonely	X
Eneco	X
Jacobs Douwe Egberts	X
Ahold Delhaize	X
Friesland Campina	X
Hema	X
KLM	X

The data portray CA at the societal domain is overwhelmingly bottom-up, since the companies target smaller actors instead of institutional actors such as governments or their competitors. All CA at the societal domain is persuasive in nature. These activities create normative pressures by setting an example of inclusivity and influencing consumers norms and values.

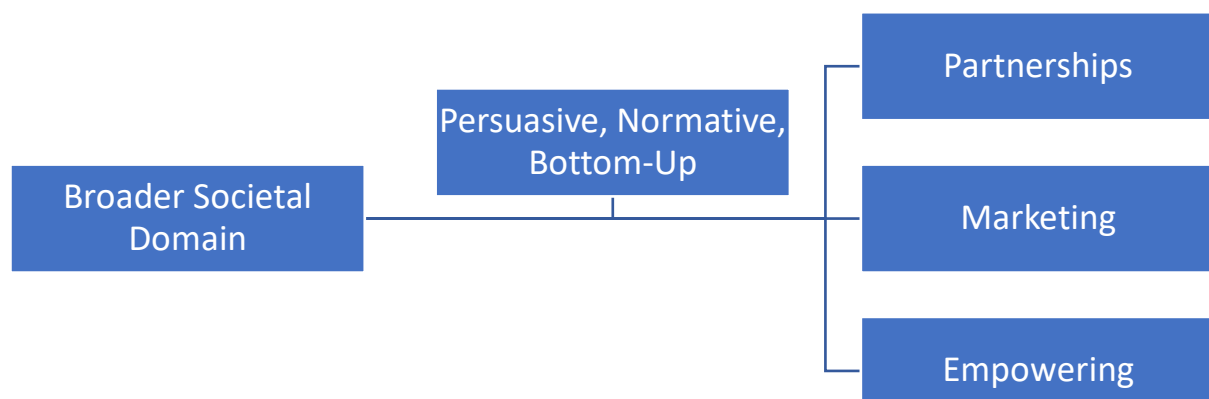


Figure 4: Overview CA Strategies Broader Societal Domain

Chapter 4.1.5 Overview CA by analyzed companies

Using Eilert and Nappier Cherup's conceptual framework, clear patterns of strategy can be found in CA activities by the Dutch large companies. A large majority of CA activities happens within the company domain. Within their own domain, companies run lower risks of backlash and have more freedom in implementing their own ideals. Such activities might not be meant as activist, but they do create normative pressures by institutionalizing a societal issue within the organization. Consequently, these company domain activities influence whether we believe something is acceptable or not. Similarly in the other two domains, most CA strategies are persuasive, as companies do not demand changes, instead persuade others to change by setting the right example. The majority of CA by the researched influential Dutch enterprises therefore has a persuasive strategy and normative influence.

More disruptive strategies were solely found in CA activities within the supply chain. Companies use their power within the supply chain to force actors to behave in accordance with the firms' norms and values. These coercive influences mainly revolve around ensuring human rights. Although in the Dutch context these activities may not be considered activist, the companies are steering institutional redesign in the suppliers' contexts. Since these CA activities are societally expected in the Dutch context, the companies have little risk of receiving consumer backlash from their activism, giving them more freedom for disruptive strategies.

The mimetic influences, which pressure other companies to change their behavior just to stay competitive, were present in all three domains. However, the data do not show mimetic influences as a direct part of the companies' strategies. Instead, mimetic influences were most noticeable as an indirect consequence of CA by companies getting celebrated through higher rankings:

In the Financial Times' Diversity Leaders 2021 report, an independent study focusing specifically on gender, age, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation, ING was listed in 225th place out of 850 companies, up 100 places on 2020 (ING, 2021, 78).

