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Dzhengiz, Tulin , Barkemeyer, Ralf and Napolitano, Giulio (2021) Emotional framing of NGO press releases: reformative versus radical NGOs. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 30 (5). pp. 2468-2488. ISSN 0964-4733

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2758>

**Publisher:** Wiley

**Version:** Published Version

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE



WILEY

# Emotional framing of NGO press releases: Reformative versus radical NGOs

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## Abstract

Drawing on the literature on framing, we explore the emotional framing differences in radical and reformative NGOs over time. We analyse the sentiment of a sample of 5880 press releases issued by five NGOs positioned differently on the reformative-radical spectrum and examine how they address large companies. Our findings reveal an increasing polarisation of sentiment in these NGOs' framing, with individual NGOs gravitating towards ideal-type radical or reformative positions, respectively. In alignment with the differences in their framing, we observe differences in their approaches to cross-sector partnerships. Policymakers need to note the implications of the observed polarisation for the effectiveness and credibility of cross-sector partnerships and multi-stakeholder initiatives more generally, given the risk of co-optation (for reformative NGOs) as well as the risk of foregoing significant funding and governance opportunities (for radical NGOs).

## KEYWORDS

cross-sector partnerships, framing, NGO-business relationships, radical NGOs, reformative NGOs, sentiment analysis

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have emerged as relevant policy actors at various levels due to their role in motivating corporate action on various environmental and social issues (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). How they motivate corporate action ranges from smear campaigns that use an adversarial language and antagonistic strategies to more constructive cross-sector partnerships where NGOs use a friendly language and act as external consultants or change agents (Burchell & Cook, 2013a). Indeed, these differences in NGO-business relationships reflect the reformative-radical spectrum that helps us categorise NGOs.

*Reformative* (or insider) NGOs try to improve and reinforce existing institutional structures, whereas *radical* (or outsider) NGOs explicitly try to change or undermine existing institutional structures (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Yaziji & Doh, 2009; Young, 1999). The

reformative versus radical categorisation is not a static one: instead, it is a spectrum whereby NGOs may shift their positions over time. Such shifts on the reformative-radical spectrum are apparent in the language NGOs use to address businesses. Hence, by analysing the changes in their language, we can capture how NGO positions change over time. Exploring such change is critical, because these changes can reveal their framing (Litrico & David, 2017), which is also associated with their attitude towards cross-sector partnerships (Klitsie, Ansari, & Volberda, 2018). While a recent study demonstrates shifts in framing in a single longitudinal case (Luxon, 2019), radical and reformative NGOs' framing would differ significantly and be likely to show different evolutionary patterns.

In this paper, our objective is to demonstrate these shifts in radical and reformative NGOs' framing in a longitudinal cross-case research design and explain cross-sector partnerships' role in these shifts. To do so, we draw on the literature on framing (Bach &

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Blake, 2015; Baek & Yoon, 2017; Benford, 1993; Benford & Snow, 2000) and the literature on cross-sector partnerships and NGO-business relationships (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Bitzer & Glasbergen, 2015; den Hond, de Bakker, & Doh, 2015; Pesqueira, Glasbergen, & Leroy, 2020). Given the prominence of major international NGOs impacting corporate environmental action, we select the following five cases—Conservation International, Friends of the Earth, Global Witness, Greenpeace and WWF—between 2002 and 2017.

We adopt the well-established view that actors motivate action by giving sense to their stakeholders through various sentiments, also referred to as emotional framing (Pesqueira et al., 2020; Raffaelli, Glynn, & Tushman, 2019; Reber & Berger, 2005; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). It is common to study framing shifts in organisational communication of NGOs, including their social media accounts (Ji, Harlow, Cui, & Wang, 2018), news media coverage (Brulle & Benford, 2012) and press releases (Luxon, 2019). We also study 5880 press releases issued by these NGOs and investigate framing shifts concerning 225 of the largest multinational companies (MNCs). We analyse these press releases using a dictionary-based sentiment analysis tool and examine their degree of optimism towards businesses, which helps us understand their positioning on the radical-reformative spectrum. We also conduct content analysis to illustrate further the role of cross-sector partnerships in the NGOs' framing.

Our results reveal framing shifts that reflect an increasing polarisation between radical and reformative NGOs. We find that over time, NGOs move further towards ideal-type radical or reformative positions, respectively. Crucially, those NGOs that have been explicitly open to various types of cross-sector partnerships with MNCs have moved towards more reformative positions. In contrast, those continuing to reject such partnerships have moved towards a more radical stance over time. This polarisation has implications for the role of these NGOs in wider governance. At one end of the continuum, it increases the likelihood of NGO co-optation, in turn carrying significant risks for the credibility and legitimacy of NGOs that adopt a collaborative stance (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). At the other end of the continuum, given the dominance of the partnership paradigm in global governance (Pearce & Doh, 2005), there is a risk that more radical NGOs are becoming increasingly excluded from private governance processes.

To explore these dynamics, our paper provides a longitudinal cross-case analysis of NGOs positioned differently on the reformative-radical spectrum. Since the literature has mostly been dominated by conceptual work and case-based inquiries in this area (den Hond, 2010; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Yaziji & Doh, 2009), our approach contributes to the literature in three ways. First, we empirically identify trajectories of framing shifts at radical and reformative NGOs and show these shifts using sentiment analysis. By doing so, we add to the existing conversation on framing in the context of NGOs (Luxon, 2019; Pesqueira et al., 2020) and NGO-business relationships (Klitsie et al., 2018; Le Ber & Branzei, 2011; Zimmermann, 2020). Second, we demonstrate that NGOs' emotional framing varies depending on their position in the

radical-reformative spectrum (Luxon, 2019). Third, the application of sentiment analysis to study the framing of NGO press releases is a promising methodological contribution to the broader literature on NGO-business relationships. Measuring the sentiment of NGO press releases allows us to capture changes in actual NGO campaigning directly, whereas previous empirical studies have focused on survey responses (den Hond et al., 2015) or variables such as board interlocks and annual report content (Bertels, Hoffman, & DeJordy, 2014). Only recently, sentiment analysis has been applied in the context of NGOs to capture the communication strategies of NGOs (Luxon, 2019) or media frames about NGOs (Wasif, 2020). Still, these efforts have not explicitly explored emotional framing in the context of NGO-business campaigning.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section reviews the previous literature on NGOs and framing, with particular emphasis on NGO-business relationships. The methods section describes and justifies case selection, data collection and data analysis. Next, we present the results of the empirical analysis. We then discuss the implications of these results for theory, practice and policy. We conclude by spelling out the limitations of our approach as well as promising avenues for future research.

## 2 | THEORY

### 2.1 | NGO definitions and categorisation

NGOs are 'private, not-for-profit organisations that aim to serve particular societal interests by focusing advocacy and/or operational efforts on social, political and economic goals, including equity, education, health, environmental protection, and human rights' (Yaziji & Doh, 2009, p. 5). In its early stages, the NGO scene could be described as 'anarchic' (Winston, 2002) and comprised a heterogeneous group of organisations. Over time, however, we observe an increasing consolidation and diversification, with different NGO types pursuing fundamentally different strategies to inform and mobilise the general public around environmental and social challenges (Brown, Khagram, Moore, & Frumkin, 2000). Table 1 below provides an overview of contemporary NGO typologies.

At a very general level, NGOs can be distinguished based on the governance functions they aim to fulfil. Service sector NGOs try to meet previously unmet needs with goods and services they provide, whereas advocacy NGOs aim to bring about institutional change through policies or practices (Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Among advocacy NGOs, two main types can be identified. *Reformative* NGOs work within the existing institutional structures to bring about incremental change; they may even 'reinforce the institutional environment by challenging infringements on it' (den Hond, 2010, p. 175). *Radical* NGOs aim directly at changing the institutional environment (Brown, 2010; den Hond, 2010; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Laasonen, Fougère, & Kourula, 2012), with some authors identifying additional configurations that are positioned between these two extremes (Åhlström & Sjöström, 2005; van Tulder & van der

**TABLE 1** Overview of NGO typologies

Typologies			References
Service	Advocacy		Yaziji and Doh (2009)
	Dolphins/Sealions	Orcas/sharks	Elkington (1998)
	Insiders	Outsiders	Young (1999); Betzold (2013)
	Engagers	Confronters	Winston (2002)
	Access	Voice	Beyers (2004)
	Pragmatic reformers	Deep ecologists/radicals	Rosenbaum (2003); McCormick (1999)
	(Scrutinizers) Preservers	Protesters/modifiers	Åhlström and Sjöström (2005)
	Reformative	Radical	Arya and Salk (2006); den Hond and de Bakker (2007)
	(range of categories representing spectrum from confrontation to cooperation)		van Tulder and van der Zwart (2005)
	(Implementers) Partners	Catalysers	Lewis (2007)
Outcome-oriented	Politics of partnership	Politics of blame	Alcock (2008)
	Watchdog	Social movement	Yaziji and Doh (2009); den Hond (2010)
		Mission-focused	Pallas and Urpelainen (2013)

Zwart, 2005). The distinction between reformative and radical NGOs then captures two fundamentally different NGO-business relationships (Fisher, 1997). Depending on their positioning on the reformative-radical spectrum, NGOs apply different means to reach their objectives (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Winston, 2002; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). These differences are, indeed, associated with the emotional framing they adopt in their campaigning.

