It’s the hegemony, stupid!

David Whyte

Finance, harm and white collar crime: An international workshop
KTH, Stockholm
15th-16th October 2015
The difference between what corporations do and what they say they do.

The former is imbued with amoral motivations, the latter with moral authority.

‘neo-liberalism’ as a system of ideas that guide practices.

neo-liberal morality looks like this?... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j1tnBOrCB7I
All systems of power rely upon moral claims as central to their legitimacy – moral claims seek hegemonic status.

challenges the mistake of thinking that the ‘bad guys have no morals’…

In corporate crime research discussions of morality in:
  • variants of CSR
  • Techniques of Neutralisation

CSR based on a variation of a myth: that corporations can have ‘good’ morals (rather than: corporate morality is always connected to amoral ends)

Some techniques of neutralisation based on moral justifications/some based on
10 Corporate Techniques of Neutralisation

- Denial of responsibility.
- Condemnation of the condemners
- Denial of victim
- Denial of harm or injury
- Appeal to higher loyalty

+ the following that apply to corporate crime

- Appeal to harm avoidance
- Denial of deviance
- Denial of the norm
- Denial by silence
- Denial of crime
Hegemonic (or counter-hegemonic) moral claims always stand somewhere behind techniques of neutralization.

And this common sense is always underpinned by the practices of key institutions (government/legal institutions/criminal justice agencies/academics).

It is those ideas and practices that give force to techniques of neutralisation.
The universalising myths of classical liberal theory irrevocably undermined by contemporary capitalism

Crisis in corporate hegemony

Market patriotism as the new morality?

Merkel on VW: "It is, of course, a dramatic event which is not good," she said. "But I think the reputation of German industry... is not so shaken that we are no longer considered a good place to do business."