



GREP

Groupe de recherche sur la gouvernance
et la relation entreprise-politique

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ESG UQÀM

Online Conference

ONLINE SYMPOSIUM

“WHAT A GOOD CRISIS! CORPORATE LOBBYING RAID DURING THE COVID19 CRISIS. IS IT AN ACT OF RESPONSIBLE CAPITALISM?”

By the *Groupe de recherche sur la gouvernance et la relation entreprise-politique* (GREP)

CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

DESCRIPTION

We hear about the following often: Companies – mostly large corporations – strategically organize political actions in order to put pressure on politicians and influence political decisions. This is commonly referred to as lobbying. And as history has shown, lobbying sometimes has an unfortunate relationship with corporate scandals. With this in mind, it raises the following question: “Does corporate lobbying constitute a noble act of responsible capitalism? While some would say no this question, others would adamantly say yes.

For those that would answer yes, corporate lobbying is important and contributes to healthy economic competition, without public policy intervention. From this point of view, there must be economic liberalism, free competition, the absence of barriers to entry (in the form of regulations) and above all else the absence of any form of regulations from public authorities in a capitalist system. Consequently, any attempt by the political system to regulate companies’ activities would be seen as an anti-capitalist act, intended to block companies. It would therefore be legitimate for companies to do everything they can to prevent politicians from interfering in corporate affairs through laws and regulations¹.

On the other hand, it could be perceived that corporate lobbying does not constitute a defensive, harmless action, intended to preserve or restore the poor capitalist mishandled by the political

¹ « Research in corporate political action”. By Kathleen A Getz. *Business and Society*; Mar 1997; 36, 1, p32-72.

authorities. In today's society, companies have literally stolen political power, which they completely dominate, through legal activities rather than through questionable and illegal activities. There is sometimes a hostage-taking of politics by companies, which manifests itself in different ways, for example: a total inability of political powers to make companies accountable, even when these companies violate the elements of their social contract; a reduction or a complete disappearance of the contribution of businesses (especially the largest) to social equity; and finally a repatriation of collective wealth to businesses, to name a few.

Faced with this contradiction, it is legitimate and logical to question the real contribution of corporate lobbying to the maintenance of a fair and responsible capitalism, which could in turn help achieve a more responsible society. Even more so than in times of crisis, corporate lobbyists are trending upwards: "Behind the coronavirus epidemic, there is also another, less visible, an epidemic of lobbying. While human tragedies and confinement drew all the attention, industrialists and private sector spokespeople wasted no time in "not letting a good crisis go to waste."²

The purpose of this symposium is to, therefore, provide a debate on this question that has become quite crucial in our current society. The current context of the Covid 19 pandemic provides an even richer platform on which to hold this debate.

PARTICIPATION TO THE SYMPOSIUM

You can participate to the symposium by two ways: by being one of the panelists or by attending as participant.

If you want to be one of the panelists, you can send a communication proposition of a maximum of 500 words to this email address: grep@uqam.ca, by April 30, 2021.

To attend the symposium as participant, please send an email to notify your interest at grep@uqam.ca, by May 12, 2021.

² Translation. « Lobbying : l'épidémie cachée ». **Rapport publié en juin 2020** par les Amis de la Terre France et l'Observatoire des multinationales. <https://www.amisdelaterre.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/lobbying-epidemie-cachee-at-odm-juin2020.pdf>