## 2.2 | Framing

Goffman (1974, p. 21), who popularised frames and frame analysis in sociology, refers to frames as ‘schemata of interpretation’ that ‘allow [their] users to locate, perceive, identify and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences.’ Picked up by scholars of social movements, the concept has frequently been used as a dynamic process of ‘framing’ ‘that implies agency and contention’ (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). These scholars specifically study what they call ‘collective action frames’ as the outcomes of framing processes that are ‘action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns’ (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 614). However, the application of framing has been quite broad, spanning from politics (Coutto, 2020; Iyengar, 1990) to media and communication studies (Collins, 2008; Du & Han, 2020; Engesser & Bruggemann, 2016; Entman, 1991) as well as business and organisation studies (George, Chattopadhyay, Sitkin, & Barden, 2006; Girschik, 2018; Hoffman & Ventresca, 1999; Howard-Grenville & Hoffman, 2003). Two distinct approaches in these framing studies can be identified: studies that focus on frames as relatively stable constructs versus those that approach framing as a dynamic interactional process, focusing on shifts in framing (Cornelissen & Werner, 2014; Gray, Purdy, & Ansari, 2015; Zimmermann, 2020). In this study, we adopt the latter perspective.

As a process, framing connotes actors’ efforts to provide meaning for others, that is, to influence their interpretations as a form of sense giving to change their actions (Fiss & Hirsch, 2005; Fiss & Zajac, 2006; Gray et al., 2015). There are many different attributes of framing that scholars have researched. Some scholars have researched how actors construct specific meanings around environmental and societal issues, also referred to as issue framing (Andersson & Bateman, 2000; Bach & Blake, 2015; Dewulf & Bouwen, 2012). Others have researched the role of ‘core framing tasks’ (Snow, Vliementhart, & Ketelaars, 2018): to shape the past (diagnostic) of a problem, how its future (prognostic) should be and giving meaning to others as a call to action (motivational) (Hervieux & Voltan, 2016; Hestres, 2018). Due to the dominant role of rationality in the broader social science research, the least researched attributes of framing have traditionally been emotions and sentiments. However, this has started to change lately with the growing interest in ‘emotional framing’ (Eyerman, 2005; Raffaelli et al., 2019; Ruiz-Junco, 2013; Snow et al., 2018). This is also the area in which we position our study.

## 2.3 | Framing of NGO-business relationships

Emotion and sentiment are especially critical attributes of framing in the context of NGOs. NGOs use ‘an emotionally-laden narrative’ to create urgency and to alarm stakeholders, triggering their feelings to mobilise action (Reinecke & Ansari, 2016). They set an emotional tone when engaging with their stakeholders to alter their perceptions using negative messages by creating feelings of fear, anger, guilt, shame or sadness (Anspach & Draguljić, 2019; Gifford & Comeau, 2011). They may also frame issues with positive messages by evoking hope and faith, and implying benefits and opportunities as well as signalling connectedness with their cause through love and joy (Flam & King, 2007).

The emotional attributes of NGOs' framing are not independent of whether the NGO is radical or reformative (Luxon, 2019), and whether it targets the 'enemy' or a 'friend' (Knight & Greenberg, 2011). In this paper, we specifically focus on NGO-business relationships that may include both antagonistic and co-operative relationships and cross-sector partnerships between NGOs and businesses as a specific form of co-operative relationships.

Reformative and radical NGOs differ in the extent to which they integrate market, community and environmental logics (Lee & Lounsbury, 2015; Lounsbury, Ventresca, & Hirsch, 2003), affecting the messages they give to their stakeholders about businesses, hence impacting the emotional tone of their framing. Reformative NGOs mainly represent functional units with little political purpose, utilising their specific expertise to address social problems (Ossewaarde, Nijhof, & Heyse, 2008). They are often 'regarded as part of market-based solutions to policy problems' (Lewis & Kanji, 2009, p. 5). Therefore, one would assume their framing to be more positive than their radical counterparts. In contrast, radical NGOs aim to act as 'a countervailing power to the market and the state, adding to the creation of an international system of checks and balances' (Ossewaarde et al., 2008, p. 43), thus explicitly positioning themselves as political actors. In alignment with this position, one would assume that radical NGOs apply an adversarial framing to trigger shame and guilt in the businesses they target and create anger and distrust among their followers (Flam & King, 2007; Knight & Greenberg, 2011); which can generally mean a more negative tone when compared to their reformative counterparts.

However, it is unlikely to expect stability in the framing efforts of NGOs. External events such as climate summits (Ansari, Wijan, & Gray, 2013), exogenous shocks such as financial crises (Kamat, 2004) and relationships NGOs have with global policy institutions and donors (Kamat, 2003) may change and evolve in different directions over time. Here, our objective is to explore and explain how they evolve, which would be observed as shifts in their framing, and therefore changes in their emotional tone or sentiment. Based on the existing literature, it is possible to put forward arguments for a shift towards both a more reformative and a radical stance. There may be several explanations as to why NGOs may shift from a radical position to a more reformative one. Studies propose that after the initial stages of NGO advocacy that were characterised as mostly antagonistic, NGOs have evolved in the direction of increasing involvement and engagement with MNCs (Doh & Guay, 2004; Heap, 2000; Valor & Merino de Diego, 2009). This is because reformative positions typically offer benefits such as improved access to funding and increased participation in global level decision-making (Arya & Salk, 2006; Pearce & Doh, 2005).

The emergence of global governance, and with it a range of multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the UN Global Compact, the Global Reporting Initiative or other private rule-making bodies, asserts pressures on NGOs towards partnerships in line with the UN Millennium Development Goals and, more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 17) (e.g., Heap, 2000; Kourula, Pisani, & Kolk, 2017; Valor & Merino de Diego, 2009). Along these lines, cross-sector

partnerships have come to be viewed as more effective than adversarial approaches (Pearce & Doh, 2005). Furthermore, these partnerships may lead to the adoption of 'business-like practices, such as the use of formal organisational charts, quantitative evaluation accounting systems, and independent financial audits' at NGOs (Ahmadisimab & Chowdhury, 2019, p. 14). Hence, such a shift would imply a change in NGOs' emotional tones toward businesses from a more negative into a more positive direction.

Equally, there may be several explanations as to why NGOs may shift from a reformative to a more radical position. At a practical level, failed projects may lead to 'partner disillusionment' (Le Ber & Branzei, 2010). Along similar lines, the—perceived or factual—loss of legitimacy and independence of NGOs once they enter into partnerships (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Burchell & Cook, 2013b) may form a barrier for future collaborations. While cross-sector partnerships have received significant scholarly support (Clarke & Crane, 2018; Clarke & MacDonald, 2016; Selsky & Parker, 2005; van Tulder & Keen, 2018), several authors also argued that accountability pressures could result in NGOs losing sight of their initial ideologies and thus lead to a de-radicalisation of these organisations (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Ossewaarde et al., 2008). Some criticised the adoption of business-like practices that hint the NGOs' reformative stance (Sanders & McClellan, 2014); while others problematized the effectiveness of cross-sector partnerships (Laasonen et al., 2012). As a consequence, NGOs may shift towards a more radical stance, which would imply a change in NGOs' emotional tones toward businesses in a more negative direction.

### 3 | METHODS

#### 3.1 | Multiple case study: selection of NGO cases

We based our case selection on the following criteria: (1) they operate globally and are therefore participating in global-level environmental governance; (2) they have self-published public archives of press releases that both cover the duration of the analysis and are sufficient in number to establish the statistical significance of any findings; and (3) reflect a spectrum ranging from radical to reformative NGOs. We selected the following cases: Conservation International, the World Wildlife Fund, Friends of the Earth, Global Witness and Greenpeace.

Among the NGOs that have traditionally leaned towards the spectrum's reformative end, Conservation International (CI) was established in 1987 in the United States. In its initial stages, it had a pure conservation focus; recently, CI has started to take a wider perspective and explicitly focus on the link between human well-being and natural ecosystems (CI, 2021).

