

LIVING DEMOCRACY

INTEGRATING CORPORATIONS into the ECOLOGY OF DEMOCRACY

From an ecological worldview, we are each nodes in networks of relationships and corporations are one of the channels we create that organize those networks. Thus, corporations are not independent of us, nor unchangeable monoliths; we shape them moment to moment through our choices (deliberate or not) as citizens, owners, managers, investors, purchasers and more.

	WIDER CONTEXT	SPECIFIC FORCES
ENTRY POINTS FOR SHAPING CORPORATE BEHAVIOR		
Rules Citizens Establish Through Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rules governing financing of political contests and lobbying • Rules governing the “revolving door” between corporations and governmental bodies • Tax policies (Including \$125 billion in corporate subsidies annually) • Rules governing stock market transactions • Trade policies (e.g. NAFTA, Fast Track) • Policies determining what is public and what is privatized (e.g. 20,000 employees of US corporations now part of military operation in Iraq; corporate-run prisons & schools) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State corporate charters defining corporate purpose and limiting liability of officers (Not set in stone; altered in many U.S. states in recent history.) • Security and Exchange Commission rules • Anti-trust laws • Producer responsibility laws requiring corporations to reclaim and recycle what they produce (now common in the EU) • Environmental and buyer protection standards and those defining rights of workers to minimum wage, to unionize, to safety, to protection as “whistle blowers” • Courts granting corporations certain constitutional protections commensurate with real people (now being challenged in certain local jurisdictions)
Practices of Business & of Citizens that Create Norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen-led education & advocacy (including “buy-cotts” and boycotts) creating expectations and judgments shaping marketplace choices -- such as about the value of organic, fair labor practices, and ecologically benign growing and processing. • Individual and institutional purchasing choices (e.g. deliberately choosing local, sustainably produced, fairly paid) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industry-promoting bodies that set standards & practices. (From the legal production-quotas of OPEC to illegal price-fixing by agribusiness.) Such bodies exert influence in part through 61 lobbyists in Washington for each elected official there. • Citizen/industry collaborations to improve corporate standards. Bodies w/membership limited to cooperating corporations (e.g. Social Accountability International, TransFair USA, Ceres) • Individual companies setting standards concerning the environment, transparency, worker participation, unions, pay.

LANGUAGE CHALLENGES

“Consumer”: Falsely conveys that what we purchase disappears from the ecosystem, blinding us to consequences. More accurate terms: “Buyer” or “purchaser.”

“Democracy”: If defined simply as “elected government plus a market economy driven by highest return to shareholder” private power comes to supersede public power -- what FDR called Fascism.