Finally, the data suggest that almost all CA by the investigated Dutch companies aims to drive change bottom-up. Companies target employees, consumers, businesses in their supply chain, or general members in society, but rarely do they target large institutional actors such as governments or their well-established competitors. In some cases, companies do acknowledge working together with governments to design better policies, but there is little evidence that such collaborations are used for activist purposes:

Contributing proactively to laws and regulations (Eneco, 2021, 40)

The findings show a crucial difference between activism by social movements and activism by corporations. We are used to seeing activism in a disruptive and coercive way, with movements demanding change and threatening with boycotts or punishment. Corporations are contributing more subtly to institutional change. By wanting to create an environment with diversity and a sense of inclusion, the companies set an example for how we should behave and persuade other actors to behave similarly.

Company	Supply Chain	Broader Society
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persuasive• Normative• Bottom-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persuasive and Disruptive• Normative and Coercive• Bottom-Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Persuasive• Normative & Mimetic• Bottom-Up

Figure 5: Summary CA Strategies Dutch Large Companies

Chapter 4.2 To what extent is Eilert and Nappier Cherup's (2020) conceptual framework suited to capture and categorize CA activities in the Dutch context?

As discussed, Eilert and Nappier Cherup's (2020) framework can capture most of the CA activities by Dutch large companies. Within the three different domains, companies are creating institutional pressures either by persuading or forcing other actors to behave in certain ways.

However, the analysis suggests that their conceptual framework is not comprehensive enough to capture all different CA behaviors. Some of the most important ways through which CA contributes to reducing social inequalities seems to be outsourcing the responsibility and empowering marginalized communities. Through these activities, the companies do not directly target institutional barriers, instead they empower those that have close connections to those barriers.

Such activities cannot be categorized as persuasive nor disruptive since the companies are not persuading the target audience. Instead, the companies invest resources in the target audience, believing this is either just the right thing to do, or that these groups are better able to drive institutional change than the company itself. Thus, companies not only achieve institutional change by persuading actors around them or using disruptive tactics to force change, but a lot of their efforts are aimed at outsourcing their CA by empowering communities that are more directly connected to the institutional barriers.

Based on an analysis of CA by Dutch large companies I therefore propose a third CA strategy: out-sourcing (figure, 6). In the Dutch context, this strategy captures behavior of companies investing in marginalized communities, be it by hiring for diversity, investing in businesses owned by members of marginalized communities, or donating to organizations representing marginalized communities such as the #BlackLivesMatter movement or Pride organizations. Adding out-sourcing as a third CA strategy also compensates for the collaboration that occurs within CA strategies. In 8 out of the 11 analyzed companies, collaborations played a central role in the CA strategy. The conceptual framework by Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2022) lacks categorizations able to capture these rich collaborations.

Besides a new influence strategy, I also propose a new type of influence: empowerment (figure, 6). Through diversity efforts, marginalized groups otherwise excluded

from positions of power, become included in decision-making at the top level. Similarly, by ensuring diversity throughout the supply chain and investing in diverse businesses, opportunities arise for more diverse crowds to gain institutional influence. Finally, in the larger societal domain companies out-source by investing in and donating to external diversity and inclusion organizations, again empowering the extent to which these organizations can drive change. In summary, much of the CA influence comprises the sharing of institutional power with those who otherwise lack resources to drive change.

