Chapter 6
The Role of Social Media in Enforcing Environmental Justice around the World

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is a critical analysis of the role that social media plays enforcing environmental justice around the world. It particularly examines how social media has been used internationally to foster Greenpeace International’s actions to enforce environmental justice and compliance in three selected countries, namely India, Canada and Russia. The cases examined are a.) the Essar Ltd.’s coal mine project in the Mahan Forests in India; b.) Prirazlomnaya Oil Company’s offshore drilling in the Artic Sea, and c.) Resolute Forests Products’ mining in the Boreal Forest in Canada. The paper concludes that social media can be used to promote and foster environmental justice globally.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a critical analysis of the role that social media plays enforcing environmental justice around the world. Social media reaches millions of viewers and listeners. However, social media must be used wisely, because it takes many work hours to design messages and monitor them so, in essence, posting to social mediums are not free. Organizations need hundreds of followers before marketing is beneficial to the ROI (return on investment). Organic use of the social mediums restricts the geographic reach of your audience, but you will be able to probe deeply into behaviors and patterns of interaction of your targeted audience. Adapting the specific messages and mediums to the specific audiences is exhausting, but it is well worth the effort because of the resulting responses and actions.

Social capital is used as the theoretical framework for this study. In each of the three cases discussed, the organization uses its social capital in a corrupt, bureaucratic way whereas Greenpeace uses its social capital in a trusting, investment method to assist the poor and indigent population. The chapter also examines how social media has been used internationally to foster Greenpeace International’s actions to enforce environmental justice and compliance in three selected countries, namely India, Canada and Russia. The cases examined are: a) the Essar Ltd.’s coal mine project in the Mahan Forests in India; b) Prirazlomnaya Oil Company’s offshore drilling in the Artic Sea; and c) Resolute Forests Products’ mining in the Boreal Forest in Canada. Through the use of case study research methodology, this study concludes that social media can be used to promote and foster environmental justice globally.

SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of organizations and community activists’ groups interacting with one another is not a new factuality. Gaining and/or exchanging social capital through professional networking is a common business practice today. Therefore, when Greenpeace, an internationally well-known environmental organization received a whiff of perceived wrong-doing by an international corporate entity, they were sure to play on their social capital and shout to their supporters across the globe that evil was being perpetrated. The corporate entities, who were supported by customers and other businesses (their social capital) cried they were following the letter of the law. So, what is social capital, how did this “fight” come about and who did this fight engage?

Social capital defined by Hanifan (1916, p.130) is:
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