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Effects of green framing

In communications on low-carbon technologies

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Based on:

- de Vries, G. (2017). [How positive framing may fuel opposition to low-carbon technologies: The boomerang model](#). *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 36(1), 28-44.
- de Vries, G., Terwel, B. W., & Ellemers, N. (2016). [Perceptions of manipulation and judgments of illegitimacy: Pitfalls in the use of emphasis framing when communicating about CO₂ capture and storage](#). *Environmental Communication*, 10, 206-226.
- de Vries, G., Terwel, B. W., Ellemers, N., & Daamen, D. D. L. (2015). [Sustainability or profitability? How communicated motives for environmental policy affect public perceptions of corporate greenwashing](#). *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 22, 142-154.
- de Vries, G. (October, 2016). [PR gone wrong: the backlash effect of window dressing](#). London School of Economics and Political Science Business Review (blog)
<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/businessreview/2016/10/06/pr-gone-wrong-the-backlash-effect-of-window-dressing/>
- de Vries, G. (in preparation). [Practice what you preach: Relations between oil industry reputation, environmental policy, and corporate communication](#).

CCS pilot project Barendrecht

- Shell refinery Pernis > CO2 storage in depleted gas fields
- Resistance from local community (Barendrecht)
- Project owners try change negative opinion
- E.g. with emphasis on environmental benefits in communication (vs on risks, or economic benefits): green framing
- Green framing was not effective
- 2010: Project was cancelled



Why can green framing be ineffective?

- Framing can change opinions. So why ineffective here?
- **Boomerang effect** (scepticism, boycott, protest, reactance, and opposition) when green framing is perceived as manipulative, as **greenwashing**.
- So, when perceived as manipulation?
- And is manipulation always **unacceptable**?
- Might depend on (source) **expectations**...

So many questions, we need to go to the lab!



Experiments and surveys

- Testing causal **effects of green framing** (vs other frames: economic, risk, neutral) in lab and (online) surveys
- Revealing underlying psychological mechanisms
- **Measures**: Perceived manipulation (and greenwashing), perceived strategic behavior, source expectations, acceptability of manipulation, level of dispositional skepticism, CCS attitude
- Role of **source**: e.g., oil company vs news agency



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BO&G investeert in de ontwikkeling van CO2 afvang- en opslagtechnologie omdat dit past in ons beleid van maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen. Als we nu namelijk niet investeren in deze technologie, dan zal de hoeveelheid CO2 in de atmosfeer blijven toenemen, waardoor de gemiddelde temperatuur op aarde steeds hoger wordt. Dit heeft allerlei negatieve gevolgen voor mens en natuur, zoals verstoring van huidige ecosystemen, sterfte van sommige plant- en diersoorten, en stijging van de zeespiegel met alle gevolgen van dien. Door het op grote schaal in zetten van CO2 afvang- en opslagtechnologie komt er veel minder CO2 in de lucht, waardoor deze milieuproblemen voorkomen kunnen worden.

Kortom, wij investeren in de ontwikkeling van CO2 afvang- en opslagtechnologie vanwege het milieu (maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen).

Results

- Green framing can **influence attitude** towards technology (short-term positive effect).
- However, green framing can be **perceived as manipulative** (greenwashing).
- Green framing from oil companies seems **acceptable** because **strategic behavior is expected**.
- Green framing from objective sources (such as news agencies) is **not accepted**.

Discussion on implications

- Source expectations are important
- But should organisations meet or break expectations?
- Dilemma for real “green” organisations in “dirty” domains
 1. Meet expectations and stay silent about green activities (i.e., greenhushing)? Then audience does not know...
 2. Break expectations and communicate their green activities? Then run the risk of being perceived as greenwashing.

The End

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