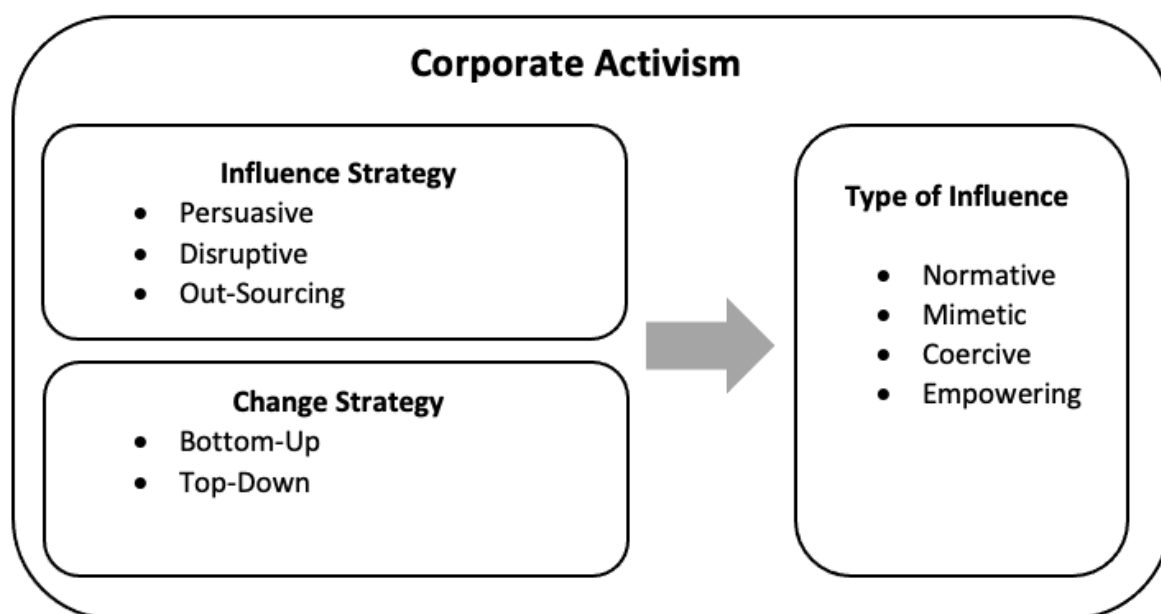


Figure 6: The New CA Conceptual Framework

Chapter 4.3 Do particular CA strategies and/or influences result in higher perceived institutional impact?

Since there are no large differences between most of the CA strategies, it is challenging to draw conclusions as to what method results in the most impact. This research analyzed companies from a wide variety of industry sectors. Some of the analyzed companies

scored relatively high on the Sustainability Brand Index, for example Albert Heijn on the 13th place, whereas others such as KLM rank low on the 160th place. Both these companies mainly rely on persuasive, bottom-up strategies that create normative pressures.

The data show one significant outlier which suggests certain change strategies may be more influential than others: Tony's Chocolonely. Tony's ranked highest in the Sustainability Brand Index, and is known for being a company that puts impact before profit:

It feels good to put everything into a company that strives to make the world a better place, and which – as far as I see it – actually puts its money where its mouth is. We're an impact company that makes chocolate, and not the other way around (Tony's Chocolonely, 2021, 3).

Although Tony is clearly much more activist than the other companies analyzed, this research found its CA strategies are similar. Most of the CA by Tony is persuasive in nature, trying to convince institutional actors of the importance of slave-free chocolate. Tony also relies on human rights and the SDG's to ensure growth in the suppliers' countries. Tony influence is clearly normative and mimetic, setting the norm for how companies should behave and pressuring others to behave similarly:

By showing it's possible to do chocolate different, we rid the market of excuses.

Despite these similarities, Tony differs from the other companies on the change strategy used. Whereas all other companies rely on bottom-up change strategy, Tony invests much more in a top-down strategy. They put emphasis on persuading large well-established members within the cacao-industry to create a fairer market. The research's data therefore suggest that a top-down change strategy may result in a higher perceived impact.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Chapter 5.1 Dutch CA and institutions

The data show an important difference between the way activists aim to drive institutional change and corporations' methods. While social activists heavily rely on disruptive tactics by going on the streets, demanding change and imposing boycotts, corporations rely overwhelmingly more on persuasive strategies. The difference in strategies between social activists and corporate activists may be explained by their relationship with institutional configurations.