As another reformative NGO, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) was founded in 1961 in Switzerland where it is still headquartered, but its roots can be traced back to the U.S.-based Conservation Foundation formed in 1947. Its mission is 'to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature' (WWF, 2021). As such,

**TABLE 2** Sample employed for sentiment analysis

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Conservation International	22	27	25	17	43	41	60	52	61	64	62	51	55	30	51	55	716
Friends of the Earth	73	112	41	73	56	42	32	45	42	31	26	20	25	32	30	9	689
Global Witness	32	34	34	33	32	36	33	78	93	64	86	103	66	53	100	107	984
Greenpeace	207	175	144	166	131	105	131	167	114	138	85	144	89	96	78	98	2068
WWF	101	64	63	46	35	34	79	209	181	91	156	136	65	62	33	68	1423
Total	435	412	307	335	297	258	335	551	491	388	415	454	300	273	292	337	5880

it focuses on a range of predominantly environmental challenges. WWF is actively engaged in partnerships with the private sector, from which it receives a significant amount of funding and can, therefore, be characterised as reformative (Ählström & Sjöström, 2005; den Hond, 2010).

Friends of the Earth (FOE) was established in the United States in 1969 but started forming an international network in 1971. FOE focuses on environmental issues in their social, political and human rights context. The organisation continues to refrain from cross-sector partnerships with MNCs (Ählström & Sjöström, 2005) and can be seen as leaning towards the radical end of the spectrum (den Hond, 2010).

Of the five NGOs considered in our analysis, Global Witness (GW) most clearly represents a radical position. GW was established in 1993 in the United Kingdom. It focuses on natural resource-related conflicts and aims to 'break the links between natural resource exploitation, conflict, poverty, corruption, and human rights abuses worldwide' (Global Witness, 2017). GW accepts funding by governments and a range of foundations and charities but categorically rejects private sector funding.

Finally, Greenpeace (GP) was founded in 1971 by North American environmental activists. Its mission is to 'ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity' (GP, 2017). In more recent years, GP has also started to engage in cross-sector partnerships with MNCs (Ansari et al., 2013) but somewhat more reluctantly than WWF (e.g., Van Huijstee & Glasbergen, 2010). GP thus occupies a middle position between the reformative and the radical end of the spectrum (den Hond, 2010).

### 3.2 | Data collection

The media's importance as an arena in which NGOs, or social actors more generally, construct norms or legitimacy is highly significant (King & Soule, 2007; Richards & Heard, 2005; Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010). It is no surprise therefore that the majority of empirical studies into NGO-business relationships have examined how NGOs participate in public discourse, based on the analysis of publicly available documents, such as organisational documents (Heugens, 2003; Joutsenvirta & Uusitalo, 2010; Scherrer, 2009; van Huijstee, Pollock, Glasbergen, & Leroy, 2011), mass media coverage or press releases (Eesley & Lenox, 2006; Joutsenvirta & Uusitalo, 2010; Siltaoja & Vehkaperä, 2010).

In line with this stream of research, we collected the five NGOs' official press releases. These press releases are designed to provide meanings and give sense to other stakeholders (Fiss & Zajac, 2006) and, therefore, are well-suited for the analysis of emotional framing adopted by NGOs (Luxon, 2019). Moreover, these press releases can impact public legitimacy and thus the reputation of a range of companies (Pearce & Doh, 2005); to a certain extent, they equal social action in this context. The extensive database of press releases we employed, spanning from 2002 to 2017, allowed us to take a longitudinal perspective and explore framing shifts over time. Table 2 summarises our data collection. Our timeframe ranges from 2002 to



2017 for data availability reasons. Out of the five NGOs, only WWF has made press releases issued before 2002 publicly available; after 2017, several NGOs have discontinued operating repositories of full-text press releases on their websites.

### 3.3 | Data analysis

#### 3.3.1 | Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis presents a great potential to study the emotional framing of NGOs in their communications through various types of media (Wasif, 2020), including social media (Åkerlund, 2020; Ji et al., 2018) and press releases (Luxon, 2019). While sentiment analysis has frequently been used to study framing in communication studies (Young & Soroka, 2012), its applications to business and organisation studies are more recent (Isil & Hernke, 2017) and yet to be explored in the context of NGO-business relationships.

For the purposes of this study, we measured the emotional tone of official NGO press releases and calculated their 'degree of optimism', which provides us with insights about the NGOs' framing (Luxon, 2019; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Press releases expressing optimism towards business are generally positive and non-critical and, therefore, can be considered to represent a more co-operative stance, thus mirroring a reformative perspective on NGO-business relationships (den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Yaziji & Doh, 2009; Young, 1999). In contrast, press releases expressing pessimism are generally more critical and represent a more adversarial stance, aligning with a radical position on NGO-business relationships. (Brown, 2010; den Hond, 2010; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Laasonen et al., 2012). Hence, we assumed that the degree of optimism could reveal NGOs' framing and, thus, their positioning on the reformative-radical spectrum.

We conducted a sentiment analysis of the sample of press releases spanning the years 2002–2017 ( $n = 5880$ ; see Table 2), using the WordStat software package. We used the Forbes 2000 list of the largest companies for the year 2010 (as the median value in our period of analysis) and identified the 15 largest companies within 15 different sectors, therefore arriving at a set of 225 companies. All results were checked manually to ensure that these press releases referred to a given company (for example, to distinguish press releases mentioning the company 'Apple' from those using the term 'apple' in other contexts). All results were transcribed into an SPSS database for subsequent statistical analysis.

The basic underlying assumption of sentiment analysis is that the sentiment of a body of text—such as its optimism—can be revealed by the frequency of words of a certain type used by the writer. These types have been provided by the existing psycho-social dictionaries included in the WordStat software package. The WordStat Sentiment Dictionary is partially based on several individual sentiment lists, including the 'Harvard IV' dictionary as well as the 'Linguistic and Word Count' dictionary (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). It is a general-purpose dictionary applied in various contexts, including

corporate sustainability reporting (Lock & Seele, 2016), academic articles (Mora, Wu, & Panori, 2020) or policy documents (van Alstine & Barkemeyer, 2014). It provides individual scores for positive and negative sentiment, each calculated based on terms comprising several thousand-word patterns, respectively, and is therefore well-suited for our analysis. Appendix A illustrates the use of the dictionary-based sentiment analysis tool, demonstrating the coding of two press releases with very high or very low optimism scores, respectively.

Both positivity and negativity scores were expressed as the number of words indicating positive (negative) sentiment divided by the total number of words in a given press release to account for variable document length. We calculated the raw sentiment score for each press release by subtracting its negative from its positive score. Given that different NGOs cannot employ the same language, we transformed all raw sentiment data into normalised z-scores. First, averages and standard deviations were calculated for each of the five NGO subsamples. The difference between the NGO-specific mean and the raw score of a given press release was divided by the standard deviation of the NGO-specific mean.

Both positive and negative sentiment dictionaries were screened manually to ensure that the underlying terms were suitable for our analysis and to remove domain-specific words (cf. Loughran & McDonald, 2011). Furthermore, McKenny, Aguinis, Short, and Anglin (2016) highlight the risk of potential bias in an automated content analysis based on what they call algorithm error. In short, different software packages use different algorithms to assess positive and negative sentiment, leading to different results. For this reason, we replicated our analysis using the General Inquirer (GI) software package (Stone, Dunphy, Smith, & Ogilvie, 1966). Like WordStat, GI is a dictionary-based sentiment analysis tool based on extensive terms lists that indicate positive or negative sentiment; like WordStat, it also provides separate positivity and negativity scores. All results based on GI sentiment scores were qualitatively equivalent to the WordStat-based regression models reported in this study, thereby minimising the risk of bias due to algorithm error.

#### 3.3.2 | Qualitative content analysis

We conducted a qualitative content analysis of press release content to complement the sentiment analysis, using NVivo 12 Plus. To further illustrate the cross-sector collaboration patterns between the NGOs we selected, we first searched the database based on terms associated with partnerships (Appendix B for the full list of search terms). We used the search terms that previous review articles on partnerships have identified (Dzhengiz, 2020; Gomes, Barnes, & Mahmood, 2016; Zahoor & Al-Tabbaa, 2020). We further complemented these search terms with synonyms of partnerships, alliances and collaboration in the Thesaurus. This helped us identify and qualitatively code the cross-sector partnerships between the NGOs and other organisations. This coding provided partnerships between these NGOs and businesses and other organisations, such as various other NGOs, universities and public authorities. Organisations other than

businesses were beyond the scope for this study and therefore not considered, since we are only interested in NGO-business relationships. We, then, manually screened the press releases that contained these partnership-related terms and coded the NGOs and their business partners.

## 4 | RESULTS

### 4.1 | Sentiment analysis

In this section, we report our findings, including the descriptive statistics regarding the industry and company coverage of NGO press releases, the degree of optimism reflected by the five NGOs combined, for reformative and radical NGO constituents individually, and their different approaches to cross-sector partnerships with MNCs.

Table 3 provides a set of descriptive sample statistics as well as the results of the sentiment analysis. We observe that press releases are not spread evenly across the five NGOs. GP ( $n = 2068$ ) and WWF ( $n = 1423$ ) have been more active than the other three NGOs within the period under analysis. Furthermore, the NGOs differ in the extent to which they addressed any of our 225 focal companies (see Appendix C). FOE and GP have a stronger corporate focus than their peers with 29% and 25%, respectively, of their press releases mentioning at least one out of these 225 companies, as opposed to 8–18% in the case of CI, GW and WWF. Overall, 1109 press releases mentioned any of the focal companies, amounting to 19% of the total sample.

Mean optimism z-scores ( $M = -0.125$ ) of business-related press releases appear to be largely in line with the overall sample. However, clearer deviations can be identified at the level of individual NGOs, with average optimism scores ranging from  $-0.294$  (FOE) to  $0.398$  (CI). It is interesting to note that different NGOs tend to prioritise companies from different sectors. GW has a strong banking and oil and gas focus, with 145 out of 177 press releases addressing companies from these two sectors. The mining sector is more closely associated with FOE, whereas chemical companies are more likely to be scrutinised by GP. Oil and gas ( $n = 444$ ) emerges as the sector that has received the most attention across the five NGOs. At the other end of the spectrum, hardly any coverage of companies in the construction, pharmaceutical or transportation sectors can be identified in these years.

Table 4 provides an overview of the 15 most frequently mentioned companies in the sample ( $n \geq 35$ ). Here, chemical and in particular oil and gas companies again clearly receive the most attention. Three electronics companies are represented in the list of most frequently mentioned companies, even though electronics featured less prominently in the sector-level comparison in Table 3. Here, press releases related to two major campaigns—the GP ‘Greener Electronics Guide’ and the WWF ‘Climate Savers’ programme—typically list a range of electronics companies. Furthermore, patterns emerge in terms of specific companies that are prioritised by different NGOs. For example, Dow Chemical has frequently been targeted by GP but not featured by the four other NGOs; FOE and GP have almost exclusively targeted Monsanto in the context of genetically modified organisms.

**TABLE 3** Descriptive statistics

	Conservation International		Friends of the Earth		Global Witness		Greenpeace		WWF		Total	
	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M	N	M
Total number of press releases	716	0	689	0	984	0	2068	0	1423	0	5880	0
Business-related press releases	95	0.398	200	-0.294	177	-0.192	526	-0.197	111	0.180	1109	-0.125
[%]	13%		30%		18%		25%		8%		11%	
Automobile	4	-0.348	4	-0.205	6	-0.060	14	-0.246	9	0.616	37	-0.013
Banking	3	0.607	10	0.284	44	-0.314	7	-0.607	11	0.169	75	-0.154
Chemicals	1	0.900	45	-0.168	1	-0.580	105	-0.248	5	0.888	157	-0.184
Construction	9	-0.498	4	0.410	0	n.a.	1	-0.720	5	0.890	19	0.047
Electronics	24	0.240	1	-2.260	11	-0.438	66	0.506	15	1.021	117	0.405
Food markets	2	0.895	1	3.760	0	n.a.	35	0.220	13	0.009	51	0.262
Food, drinks and tobacco	5	1.112	16	0.629	9	-0.118	60	-0.208	20	0.664	110	0.140
Forestry	2	0.680	6	-0.388	0	n.a.	20	0.023	4	0.653	32	0.065
Hotels, restaurants and leisure	25	0.775	2	1.160	0	n.a.	10	0.367	2	0.435	39	0.673
Mining	9	0.127	33	-0.336	22	-0.237	7	0.379	2	0.650	73	-0.154
Oil & gas	16	0.599	111	-0.374	101	-0.117	183	-0.434	33	-0.566	444	-0.320
Pharmaceutical	0	n.a.	5	1.076	0	n.a.	4	-0.790	8	0.869	17	0.539
Retail	14	0.804	2	0.615	3	0.460	39	-0.040	10	0.588	68	0.268
Transportation	0	n.a.	0	n.a.	0	n.a.	0	n.a.	3	-1.117	3	-1.117
Utilities	1	-0.620	16	-0.394	2	-0.060	48	-0.090	12	0.091	79	-0.130



**TABLE 4** Optimism scores of most frequently mentioned companies

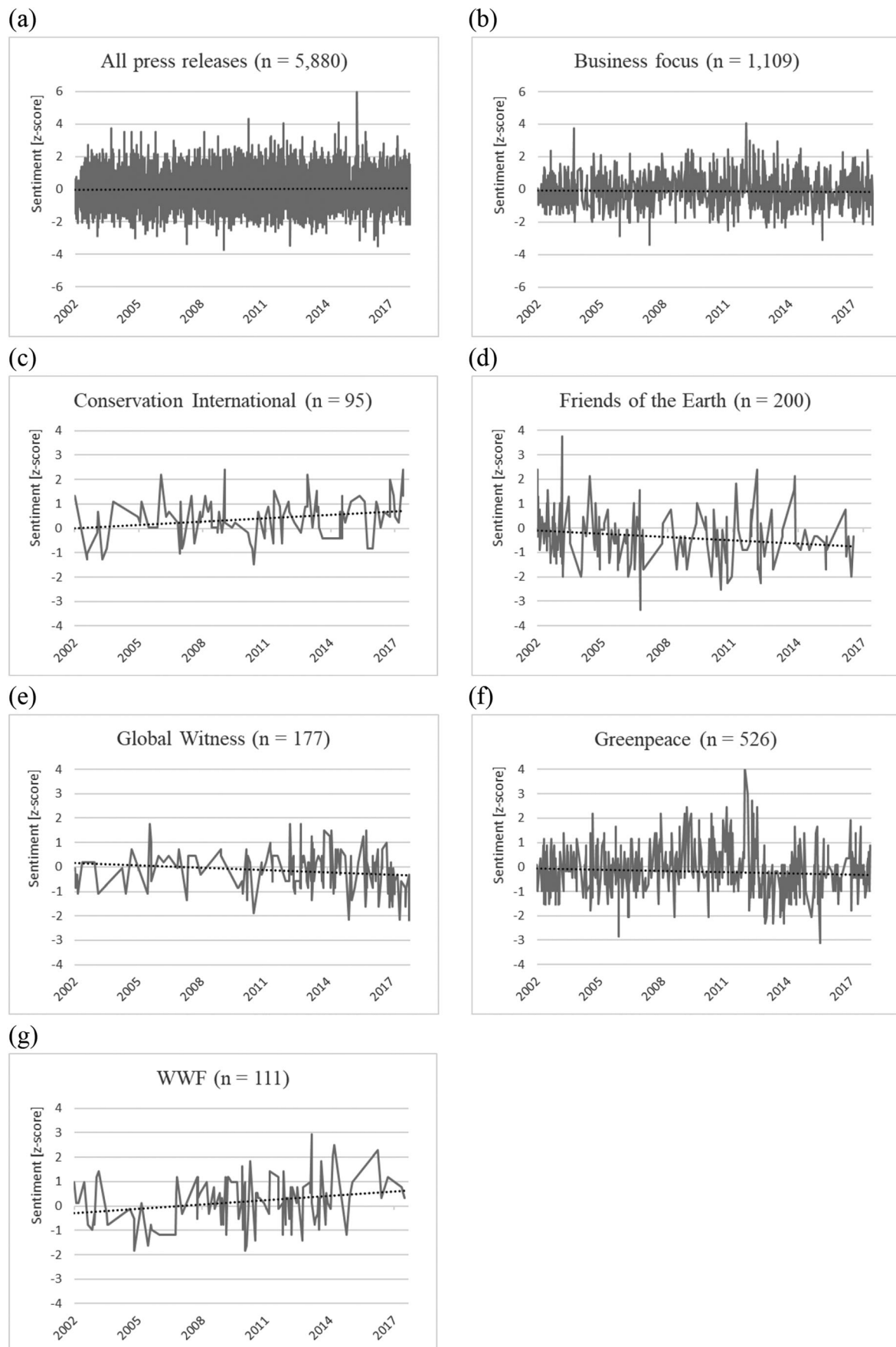
Company	Sector	n	Optimism	Mainly mentioned by	Common themes
Royal Dutch Shell	Oil and gas	234	−0.40	All 5 NGOs	Green-washing awards; carbon emissions, Niger delta; endangered grey whales; tar sands
BP	Oil and gas	126	−0.05	All 5 NGOs	Carbon emissions; Deepwater Horizon; sponsorship of conservation projects; tar sands; pipeline project in Azerbaijan
Exxon Mobil	Oil and gas	98	−0.16	All 5 NGOs	Carbon emissions; corruption allegations in Equatorial Guinea; Exxon Valdez spill; endangered grey whales; arctic oil drilling; corporate lobbying
Monsanto	Chemicals	90	−0.12	FOE, GP	Genetically modified organisms
Chevron	Oil and gas	75	−0.05	All 5 NGOs	Corporate lobbying; deep water drilling; arctic oil drilling; environmental governance in Liberia; Nigeria pipeline; application of integrated biodiversity assessment tool
Gazprom	Oil and gas	66	−0.69	GP, GW	Arctic oil drilling
Apple	Electronics	51	0.48	GP	Featured in Greenpeace Greener Electronics guide
Unilever	Food, drinks and tobacco	51	0.02	GP, FOE, WWF	Indonesian palm oil; climate-friendly refrigeration; marine protection
Nestlé	Food, drinks and tobacco	49	−0.03	FOE, GP	Genetically modified organisms; sustainable palm oil; rainforest destruction; illegally grown coffee
ENI	Oil and gas	44	−0.42	GW, GP	Nigerian corruption scandal; oil rig in Sicily
Hewlett-Packard	Electronics	44	0.36	GP, WWF	Featured in Greenpeace Greener Electronics guide; WWF Climate Savers programme
Sony	Electronics	39	0.13	GP; WWF	Featured in Greenpeace Greener Electronics guide; WWF Climate Savers programme
Dow chemical	Chemicals	38	−0.33	GP	Irresponsible corporate behaviour awards; corporate lobbying; Bhopal disaster
Total	Oil and gas	38	−0.03	GP	Break Free from Fossil Fuels campaign
Electricité de France	Utilities	35	−0.27	GP, WWF	Nuclear waste; Europe's worst climate-polluting power stations; development of global water tool for power utilities