Returning to the multi-level perspective (figure 1), most activists hold niche positions in society allowing them to create innovative new institutional proposals and fiercely battle existing institutions. On the other hand, large companies are part of the regime and thus find themselves being one with institutions. Companies rely on institutions and in turn institutions rely on companies. It thus makes sense for activism that occurs within the regime to be much more subtle, aimed at driving incremental institutional improvements, whereas other types of activism enjoy more freedom to be disruptive and demand radical institutional change.

Besides the clear differences in activist strategies by "institutional activists' and "non-institutional activists", there is also contrast in the visions of desired change. Bhagwat et al. (2020) found that the further removed from institutionally set values and norms CA is, the larger the risk of financial backlash. Consequently, CA is much harder to recognize than other types of activism, since it remains very close to institutional boundaries. This research's data are consistent with the findings by Bhagwat et al., (2020) since few companies made radical statements or pursued radical institutional change.

In summary, although large companies enjoy institutional power, this rarely translates into the driving of large institutional changes. The companies heavily rely on institutions and seem to prefer maintaining institutional stability. As a result, the companies rarely target other institutional actors, and their CA activities are limited in the extent to which they go past institutional boundaries. The data collected for this research resemble theoretical expectations for activism by regime level actors

Chapter 5.2 Institutional Activists

The research found that CA mainly aims to drive change through bottom-up pressures. Returning to the multi-level perspective, this means that companies aim to influence niches but rarely decide to target institutions directly. “Insider activism”, activism that occurs within the regime, rarely occurs, even though such types of activism may be most influential, as portrayed by Tony Chocolonely’s success. These findings point to a larger discussion within academia, about the influence of “institutional activists”.

Both Tilly and Pierson characterize institutional activists as those with access to institutional resources and the decision-making process who are working on movement issues. In other words, institutional activists are insiders working on outsider causes (Pettinicchio, 2012). This characterization of institutional activists, points to a question underlying this whole research: are companies performing CA because they are pressured by outsiders, or do they pressure outsiders based on their own values and ideals?

Most of the literature on institutional activists focusses on the political domain, overlooking the significant influence of companies. The dominant understanding of

movements still situates activists on the outside. Activists are seen as niche groups of people with little power and are on the bottom of the racial, ethnic, and class hierarchies (Pettnicchio, 2012). Clearly, such an understanding of activism emphasizes the bottom-up characteristics of social change. Activists use disruptive strategies to demand change from political actors. However, there is growing recognition of the limits of this insider and outsider dichotomy, as social movements are increasingly seen as being embedded within political institutions (Pettnicchio, 2012). The dividing lines between political insider and outsider activists is blurring. "Political elites are not simply responding to outside pressures, but rather, that they are entrepreneurial in promoting social change while often times creating new opportunities for outside challenges" (Pettnicchio, 2012, 507).

Whereas the dichotomy between political and social activists is blurring, this research suggests this is less the case for CA and social activism. By investigating CA, this research emphasized a different type of institutional activism, namely that by corporations. The data implies that CA is still overwhelmingly a response to societal pressures demanding companies to take a stance. Companies run high risk when performing CA, since they potentially face backlash and prefer institutional stability. Activist companies may benefit from looking into the history between political activists and social movements, as a means for bridging the gap between their efforts and niche activists.

Chapter 5.3 Future research and Limitations

This research is a first step towards connecting literature on CSR to institutional theory. Even though we are holding companies increasingly accountable for their institutional

role, academics rarely investigate what this entails for society. Linking these two strains of theory brings about many research questions that require answering. Table 5 has an overview of possible questions that require researching:

Table 5: Future research

Area	
Impact	How can we measure institutional change driven by corporations?
	Are certain CA strategies connected to larger institutional shifts?
	Is it desirable to expect companies to be activist?
Influences	What drives companies to pursue CA?
	What drives top-down strategies to CA?
Contexts	How does CA differ between different contexts?
	Are there different CA activities between different industry sectors?
Targets	Which social inequalities are most addressed through CA?
	Is CA towards certain institutional boundaries more effective than others?