In stark contrast, the four most frequently mentioned oil and gas companies were targeted by all five NGOs in the context of various topics ranging from carbon emissions to corruption allegations or specific aspects of their operations, including tar sands, deep water drilling or the social, environmental and economic implications of large-scale pipeline projects. Given these topics, it does not come as a surprise that average optimism z-scores of press releases covering any of these four oil and gas companies are negative. On the other hand, press releases featuring electronics companies consistently receive higher-than-average optimism scores. Interestingly, these 15 most frequently mentioned firms account for around 60% of all business-related press releases in the sample, whereas the remaining 210 companies only account for 40%. In other words, all five NGOs tend to focus on a narrow group of highly visible companies rather than a wider portfolio of firms from different sectors.

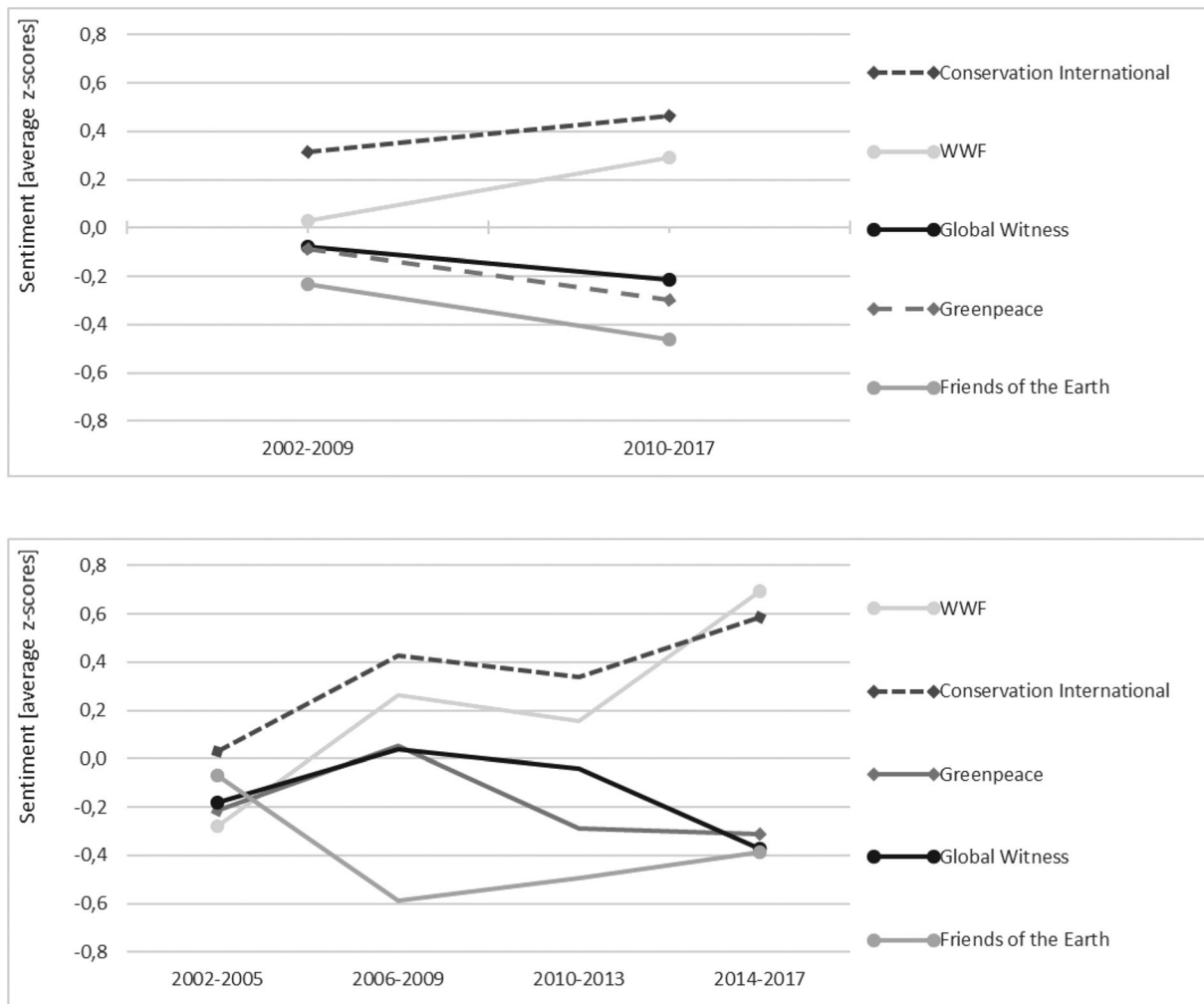
Figure 1 tracks optimism scores across (a) the entire sample of NGO press releases ( $n = 5880$ ) and (b) the subsample of business-related press releases ( $n = 1109$ ) as well as (c)–(g) the individual NGO subsamples of business-related press releases. While extreme z-scores range from  $-3.71$  (GW, 05/02/2009) to  $5.95$  (FOE,

16/06/2015), average z-scores remain relatively stable and largely within a narrow band between  $-2$  and  $2$  in each case. On aggregate, no clear differences emerge between business-related press releases and all other press releases issued by the five NGOs, and optimism scores appear to remain relatively constant over time. However, this picture changes when datasets of NGO press releases are explored separately. Here, different trajectories can be identified for the five different NGOs.

NGO-specific trajectories over time are further substantiated in Figure 2, which breaks up the overall sample into 8-year-periods (panel A) and 4-year-periods (panel B), respectively. CI and WWF show upward trajectories over time, whereas a downward trend is observed for GW, GP and FOE. Independent samples  $t$  tests show that only for GP, a significant decrease is observed when comparing average optimism scores 2002–2009 against 2010–2017 (panel A;  $t = 2.55$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ). The likely reason for this is shown in panel B: when broken up into 4-year-periods, varying patterns (rather than a continuous development) over time emerge. However, a general distinction appears between CI and WWF, reflecting a clear upward trajectory, and the other three NGOs with different downward trajectories.



**FIGURE 1** Sentiment scores of business-related NGO press releases (2002–2017)



**FIGURE 2** Sentiment scores of business-related press releases over time per NGO (2002–2017)

Independent samples *t* tests comparing the period 2002–2005 with 2014–2014 show a significant increase for the former (CI:  $t = -1.88$ ,  $p < 0.1$ ; WWF:  $t = -3.07$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), whereas no significant differences are identified for FOE, GW or GP.

## 4.2 | Qualitative content analysis

The press releases also showed stark differences between NGOs regarding cross-sector partnerships with MNCs (see Table 5 for illustrative quotes and examples). Among others, CI and WWF reported direct engagement with corporations, explicitly identified the projects funded by these corporations and explained the nature of their relationships by describing the role they play as external change agents or consultants to drive corporate action. These two NGOs often played a critical role in working with MNCs, helping them draft specific environmental policies. For example, WWF helped H&M draft its new water policy. Both NGOs emphasised partnerships with the media and entertainment world to educate the public regarding the social and environmental challenges. For

CI, its continued partnership with Disney and for WWF its partnership with Netflix played such a role.

GP also engaged with corporations; however, its engagement is less direct than WWF and CI. Instead, GP's corporate engagement appeared as embedded into campaigns such as its 'Detox Campaign', 'Greener Electronics Guide' and the 'Consumer Goods Forum'. This indirect involvement allowed GP freedom to report on companies' progress and take a critical stance if necessary. For instance, Adidas has been scrutinised by GP even after the company's commitment to GP's detox campaign and only after setting a credible roadmap has GP announced these commitments as a victory for the industry. FOE and GW did not report any partnerships with the business world and even outright rejected the effectiveness of cross-sector partnerships with MNCs as a mechanism to address environmental problems.

Some of the cross-sector partnerships announced turned controversial. In the case of BP and CI, this was due to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill. CI chairperson commented on the tragedy as follows: 'In 2001, CI began to work with BP on various initiatives to reduce their environmental footprint [which] included the Energy & Biodiversity Initiative, a collaboration with several oil and gas

**TABLE 5** NGOs and their approach to cross-sector partnerships and market-led initiatives

NGOs	Examples of corporate partners	Illustrative quotes
CI	BP, Walmart, Starbucks, Nestle, McDonald's, Mitsubishi, Nokia, Intel, HP, Imperial Tobacco	<p>'We absolutely must work together to find new ideas and solutions to the daunting challenges before us. Therefore, we will always come to the table to have conversations -- with communities, with governments, with scientists and with businesses that express an interest in doing their part to help us tackle these challenges. Failure to do so would be irresponsible. What was recorded on the tape and emails was simply an initial conversation with a corporation that approached us. But initial conversations are only a first step in a long process of due diligence about an organisation's commitment to environmental leadership. We challenge and collaborate with companies to improve their business practices and invest in conservation initiatives. Our commitment is to engage with corporations to minimise environmental impact and encourage them to proactively participate in programs to preserve healthy ecosystems and biodiversity; this is in their enlightened self-interest ...'</p> <p>'... As the incubator for this business, Conservation International Hawai'i will provide the technical expertise and start-up funding and infrastructure for the successful establishment of the business. Profits from the business will be directed toward ocean stewardship and sustainable fishery initiatives...'</p>
WWF	Coca Cola, HSBC, Toyota, Ikea, Netflix	<p>'... The Climate Savers companies show that sustainable development is not an academic concept but something that can be tackled with a profit – for nature, for society, but also for the companies themselves ...'</p> <p>'We know the commitments under the Heart of Borneo Declaration cannot be achieved without the support of the private sector. Tonight, we highlight solutions for involving business in green growth and offer then a range of tools to help them to do that.'</p> <p>'... Samantha Smith, leader of WWF's Global Climate and Energy Initiative says cleantech is finally coming of age. "Since the first Global Cleantech Innovation Index was produced just two years ago, we have seen a real increase in the disruptive start-ups we need to shrink our footprint on this planet. And that increase is spread across different countries, with some leading but all making progress. Of course, much more needs to be done in every country and by investors if we are to properly address climate change and achieve a transition towards a 100% renewable energy future ..."</p> <p>'... WWF was a co-founder of the MSC and openly promotes MSC certified products. WWF considers that the full application of the MSC's rigorous and robust standards and procedures is critical to ensuring the maintenance of its leadership position ....'</p>
GP	Corporate partners within 'Detox Campaign', 'Greener Electronics Guide' and the 'Consumer Goods Forum' and Facebook	<p>'... Although Greenpeace is best known as a fierce opponent to corporate polluters, the organisation also works in cooperation with big business when corporate leadership is ready to transform its actions on behalf of the environment ...'</p> <p>'... This case shows that the FSC needs to urgently establish certification safeguards in high risk areas where there are high levels of corruption and where good governance, the rule of law and organised civil society are all lacking ...'</p> <p>'... Greenpeace calls on other palm oil producers to follow GAR's initiative rather than hide behind weak legislation and certification systems, such as the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). If the palm oil industry is to erase the bad reputation it has acquired among consumers and financial institutions, it needs to be clear which plantation companies are truly committed to protecting Indonesia's remaining forests, and those which will continue their destructive practices ...'</p>
FOE	None	<p>'The UN has been working very closely with big business in developing and promoting the concept of "Green Economy" which is selling out nature and people and greenwashing a broken and unfair economic system at the expense of sustainable development ...'</p> <p>'As an alternative to the ICC awards, Friends of the Earth is part of the Greenwash Academy which itself is presenting awards to corporations which are greenwashing their bad social and environmental practices. FoEI has exposed the real story of big business bad practices around the World in its report Clashes with Corporate Giants'</p>

(Continues)

TABLE 5 (Continued)

NGOs	Examples of corporate partners	Illustrative quotes
		<p>'Attempts to use certification schemes to reduce the widespread environmental and social problems caused by growing crops for fuels and animal feeds are bound to fail, states a new report released today by Friends of the Earth groups...'</p> <p>“‘The certification of palm oil by the RSPO does not halt deforestation, it does not halt the expansion of damaging oil palm plantations and it does not benefit local communities. Basically, it fails to deal with the causes of the palm oil problems,” said Friends of the Earth International Agrofuels Campaign Coordinator Torry Kuswardono from Indonesia. Small but quickly growing quantities of palm oil are being certified by the RSPO. The certification of palm oil is seen by many as a way to make the palm oil industry look “responsible” or “sustainable” ....’</p>
GW	None	<p>‘... In general, we are not confident about voluntary systems involving businesses. Sometimes they work, and sometimes they do not, and we do not see them as a substitute for binding regulations and accountability. There are times in which there may be an argument for a voluntary system as a first incremental step along the way, but the danger is that a voluntary system negates the potential and opportunity for a mandatory system and that is absolutely what we want to avoid.’</p> <p>‘Particularly in the area of forests and palm oil, we have significant concerns about how the certification schemes are functioning. We do not rule it out. The certification scheme is a very broad term, but there are far too many that do not deliver on the intended aims and vision.’</p> <p>‘... Global Witness totally rejects these accusations. We are not funded by multinationals, as a quick look on our website would show, where all our funders are declared (see page 11 of our 2011-12 financial statement) ....’</p> <p>‘... A report published by Global Witness today shows how unlikely this is to work. The report – Wilful Ignorance: How Japan's voluntary approach is failing to stop the trade in illegal timber – shows that corporate self-regulation under Japan's current voluntary timber legality system has had little, if any, impact on business practices ....’</p> <p>‘... In response to a civil society campaign, the diamond industry launched a system of self-regulation in January 2003 to support the Kimberley Process, an international certification scheme between governments designed to keep diamonds from conflict zones out of legitimate trade. But Global Witness investigations have shown that elements of the diamond industry continue to trade in conflict and illicit diamonds, while the rest of the industry turns a blind eye. The World Diamond Council and other diamond trade bodies have not systematically monitored how the self-regulation works in practice ....’</p>

companies and environmental groups to create environmental guidelines for the industry as a whole. Clearly, this was not enough’. In other cases, a company that partnered with CI or WWF was targeted by the other NGOs. For example, GP criticised McDonald's (partner of CI) for sourcing soya from the Amazon region, leading to the destruction of the rainforests. Similarly, HSBC (partner of WWF) was targeted by GW on alleged tax evasion and money laundering.

## 5 | DISCUSSION

This paper conducted a longitudinal cross-case analysis of five NGOs positioned differently on the reformative-radical spectrum. By tracking the sentiment of a sample of 5880 press releases issued by these NGOs, we were able to uncover distinct trajectories of individual NGOs, in turn reflecting a polarisation in the sentiments of radical and

reformative NGOs. Reformative NGOs are found to adopt a more positive framing of businesses over time, whereas radical NGOs have increasingly distanced themselves, reflecting a less co-operative and more adversarial stance over time. Hence, we observed an increasing polarisation in the radical and reformative environmental NGOs' emotional framing. This polarisation followed a path dependency, as those who started as less negative have employed even more co-operative language while those with more negative framing have turned even more adversarial.

Our assessment regarding cross-sector partnership patterns with MNCs also reflects this path dependency. An NGO's previous interactions with the private sector and shared experiences as part of ongoing partnerships may reinforce its acceptance of future cross-sector partnerships. We have observed this in the case of WWF and CI. These reformative NGOs have already positioned themselves open to market-led initiatives and corporate partnerships at the beginning of

our period under analysis. Their experiences and personal ties with corporate partners may have reinforced future cross-sector partnerships (Burchell & Cook, 2013b; Le Ber & Branzei, 2010; Payne & Calton, 2017). We not only observed that WWF and CI had repeated partnerships with the same corporate partner after a successful partnership (CI with Starbucks, Disney and HP, WWF with Coca-Cola), but can also assume that the overall success of cross-sector partnerships reinforced their willingness and openness to partner with others.

The path dependency explained above appears to also apply to radical NGOs, especially FOE and GW, but negatively. NGOs that are opposed to the adoption of more collaborative approaches due to the loss of legitimacy and independence of NGOs (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Burchell & Cook, 2013b) may, as a consequence, reject cross-sector partnerships with MNCs, owing to concerns about the potential for their agendas to be diluted and 'hijacked' by businesses for public relations purposes (Stafford, Polonsky, & Hartman, 1998). For example, the concern for 'selling out' their missions or general avoidance of being associated with a multinational corporation was voiced by FOE and GW.

To sum, those NGOs engaging in cross-sector partnerships were also associated with more positive emotional framing. Both emotional framing and cross-partnership activities intensified over time, demonstrating the role of positive experience and relationships in reinforcing NGO partnership strategies on emotional framing. On the contrary, those who rejected partnerships continued to do so and exhibited increasingly negative emotional framing over time.

These path dependencies present some risks for both radical and reformative NGOs. At the reformative end of the spectrum, NGOs' co-optation might result in the loss of autonomy, reducing their capacity to assume the role as an independent third party next to the state and the market (Ossewaarde et al., 2008) and thus effectively representing the interests of wider society. At the same time, it may result in the loss of public legitimacy of these NGOs and partnerships and even wider private governance initiatives they participate in (Baur & Schmitz, 2012). In other words, there is a risk that reformative NGOs can 'become voices of – rather than watchdogs over – official agencies, political parties and powerful individuals in global governance' (Scholte, 2004, p. 224). At the radical end of the spectrum, refusal to enter into cross-sector partnerships with the private sector not only means that no direct access to corporate leaders can be gained, thus potentially foregoing the opportunity to bring about change from within and losing a range of significant funding opportunities. It may also lead to the exclusion from significant parts of the recently emerging private governance architecture, including various new-generation multi-stakeholder initiatives. Thus, to a certain extent, there is a risk that some more radical positions become marginalised or even excluded from the organisational field (Laasonen et al., 2012).

The potential co-optation of reformative NGOs and the marginalisation of radical NGOs may limit both the functionality and credibility of multi-stakeholder initiatives. This is significant given that multi-stakeholder initiatives have become essential parts of governance for sustainable development. The credibility and effectiveness of sustainability-related norm-building, rulemaking or standards-

setting will suffer if a substantial part of the NGO sector chooses not to engage in these initiatives. From a policymaking perspective, this imbalance creates the need to actively try to promote more radical voices in governance mechanisms to enhance their credibility and balance. This also includes the need for national governments to create conditions under which multi-stakeholder initiatives can be effective governance mechanisms (Gond, Kang, & Moon, 2011).

## 6 | CONCLUSION

Our paper makes three distinct contributions to the existing literatures on NGO-business relationships (Baur & Schmitz, 2012; Bendell, Collins, & Roper, 2010; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Yaziji & Doh, 2009), cross-sector partnerships (Seitanidi & Crane, 2008; Selsky & Parker, 2005) and framing in the context of NGOs (Luxon, 2019; Pesqueira et al., 2020). First, our longitudinal perspective allows us to identify trajectories in the development of framing at reformative and radical environmental NGOs over time, whereas the extant literature has been dominated by conceptual work and case-based inquiries (den Hond, 2010; den Hond & de Bakker, 2007; Yaziji & Doh, 2009). Second, we demonstrated that NGOs' emotional framing vary depending on their position in the radical-reformative spectrum (Luxon, 2019). Third, as a methodological contribution, we demonstrate how sentiment analysis tools can be usefully applied to the analysis of NGO-business relationships and more specifically to NGO campaigning in the context of MNCs.

We are aware of several limitations affecting our data and methods. The WordStat dictionaries we have used for the sentiment analysis have widespread applicability but could be refined further to capture the specific language and style found in NGO press releases. Nevertheless, their extensive and successful use in several contexts, many related to ours (Dabic, Colovic, Lamotte, Painter-Morland, & Brozovic, 2016; Lock & Seele, 2016), suggest that this limitation should not be severe. Furthermore, press releases constitute one of a range of engagement mechanisms and contributions to the discourse on corporate responsibility for NGOs, and the method applied in this study, therefore, evaluated one specific dimension (emotional framing)—rather than the entirety—of this discourse. There is also a risk of missing different dynamics that may have been developing in NGOs and sectors other than those that we have included in this study (cf. Idemudia, 2017). Crucially, the trends and patterns identified here may not extend to other types of (e.g., smaller, community-based and service-oriented) NGOs not included in our sample. Therefore, this type of analysis should be replicated with other NGO types. Likewise, the addition of other types of—quantitative and qualitative—data and media and the application of other methods can be expected to generate a more in-depth picture of framing over time and NGO-business relationships more generally.

Future research should include the application of more diverse samples and the fine-tuning of dictionaries used in this study. Likewise, it could engage more directly with the framing contests between companies and NGOs (MacKay & Munro, 2012), for



example, concerning specific norm-building processes such as corporate responsibility standards (Haack, Schoeneborn, & Wickert, 2012). Another promising avenue for future research is a more focused analysis of factors that determine the extent to which international NGOs scrutinise individual sectors and companies. A quantitative analysis of the spotlight effect (Spar, 1998) would contribute towards a better understanding of the dynamics underlying NGO campaigning and shed further light on strengths and limitations of private governance mechanisms in the context of wider governance.

We conclude by highlighting that while we have observed an increasing polarisation in the context of environmental NGOs, it remains to be seen whether and up to which point environmental NGOs will continue to gravitate towards the two extreme positions and how this will impact the private governance architecture.

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**How to cite this article:** Dzhengiz T, Barkemeyer R, Napolitano G. Emotional framing of NGO press releases: Reformative versus radical NGOs. *Bus Strat Env*. 2021;1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.2758>



## APPENDIX A: TWO ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF HIGHLY POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE SENTIMENT (RED INDICATING NEGATIVE TERMS, GREEN INDICATING POSITIVE TERMS)

### 1. Press release: Greenpeace – 15 December 2011 (z-score +4.06)

Facebook commits to **clean** energy future

Amsterdam, 15 December 2011 - Greenpeace and Facebook today announced that they will **collaborate** on the **promotion** of **renewable** energy, **encourage** major utilities to develop **renewable** energy generation, and develop programmes that will **enable** Facebook users to save energy and **engage** their communities in **clean** energy decisions. The news comes two years after Greenpeace launched its global Unfriend Coal Campaign, enlisting 700,000 online activists to call on Facebook to power its datacentres with **clean** energy instead of coal. As a result of the announcement the campaign ends today. "Greenpeace and Facebook will now work together to **encourage** major energy producers to move away from coal and instead invest in **renewable** energy. This move sets an example for the industry to follow", said Tzeporah Berman, Co-director of Greenpeace's International Climate and Energy Program. "This shift to **clean**, **safe** energy choices will help **fight** global warming and **ensure** a stronger economy and **healthier** communities". Facebook's goal, announced today, is to power its operations, including its data centres, using **clean** and **renewable** energy. The company will build on its **leadership** in energy **efficiency** through the Open Compute Project to **encourage** other IT companies to power its operations with **clean**, **renewable** energy. "Facebook looks forward to a day when our primary energy sources are **clean** and **renewable**, and we are working with Greenpeace and others to help bring that day **closer**," said Marcy Scott Lynn of Facebook's **sustainability** program. "As an important step, our datacenter siting policy now states a preference for access to **clean** and **renewable** energy. Another important step will be to work with Greenpeace to put the power of our platform to use for the environment. Greenpeace has been particularly **effective** using Facebook to spark environmental **awareness** and action, we are **excited** to work with them to explore new ways in which people can use Facebook to **engage** and connect on the range of energy **issues** that matter most to them - from their own energy **efficiency** to access to **cleaner** sources of energy." As part of the agreement, the social media giant will continue pursuing on-going research into energy **efficiency** and the open **sharing** of that technology through the Open Compute Project which Greenpeace will work to support. Facebook also plans to engage in dialogue with utility providers about the sources of energy that power their data centres. "Facebook's commitment to **renewable** energy **raises** the bar for other IT and cloud computing companies such as Apple, IBM, Microsoft, and Twitter," said Casey Harrell, Senior IT Analyst for Greenpeace International. "The Facebook campaign proved that people all over the world want their social networks powered by **renewable** energy, and not by coal. Greenpeace will continue to measure, report and campaign on the sector's **progress** to green the cloud". Greenpeace and Facebook have also agreed to develop and **promote** experiences on Facebook that help people and organizations connect with ways to save energy and engage their communities in **clean** energy **issues**. Greenpeace makes extensive use of Facebook to engage its **supporters** in campaigns, and is the most 'liked' environmental non-profit organization on Facebook. Greenpeace is an **independent** global campaigning organisation that acts to change attitudes and behaviour, to **protect** and **conserve** the environment and to **promote** **peace**.

### 2. Press Release: Friends of the Earth – 08 May 2007 (z-score –3.35)

Shell's **misleading** ad: Complaints submitted - 'Oil refineries emit smoke not flowers'

May 8, 2007, BRUSSELS (BELGIUM), LONDON (UK), THE HAGUE (THE NETHERLANDS) – **Complaints** are being **filed** today, May 8, in three European countries **against** a **shameless** advert that makes **exaggerated** and **misleading** green **claims** about oil giant Shell's operations. Friends of the Earth International is **filing** simultaneous **complaints** to the national advertising standards authorities of Belgium, the Netherlands, and the UK about Shell's advert which depicts the outline of an oil refinery emitting flowers rather than smoke and **claims** that it uses its "waste CO2 to grow flowers and [its] waste sulphur to make concrete". Friends of the Earth International is **objecting** to the overall message and imagery used. The advert says 'Don't **throw** anything away, there is no away' - which may be true, but the **implication** that Shell carries out its operations in line with this is **false** and **misleading**. Shell's advert is also **misleading** because it suggests that Shell uses all of its waste CO2 to grow flowers while in reality it uses less than 0.5 percent of it to grow flowers. Shell **boasts** that at a refinery in the Netherlands, CO2 is piped to heat greenhouses, saving 350,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide a year. This is only 0.325 per cent of Shell's direct emissions. According to Shell's own figures, it emitted 100 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2005. Paul de Clerck, Friends of the Earth International's Corporates Campaigner said: "Shell is one of the world's **dirtiest** companies. People living next door to Shell's refineries around the world can vouch for that. Shell should spend money **cleaning** up its **mess**, not on **deceiving** the public with **expensive**, **dishonest** adverts. We hope that the advertising standard authorities will take immediate action to **withdraw** the advert and order Shell to air a correction to the audiences reached with the **misleading** advert." There are people **suffering** from the effects of the **pollution** emitted by Shell's refineries in Nigeria, South Africa, the US and the Philippines, among others. In Nigeria, Shell **wastes** gas, a by-product of oil, by flaring it, **despite** having been ordered to **stop** by the Nigerian High Court. Shell's **illegal** flares emit sulphur which causes acid rain and **devastates** the environment and **corrodes** people's **homes**. In Durban (South Africa), for example, Shell emits 7,300 tonnes of sulphur dioxide a year, much of which it could recover and reuse. People living near Shell's refinery **suffer** from high rates of **asthma** and respiratory **diseases**, thought to be caused as a result of breathing in high levels of sulphur dioxide.

## APPENDIX B: SEARCH TERMS FOR QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

## Search terms

agreement\*

contract\*

conjoin\*

coalesc\*

collaborat\*

cooperat\*

partner\*

partnership\*

allianc\* OR ally\* OR alli\*

coalition\*

collective\*

pact

Bond\*

join\*

pair\*

unification OR unifi\* OR unify\*

union\* OR unit\* NOT united

merg\*

connect\*

confederation\* OR confederat\*

participat\* OR participant\*

side\* with

pool\* resources, pool\* together

team\* up

work\* together, work\* jointly, work\* side by side with, work\* in unison

stand\* together

act\* jointly

get\* together

pull\* together



## APPENDIX C: COMPANIES INCLUDED IN THE SAMPLE

Automobile	Bank	Chemicals	Construction	Electronics
BMW	Banco Bradesco	Air Liquide SA	Acciona SA	Apple
Daimler	Banco Santander	Air Products	ACS	Cisco Systems
Dongfeng	Bank of America	Akzo Nobel NV	Bouygues	Dell Inc
Fiat	Bank of China	BASF SE	Cemex SAB DE CV	Fujitsu
Ford	Barclays	Bayer AG	CRH plc	Hewlett-Packard
Honda	BBVA	Dow Chemical	Eiffage	Hitachi
Hyundai	BNP Paribas	El du Pont de Nemours	Hochtief	Hon Hai
Nissan	China Construction Bank	Linde	Holcim Ltd	IBM
Peugeot	Deutsche Bank	Monsanto	Kone	LM Ericsson
Porsche	HSBC	Praxair Inc	Lafarge	Nintendo
Renault	ICBC	Saudi Basic Industries	Obayashi Corporation	Nokia
Suzuki	JP Morgan Chase	Shin-Etsu Chemical	Sacyr Vallehermoso	Panasonic
Toyota	Lloyds Banking Group	Solvay	Saint-Gobain SA	Qualcomm
Volkswagen	UniCredit Group	Syngenta	Sekisui House Ltd	Sony Corporation
Volvo	Wells Fargo	Yara International	Vinci	Toshiba Corporation
Food markets	Food, drinks & tobacco	Forestry	Hotels, restaurants & leisure	Mining
Ahold	Altria Group	CMPC	Accor	Alcoa
Carrefour	Anheuser-Busch InBev	Domtar Inc	Carnival	Anglo American plc
CBD-Brasil Distribuição	Archer Daniels	Fibria/Aracruz	Darden Restaurants	Barrick Gold
Cencosud	British American Tobacco	International Paper	Genting	BHP Billiton
Delhaize Group	Coca-Cola	Mondi	Las Vegas Sands	Eurasian Natural Res.
George Weston	Danone	Nine Dragons	Marriott International	Freeport Copper
Kroger	Diageo	Nippon Paper Group	McDonald's	Newmont Mining
Marks & Spencer	Imperial Tobacco Group	Norske Skog	MGM Mirage	Nippon Steel
Metro AG	Japan Tobacco	OJI Paper Co Ltd	OPAP	Norilsk Nickel
Morrison Supermarkets	Kraft Foods	Sappi	Royal Caribbean	Rio Tinto
Safeway	Nestlé	SCA Forest Products	Starbucks	Sumitomo Metal Mining
Sainsbury	PepsiCo	Smurfit Kappa	Starwood Hotels	Teck Cominco
Sysco	Philip Morris International	Stora Enso Oyj	TUI	Usiminas
Tesco	SABMiller	UPM-Kymmene	Wyndham Worldwide	Vale
Woolworths	Unilever	Weyerhaeuser	Yum Brands	Xstrata plc
Oil & gas	Pharmaceutical	Retail	Transportation	Utilities
BP	Abbott Laboratories	Amazon.com	Abertis Infraestructuras	Centrica
Chevron	Amgen	Best Buy	Atlantia	Dominion Resources
Conoco-Phillips	AstraZeneca	Costco Wholesale	Canadian National Railway	Duke Energy
ENI	Bristol-Myers Squibb	CVS Caremark	Central Japan Railway	E.ON
Exxon Mobil	Daiichi Sankyo	Ebay	China Cosco	Electricité de France
Gazprom	Eli Lilly	H&M	CSX	Eletrobras
Lukoil Holding	GlaxoSmithKline	Home Depot	Deutsche Post AG	ENEL
Petrobras-Petróleo	Johnson & Johnson	Inditex	East Japan Railway	Exelon
PetroChina	Merck & Co	Kohl's	FedEx	FPL Group



Automobile	Bank	Chemicals	Construction	Electronics
Repsol-YPF	Novartis Group	Lowe's Cos	Mitsui OSK Lines Ltd	Gas Natural
Rosneft	Pfizer	PPR	Norfolk Southern	GDF Suez
Royal Dutch Shell	Roche	Staples	TNT NV	Iberdrola
Sinopec	Sanofi-aventis	Target	Union Pacific	National Grid
Statoil	Takeda Pharmaceutical	Walgreen	United Parcel Service	RWE Group
Total	Teva Pharmaceutical	Wal-Mart Stores	West Japan Railway	Veolia Environnement