This research is limited due to both its spatial scope and unit selection. First, since the research was conducted using only Dutch companies and CA strongly depends on institutional surrounding, the findings may not be applicable to other contexts. Even though all companies are large and operate on an international scale, they still respond to Dutch institutions. Companies in other countries may experience more or less pressure to perform CA and may have different incentives for different CA strategies.

Second, the research relied on only 11 companies, therefore not ensuring a high level of validity. With the aim to get a broad image of most industry sectors, only one or two companies were selected per industry. Furthermore, some industries did not have large companies with their headquarters in the Netherlands because of which they had to be excluded altogether. The commonalities within the data suggest strong evidence for patterns within strategies, but further research should investigate a larger number of different sized companies to ensure a higher level of reliability.

Finally, the validity of this research is limited due to the risk of including woke-washing statements in the data. Although benefitting from the comprehensiveness that the annual reports offered, there is no certainty about the extent to which the companies' claims mirror their activities. Thus, likely CA statements were included that may not have any institutional impact, since they are not followed up by actual activism. Further research should investigate woke-washing and how often it occurs.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

This research was a first attempt at understanding the increasingly activist behavior by companies. Firms realize they are no longer able to disconnect themselves from their societal impact, and experience increasing pressure to perform CA. This research aimed to investigate what CA looks like in the Dutch context using a pre-developed conceptual framework, but also to use the collected empirical data to research the comprehensiveness of said conceptual framework.

The findings suggest that CA is limited to three domains: the company, the supply chain, and society more generally. By using the conceptual framework, clear commonalities were found in the different CA strategies utilized by the companies. By far most CA occurs within the company domain through diversity & inclusion efforts. Some companies also use CA targeted at the supply chain or societally more generally, but these were less common. Almost all CA strategies are persuasive and normative, since companies are trying to convince targets of a particular merit by setting the right example. Only within the supply chain do companies use more disruptive and coercive strategies by forcing businesses to comply to certain standards, often shaped around human rights and the SDG's. With one exception, all companies rely on bottom-up strategies for driving institutional change. Only Tony's Chocolonely uses its power to actively persuade institutional actors thereby pursuing a top-down strategy. This finding combined with theoretical understandings of institutional configuration, suggest that companies participating in CA could benefit from a top-down strategy to drive higher impact.

Besides findings of CA in the Netherlands, the research also contributed to the further development of the CA framework by Eilert and Nappier Cherup (2020). Although their

framework was able to capture most of the CA activities, some strategies could not be categorized. These uncategorized activities revolve around collaborations and refer to behavior by companies outsourcing their activist wishes by empowering marginalized communities who otherwise lack the institutional power to pursue institutional change.

Social inequalities are deeply rooted into the structures of our institutional configurations. Radical changes within those institutions are necessary to create a just society. Given the institutional power that large companies hold, they have many opportunities to contribute to these necessary changes. This research found that Dutch CA is still very limited, since companies play it safe by relying on persuasive, normative and bottom-up strategies to driving change.

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Appendix A: Ethics Checklist

CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Jennifer A. Holland, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Walking the Talk: An Analysis of Corporate Activism by Dutch Large Companies

Name, email of student: Menno Knol,

551279mk@eur.nl
Name, email of supervisor:

Jennifer Holland,

Start date and duration: 20-03-2022, 4 months

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted? (e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. NO

If 'NO': skip to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition? Jennifer A. Holland

Data are stored on my personal laptop and my on 17/03/2022 drive. The cloud is password protected through the ERNA login system. All data will be deleted after succession of the thesis trajectory.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

Menno Knol is (I am) responsible for the data management.

551279mk@eur.nl How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

The data will be continuously uploaded and backed up onto a protected online cloud.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Menno Knol

Name (EUR) supervisor:

Date: 15-03-2022

Date:

