On Transnational Politically Motivated Consumer Boycotts: Their Emergence, Evolution, and Ending

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Abstract:

This multiple case study aims to contribute to theory development by building a model of the emergence, evolution and ending of transnational politically motivated consumer boycotts (TPMCBs). A TPMCB can be defined as “an attempt by one or more parties to transform or punish a foreign government’s policies by urging individual consumers to refrain from purchasing products or services originating from this state in the market place.”

The study elaborates on theoretical notions from the fields of International Business-Society Management, Issues Management and Reputation Management. Five TPMCB cases were selected. Detailed case write-ups were provided based on qualitative interpretive content analysis of newspaper articles and talkbacks. Consequently, following Eisenhardt’s (1989) data analysis strategy, cross-case patterns were identified. Based on these patterns, a model of TPMCB evolution was developed.

The model explains that TPMCBs emerge when a critical event endangers a structure of mutual understanding between stakeholders in different societies. In order to give rise to a TPMCB, the boycott call needs to draw attention. Stakeholders meet each other in an arena in which a process of meaning making takes place. After this, realignment takes place, which can lead to boycott perpetuation or boycott discontinuation. TPMCBs were found to share a number of characteristics. Yet, the model cannot specify which actors get involved at a certain point in time and what actions they perform.

Keywords: transnational politically motivated consumer boycotts, Issues Management, evolution, TPMCB, boycott evolution, newspaper articles, talkbacks, Business-Society Management, Reputation Management, arena model, value areas
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Preface

In 2008, after having graduated as a political scientist in my native the Netherlands, I decided to look for foreign shores to prolong my academic career. My plan was to pursue a master’s degree in the fields of Business or Management to complement my previous studies. This plan materialized when I got accepted as a degree student at Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki, Finland. Now, two years later, I find myself writing the preface to my master’s thesis in International Management.

Over the past two years, I have been able to significantly extend my knowledge of themes in Business and Management. I developed a particular interest in issues concerning business and politics. While thinking about a subject for my thesis, I decided to study a subject in which I could apply my knowledge of politics on the one hand and my newly gained knowledge on Business and Management on the other hand.

Following the news closely, my attention was drawn to calls for a boycott of Danish companies as a result of the publication of cartoons depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper. In contemporary Islam, pictorial representations of Muhammad are generally prohibited. Danish companies doing business in predominantly Muslim countries saw their products removed from the shelves of local supermarkets and reported significant losses. Interestingly, companies did not become the target of boycotts because of their practices but because they were of Danish origin. Consumers in the Middle East felt offended by cartoons in Danish newspapers and the subsequent perceived refusal of the Danish government to take action. This phenomenon, in which companies find themselves the target of boycotts because they are being associated with a certain state which policies are rejected by consumers in export markets, is the focus of this study.

In the case of these boycotts, disputes with a political character are being addressed through consumption behavior, rather than through political engagement. British economist, activist and campaigner Noreena Hertz (2001: 190) illustrates this idea by
arguing that: “instead of showing up at the voting booth to register their demands and
wants, people are turning to corporations. The most effective way to be political today
is not to cast your vote at the ballot box but to do so at the supermarket or at a
shareholder’s meeting.”

Writing a master’s thesis in a summer in which Finland saw record high temperatures
has been a special —at times challenging— experience. At this place, I would like to
write some words of gratitude. First and foremost I would like to thank the Finns for
their friendship and for making it possible for me to study and live in their beautiful
country, which has become a second home. I also wish to thank the people at Hanken’s
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insights, support and comments on my work.

I am much obliged to my parents for their unconditional support and love, which has
enabled me to continue my studies abroad and move back to the Netherlands in the
possession of a master’s degree in International Management and many unforgettable
experiences. Furthermore, I consider myself privileged with my lovely friends and
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Thomas Hullegie
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“All right, what we are going to have to forgo is—penis.”

Aristophanes’s *Lysistrata*
Translation: Roche (2005: 425; emphasis in original)

In 411 B.C. Athens saw the performance of *Lysistrata*: a comedy by ancient Greek playwright Aristophanes (c. 445-375 B.C.). In the play, the women of Athens and Sparta are tired of the ongoing war between their city states. The play’s main character, Lysistrata, persuades the women of the two belligerent city states, Athens and Sparta, to withhold their men sexual privileges so as to force them to end the Peloponnesian War. Lysistrata assures the indecisive women that they will achieve their aim before long and presents the following strategy:

“[b]y Demeter and Persephone, absolutely! Imagine it: us lolling around all tatted up, our pussies’ sweet little triangles neatly plucked, and we float past them in our see-throughs, and our men get stiff as rods and want to screw, but we elude them and hold ourselves aloof—why, they’ll sue for peace real quick. That you can bet.”

Roche (2005: 426)

Lysistrata’s device proves fully effective: the women get their way and peace is concluded between the belligerent parties.

Centuries later, in the Ireland of the 1880s, Irish farmers were generally treated very poorly by their British landlords. Friedman (1999: 6) provides an account of the events that took place in the summer of 1880 between tenants and the estate manager Charles Cunningham Boycott:

“[a]fter several years of extremely dire living conditions for the Irish peasants, Boycott sent his tenant farmers into the fields to harvest crops at only a fraction of the regular wage. When they refused, Boycott and his family attempted to bring in the crops themselves; however, they had to give up, completely exhausted, after a few hours of work. Boycott’s wife pleaded with the tenants to go back to work, which they did; however, on rent day they were summarily served with eviction papers by constables under orders from Boycott. The outraged tenants called a mass meeting at which they persuaded Boycott’s employees (his servants, drivers, and herders) to desert him and his family.”
One could wonder what these seemingly unrelated tales have in common. The historical occurrences in the Lysistrata and the anecdote of landlord Boycott, the name giver of the boycott phenomenon, provide an interesting insight in the logics of the central phenomenon of this study, namely the boycott. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a boycott is defined as: “[w]ithdrawal from social or commercial interaction or cooperation with a group, nation, person, etc., intended as a protest or punishment.” In both tales, actors refrain from actions so as to advance certain interests. The Athenian and Spartan women deny their men physical intimacy in a bid for peace, whereas the tenants convince Boycott’s employees to cease activities for their boss so as to annul their eviction from the estate. Furthermore, in both tales, powerless or disenfranchised segments of society seek to change the course of events. Often, boycotts are mulled as a form of protest or punishment. In *Lysistrata*, women agree to exact peace by means of a ‘sex boycott’ although they ask themselves: “[w]hat on earth can women do? […] We’re just household ornaments in flaxen dresses and negligees you see through, all pretty made up and shod in our come-hither trotters” (Roche, 2005: 421). Concluding peace is apparently seen as a male activity in ancient Greek society. In the tale about the Irish peasants, the tenants’ weak power position is not caused by their sex —as is the case with the ancient Greek women— but their dependency on the estate to earn a living. For the tenants, convincing the employees to leave Boycott is one of the limited means open to them to have the eviction revoked. Accordingly, the boycotters wish to influence the course of events despite their limited possibilities to exert direct influence. Boycotts are hence referred to as “weapon of the weak” (cf. Scott, 1985).

In *Consumer Boycotts: Effecting Change Through the Market Place and the Media*, Friedman (1999) focuses on the consumer boycott, which he defines as “an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace” (Friedman, 1999: 4; emphasis added). Friedman (1999) argues that consumer boycotts can have consumer economic objectives, such as lower prices, as well as political objectives. For example, since 1970, various groups in the United States have used the boycott instrument to help realize their political objectives: women, gays, African Americans, Chinese Americans, and Jewish Americans (Friedman, 1999).
This study seeks to advance the understanding of what I refer to as *transnational politically motivated consumer boycotts* (TPMCBs). This boycott variant is called for by groups that wish to express their dissatisfaction with or punish an actor outside their own nation state. In this particular boycott, multinational enterprises (MNEs) are targeted by boycotts because consumers disagree with the policies of the MNEs country of origin. By boycotting MNEs, consumers aim to punish a foreign state for its policies or contribute to a change of the policies they reject. Thus TPMCBs have a cross-border character.

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part results in the formulation of the central question. In order to make the TPMCB phenomenon comprehensible and relevant to the central question, a number of steps will be taken. Firstly, van Tulder with van der Zwart’s (2006) idea of society as a triangular relationship will be discussed (cf. section 1.1). The section will discuss the institutional spheres that can be distinguished in a given society and their mutual interactions. Hereafter, given the cross-border character of TPMCBs, it will be argued that the process of intensifying globalization increasingly creates and reinforces the mutual interconnectedness of institutional spheres across national borders (cf. section 1.2). The process of intensifying globalization increases the chances that individual consumers come in contact with organizations belonging to foreign institutional spheres. Yet, as will be set forth, individual consumers’ chances of influencing or playing a role in decision making within organizations belonging to foreign institutional spheres are not necessarily the same as within domestic institutional spheres. This holds particularly true for foreign governmental spheres, which the actor consumers in TPMCBs ultimately disagree with. Consequently, political consumerism will be introduced as an alternative means of influencing foreign governments through consumer behavior (cf. section 1.3). The following section will discuss the role of a product’s country of origin in consumer behavior (cf. section 1.4) Subsequently, consumer boycotts will be categorized and introduced as an act of political consumerism (cf. section 1.5). After wards, the TPMCB phenomenon will be discussed as the focus of the study (cf. section 1.6). Finally, based on these sections, the study’s research problem and central question will be formulated (cf. section 1.7).

Based on the research interest set forth in the first part of this chapter, the second part of the chapter will discuss the study’s aims (cf. section 1.8), provide a brief overview of
the methods that will be applied (cf. section 1.9) and indicates the delimitations of the study (cf. section 1.10). At the end of the chapter, the study’s structure will be addressed (cf. section 1.11) and, as will be the case in all the chapters, a synthesis will be provided at the end in which the main arguments made in the chapter will be restated (cf. section 1.12).

PART I

1.1 Society as a triangular relationship
MNEs interact intensively with other actors in society. Within academics, Business and Society Management addresses the role of MNEs in society. Tulder with van der Zwart (2006) distinguish three societal spheres that interact with one another.

1.1.1 The Business and Society Management research agenda
As Meyer (2004: 61; cited in van Tulder with van der Zwart, 2006: xx) argues: “[a]lthough IB [International Business] scholars are arguably the prime experts on Multinational Enterprises (MNEs), they have contributed relatively little to explaining and evaluating ‘the role of MNEs in society’” This perceived gap has contributed to the relatively new Business and Society Management (B&S) research agenda, building on the collective insights of a number of scientific disciplines, like International Business and International Political Economy.

In researching consumer boycotts, addressing the issue of the role of MNEs in society, i.e., their interaction with other societal actors, can contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon. Indeed, as van Tulder with van der Zwart (2006: 3) state: “[t]he bigger and the more entangled with societal issues firms become, the more difficult it becomes to analyse firm strategies isolated from society and vice versa.” This is particularly true for TPMCBs because stakeholders from all parts of society are involved. Therefore, the following sections will introduce a concept which stems from the Business and Society Management (B&S) research agenda: the societal triangle.
1.1.2 The societal triangle

In *International Business-Society Management*, van Tulder with van der Zwart (2006) present their model of the societal triangle (Figure 1.1). Van Tulder with van der Zwart (2006: 8) distinguish three separate institutional spheres: civil society, state, and market with “a logic, rationality and ideology of its own.”

![Figure 1.1 The societal triangle](source)

Source: van Tulder and van der Zwart (2006: 8)

(1) The first sphere, *civil society*, “represents the sum of social relations among citizens that structures society outside of politics and business” (van Tulder and van der Zwart, 2006:8-9). It includes institutions such as churches, trade unions, the family, voluntary organizations and societal groupings. Steiner and Steiner (2009: 102) discuss the role of civil society in a global critique of business and define it as: “[a] zone of ideas, discourse, and action that transcends national societies,” thus underlining the fact that civil society’s engagement is not necessarily constrained by national boundaries. Civil society is coordinated by shared norms, values, structures and cooperation patterns within communal relations and regulated through participation and collective action. In this societal sphere, funds are derived from donations, sponsorships. Furthermore, unpaid volunteers play an important role. Civil society produces so-called *club goods or collective goods*, which “occupy the middle ground between private goods and public goods” (Anderson, *et al.*, 2001: 337), since they privately provide public goods to those who join the ‘club’, while excluding others. As in all three spheres, “discrepancies exist between who is pulling the strings *de jure* and *de facto* (van Tulder and van der Zwart, 2006: 9; emphasis in original). Within civil society organizations, managers (or technocrats)
are often powerful and not controlled by members by means of voting procedures. Fragmentation is a primary weakness of civil society organizations which is often caused by insufficient resources and high reliance on volunteers.

(2) The second sphere, the *market*, creates value and welfare for society by converting inputs, e.g.: natural resources, into outputs, such as products, and employment. The market sector is coordinated and regulated by competition, profits and rewards. Profits are the income of market organizations which produce private goods. In a managerial capitalistic system, managers run the company on behalf of shareholders and often tend to be much more influential than the shareholders and the members of the Supervisory Board. Monopolies and other forms of market failures are the primary weaknesses of this sphere.

(3) The third sphere, the *state* (government), provides a society’s legal framework. The state is coordinated by control and codification and regulated by legislation. Taxation is its main source of income, which it uses to provide public goods to its citizens. In parliamentary democracies, the legal control of the state takes place via the electorate and a parliament. However, actual control is often in the hands of civil servants who have not been democratically elected. As van Tulder and van der Zwart (*ibid.*) point out: “as a result of large and stable income flows which are minimally and infrequently (once in for years at election time)\(^1\) properly accounted for,” rigidity or bureaucratization is one of the government’s weaknesses.

As seen in Figure 1.1, none of the institutional spheres can operate in isolation of the other. However, the institutional spheres are often inward looking and in some societies the ideal is that they are separated. This is for example the case in the United States (van Tulder and van der Zwart, 2006). As Etzioni (1998) points out, market organizations operate and are grounded in society by legislation, competition and shared values and norms. Accordingly, there are a vast number of connections between the spheres. This interconnectedness increases the complexity of society but also creates the need for hybrid organizations that bridge the different institutional spheres (van Tulder and van der Zwart, 2006).

\(^1\) Prescribed election intervals vary across constituencies
1.2 Stepping across the border: the institutional spheres in a ‘flat world’

The above discussion of the societal triangle might convey the impression that the institutional spheres predominantly interact with one another within a certain society, more specifically within a certain state. Yet, the opposite is true: all three spheres maintain strong ties with institutional spheres in other states. Furthermore, the process of intensifying globalization expands these connections evermore.

1.2.1 Cross-border connections between societal spheres

States encounter each other in a large number of international forums, for instance in intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) like the World Bank, the United Nations, as well as within the framework of the European Union. Civil society organizations have established connections with representatives in other societies, resulting in the extraordinary growth of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) since the mid-1990s (van Tulder and van der Zwart, 2006). Examples include well-known organizations like Greenpeace, Oxfam, and Médicins sans Frontières. A steady increase in cross-border activities can also be seen in the market sector which has seen the number of MNEs increased markedly since the beginning of the 1990s. Icons like Coca Cola and McDonald’s are present in almost every state.

It is important to note that this growing interconnectedness takes place between organizations representing similar societal spheres in different states—as is the case in the examples above—but also between dissimilar societal spheres across borders, i.e., civil society organizations from a certain state focusing on the governments of other nations. Moreover, given the study’s focus on transnational politically motivated consumer boycotts, connections between institutional spheres that cross national borders are of particular interest. Figure 1.2 on the following page illustrates the possible relationships between the institutional spheres in different societies (x and y) in van Tulder and van der Zwart’s (2006) societal triangle by placing two societal triangles next to each other and establishing links between the spheres.
An intensification of the process of globalization

The growing interconnectedness between societal spheres across national borders is usually referred to with the controversial term globalization, causing some scholars to argue that “the world is flat” (Friedman, 2005). The globalization phenomenon is connected to the model of the societal triangle. For instance, in his study on the MNE, the national state and the distributional effects of globalization, Agmon (2005: 426) argues that “[g]lobalization is the outcome of the interface between national states and MNEs in a liberalized world market.” Currently, there is much focus on the concept in public and international debate, as well as in academia. In these debates, globalization is often conceptualized as a recent phenomenon. Some scholars argue that globalization is ‘nothing new’. They point out that the concept has its roots in the growth of large trading companies in the 16th century, like the Dutch East India Company. Rather than seeing globalization as a new phenomenon, the contemporary era has brought up an intensification of the processes of globalization through technological advances in areas such as transport and communication (cf. Steiner and Steiner, 2009).

Scientific literature provides a myriad of definitions of globalization. Waters (1995: 3), for instance, defines globalization as “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding.” Thomas Friedman (1999: 7-8) sees the concept as a process of “inexorable integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies to a degree never witnessed before —in a way that is enabling individuals,
corporations and nation-states to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper and cheaper than ever before.” According to Gray et al. (2006: 295) the terms globalization and internationalization can be used interchangeably since both “refer to trans-border movements of goods, services, capital, people, ideas, information, and symbols. The terms imply that countries are becoming increasingly interconnected through rising levels of cross-border interactions.”

A similar perception of globalization can be found in A.T. Kearney’s well-known Globalization Index. In this index, nations are ranked based on their scores in four key compounds of global integration; i.e., (1) political engagement, including foreign aid, treaties, and membership in international organizations, (2) personal contact, including travel, telephone calls, and remittances, (3) technological connectivity, tracking the number of internet users, host and secure servers, as well as (4) economic integration, combining data on international trade and foreign direct investment (The Globalization Index, 2007). A comparable logic underlies another often-applied index of globalization provided by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich. In the KOF Index of Globalization, three main dimensions of globalization are distinguished and measured: (1) economic, (2) social and (3) political (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, KOF Index of Globalization). Following these arguments, the meaning of globalization is in this study thus not constricted to the rise of the MNE but refers to the increasingly transnational character of the connections between the three institutional spheres.

1.3 Politicizing consumer choice: ‘voting’ across national borders
The possibilities that citizens have at their disposal in influencing societal spheres in their own society and in foreign societies differ. As will be argued, citizens have particularly few ways of influencing foreign governments. Yet, citizens, in their role as consumers, can try to punish a foreign government for certain policies it pursues or try to change these policies through their shopping behavior. This behavior is referred to as political consumerism.

1.3.1 Citizens’ interaction with the societal spheres within a society
Within a society, citizens’ interaction with the societal spheres occurs within the context of rights and duties (state), consumption of goods and services (market) and active
participation (civil society). In parliamentary democracies, citizens who enjoy the right to vote can influence the decision-making process during elections. Discontent with government policies can be punished by electing other representatives to fill office in the legislature. Citizens can influence civil society by actively participating in it. Indeed, civil society consists of the sum of social relationships among citizens; hence by actively participating in civil society organizations, citizens can alter the course of events. Civil society often targets state and market organizations’ policies. Consequently, citizens can, on the one hand, influence the civil society sphere by functioning as agenda-setters for civil society organizations, and, on the other hand, try to influence state and market organizations through active engagement in civil society organizations. As for market organizations, within capitalist societies, citizens can influence market organizations through their consumption choices. Dissatisfaction with provided goods or services will make people shift to other producers. This dissatisfaction can be caused by a large number of factors, including a product or service’s quality, price, and the conditions in which it was produced or provided. Considerations are not only economical, but can also be ethical, political and social. Furthermore, pressure can be put on market organizations through civil society organizations and the government.  

1.3.2 Citizens’ interaction with the societal spheres outside a society
The ability of citizens to influence societal spheres across national borders varies throughout. Citizens’ possibilities to influence foreign market organizations are equal to their chances of influencing domestic market organizations. They can send a signal with their consumption pattern, mobilize as civil society organization and / or demand legislation. Civil society is highly internationalized and it is through INGO membership or donations that citizens hope to have their voices heard.

However, complications arise when citizens seek to demonstrate discontent with the policies of state organizations in other societies. In the modern international system consisting of nation states, suffrage is generally restricted to citizens who are nationals of the state in question. Nevertheless, the effects of the policies of a state often have

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2 Monopolies and other forms of market-failures can restrict consumers’ options.
3 Exceptions to this general rule exist. For instance, under European Union law Every citizen of the Union residing in a Member State of which he is not a national shall have the right to vote and to stand as a
significance outside of its national borders. As a general rule, the more powerful a state, the bigger its influence across borders. The European Union, for instance, supports its farmers with artificially high prices and generous subsidies. Furthermore, the Union seeks to block the entry of developing country imports into its market with tariffs of more than 300 per cent. As a result of these agricultural policies, efforts of farmers in the developing world to earn a living are undermined, as chances to export to the European market are nearly impossible (Menon, 2005).

The absence of possibilities to directly influence political decision making in other states in combination with an intensification of interdependence between nations, has led to proposals that abandon the electoral system in which only nationals are enfranchised; e.g., political scientist Farzana Shalikh who suggest that every citizen in the world should be able to vote in a US election (BBC News Magazine, 2008). Likewise, in the build-up to the 2008 US presidential elections, The Economist aimed to give the world a vote by creating a global version of the US Electoral College, based on the population of each country. Ron Dorio, vice president of product and community development for The Economist Online was quoted as saying: “[w]e’re trying to recognize that the U.S. has a significant role in the world’s economy and politics and offer people a way to get a little bit off their chest” (Marketing Fox, 2008).

1.3.3 Political consumerism: making change through the marketplace

The section above presents a grim picture of the possibilities citizens have at their disposal to directly influence state organizations’ decisions in foreign societies. However, as van Tulder and van der Zwart (2006: 62) argue: “[a]ssertive citizens seek to exert direct influence on their environment rather than through the political process.” Noreena Hertz (2001: 190) points to the political apathy in many nations and argues that: “instead of showing up at the voting booth to register their demands and wants, people are turning to corporations. The most effective way to be political today is not to cast your vote at the ballot box but to do so at the supermarket or at a shareholder's meeting.” The reasoning behind this argument is the claim that “companies respond”,

candidate at municipal elections in the Member State in which he resides, under the same conditions as nationals of that State” European Union, EurLex, n.d., Treaty establishing the European Community (Nice consolidated version) - Part Two: Citizenship of the Union - Article 19 - Article 8b - EC Treaty (Maastricht consolidated version).
[Accessed, 6 July, 2010].
whereas governments “do nothing” (ibid.). However contestable this argument may be, satisfaction with a product of service is ultimately determined by numerous factors, which go beyond the adage: ‘a good product for a good price’. Consumers find it increasingly important whether a company takes its responsibilities toward society seriously (Hertz, 2001).

1.3.4 Defining political consumerism

When people use the market to pursue their political aims, they engage in the act of political consumerism. Although the phenomenon has been applied throughout history and is nothing new, the term political consumerism was first used in Denmark in the mid-1990s to understand a boycott of Shell (Micheletti, 2003). The concept is particularly visible in Scandinavia where it has been at scholars’ attention for decades (Stolle et al., 2005). Political consumerism can be defined as: “consumer choice of producers and products based on political or ethical considerations, or both” (Micheletti et al., 2003; quoted in Stolle et al., 2005; emphasis in original). The political consumer relies on his choice for particular producers or products in order to change institutional or market practices. Consumption choices are based on considerations of justice or fairness, or on an assessment of business and government practices (Micheletti, 2003). By custom, citizens are familiarized to express their political vents by voting in elections. Yet, political consumerism illustrates that there is a connection between consumer choices and political issues. In line with van Tulder and van der Zwart (2006) who notice a shift from exerting influence through political institutions toward direct influence on their environments, Micheletti (2003: 2) argues that:

“[t]here is, in other words, a politics of consumer products, which for growing numbers of people implies the need to think politically privately. This politicizes what we have traditionally conceived as private consumer choice and erases the division between the political and economic spheres.”

Applying the notion that politicizing consumer choice blurs the division between the political and economic spheres in the model of the societal triangle that was presented before, political consumerism can be seen as an exponent of the overlap between the societal spheres.

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4 In Danish, the original term is: ‘politiske forbruger’
5 Where Micheletti (2003) uses the term ‘erases’, I argue that it is more appropriate to say that the division between the societal spheres gets blurred.
1.3.5 Political consumerism as window of opportunity in cross-border issues

Political consumerism creates an arena for political action that expands the policymaking process by introducing new issues and participants (Micheletti, 2003). What is its impact on the problem of representation between citizens in one state and governments in other states? As argued before, since the beginning of the 1990s the world has experienced an intensification of the process of globalization which is in line with the steady rise of market organizations active in other states, so-called MNEs. For consumers, this implies that the chances that the services and products they purchase are foreign-made have increased. From the above section on political consumerism, it follows that consumer choices can take on political meanings. This combined with the increasing presence of foreign products and services in our ‘flat world’ provides a window of opportunity to citizens in a society to influence state and market organizations abroad.

1.4 Country of origin and shopping behavior

What role does a product’s country of origin play in consumers’ decision to buy or not to buy a certain product? An answer to this question naturally depends on the engagement of the individual consumer. As stated before, political issues are one of the possible considerations that shape consumer choices. In the end, it is the individual consumer’s own choice what value she attaches to these considerations. For example, the tendency can be observed that consumers drop their preference for organic food when they are on a tighter budget. According to a recent article in the *Financial Times*,

“[o]rganic food producers found that some supermarkets were removing their products from the shelves, as attention shifted to offering customers cheaper food. Organic food sales fell 9.7 per cent in 2009, according to Kantar, the grocery research company, from double-digit growth just a couple of years earlier” (Rigby, 2010).

Yet, literature in different scientific disciplines provides numerous accounts of the impact of a product’s country of origin. In a recent article, Sandıkcı and Ekici (2009: 208) introduce the concept of politically motivated brand rejection (PMBR), which they define as: “the refusal to purchase and / or use a brand on a permanent basis because of its perceived association to a particular political ideology that the consumer is opposed to.” In their study, the authors find preliminary evidence for this behavior. Although not clearly specified in the article, the connection between a particular disliked political
ideology and a state emerges from an example Sandıkcı and Ekici (2009: 217) provide in their Turkish case: “several informants mention a relation between Coca Cola and Israel and argue that religiously fundamentalist people prefer Cola Turka because Coca Cola supports Israelis.”

Other studies have focused on how a country’s image, for example its technological advancement, is used by consumers to assess the quality of a product (e.g., Papadopoulos and Heslop, 1993; Bilkey and Nes, 1982). Consumers perceive, for instance, Swedish cars as being safe, where German cars are often seen as reliable. These studies show considerable evidence for a connection between consumers’ purchasing decisions on the hand and an image of the country the product was manufactured in on the other.

Two important constructs have emerged from marketing literature. Klein (1998) addresses the concept of consumer animosity. Klein (1998: 346) argues that “anger related to previous or ongoing political, military, economic, or diplomatic events has been found to affect consumers’ purchase behavior.” Here the animosity is directed toward the producing nation. Shimp and Sharma (1987) distinguish the phenomenon consumer ethnocentrism which refers to beliefs held by consumers about the appropriateness of buying foreign-made products. According to ethnocentric consumers, “purchasing imported products is wrong, because, in their minds, it hurts the domestic economy, causes loss of jobs, and is plainly unpatriotic” (Shimp and Sharma, 1987: 280). In their article, the authors construct and validate the CETSCALE, an instrument to measure consumers’ ethnocentric tendencies.

1.5 Consumer boycott: simple concept, complex reality
If a product’s country of origin matters to consumers for diverging reasons, it is likely to influence their purchasing decisions. Moreover, people can cease their consumption of certain products so as to bring across a message of discontent; e.g., by switching to a competitor in the market, consumers can show their dissatisfaction with a change in taste of their favorite product. This form of consumer behavior is an example of a boycott. TPMCBs are examples of consumer boycott. A consumer boycott can be defined as “an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging
individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace” (Friedman, 1999: 4).

In order to account for the focus of this study, namely TPMCBs, a general discussion of consumer boycotts will be provided. Friedman (1999) presents a multitude of variants of the consumer boycott phenomenon, based on dimensions like place, time, target, and boycott launcher. Table 1.1 gives an overview of the different kinds of consumer boycotts that follow from Friedman’s (1999) categorization. As I shall argue later, the list is not complete, but is intended to introduce the reader to the different boycott variants that can be identified. Furthermore, it is important to note that the boycott variants are not mutually exclusive, i.e.: a boycott can, for example, be international, long-term, and part-time.

Table 1.1 Categorization of the consumer boycott

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Boycott variants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Supranational (international boycotts) / national boycotts / state boycotts / regional boycotts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Long-term boycotts / medium-term boycotts / short-term boycotts / full-time / part-time boycotts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boycott completeness</td>
<td>Commodity boycotts / single-firm boycotts / brand name boycotts / partial boycotts / complete boycotts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Launched by</td>
<td>Consumer groups / labor unions / organizations representing ethnic and racial minorities / religious groups / women’s rights groups / environmental groups / groups combining two or more interests etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions</td>
<td>Action-considered boycotts / action-requested boycotts / action-organized boycotts / action-taken boycotts / marketplace-oriented boycotts / media-oriented boycotts / positive boycotts / negative boycotts / obstructionist boycotts (including: sit-in, stand-in and call-in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Instrumental boycotts / expressive boycotts / punitive boycotts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targets</td>
<td>Surrogate boycotts / nonsurrogate boycotts / transformational boycotts / headquarters boycotts / primary boycotts / secondary boycott /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship offended and targeted actors</td>
<td>Beneficiary boycotts / conscience boycotts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: author’s interpretation of Friedman (1999: 8-17).

A first way of classifying the many boycot variants is to look at their intended geographic scope. By organizing boycotts according to this dimension, the geopolitical area in which the boycott is intended to take place is referred to. As Friedman (1985) points out, national boycotts appear to be the most widespread, followed by local boycotts. However, recent years have shown growth in the number of international boycotts.
In addition, boycotts differ in *duration*. Friedman (1999) distinguishes long-term boycotts, which extend beyond two years, mid-term boycotts which take between one and two years, and short-term boycotts with duration of less than one year between the moments a boycott is announced and its end. Often, however, it is hard to precisely determine when a boycott has ended. As Friedman (1999: 8) sets out: “[t]his is especially true for end points and particularly for those boycotts that fall short of their leaders’ expectations. In these instances announcing an end to a boycott may be tantamount to admitting the failure of one’s effort, and it is not hard to understand why such disclosures infrequently occur.”

Friedman (1999: 9) states that the third dimension, *boycott completeness*, refers to “how much they ask of consumer participants.” It thus concerns what products consumers are asked to refrain from purchasing. Commodity boycotts request consumers not to buy “all brands and models in a product or service category (e.g., all brands of granulated sugar)” (Friedman, 1999: 9). In other cases, the boycott targets only products from a certain manufacturer or retailer as in a single-firm boycott or of a certain brand, as is the case in a brand-name boycott. Boycotts also vary on the degree of abstinence of a certain product asked from consumers. In complete boycotts, consumers are requested to fully refrain from buying a certain product, whereas in partial boycotts, the consumer is asked to decrease his consumption. This is often the case with boycotts of goods in which the initiators are aware of the fact that many consumers might not be able to fully abstain from consuming the targeted product. Friedman (*ibid.*) illustrates the latter with an example of a coffee boycott in the US in the 1970s: “fully realizing that many consumers would not be able to make do without this beverage [the initiators of the boycott] called for a 50 percent drop in daily purchases.”

Boycotts have been initiated by large number of different actors. Examples are consumer groups, labor unions, organizations representing ethnic and racial minorities. Moreover, a boycott can be launched by groups with multiple interests.

Another way to distinguish boycotts is to look at their actions. As Friedman (1999: 10) argues: “[a]n examination of news accounts of boycott actions reveals that many of them follow a path of escalating militancy […] that begins with an announcement that a
boycott actions is under consideration.” Action-considered boycotts, then, do not go beyond this point, while in action-requested boycotts a boycott action is announced and consumers’ support is asked for. When, after this stage, a boycott is actually organized, it is called an action-organized boycott. Finally, when concrete measurements are being taken such as demonstrations in support of the boycott, one may speak of an action-taken boycott. Some boycotts, then, are more concerned with media attention than with action in the marketplace. These are referred to as media-oriented boycotts, while marketplace-oriented boycotts focus primarily on boycott activities in the marketplace. Apart from this, boycotts can be coined positive or negative. Positive boycotts request consumers to refrain from buying certain products, whereas negative boycotts focus on what to buy instead of what not to buy. Consumers are often provided with a list of accepted options. The latter boycott action is also referred to as ‘buycotts’

Yet another distinction between boycott actions that can be identified refers to the nature of the offending actions as perceived by the boycotting party. Violation of rights, such as consumer or animal rights, is often the reason behind a boycott announcement. In many cases the focus is on a perceived victim versus an offending party. In beneficiary boycotts those launching the boycott and the victims are the same, as is for example the case in an organized labor action (Friedman, 1999). On the other hand, when those who are perceived as victims and those who launch a boycott are not the same, we speak of a conscience boycott. A boycott launched to demand animal rights is a clear example of the latter.

A last distinction that can be made concerns the function of the boycott. What is it the boycott launchers agitate for? As Friedman (1999) points out, many boycotts have practical ends in mind. These are referred to as instrumental boycotts and can be contrasted with expressive boycott, which provides an outlet for the protesting group to vent frustrations. Hybrid forms of boycotts in which both practical ends as venting frustration are the punitive boycott. As Friedman (1999: 13; emphasis in original) argues: “[u]nlike the purely instrumental boycott, which attempts to persuade a target to take ‘corrective’ action, the punitive boycott is often an expressive response to a seemingly irreversible fait accompli.”
In studying boycotts, it is important to separately distinguish those whose actions are considered offensive by the boycotters and those that are actually targeted by a consumer boycott. Direct boycotts—boycotts in which the offending and the targeted party are one and the same—are then referred to as nonsurrogate or transformational boycotts. Interestingly, the offending party and the boycottee are not the same in many occasions. Often, the offending party is not directly accessible to the boycotters, so they choose another target for their actions. As Friedman (1999: 14) points out: “[a]n illustration of this kind of indirect action is the case of the group that finds itself dissatisfied with the government policies of a city, state, or foreign nation and acts upon its feelings by boycotting the business operating in the affected geographic area.” These indirect boycotts are also called ‘surrogate boycotts’:

“their objective is to transform issues concerned with objectionable practices external to the marketplace (such as a foreign government’s oppressive policies) into consumer-accessible marketplace issues. Transformational boycotts attempt to change political issues into economic ones so they can be acted upon by consumer ‘voting behavior’ consisting of dollar expenditures (or more appropriately, in the case of boycotts, the cessation of dollar expenditure) in the retail marketplace” (ibid.)

1.6 Transnational politically motivated consumer boycotts

Based on the preceding sections, the focus of this study, TPMCBs, can now be understood and defined. At the opening of this chapter, two historical boycotts were presented from which followed that the boycottee and the offending party are often not one and the same. Elaborating on concepts from the field of Business and Society Management, the societal triangle model with its three societal spheres was discussed.

The model was extended by establishing and discussing the links between societal spheres in different societies. It was argued that connections between spheres are not confined to the national setting but in an era of intensifying globalization, consumers’ lives are more and more influenced by the actions of societal spheres in other states. Yet, citizens in a society have very limited means of influencing the governments in another society. Consequently, political consumerism was introduced as an arena for political action that enabled citizens to affect governments in other societies through their role as customers, and of which consumer boycotts are an example. Examples from the literature underlined the expectation that a product’s country of origin can be a
determining factor in a consumer’s choice for a certain product. Ultimately, the boycott phenomenon was described and categorized.

In this study, the focus will be on the phenomenon in which consumers from a certain state seek to influence the policies of another state’s government by their consumption behavior, concretely by their boycotting of products or services that originate from the state which policies they oppose and seek to change. Given the absence of voting rights, they seek to put pressure on the foreign government by trying to hurt its exports. As emerged from the previous section, Friedman (1999) designates this boycott variant as the transformational boycott or surrogate boycott. However, this study is not only interested in those boycotts who seek to transform policy, but also in boycotts who seek to punish a foreign government for certain policies. Furthermore, to underline the cross-border character of the boycotts under scrutiny, I will speak of the transnational politically motivated consumer boycott (TPMCB). Elaborating on Friedman’s (1999) general definition of the consumer boycott as well as the preceding sections, a TPMCB can be defined as: “an attempt by one or more parties to transform or punish a foreign government’s policies by urging individual consumers to refrain from purchasing products or services originating from this state in the marketplace.”

1.7 Research problem and presentation of the central question
Based on the above, in this section the study’s research problem and central question can be formulated.

1.7.1 Research problem
In Boycotts are busting out all over, Putnam (1993) claims that boycotts have increased markedly in number, with 100 efforts under way in the early 1990s. Moreover, given an intensification of the process of globalization, TPMCBs can be expected to occur in a rising frequency. Hence, expectations are that MNEs will increasingly be identified as boycott targets not because of their own actions, but because of governmental policies of their country of origin. However, the phenomenon of TPMCBs is ill-understood and a thorough investigation of the process is absent from scientific literature in different fields in academia. Therefore, the research problem of this study can be formulated as follows:
“Addressing a perceived gap in the literature, this study seeks to understand how the TPMCBs evolve from the build-up of the boycott’s announcement to its final stages and which are the relevant actors involved in the process.”

1.7.2 Research questions

Building on the research problem presented above, the central question of this study can be formulated as follows:

- Central question:
  
  How do TPMCBs evolve and what are the relevant actors involved in the process?

In order to answer the central questions, the following questions will need to be answered:

- Subquestion 1:
  
  What are TPMCBs?

- Subquestion 2:
  
  What are the relevant actors involved in the TPMCB process?

PART 2

1.8 Research objectives

The observed absence of the TPMCB phenomenon in academic literature functions as the intellectual problem prompting the research endeavor. The study thus aims to develop a theoretical model of the TPMCB process. Accordingly, the first objective can be formulated as follows:

- Objective 1:
  
  The objective of this research is to contribute to theory development by providing a theoretical model of the TPMCB process.
In addition to the important theoretical insights to be accrued from undertaking this research, the research might also have practical benefits. Although it should explicitly be mentioned that this study particularly seeks to address a knowledge problem, its results might be used for informing corporate practice. As was indicated before, TPMCBs can be expected to become increasingly frequent in an era of intensifying globalization. As will become clear in the analysis (cf. chapter 4), becoming the target of a boycott like this can have severe implications for corporate performance. Although outside of the scope of this study, management can develop strategic responses to TPMCBs based on the improved understanding of the phenomenon. A second objective will thus be:

- Objective 2:
  
  *The objective of this is research is to contribute to corporate management’s tools for formulating a strategic response to TPMCBs by increasing knowledge about the phenomenon.*

1.9 Methods
The model of TPMCB evolution will be based on multiple case study research. Qualitative interpretive content analysis of newspaper articles and talkbacks has resulted in the detailed write-ups of five cases. Based on the steps identified by Eisenhardt (1989), a theoretical model was built based on cross-case patterns that were identified in the case write-ups through a process of induction.

1.10 Delimitations
The study is delimited in a number of ways. As indicated, TPMCBs are the focus of the study. This means that other consumer boycott variants will not be incorporated in the analysis. Furthermore, it means that only those boycotts will be addressed in which MNEs are targeted not because of their own actions, like the quality of their products or the way the their goods were produced, but because consumers in foreign markets identify them with a certain state whose policies they disagree with.

1.11 Structure of the study
This study is comprised of six chapters. After this introductory chapter, a review of relevant literature will be provided (cf. chapter 2). Consequently, the whole of
methodological decisions will be justified (cf. chapter 3). Hereafter, the actual analysis will be conducted and the model of the TPMCB phenomenon will be provided (cf. chapter 4). Subsequently, the results will be discussed in light of the research objectives and previous literature (cf. chapter 5). Finally, the central question will be answered in the conclusion and directions for further research will be suggested (cf. chapter 6).

1.12 Synthesis

In this chapter, I presented the argumentation behind the research problem. In the first part of this chapter, drawing on insights from different scientific disciplines, I set forth that by politicizing consumer choice, citizens can seek to affect decision-making procedures of governments in other states. Furthermore, an increase of links between societal spheres in different societies can be expected due to an intensification of the globalization process. One of the manifestations of political consumerism is the consumer boycott. Boycotters aim to transform political issues into economical issues. In doing so, these consumers try to make their influence felt. TPMCBs were introduced as the focus of this study, which followed in the formulation of the central question. In the second part of this chapter, the research objectives were specified and a brief overview of the methods was provided. I also touched upon the delimitations of the study. Ultimately, the structure of the study was presented.
CHAPTER 2

2

Literature review

“Failure to perform competently and credibly in the realm of public issues can be devastating to the prospects of any business. It is no stretching fact at all to say that business today has a new bottom line—public acceptance. Without the approval and support of society, it is obvious that financial success is irrelevant.”


In the preceding chapter, the TPMCB phenomenon was introduced. In order to improve understanding of this boycott variant, TPMCBs were discussed in a context derived from Business and Society Management (the societal triangle) and Marketing (political consumerism). Yet, at large, such framing of a phenomenon in academic literature does not provide a sufficient review of the relevant literature for the study.

In order to conceptualize the TPMCB phenomenon, this chapter will provide a an overview of the relevant literature to “facilitate the reader’s understanding of the world under study” Patton (2002: 457). In the absence of a cut-and-dried theory to facilitate this study, this literature review draws on received theoretical notions from multiple fields. Firstly, Issue Management (IM) will be introduced. After that, Reputation Management (RM) will be introduced as complimentary field. Eventually, the focus will be on pluriformity of audiences in an era of intensifying globalization.

2.1 Issues Management

Expectations are that particularly the field of Issue Management can present a useful framework for analyzing our special research area, the TPMCB phenomenon. In academic literature the discipline goes by a number of names: Issue Management (Chase, 1976), Issues Management (Schoonman, 1991; Heath, 2002), Strategic Issue Management (Ansoff, 1980) and Strategic Issues Management (Heugens, 2001; Heath and Palenchar, 2009). I will adopt the term Issues Management (IM) in reference to the field, for, as Greening and Gray (1994: 468) point out: IM is interested in “corporate responses to social and political issues or economic issues with the potential to generate
a social or political response.” Expectedly, this focus within the field is more in line with this study’s particular research interest. Strategic Issues Management, on the other hand, focuses on issues which are perceived as having an effect on organizational objectives and can, in addition, also address purely competitive issues (Greening and Gray: 1994). Nevertheless, the distinction between the subdisciplines is, to say the least, unclear. I will therefore draw on insights from the broader field.

According to Heath and Palenchar (2009: 5), IM as an applied discipline has been conducted for centuries. Government leaders as well as business managers have “responded to, created, and managed issues as a part of their routine activities.” Issues Management as a scientific discipline, on the other hand, is of relatively recent date. Generally, its origins are traced back to the 1970s, more specifically to 1976, the year in which Howard Chase, a public affairs practitioner, coined the term ‘issue management’ for the first time within a public affairs context. The view of Heath and Palenchar (2009) that the newborn field did not describe a new phenomenon is shared by Wartick and Heugens (2003: 8), who point out that “a new term like issues management finally provided public affairs professionals with a label they could use to describe and legitimize their activities.” In this section, Issues Management (IM) as an academic field will be discussed. Firstly, IM will be defined. Consequently, the so-called issue life cycle will be introduced. Expectations are that this cycle can contribute significantly to an understanding of the TPMCB process. Finally, the focus will be on the symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution.

2.1.1 Defining and characterizing an issue
As often in social sciences, a myriad of definitions can be distinguished, from which the author’s respective focus can often be gathered. Ansoff (1980: 133) defines an issue as “a forthcoming development, either inside or outside the organization which is likely to have an important impact on the enterprise to meet its objectives.” Others argue that issues are “critical events that, if left unattended, could threaten [a company’s] social legitimacy” (Heugens, 2001: 1). Focusing on a company’s relation with public opinion, according to Schoonman (1991) an issue is an event or trend which can affect a company or organization over which no direct control can be exerted.
As Zyglidopoulos (1997) points out, within the Business and Management literature, issues have been conceptualized as (1) social issues, (Mahon and Waddock: 1992), (2) public issues (Buchholz: 1988), and (3) corporate issues (Wartick and Mahon: 1994). According to Mahon and Waddock (1992: 20) issues can be defined as:

“social problems that may exist objectively but become issues requiring managerial attention when they are defined as being problematic to society or an institution within society by a group of actors or stakeholders capable of influencing either governmental action or company policy”

Consequently, Bigelow and Fahey’s (1993: 18) definition of the public issue argues that: “[p]ublic issues are ones that involve multiple stakeholders with competing interests and involve some form of collective action.” The collective action can be defined in terms of the public policy process, but may also occur in arenas other than governmental ones such as bargaining with local communities or intersectoral collaborations (Bigelow et al., 1993). Finally, drawing on the literature in the field, Wartick and Mahon (1994: 306) provide a definition of a corporate issue. According to the authors, an issue is:

“(a) controversial inconsistency based on one or more expectational gaps (b) involving management perceptions of changing legitimacy and other stakeholder perceptions of changing cost/benefit positions (c) that occur within or between views of what is and/or what ought to be corporate performance or stakeholder perceptions of corporate performance and (d) imply an actual or anticipated resolution that creates significant, identifiable present or future impact on the organization.”

Notwithstanding the important contributions of the definitions above, but taking into consideration the purpose of this study, I adopt Zyglidopoulos’s (1997: 71-72) definition, which—drawing on both the social, public, and corporate definitions above—comprehensively defines an issue as:

“a controversial inconsistency based on one or more expectational gaps of what is considered appropriate behavior within a particular society concerning a certain type of cost/benefit decision, with implications for corporate performance and behavior. In other words, an issue is a controversy that exists at the intersection of the public and corporate arenas, and has implications for both society and the corporation.”

According to the definition, there needs to be an expectational gap (cf. Reichart: 2003). Such a gap exists when relevant actors hold different view on what is and what ought to be corporate performance on a particular issue (Wartick and Wood: 1998; Heugens 2001). The literature on issues usually distinguishes three types of such gaps (Wartick
and Mahon: 1994; Wartick and Wood: 1998). (1) Factual gaps refer to disputes between groups concerning inconsistencies in their assessment of the facts. In case of a (2) conformance gap, parties agree upon the facts of an issue, but differ on their desirability. Finally, (3) ideals gaps refer to issues where actors hold differing views about “the values at stake” (Heugens, 2001: 45). From the definition, it follows, that a certain level of controversy must exist.

2.1.2 Issues and public opinion

Largely unnoted amid Anglo-American scholars in the IM field, Schoonman’s (1991) introduction of the concept of Issues Management in the Netherlands contributes to the literature review by connecting the issue concept with that of public opinion. She explains that there is no such thing as the public opinion. However, what exists are relatively generally shared views on various socio-cultural, economical, political, societal, and ethical questions. According to Schoonman (1991), public opinion consists of two groups: target groups and public groups. Target groups actively try to make contact with companies. Conversely, public groups either try to make contact with companies or are inherent in companies, like employees. For a certain group to be a target group, it needs to be commercially interesting for a company. Likewise, for a group to be a public group, it needs to maintain functional relations with the company. Public opinion can have a stimulating effect on corporate performance, but can also have a disruptive impact. An issue, then, is shared by the company and the larger public.

According to Schoonman (1991), in order for a certain development to become an issue, two conditions need to be fulfilled. Firstly, a trend or a societal breeding ground needs to be present. As Schoonman (1991: 14) argues, “trends are often not well-delineated sets of opinions.” A trend can be the result of another trend and they can be melting into one another. An example of such a societal trend is consumerism. According to Wiley (2009: 477) consumerism is “a powerful ideology in which the pursuit of material goods beyond subsistence shapes social conduct.” Products can, for example, serve as a means for an individual consumer to distinguish herself from the public at large. Secondly, for a development to become an issue, there needs to be a cause to spark off the issue. Causes can be accidents, incidents or they can be brought up by the media. Schoonman

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6 Schoonman (1991) uses the Dutch terms doelgroepen and publieke groepen respectively.
(1991) explains that there is a positive relationship between the extent to which individuals feel (they could be) personally affected by an issue and the pace in which the issue passes off; the greater the feeling that a certain incident might affect the individual, the more likely it is that it develops into an issue. This point can be illustrated by taking the example of a flood. People in low-lying deltas are likely to be more affected by such an occasion than people who live in places situated high up in the mountains. Hence, the flood may ignite the issue of global warming, which is often seen as a cause of rising sea levels in the communities in the low-lying areas, but may keep the status of incident in the more elevated areas.

Drawing on the work of psychologist Hermans (1974), Schoonman (1991: 17) adopts the concept value area, which she defines as: “all ethical, social, cultural, economic, and political choices which a society makes in a given period of time” and which are reflected in “legislation, in a certain popular representation, and in the way a society raises its children.” Value areas, in their psychological sense, are different for every human being. Nevertheless, in their societal sense, they are often shared by large parts of society. One of the characteristics of the intensity of value areas is that the further away an individual perceives this to be —emotionally as well as physically— the less its intensity will be (Schoonman, 1991). This implies that individuals are expected to be more concerned with occasions which they expect to have a personal impact; as was illustrated with the example of the flood. Moreover, this logic also applies to a period in time: the further away in time a certain occasion took place in time, the less of an impact it generally has on individuals. Yet, the emotional distance of an individual has the biggest influence in determining the individual’s perception of the gravity of a case (Schoonman, 1991). The notion becomes self-evident if we imagine the case of a natural disaster, like the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico which took place in the spring and summer of 2010. Geographically, those living in the coastal areas are more likely to assess the accident as grave than those who are not directly affected by its consequences. In time, the importance individuals dedicate to the accident will decrease, the more time passes. Finally, individuals sympathetic to environmental issues are likely to perceive the incident as severe, whereas those who do not hold special interest in the degradation of the natural environment are more likely to assess the incident as less important.
As can be seen in Figure 2.1, the intensity of an issue is based on an individual’s geographical and emotional distance to the issue as well as to the time passed since the birth of the issue. The individual representation presented in the figure portrays a picture of a person who is very emotionally involved with the issue, although she lives far away from the place where the issue takes places and much time has already passed.

Figure 2.1 An individual’s distance to an issue


2.1.3 The issue life cycle construct

In chapter 1, TPCMBs were introduced as the central phenomenon of this study. The phenomenon was referred to as a process. Typical for any process is that change takes place during its life span. They have, in other words, an evolutionary and sequential character. In order to build a model of the TPMCB process, it is essential to lay down a guideline of how processes develop in stages. IM provides a guideline of this type by means of the issue life cycle model, within the literature also referred to as natural history framework (Lamertz et al.: 2003) or evolution model (Wartick and Heugens, 2003).

Interest in the issue life cycle is usually traced back to at least the early 1970s (e.g. Down, 1972). Issue life cycles played and still play a significant role within the broader field of IM, despite severe criticism on early models. Underlying the issue life cycle is the assumption that issues are not fundamentally unpredictable (Wartick and Heugens, 2003). Quite the reverse: so-called natural history models (Lamertz et al.: 2003) identify sequential stages, usually three or four, which issues go through (Heugens: 2001; Zyglidopoulos: 2003).
According to Lamertz et al. (2003) two varieties of the basic models of the issue life cycle can be identified. The first one is concerned with describing the process of corporate responsiveness to evolving issues (cf. Ackerman, 1975). Core of this variant is the idea that as time passes, attempts to influence the evolutionary course of the issue become more complicated. Therefore, it is important for organizations to identify issues as early as possible, preferably when they are in their emergent stages.

The second variant gives a picture of social issues within the public policy process. This cycle portrays the evolution of an issue from its emergence to the eventual implementation of legislation. In Post (1978), for instance, such an issue life cycle model is developed. As can be seen in Figure 2.2, four stages are identified in his version of the issue life cycle. In the first stage, issues emerge when “a gap develops between the actual performance of a corporation and public expectations about what the performance should be (Post, 1978: 23; emphasis added).

In the first stage, (1) emergence, the public —more often concerned groups or issue makers (Schoonman, 1991)— becomes aware of a problem with an organization’s performance and consequently develops ideas about how its performance should change. This stage can be of long duration and might even last months or years (Bigelow et al.: 1993). Consequently, in the second stage, political controversy erupts as (2) politicizing of these expectational gaps takes place. As Heugens (2001: 44) states: “[a]t this stage the issue becomes widely discussed in the media, becomes a top priority for related interest groups, and may be introduced into the formal public policy process by politicians.” In the following stage, the (3) legislation phase, legislation concerning the issue becomes enacted. Ultimately, in the last stage, (4) litigation, “stakeholders and governments jointly establish enforcement standards and time tables for meeting the new requirements” (ibid.).

Figure 2.2: An example of a natural history issue life cycle

Source: author’s interpretation of Post (1978).
2.1.4 Shortcomings of the natural history issue life cycle model

In their guest editorial published in Corporate Reputation Review, Wartick and Heugens (2003) identify three future directions for IM. The first one concerns issue life cycles, which they aim to develop theoretically by “enriching them with concepts and insights from other branches of the social sciences” (Wartick and Heugens, 2003: 14). As they argue, natural history models are to date dominant in the field, despite extensive criticism.

Among others, Bigelow et al. (1993) identify a number of serious shortcomings of the traditional model. Firstly, their typology acknowledges that an issue’s evolution begins prior to stakeholders’ establishment of their position vis-à-vis the issue. This is in line with Schoonman’s (1991) argument that a trend needs to exist before an issue erupts. Secondly, they recognize that public issues may be solved in arenas other than the governmental one. This means that issues need not necessarily go through the stages of legislation and litigation as identified by Post (1978). They can be settled, speaking with van Tulder and van der Zwart (2006) in or between other societal spheres. The third critical remark the authors make concerns the facts. Bigelow et al. (1993) argue that facts can influence an issue’s evolution in two ways: (1) they may diffuse an issue that has already become public by recasting it and (2) the emergence of new facts serves to galvanize public attention and catapult an issue back on the agenda. Although facts are neutral, stakeholders’ perception of their meaning varies. A fourth shortcoming concerns the evolution through stages. Bigelow et al. (1993) argue that evolution is not always linear. Stages in the model can be skipped, for instance when the resolution stage is reached, even despite other stages being circumnavigated. Moreover, issues may “cycle back through stages” (Bigelow et al., 1993: 24). A fifth weakness of the ‘traditional’ model is that does not account for the fact that different stakeholders can be positioned in different stages within the model at a same point in time. Some stakeholders are well-informed, whereas others have limited information at their disposal, thus enabling the former to engage in strategies before other stakeholders become aware of the issue. Finally, they endorse the idea that issues are not necessarily solved since issues compete for stakeholders’ attention. Furthermore Bigelow et al. (1993: 22) argue that:
The emergence of new issues may abort or stall the development of existing issues or [...] recast existing ones. Similarly, policies or other outcomes that result from other issues may serve to ‘resolve’ an issue either temporarily or permanently before it reaches the resolution stage.”

2.1.5 Toward a symbolic interactionist perspective to issue evolution

The shortcomings provided above are shared by Lamertz et al. (2003) who provide an alternative model of issue evolution. Moreover, the authors argue that within natural history models, “[i]ssues are [...] modeled as moving through an evolutionary cycle that is semi-detached from the deeper cultural and institutional structures of the societies in which they play out” (Lamertz et al., 2003: 82). The idea of multiple societies with their own characteristics is in line with our findings in Chapter 1. The central assumption in the model is the idea that issues exist foremost in the minds of the disputants.

The framework Lamertz et al. (2003) propose is grounded in a symbolic interactive perspective, adopted from Blumer (1971). Typical of this perspective is the assumption that a “social problem exists primarily in terms of how it is defined and conceived in society” (Blumer, 1971: 300). Interaction among social actors is mediated by symbols and meanings, which are socially constructed and subject to manipulation through interpretation (Lamertz et al., 2003). Social constructivist theoretical approaches are applied in a number of scientific disciplines. The literature on the constructivist theoretical approach within the field of International Relations (IR) provides a number of valuable insights that might help to improve understanding of the model provided by Lamertz et al. (2003).

Firstly, as Guzzini (2000: 159) argues: “[c]onstructivism does not deny the existence of a phenomenal world external to thought. This is the world of brute (mainly natural) facts.” Yet, “[w]hat counts as a socially meaningful object or event is always the result of the world out there. [...] Our interpretations are based on a shared system of codes and symbols, of languages, life-worlds, social practices.” Constructivists suppose, in other words, a socially constructed reality in which material facts receive their meaning through actors’ interpretations. Indeed, as Lamertz et al. (2003: 84) argue: “[t]he symbolic interactionist framework proposed here specifically avoids attributing independent ontological status to issues or events.” This assumption is in line with
constructivism, which employs an intersubjective ontology or ontology of becoming (Locher and Prügl, 2001). Within the constructivist approach, material facts as well as social facts like ideas, norms, identities, shared meanings, rules and institutions are assumed to have explanatory power (Christiansen et al., 1999: 530). What are the consequences of applying constructivist notions to issue evolution? Firstly, Lamertz et al. (2003: 84) draw the conclusion that:

“[t]herefore, an issue is described here not simply as a social problem that receives a predictably fluctuating share of public attention, but as a socially constructed discontinuity that arises from performance problems and disrupts an organizational field by interfering with the established meanings attributed to actors and their patterned interactions.”

Secondly, it implies that “issue evolution is therefore less a natural process of fluctuating public attention and more a social process of constructing and negotiating meaning in a context of ongoing social relations and transactions” (ibid.)

2.1.6 A symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution

Based on the notions discussed in the previous section, Lamertz et al. (2003) present a symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution, which can be seen in Figure 2.3 on the subsequent page. In imitation of the model’s creators, the model will be discussed in four steps. Although the model stresses institutional elements, this will not be the direct focus of this study.

Figure 2.4: A symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution

Source: Lamertz et al. (2003: 85).
a) From enacted structure to structural failure

Firstly, the model supposes an enacted structure, which the authors define as: “a set of shared agreements that emerges as social actors ‘work out’ the terms under which they will engage in joint acts and a set of institutional rules that guide future actions” (Lamertz et al., 2003: 84). The assumed agreements in the enacted structure include “the rules of conduct and the role expectations for participants in the social structure” (ibid.). Rules and roles need not be understood as determining behavior, but rather as interpretative frames (Weick, 1995). In a continuous process of social interaction, actors interpret one another’s behavior so as to shape their own conduct within the ‘negotiated order’. The level of mutual understanding determines the stability of the enacted structure. As the authors set forth, a high level of mutual understanding “provides a basis for the emergence of identities, which constitute social actors’ self-focused interpretations of how rule compliance and role performances merge into a coherent image” (Lamertz et al., 2003: 85).

As can be seen in the model, external pressure may be exerted on the enacted structure. This pressure originates in environmental conditions which may impact the structure’s development and maintenance because they shape the processes of interpretation and enactment among the system’s actors. As a consequence of external pressure, actors may be confronted with information overload or non-routine situations, which may result into poor decision-making. Too much pressure, then, can lead to structural failure of the ‘negotiated order’. In this situation, too little, too much or unfamiliar information can negatively affect actors’ ability “to use existing interpretive frames for making sense of external conditions and the endogenous events to which they give rise”, resulting in “the collapse of sensemaking among social actors and the associated disintegration of interaction patterns and role structure” (ibid.).

b) From structural failure to issue definition

Structural failure is a necessary ingredient in giving rise to an issue’s emergence. Yet, for an issue to emerge, a situation needs to exist in which the actors compete to assert a certain interpretation of the sensemaking failure, an issue definition, which is in line with their respective interests. When an existing enacted structure fails to provide sensemaking for a particular event, actors will search for a rival framework to explain the event. This new interpretative framework might clash with the views of other
participants. Hence, “[i]ssues can then be conceptualized as contests over the creation of meaning, arising as social actors disagree over the causes and consequences of events that precipitate structural failure of the negotiated order” and emerge “when key social actors who seek to make sense of disruptive events utilize conflicting alternative interpretive frameworks” (Lamertz et al., 2003: 84).

The amount of public attention a certain issue receives through its presence in the media influences “the manner in which the social actors involved account for and interpret the events that gave rise to that failure” (ibid.) The authors assume that the greater the public attention, the more likely it is that key social actors will deliberately construct an issue definition which is in line with their interests. In addition, it is argued that structural failure can lead to identity threat. Lamertz et al. (2003) assume that the greater the threat to the identity of key social actors, the more likely those actors will deliberately attempt to construct an issue definition consistent with their interests.

c) From issue definition to institutional redesign
Lengthy periods of dysfunctional interactions between actors and contested meanings serve as a motivation for social actors to push for institutional redesign in line with their definition of the issue. This can be done in two ways. Firstly, through so-called attention advocacy, when public attention is likely to push all actors affected by a social issue toward resolution and motivate them to advocate an issue definition to the powerful actor or relevant authority that favors their interests. Secondly, in the case of identity advocacy, actors’ identities provide them with an incentive to present their own definition to influential peers or relevant authorities as the most convincing account of what happened (Lamertz et al., 2003).

d) From institutional redesign to issue outcomes
In this stage, two directions in which the issue evolves can be identified. Firstly, a social issue can be resolved. Issue resolution takes place “when an intervention attempt by public or private authorities restores a meaningful enacted structure among the social actors comprising an organizational field” (Lamertz et al., 2003: 89). This step fulfills the issue cycle, since the initial point of departure of the model is reached. Nevertheless, issues may also remain unsolved. Contrary to issue resolution, issue perpetuation is expected to take place when “an intervention attempt by public or private authorities
fails to restore a meaningful enacted structure among the social actors” (Lamertz et al., 2003: 89).

2.2 Reputation management
A clear notion that emerged in the previous section is the important role of the media in shaping public opinion (Schoonman, 1991; Lamertz et al., 2003). Yet, IM literature fails to account clearly for the question how media and the public interact so as to construct views on what actors perceive as the real course of events. To make up for this shortcoming, Reputation Management (RM) will be introduced in this section. Although the aim is not to provide an extensive overview of the discipline, capita selecta from RM literature will be discussed based on their alleged contribution to an improved understanding of the analysis.

For the greater part, this section is based on Aula and Mantere’s (2008) Strategic Reputation Management: Towards a Company of Good since —contrary to other scholars in the RM field— Aula and Mantere (2008) provide a cycle in which reputations are created. Furthermore, the authors provide a model to explain how meaning is created, the so-called arena model of organizational reputation. Because of this, it elaborates on the finding that media as well as the public opinion play an important role in determining when an event becomes an issue or when an event affects corporate reputation. Reputation is believed to be made in communication, instead of by communication. Finally, Aula and Mantere (2008) bring the concept of culture into the equation, which expectedly functions as an important construct in our study of a cross-border phenomenon as the TPMCB.

2.2.1 Reputation Management: managing the corporate reputation
What are the central issues to the field of RM? As the name identifies, RM is interested in the ways organizations (can) manage their reputation. Yet, this raises a number of other questions. For instance, what do we mean by reputation and why would companies care about it? Numerous definitions can be found in the literature. Van Riel (1995), for instance, provides no less than ten definitions of the concept. Moreover, reputation as a concept is often used interchangeable with concepts as image and identity. Indeed, when looking up the lemma ‘reputation’ in the index to van Riel’s
(2001) bulky book *Corporate Communication: Het managen van reputatie*, one can find: “see also image” (van Riel, 2001: 701; emphasis in original). Van Riel (2001: 14) argues that reputation refers to: “a positive or negative overall impression of people or organizations.” In an older work, however, van Riel (1995) consistently applies the term corporate image. Aula and Mantere (2008: 15) see the concept reputation as “reflecting intangible organizational capital, which is founded on, and mediated by, the concepts of trust, respect, and social capital.”

Nonetheless, Aula and Mantere (2008: 27) argue that corporate reputation and corporate image are not one and the same “even though the concept of reputation is deeply connected to image.” They identify a number of aspects in which reputation differs from image. I include them here because they work illuminant on the understanding of the reputation concept. As Aula and Mantere (2008: 27-28) set forth:

1. reputation consists of symbolic meanings, for example stories, whereas reputation is more oriented to how things appear. Reputations and image hence represent different but overlapping aspects of organization;
2. reputation is dynamic, as meanings are constantly enacted in stakeholder sensemaking. Image is believed to be less dynamic;
3. reputation is non-centralized as it is held and constantly re-enacted by a variety of stakeholders. It is more fragmented than image. As such, reputation can be influenced by various parties but it is much harder to ‘manage’ or ‘control’ than reputation is;
4. reputations evolve over time and cannot be fashioned as quickly as images (adopted from Bennett and Kottasz, 2000).

Aula and Mantere (2006) emphasize the idea that reputation is an idea that evolves over time. It may, on the one hand, change over time and connect different temporal perspectives on the other. Corporate reputation, then, can be understood as a combination of a company’s past actions, its current state as well as future prospects. By applying this perspective on the creation of reputations, the authors enable a sequential analysis of reputation.
2.2.2 Reputation as conditio sine qua non

In the streets of Helsinki, one can spot trucks from the Lindström company which bear the following text: “Lindström cares for your image”. Lindström is a Finnish company which provides, among other things, hygiene services for washrooms as well as mats. On the corporate website, it is argued that “Lindström is a global business-to-business partner that strengthens the corporate image of its customers by means of textiles and cleanliness” (Lindström – Lindström in brief). Further onwards, the following rhetorical questions are posed: “[w]hat image do you want the entrance to your business to convey to your customers? An image that is clean, tempting and stands out?” (Lindström – Services). Assuming that the company does not necessarily distinguish between corporate reputation and corporate image, the question arises: “why would a company want to strengthen its corporate image?” Or, more generally, “why do reputations matter to companies?”

As van Riel (2001: 15) argues, “a good reputation is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve an end. It could be perceived as a way to achieve a positive point of departure for establishing (commercial) ties with interest groups on which [a company] depends.” In line with this finding, Aula and Mantere (2008: 23) argue that “[a] good reputation helps companies acquire capital and facilitates financing.” In this economical view, reputation is viewed as capital. It differs from other forms of corporate capital in the sense that it is an intangible resource. From this perspective, reputation is something that belongs to the owner, who can put it to good use to improve corporate performance.

As can be seen in Figure 2.4, Fombrun and van Riel (2004) present a modification of Porter’s (1985) often-used value chain, in which they include the variable reputation and which illustrates the role reputation can play as capital for a company. From the model, the impact of a positive corporate reputation can be derived.

Figure 2.4 A reputational value chain

2.2.3 Creating reputation: the arena model

Another way of looking at reputation is to perceive reputation as interpretation, for, as Aula and Mantere (2006: 49) argue, “regarding reputation solely as capital creates a false sense of control.” Just like Lamertz et al. (2003) emphasize the role which interpretation plays in determining what is and what is not believed to be cause or consequence of an issue, Aula and Mantere (2006: 21) state that “reputation lies to a great extent elsewhere than in its actual subject […], i.e. among a company’s audience, stakeholders, interest groups, and others.” And, as they argue further on, “reputation is based on experiences and ideas that stakeholders use to evaluate organizations” (Aula and Mantere, 2006: 33). Therefore, they propose that reputation should also be studied as interpretations among stakeholders.

In their book, the arena model of organizational reputation is introduced to reconcile the economic and interpretive viewpoints of reputation. Underlying the model are two basic assumptions. Firstly, (1) reputation is seen as a process of social construction. Stakeholders thus create their own reality. Apart from this, (2) reputation is negotiated; i.e., sensemaking takes place through interaction between the company and its stakeholders and when people accept or reject a reputational message based on their respective cultural backgrounds.

As can be seen in Figure 2.5, a corporate reputation is negotiated between organizations on the one hand and the public on the other. The media functions as the arena in which reputations are negotiated. A similar finding was discussed by Schoonman (1991) for issues. Organizational communication occurs in many places, e.g., the exchange of texts, new and digital media, television, and the Internet are examples of places in which organizations seek to convey their message and where they receive messages from the greater public. Yet, the arena model is more complex than a mere sending and receiving of messages.
In the model, organizations and the public encounter each other in an arena. Both actors bring their own cultural background to the arena. Furthermore, apart from intended messages, actors also bring unintended massages to the arena. Through communication, which takes place in several media, meaning is negotiated. Reputations which the public deems fit are accepted, whereas corporate reputational messages that do not fit the public’s ideas are rejected. In the arena, beliefs are enacted and re-enacted. Yet, communication can also break the existing meaning-making structures. Hence, communication has integrating as well as dissipative elements (Aula and Mantere, 2008; cf. Lamertz et al., 2003).

2.3 Pluriform audiences and democratization of the news

A last subject that needs to be discussed in our theoretical framework is that of multiple and or pluriform audiences. Although this issue was touched upon in previous sections, it is important to underline its importance. Given the fact that TPMCBs have a cross-border character and given the theoretical expectation that the media play an important role in shaping public opinion, MNEs are likely to be active in multiple arenas where they find themselves confronted with publics with diverse cultural backgrounds. As Aula and Mantere (2008: 55) set forth:

“[t]he interpretive view of reputation portrays an organization as a collection of people, a network, whose border with its environment is more or less wavering. […] The organizational person brings to these encounters [between organization and public] his entire value system; his world view; his concept of self, others, of his own organization and that of others. In these encounters a person utilizes his identity.”
Identities will codetermine \textit{a priori} which messages the actors will send in the arena and what views they will utter. Identities, which are ideas about \textit{Self} and \textit{Other} (Wendt, 1999), vary among individuals and groups. It is a safe bet to expect audiences in different states to have different identities. And, for that reason, the stances they take in the battle in the arena will be different. Based on these notions, Aula and Mantere’s \textit{reputation arena model} can be modified so as to include multiple publics. As can be seen in Figure 2.6, at one point in time, an organization can find itself confronted with a number of audiences.

Figure 2.6 The reputation arena with multiple audiences

![Diagram of the reputation arena with multiple audiences](image)

\textit{Source:} reputation arena model adapted by author from Aula and Mantere, 2008: 63.

Another important issue concerns the media, or the reputational arena in which reputational battles are fought. An important leitmotiv in Schoonman’s (1991) argument is the role of the media in shaping issues. In addition to issue makers like non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and interest groups, media play a decisive role in igniting an issue. The author argues that particularly the television plays an important role in the selection of news items and the way they are presented. Almost 20 years after her book was published Internet might have taken over the role of television for at least some news consumers. According to a survey conducted in 2008 by a Dutch market bureau research under 1,419 respondents of 13 years and older, 87\% use the television as one their news sources whereas 65\% indicated to include using the Internet for that
purpose. Moreover, 80% expect to use the Internet as a news source by 2029 versus 72% who expect to use the television as a news resource in that year, making the former the expected main source of news in twenty years from now (TNS NIPO, Nederlandse jongeren: in 2029 internet nieuwsbron nummer 1).

The finding that the televisons functions as an important news source for many and the increasing role of the internet raises the matter of the pluriformity of audiences. Television channels—with few notable exceptions—are often confined to a state’s territory. This means that people in different states consume different news items or a different representation of similar occasions. As was illustrated with Figure 2.1, news consumers’ assessment of the relevance of an issue depends on their distance to the issue. For people in different states, distances might differ. Moreover, the media’s representation of issues can largely differ.

In addition, the Internet has increased the supply of news tremendously. It has brought the possibilities of accessing news sources from all over the globe. Furthermore, the Internet has enabled the ordinary citizen to step into the shoes of the journalist. As Professor of Communication Science Joan Hemels (2001: 320) argues: “[t]he traditional sender organization dominated relation between suppliers and users of communication messages and information sources experiences […] a sort of reversal: the initiative lies much more with the latter category.” The process of the rise of citizen journalism made possible through the Internet is often referred to as ‘the democratization of news’. The well-known online encyclopedia Wikipedia is a prime example of this ‘democratization process’. The above process can be expected to have an effect on issues. Internet sources may ignite issues. Yet, citizen journalism is not being guided by the same principles and standards that professional journalist are expected to apply. Less than traditional media, many internet sources neglect verifying facts. Moreover, Internet users make their own selection of news items, whereas television viewers let the sender organization determine the news they consume. This implies that the Internet provides a platform for people with certain interest or views to deliberately surf the web for news items that suit to their interest or are in line with their views.

From the above the conclusion can be drawn that MNEs operate in markets in which an issue is assessed in diverging ways. An incident can develop into an issue in a certain
state and at the same time pass by unnoticed in another. Furthermore, the modern citizen has taken up the role of provider of news, whilst the Internet enables news consumers with similar values to communicate. The Internet can thus been seen as an important new arena in which issues are born and developed. This development should be viewed as an addition to Schoonman (1991) who attaches these qualities to traditional media. In this era of intensifying globalization, companies active in multiple markets like MNEs can accordingly expect to be confronted by criticism stemming from international, pluriform audiences.

2.4 Synthesis
The literature review presented in this chapter borrowed insights from two scientific disciplines: IM and RM. As was argued in the chapter, in order for an issue to come into existence, actors need to experience a discrepancy between beliefs of what a company ought to do and actual corporate performance. Prior to the emergence of an issue, a trend must be present, which functions as a seed-bed in which the issue can develop.

The issue life cycle was introduced because the study aims to build a model of the evolution of TPMCBs. Natural history cycles provide such a sequential perspective of an issue’s development. Yet, these models have received criticism in the literature. Issues, for instance, do not always move in a linear way, and can skip stages in the model. Drawing on this criticism, other models were developed, of which the symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution was extensively discussed because it emphasizes the importance of the concept of interpretation. Actors assess facts and make sense based on their own understanding. In this context, social constructivism which assumes the existence of a socially constructed reality was briefly touched upon.

RM was introduced because of gaps in IM literature to explain how perceptions of facts, which underlie an issue, are constructed. It was argued that organizations and media encounter each other in an arena. The media can be one of these arenas. Moreover, sense-making in the media has changed because of the Internet. Finally, Aula and Mantere’s (2006) reputation arena model was modified to explain that MNEs which are engaged in cross-border activities can be expected to be confronted with pluriform and multiple audiences.
CHAPTER 3

3 Methods

In the previous chapter, relevant literature for this study was reviewed. Drawing on IM and RM, I outlined the theoretical notions that will inform the analysis. This chapter, then, presents the justification for the whole of methodological choices. As Blaikie (1993: 7) expresses in brief, these choices determine “how research should or does proceed.” Methodological choices do not come out of thin air. To prevent the methods section from becoming a rambling story, the methodological choices need to be logically consistent with the study’s central question and research objectives.

Therefore, this chapter will commence with a brief section in which the study’s central question and aims will be repeated (cf. section 3.1). After this, the qualitative-quantitative distinction will briefly be touched upon (cf. section 3.2). Consequently I will account for the unit of analysis and the ‘sample’ (cf. section 3.3) and justify the choice for case study research (cf. section 3.4), followed by a justification of the data selection (cf. section 3.5) and data analysis (cf. section 3.6). Hereafter, I will explain the choices made in relation to the study’s analytical approach (cf. section 3.7). The chapter will be concluded with sections on establishing reliability and validity (cf. section 3.8) and ethical issues (cf. section 3.9). Ultimately, a synthesis of the methodological choices discussed in this chapter will be provided (cf. section 3.10).

3.1 Central question and aim of the study

The central question of this study is (cf. section 1.7):

- Central question:

  *How do TPMCBs evolve and what are the relevant actors involved in the process?*
The objectives of this study are (cf. section 1.8):

- **Objective 1:**  
  *The objective of this research is to contribute to theory development by providing a theoretical model of the TPMCB process.*

- **Objective 2:**  
  *The objective of this research is to contribute to corporate management’s tools for formulating a strategic response to TPMCBs by increasing knowledge about the phenomenon.*

### 3.2 The quantitative-qualitative distinction

In quantitative research, scholars aim to infer generalizations from a large population. Quantitative researchers, then, are concerned about the external validity of their study, which “refers to the likelihood that a study’s findings will apply to the larger population represented by the study’s sample (Donmoyer, 2008). As Patton (2002: 14) argues: “[t]he advantage of a quantitative approach is that it’s possible to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data.” Qualitative research methods, on the other hand, “facilitate study of issues in depth and detail” (Patton, 2002: 14) over a much smaller number of cases. As a consequence, the depth of understanding of the cases studies is being improved. However, generalizability is being reduced. The qualitative researcher tries to understand social phenomena in their particular context (Silverman, 2006).

In order to understand the evolution and the relevant actors involved in TPMCB in-depth information is needed. Furthermore, as the phenomenon is clearly a social phenomenon, in which ideological convictions are involved, we are interested in the meaning participants attach to their actions themselves. Based on these considerations, expectations are that a qualitative design will provide the necessary tools to conduct an analysis and make the necessary inference to establish a model of the TPMCB phenomenon.
3.3 Unit of analysis
TPMCBs involve the three societal spheres van Tulder and van der Zwart (2006) identify: the market, the state, and in most but not all cases civil society. Furthermore, individual consumers can be identified as actors in the TPMCB, since the influence that TPMCBs can exert in punishing a foreign government or in changing its policy ultimately depends on the individual consumer’s willingness to participate in the boycott. In the analysis, the following stakeholders will be analyzed:

- **targeted MNEs**: the internationally operating companies that become the target of a consumer boycott;
- **governments**: the governments of the country of origin of the boycottee as well as that of the boycotters;
- **civil society organizations**: the organizations through which boycotters may organize their boycotts;
- **individual consumers**: those supporting or rejecting the call for a boycott.

3.4 Sampling
3.4.1 Sampling strategy
The choice for a sampling strategy determines the way in which cases are selected based on which generalizations are made. The sampling strategy that will be applied in this study is *intensity sampling*. As Patton (2002: 234) explains: “an intensity sample consists of information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely”.

The TPMCB phenomenon appears in different intensities. Some TPMCBs make the headlines for a considerable time, while others are hardly noticed by the general public. I expect the sampling of information-rich cases to provide the most inclusive understanding of the TPMCB phenomenon. This is not to say that I seek to *a priori* determine cases in which the phenomenon follows a certain evolutionary path. On the contrary, I will try to establish a model in which, at different stages in time, different courses of events can be identified. To illustrate this point, in the issue life cycle model of Lamertz *et al.* (2003) which was discussed in section 2.2.6, at a certain point in time either issue resolution or issue perpetuation can take place.
The intention to select information-rich cases presumes knowledge about the cases. Indeed, the intensity sampling strategy is a type of purposeful sampling contrary to random sampling strategies. In order to maximize diversity in the sample, I have, first of all, selected samples of TPMCBs involving different states. Secondly, I selected the samples based on the different political controversies they represent. This was done to avoid selecting a sample in which different states would be included, which would nevertheless be a manifestation of the same controversies, e.g: issues related to the at times problematic relationship between the West and Islamic states.

3.4.2 Sample size
Within qualitative research, there are no specified rules for sample size (Patton, 2002). In the end, an answer to the question whether the sample size is adequate is decided upon by “peer review, consensual validation, and judgment” (Patton, 2002: 246). Determining the sample size takes a number of factors into account. The research objectives provide a guideline for the sample size. This study aims to build a general model of the TPMCB. Such a model is constructed based on generalization of the sample. The larger the sample, then, the higher the explanatory power of the model.

Based on other considerations, however, the sample size needs to be limited. Since the study can not elaborate on previous theoretical endeavors concerning the phenomenon of interest, the study can be said to have an exploratory character. Instead of focusing on generalizability, an important part of the research effort will be dedicated to exploring the actors involved and the evolutionary stages. For this reason, in-depth description of the cases is necessary. However, the resources and time that can be dedicated to this research are limited and make it feasible to study in-depth a limited number of cases. The Internet provides an extensive amount of material which cannot all be covered in this study. Although these considerations negatively affect the models generalizability, I argue that, in this case, this finding is not that severe. The theoretical model that will be built in this study based on inductive reasoning can in other studies be tested deductively for a larger sample. This, however, is not the intention of this study.

Given the above considerations, I have selected a sample of five TPMCB cases. These TPMCBs have all been extensively discussed in the media and have thus come to the
attention of the larger public. This extensive media coverage contributes to getting a clear view of the relevant actors involved and the evolution of TPMCBs. The cases are:

(1) Israeli consumers boycotting Swedish companies over an article in a Swedish newspaper;
(2) Jordanian consumers and consumers in other Muslim states boycotting Dutch companies over a movie published by Dutch MP Geert Wilders;
(3) Consumers in the Middle East boycotting Danish companies over the publication of cartoons of the Islamic prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper;
(4) Chinese consumers boycotting French companies over the attack of wheelchair-bound torch-bearer Jin Jing by a number of protesters trying to extinguish the Olympic flame;
(5) Greek consumers boycotting German companies over what were perceived as anti-Hellenic articles in the wake of Greece’s economic hardship.

3.4.3 Sample boundaries
Where the justification of the units of analysis already limits the scope of the research, two other demarcation criteria will be used to draw the boundary between what will be and what will not be studied in this research (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Spatial boundaries refer to the geographical scope of the study. Since the study is interested in a cross-border phenomenon, a clear boundary cannot be drawn. A possibility could be to study the boycott of companies with a certain country of origin. Yet, we do not see positive results of such a choice for our research. Therefore, the spatial boundaries are global.

The second boundary concerns temporal boundaries. In this research the lower boundary will be set at the year 2000. The reason for this is that, for this study, I depend on Internet resources for data collection (we will elaborate on this in section 3.6). By setting the lower boundary at the year 2000, I expect to safeguard access to internet resources. This makes it possible to get in-depth understanding of the TPMCB phenomenon. The year 2010 will be the upper temporal boundary, the last year in which data could be gathered.
3.5 Case study design

Theory building in this study will be conducted within the framework of the case study design. A number of complementary definitions of the case study exist. In an often-cited line, Yin (1994: 13) defines the case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” In other words, contrary to other research strategies, case studies take the phenomenon’s environment into account. Peters (1995) argues that the case study design is particularly appropriate when the study focuses on social processes. As argued before, TPMCBs are intrinsically social processes. Therefore, the case study design is an appropriate choice for this study.

A second definition is provided by Eisenhardt (1989:534), who defines the case study as: “a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings.” This definition might look slightly cryptic at first glance. Yet, as Heugens (2001: 10) explains: “the contribution of this definition is that it draws to the fact that case studies are always based on an inherently and deliberately limited number of observations, each of which is considered to be unique.” This has consequences for the generalizability of case study research. As Yin (1994: 10) argues in this respect:

“case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions, and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a ‘sample’ and the investigator’s role is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization).”

Within case study research, units of analysis are habitually referred to as cases. A core characteristic of case study research is that the researcher’s aim is to gather in-depth information on one or few cases rather than studying a few aspects of a large population. Furthermore, case study research studies a large number of aspects and their characteristics in relation to each other (Peters, 1995). With five purposefully selected cases, the study has a limited number of cases with a large number of aspects. This provides the opportunity to gather in-depth information on these cases. Finally, As Peters (1995) argues, the case study design is interested in building theoretical generalizations from a limited number of cases. This is in line with the main objective of this study, namely to build a model of the evolution of TPMCBs.
3.6 Data collection

According to Silverman (2006), British and American social scientists have never been entirely confident about analyzing written texts. In many cases, texts are only used for providing background information for the ‘real analysis’, not as the researcher’s raw material. In this research, I will also make use of texts as the raw data for the study. The texts that I use can be divided into two categories: (1) Internet-based newspaper articles and (2) readers’ comments, so-called talkbacks. The latter are the comments of the audience on Internet-based newspaper articles’ contents. Yet, not all papers offer the possibility to leave talkbacks.

I see this combination as promising: apart from the information in the articles, the talkbacks give a clear account of the way readers, i.e., consumers, assess the information in the article and how they create meaning out of the provided facts. Besides, I expect the analysis of talkbacks to provide insight in people’s naturally occurring reactions. Yet, it should be mentioned that the talkbacks in newspapers are checked for their contents by moderators in order to prevent comments deemed inappropriate. Furthermore, the Internet provides access to news sources in countries with political tensions. I expect TPMCB to arise often in connection with states whose governmental policies are disapproved of by citizens in other state. Furthermore, TPMCBs are social processes, in which ideological convictions are expected to shape actors’ understanding of the world. Therefore, using texts for data collection makes it possible to ‘unlock’ the meaning actors attach to their actions.

In chapter 2, then, the important role of the media in the evolution of issues, as well as in the creation and repetition of reputations was discussed. Aula and Mantere’s (2008) arena model of reputation was introduced to explain this process. I believe that the combination of Internet newspaper articles in combination with talkbacks from readers closely approaches such an arena. Yet, it differs from a real arena in the sense that newspapers usually do not react to readers’ comments. However, one might argue that combining these two types of text data will provide a better understanding of the views of the public opinion on a certain TPMCB than only using articles could possibly do.
3.7 Data analysis

Brewerton and Millward (2001: 151) argue that “[c]ontent analysis is used to analyse transcription data and any other types of data that can be reduced to textual form.” A number of types of content analysis can be distinguished. Silverman (2006), for example, emphasizes quantification of the qualitative data, by creating categories and counting the number of instances that fall into each category. This pursuit of quantification in conducting content analysis can also be found in Berelson’s (1952: 18) classic definition of the technique: “[c]ontent analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.”

Yet, as Wester (1995: 628; emphasis in original) argues: “although quantification of characteristics is a possible procedure in content analysis research, it is not a principle characteristic of the technique.” Wester et al. (2004) provide a procedure for qualitative interpretive content analysis, which is particularly useful for analyzing newspaper articles. According to Wester et al (2004: 501), in qualitative interpretive content analysis “[t]he reconstruction of the actor perspective is relevant […], since it enables the researcher as a cultural member to summarize the reporting on an event in terms of people, activities, and relevant themes.”. The authors argue that the content of media messages is “produced in a specific institutional context (e.g., a newspaper’s editorial office) and refers to a wider socio-cultural context (e.g., The Netherlands in 1997)” (Wester et al., 2004: 510). Since this study aims to build a model of TPMCB evolution based on information from newspaper articles and talkbaks, qualitative interpretive content analysis will be used as method to analyze the data.

In their article, the authors develop a guide-line for qualitative interpretive content analysis of newspaper articles consisting of eight steps which are useful for this study as well:

1. reading the whole series of news reports on a given event;
2. description of the overall subject of the series of news reports;
3. summarizing the content of the whole series of news reports;
4. re-reading the news reports and marking image-relevant textual;
5. inventory of the news reports’ headlines;
Step five calls for the formulation of interpretive frameworks. In chapter 4, each case will be introduced with background information on the case which will function as an interpretive framework. I have chosen not to follow step six, seven and eight. Wester et al. (2004) have included these steps for their specific research on the portrayal of countries and people in Germany and the Netherlands. In my study, however, the aim is to identify patterns in the evolution of TPMCB cases. Therefore, I will continue the data analysis with the analytical steps set forth by Eisenhardt (1989: 539) who considers “[a]nalyzing data [as] the heart of building theory.” Eisenhardt (1989) identifies several key features of data analysis.

First, detailed case study write-ups need to be created for each case. This is in line with the 3rd step of the guideline provided by Wester et al. (2004). The case write-ups combine the relevant information from the used newspaper articles and provide the researcher with a chronological overview of the events that take place during the TPMCB process. The case descriptions are important for generating insight: “the overall idea is to become intimately familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity” (ibid.). In the stage of the analysis, unique patterns of each case emerge before continuing by generalizing patterns across cases.

The next step is searching for cross-case patterns. Cross-case comparison functions as a safeguard not to “leap to conclusions based on limited data” (ibid.). Three tactics of cross-case comparison can be identified: (1) selecting categories or dimensions, (2) selecting pairs of cases and then and list the similarities and differences between each pair, and, finally, (3) to divide the data by data source. In this research we the second strategy will be applied. As we believe, in other to look for patterns within the TPMCB phenomenon, juxtaposing the cases can signal similarities as well as subtle differences. Yet, as Eisenhardt (1989: 541) mentions parenthetically, “an extension of this tactic is to group cases into threes or fours for comparison.” Since the number of cases in this study is limited to five, I will at once compare the write-ups in order to search for cross-
case patterns. In following these steps, the emerging TPMCB model is expected to have a close fit with the data. Furthermore, it will include the richness included in our text material.

From the within-case analyses and the cross-case analysis, a frame emerges. For this study, it means that an initial idea about the evolution of TPMCB will come forward. Eisenhardt (1989) suggest at this point in the analysis to iterate between the emerging model and evidence from each case, i.e., to find out whether the emerging model fits with the evidence from each case. Iteration, then, needs to be understood as another way to establish a close fit between data and theory. A synopsis of the data analysis strategy we will apply in this study is presented in table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Synopsis of the data analysis strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Material reduction</td>
<td>Writing detailed write-ups for each case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Identification</td>
<td>Identifying within-case patterns for each case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Juxtaposing</td>
<td>Searching for cross-case patterns by juxtaposing the cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Concept development</td>
<td>Developing an emerging model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Iteration</td>
<td>Compare the emerging model with the cases and adjust.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


3.8 Analytical approach
Eisenhardt’s (1989) method is an example of an inductive case design. In her often-cited article, she aims to provide “a roadmap for building theories from case study research” (Eisenhardt, 1989: 532, emphasis added). It is this very aim of her study that signals the inductive character of her strategy: from data collected in case study research, theories are being built

3.8.1 The inductive design
A central task of the inductive case design is to present theoretical generalizations based on empirical data. In this design, an inductive logic is applied, in which conclusion based on a general level are derived from a series of empirical ‘observations’. Characteristically for inductive reasoning is, according to Danemark et al. (2002: 85), “that from a number of observations of individual phenomena we draw general conclusions assumed to be true of a larger number of phenomena than those we have
observed.” Since this study aims to build a model of the evolution of TPMCBs based on five cases, the study applies an inductive design. As can be seen in Figure 3.1 in the inductive design, theory is built from data through a process of generalization.

3.8.2 The problem of induction
British Philosopher Bertrand Russell provided the famous fable of the inductivist turkey. On its first day on the turkey farm, it found that it was fed at 9 a.m. Being a good inductivist turkey, it did not jump to conclusions. It waited until it collected a large number of observations that it was fed at 9 a.m. and made these observations under a wide range of circumstances, on Wednesdays, on Thursdays, on cold days, on warm days. Each day it added another observation statement to his list. Finally it was satisfied that it had collected a number of observation statements to make inductively infer that “I am always fed at 9 a.m.” However on the morning of Christmas Eve it was not fed but instead had its throat cut (Chalmers, 1999).

In the example above, a problem with the inductive design comes forward. In a recent article, Ketokivi and Mantere (2010: 315; emphasis in original) define the problem with inductivist reasoning as follows:

“[i]nductive conclusions contain knowledge claims not analytically implied by the premises, which is why induction is sometimes dubbed an ampliative form of reasoning […] it ‘amplifies’ our knowledge in that the conclusion is more than a restatement of the premises.”

Instead of being analytically implied, inductive reasoning is based on observation or experience. Within inductivist reasoning, no single conclusion follows from generalization, i.e., based on the same empirical data, multiple conclusions can be drawn that are logically coherent with the data. Ketoviki and Mantere (2010) frame the problem as a dilemma for organization researchers and ask rhetorically:
“Given that several alternative theoretical generalizations are logically coherent with my data and my primary form of reasoning—induction—does not provide the logical means to unambiguously select one over the others, how do I convince my audience of the choices I make?” (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010: 316).

Indeed, the problem of induction has negative implications for the validity of generalizations derived from data with inductivist logic. It might therefore be concluded that since “there are no universally accepted and sound principles to govern the practical reasoning process” (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2008: 315) in a bid to convince the audience of one’s conclusions, other strategies need to be applied.

Ketokivi and Mantere (2010) identify two such responses to the reasoning dilemma. The first strategy, *contextualization*, is inherently subjective, in the sense that it places the perception of the researcher centrally. *Inference to an explanation* (IBE) is embraced as means of warrant-seeking for the inductive reasoning process. The strategy aims to:

“establish the contextual authenticity of reasoning. Specifically, reasoning is viewed as a context-dependent process, focused on arriving at what the researcher and the audience judge to be the best explanation for the data in light of the epistemic virtues embraced” (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010: 323).

Explanations based on this strategy only make sense if one accepts the underlying theoretical, empirical or researcher specific contextual idiosyncrasy (*ibid.*).

In the *idealization* strategy, on the other hand, a degree of objectivity is constructed by adherence to explicit and established rules and procedures. Central in this strategy is the aim to reach empirical adequacy; i.e., researchers do not look for statistical generalizations but seek to build theories that are more likely to be empirically valid. The authors explicitly mention the data collection strategy I adopted from Eisenhardt (1989). They argue that the inductive case study: “illuminates arguments based on theory-generating multiple case studies. Both approaches thus enable authors to reconstruct their research so that the audience will understand the warrants and their backing (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010: 321).I shall obey the authors’ appeal to “make a choice and defend it” (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010: 329). Given the methodological choices I have made and accounted for in this chapter, the idealization strategy will be applied.
3.9 Establishing reliability and validity

What makes qualitative research credible? To answer this question, this section will discuss how the study’s reliability and its validity which can be broken down into external validity and construct validity. I will not address the issue of internal validity, which is concerned with the causal inferences of the study, since the study does not aim to establish causal links between events.

3.9.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to “the question of whether or not some future researchers could repeat the research project and come up with the same results, interpretations and claims” (Silverman, 2006: 282). The sections in this chapter on data collection (cf. section 3.6), data analysis (cf. section 3.7), and analytical approach (cf. section 3.8) function as a ‘reliability check’ since they provide a detailed description of the procedures prior to as well as in the analysis. They serve as a tool for others to judge the quality of the decisions I have made to get from my research problem via my theoretical framework, data selection, and data analysis to a generalized model of the TPMCB process.

3.9.2 External validity

External validity is concerned with the generalizability of the study’s results. In other words: external validity is about delimiting the domain to which the findings of the study relate (Peters, 1995). As I argued before, Ketoviki and Mantere’s (2010) idealization strategy will be applied. This strategy is one of the strategy’s to justify the study’s external validity using standardized methods.

Furthermore, expectations are that the selected cases will provide a good understanding of the phenomenon because they are information rich and diverse. Moreover, iteration which takes place in cross-case comparison can function as a safeguard for the extent to which the study’s results are generalizable (cf. section 3.7). Nonetheless, the number of cases that will be used in this multiple case study cannot serve as a ground for making generalizations to populations. Yet, it can serve as a base for building a theoretical model.

3.9.3 Construct validity

Construct validity is concerned with the establishment of a precise meaning for the constructs used in the study. It relates to the question whether the constructs are a good
representation of the empirical events one tries to refer to (Harrison, 2001). As Peters (1995) sets forth, within most research strategies variables are formulated definitely prior to the analysis and based on the theoretical framework. However, a framework like this, in which the constructs are clearly defined, is often missing in a case study. Therefore, Peters (1995) pleads for the use of sensitizing concepts, which are signaling and guiding constructs that will be put the researcher on the right track and which need to be concretized gradually during the research process. I believe that the literature review (cf. chapter 2) provides an adequate base from which sensitizing concepts can emerge. The issue life cycle was adopted to get a grasp of stages in an evolutionary model.

Finally, construct validity can be established by peer debriefing (Peters, 1995). Constructs were presented to and discussed with other researchers in order to come to a shared understanding of the phenomenon. Furthermore, having this study reviewed and revising its content according to peers’ comments has contributed to a higher degree of agreement on the meaning of the constructs.

3.10 Ethical issues
A last issue that will be discussed in this chapter and which is not always brought up in comparable studies is related to research ethics. Silverman (2006) identifies a number of ethical pitfalls which are a particular feature of a qualitative research: (1) exploitation, (2) deception and (3) identification of the subjects against their will, (4) forcing them to participate in your research or (5) fraternizing with groups we dislike. Indeed, these issues are often more relevant when there is direct contact between the researchers and the subjects, which is not the case in this study. Why, then, do I discuss this issue? In reference to the last point mentioned, Silverman (2006: 321) asks rhetorically: “do you salve your conscience by avoiding studying such people or do you enter a potential minefield and try to do the best you can without compromising your beliefs?” As I have argued before, the TPMCB is a highly political phenomenon. People bring their cultural backgrounds and their values into the sensemaking arena. In addition, TPMCBs are expected to emerge when there is talk of a political controversy after all. What stance should the researchers adopts in studying these situations?
Schoonman (1991:11) takes a disappointing stand in this matter. She begs the question by arguing that: “I am neither in favor, nor against aerosols, fur coats, South Africa [Schoonman writes this section in the era of apartheid] or pit bull terriers […] thus the question whom I side with is not under discussion”. Contrary to Schoonman (1991), this researcher luckily has opinions about the actions of the actors that will be discussed and the events that take place. I have views on Israel, on Islam critical movies and on the other social phenomena in the analysis. Yet, this should not be a problem per se. In trying to aim for at least a certain level of objectivity, I expect that the methodological choices will contribute to this in their role as a safeguard which will prevent me from overstating the results with my own world view.

3.11 Synthesis
In this chapter, the methodological choices were presented and justified. It was set forth that the study’s aim to build a model of the evolution of TPMCBs will be based on case study research using inductive inference. Finally, I explained how I intend to establish the study’s reliability and validity and explained my views on how to behave while analyzing politically sensitive topics.
Analysis

“There is no doubt that the Internet made consumer boycotts accessible and simple. What’s easier than sending a group email, posting a petition on Facebook, or posting a brief message on Twitter?”

Chen (2009)

In the preceding chapter, I provided a rationale for building a theoretical model of TPMCBs based on case study research. In this chapter, the analysis of this study conducted. In line with Eisenhardt (1989), detailed write-ups of each single case will be provided. Hereafter, a model will be built based on the patterns that emerge from the data through within-case and cross-case analysis. This chapter will present an analysis of five cases representing the TPMCB phenomenon. The patterns that will emerge from the data will shape an initial model. Through a process of iteration, a definite model is constructed.

4.1 Case write-ups

4.1.1 Case 1: Blood libel

In this first case a TPMCB is launched by Israeli consumers disagreeing with Swedish government policies. A dispute sparked off in August of 2009 after the publication of a perceived anti-Semitic newspaper in Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet*. Yet, basing itself on the freedom of speech enshrined in Sweden’s constitution, the Swedish government refuses to interfere, causing a diplomatic row with Israel and an online boycott petition targeted at Swedish corporations.

On August 17th, 2009, *Aftonbladet* ran an article by Donald Boström suggesting that the Israeli army abducts and kills Palestinians in order to harvest their organs. The report quotes claims by Palestinians that young men have been seized and that their bodies were returned to their families missing organs. According to the daily:
“we know that Israel has a great need for organs, that there is a vast and illegal trade of organs which has been running for many years now […] We also know that young Palestinian men disappeared, that they were brought back after five days, at night, under tremendous secrecy, stitched back together after having been cut from abdomen to chin” (Boström, 2009).

On August 18, 2009, Israel’s Haaretz newspaper mentions the Swedish article and states the reaction of the Israeli Foreign Ministry. In Haaretz, Ministry spokesperson Yigal Palmor is quoted, saying that: “[i]n a democratic country, there should be no place for dark blood libels out of the Middle Ages of this type […] This is an article that shames Swedish democracy and the entire Swedish press” (Berthelsen and Ravid, 2009) Haaretz also stated that: “[a] Foreign Ministry official said that Israel’s embassy in Stockholm have communicated a harsh condemnation to the Swedish government and the newspaper itself” (ibid.). In an article from rival newspaper Ynetnews (Sofer, 2009a), the first calls for a boycott can be found in the talkbacks. An anonymous reader states: Say no to IKEA…”, commenter ‘Punisher’ says: “Bye Bye IKEA”, and ‘Christopher, Boston, MASS’ encourages to “[r]emember this the next time you shop for volvos and saabs [sic]”.

During the next days, a diplomatic row brews over the article. Israeli Foreign Minister Ayalon argues that: “I demand the Swedish government condemn this groundless article” (Sofer, 2009b), which he sees as anti-Semitic and a blood libel. Meanwhile, the Swedish ambassador in Tel Aviv, Elisabet Borsiin Bonnier, issues a statement:

“[t]he article in the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet is as shocking and appalling to us Swedes, as it is to Israeli citizens. We share the dismay expressed by Israeli government representatives, media and the Israeli public. This Embassy cannot but clearly distance itself from it. Just as in Israel, freedom of the press prevails in Sweden,” concluded the statement. However, freedom of the press and freedom of expression are freedoms which carry a certain responsibility. It falls on the editor-in-chief of any given newspaper” (Cited in: Klein, 2009).

Yet, the row intensified after a statement from the Swedish Foreign Ministry arguing that the embassy’s response does not reflect the government’s stance, arguing that: “[t]he embassy in Tel Aviv responded in accordance to Israeli public opinion, however the Swedish government is committed to freedom of the press” (Cited in: Sofer, 2009c). The diplomatic row deepened when Israel’s Foreign Minister Lieberman draws a parallel with the Second World War and argues that: “[i]t’s a shame that the Swedish Foreign Ministry fails to intervene in a case of blood libels against Jews. This is reminiscent of Sweden’s stand during World War II, when had failed to intervene as
well.” Talkbackers respond to the newspaper articles with various boycott statements. ‘The Doc, Haifa, Israel’ states that: “[a]s for me, Ikea and H&M can wait for my money until hell freezes over!” (Sofer, 2009c). ‘David, Karmiel, Israel’ suggests that: “Jews throughout the world should think twice before buying Swedish goods especially Volvo cars!” (Sofer, 2009c).

After Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt’s rejection to officially condemn the publication in *Aftonbladet*, arguing that “[f]reedom of expression and press freedom are very strong in our constitution by tradition. And that strong protection has served our democracy and our country well,” (Sofer, 2009e) new boycott calls appear. Talkbacker ‘GZlives’ urges other commenters the following: “Don't travel to or buy Swedish goods for 6 months” (Sofer, 2009e). Accordingly, ‘gadot, herzliya’ encourages to: “stop buying at Ikea, Absolut Vodka, anything made in Sweden [sic]” (Sofer, 2009e). ‘Marty, Toronto, Canada’ explains: “here's how my family is protesting: We won't play an Abba CD’s We won't watch the movie Mamma Mia We won't buy a Volvo (they are unreliable crap according to Consumer Reports anyway) We won't shop at Ikea [sic]” (Sofer, 2009e).

Apart from talkbackers’ boycott calls, *Ynetnews* features an article about an internet petition signed by thousands of people calling for a consumer boycott on Swedish companies (Petersburg, 2009). As the paper quotes the petition’s website:

“after the anti-Semitic publication and the blood libel against IDF soldiers, and the refusal of Sweden’s foreign minister and prime minister to condemn this report, there is no way that we can continue buying products made in Sweden. Don’t settle for signing the petition. Real action is needed” (*ibid*).

*Ynetnews* also provides some of the reactions of people who have signed the online petition. Interestingly, the perceived anti-Semitic character of *Aftonbladet*’s article is now seen as an attribute of IKEA itself:

“Shmuel Pakor of Rishon Lezion, who signed the petition, wrote: ‘Yesterday I threw away a cabinet I had bought from IKEA. From an ethical point of view, I cannot own a product manufactured by a Swedish company encouraging anti-Semitism. I'm choosing to boycott them too’” (*ibid*).
That the distinction between the boycott’s target and ‘offender’ often blurred is also illustrated by the title and subtitle of Haaretz’s coverage of the boycott call: “Thousands of Israelis petition to boycott Sweden retailer IKEA” (Rosenblum and Dovrat-Meseritz, 2009) and “Signatories protest stance of Swedish government over IDF organ harvesting controversy” (ibid.) respectively.

In response to the boycott threat, IKEA responded by stating that it is: “an a-political commercial body which enjoys excellent relations with Israeli consumers and will continue these relations in the future as well.” Absolut, a vodka brand, declined comment and H&M was unavailable for comment. Finally, the Israeli importer of Volvo’s was found responding that “Volvo is a strong and established brand in Israel. We are certain that the Israeli consumer will continue choosing the Volvo brand because of the safety and quality it represents” (Petersburg, 2009).

Talkbackers leave differing comments on the (Petersburg, 2009) article. Many judge the boycott call as pointless and ask themselves why companies should be boycotted over a newspaper article. Many doubt the feasibility of a boycott, because people’s memory tends to be short in this sense. ‘Michael, Haifa’ argues that “Israeli commitment to a boycott is just a joke...a moment of indignant self righteousness [sic], forgotten after a few months.” Talkbacker ‘Betoch ami’ writes to be “appalled by the blood libel and [that] action should be taken against the paper, but boycotting IKEA or Volvo is stupid because people in Israel quickly forget and life moves on.” As ‘Rich, Toronto, Canada’ asks: “[w]hat does IKEA have to do with anything? They are an international company doing business in Israel. They have nothing to do with this newspaper article criticizing the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces].” ‘Nick Sporek, Jerusalem Israel’ asks rhetorically: “What does Ikea have to do with the tabloid or government policy? Finally, ‘Yishai Kohen, YeShA, Israel’, then, comments the following:

“Let’s leave aside the fact that Ikea is a DUTCH-registered company (they left Sweden years ago), they are also a privately-owned company that has NOTHING to do with the newspaper in question or even the government of Sweden. I personally will continue to shop at Ikea, as will almost everyone with whom I speak.”

Few others, though, seem to be in favor of boycotting Swedish companies, as shows a comment by ‘Jean Goldberg, Maryland, USA’: I shall no longer shop at IKEA, neither
in the U.S. nor when I visit Israel.” Whereas ‘dan snyder, northbrook illinois’ writes that “[w]ith all the Anti - Semitism [sic] coming out of Sweden, I’ve decided to cancel my trip to Europe, which included a stop in Sweden” Apart from this, among the talkbacks a call for a counter boycott can be found. As ‘ale, Italia’ pleads: “boycott israel [sic] in EU.”

In a Ynetnews commentary on August 24, Chen (2009) asks: “[w]hat does the Swedish investigative report on the alleged harvesting of Palestinian organs have to do with a consumer boycott on IKEA, H&M, Volvo, or Absolut Vodka?” Talkbackers’ comments are in line with the comments on other articles: people address the boycott as pointless and question the relationship, if any, between Swedish companies, a Swedish newspaper publishing a certain article, and the Swedish government’s stance.

The last article on the matter appeared in early November of 2009, when the journalist of Aftonbladet’s article visits Israel to partake in a media conference (Sofer, 2009f). The talkbackers do not provide any reference a consumer boycott, nor does the article on Boström’s visit. After the visit, the issue seems to be blown over.

4.1.2 Case 2: Fitna

On March 27th, 2008, Dutch MP Geert Wilders published his short movie Fitna on the Internet. Wilders is domestically as well as internationally known for his critical views on Islam. In Fitna, selected excerpts from suras from the Quran are shown, alternated with press clippings and / or video images showing acts of violence or hatred by Muslims. According to Wilders, he aims to make it clear to people that: “islamization of the Netherlands needs to be stopped, because islamization comes at the expense of our constitutional state and our freedom” (Dijkman and Stellinga, 2008a). Wilders holds the view that crimes committed by or hatred from Muslims finds its legitimization in Quranic texts. Soon after the movie’s release, calls to boycott Dutch corporations are starting to appear in many countries with large Muslim populations.

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Wilders published Fitna on the Internet on March 27th, 2008. Yet, the Dutch government starts its resistance to the movie at an earlier stage. Already on November
28th, 2007, Foreign Minister Verhagen is quoted arguing that: “it is patently obvious that certain convictions can trigger reactions” (van Kemenade, 2007). Consequently, on February 28th, 2008, Verhagen and Minister of Justice Hirsch Ballin set forth in a conversation with Wilders, that the Cabinet expects severe damages because of the forthcoming movie. According to Elsevier, “the Cabinet is deeply worried about the reputation of the Netherlands and the consequences for business and Dutch nationals abroad” (van der Kloor, 2008a; emphasis added). Anticipating on consumer boycotts or corporate divestiture, Verhagen makes a strong appeal to Wilders to refrain from broadcasting the movie. According to Elsevier, Verhagen argues that “Wilders has to take responsibility for the possible consequences on the security of Dutchmen abroad and for our economy” (Peeters, 2008). Furthermore, in a joint appeal, employers’ organization VNO-NWC and industry organizations MKB-Nederland and LTO Nederland call upon Wilders not to broadcast Fitna. According to VNO-NCW president Bernard Wientjes “Wilders has to realize what the far-reaching consequences of his intended movie are” (Willems, 2008), referring to the perceived adverse economic effects on the country’s economy.

It did not take a long time after the movie was published online for an article on boycott calls to appear in Dutch media. Two days after the publication, on March 29th, 2008, VNO-NCW president Wientjes makes headlines again by alleging that: “If it comes to a boycott, because of the export position of the Netherlands, it will lead to damages quickly. Corporations like Shell, Philips and Unilever are easily recognized as Dutch” (van der Kloor, 2008b). According to the same article, the employers’ organization investigates whether Wilders can be held liable for the consequences of prospective boycotts (ibid.).

The expectation that Dutch corporations might be the target of consumer boycotts materializes when consumers in the Middle East and Malaysia are called on to refrain from buying Dutch products. According to Elsevier, Dutch products were labeled with red stickers in Malaysian supermarkets of Mydin Mohamed Holdings. Furthermore, posters in the supermarkets call on shoppers to stay away from Dutch wares. Elsevier learns that according to the corporation’s president: “nobody has the right to condemn other religions” (cited in: Dijkman and Stellinga, 2008b). According to Malaysia’s former PM Matahir Mohamad, if the world’s 1.3 billion Muslims boycotted Dutch
products, the country’s industries would be forced to shut down (Channel News Asia - *Malaysian supermarket chain calls for boycott of Dutch goods*). More details about the boycott are not provided. Since coverage on the topic stops, the boycott or the media’s interest to cover the story has faded away.

The Jordanian consumer boycott was organized by a local civil society group. The organization, who had been boycotting Denmark over cartoons of the Islamic prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper, expanded the boycott to target the Netherlands as well. The boycott campaign, titled *The Messenger of Allah Unites Us*, has as its ultimate goal the creation of a universal law against defaming religions. The boycott is brought to the attention of the public with posters showing Danish and Dutch corporate brands. Interestingly, the campaign spokesperson, Zakaria Sheikh, argues that the boycott should aim to put pressure on the Dutch and Danish people to pressure their governments to support such a law against religious defamation. Sheikh was quoted saying that “the boycott is a means not an end. We are not aiming for collective punishment, but when the Danish and Dutch people put pressure on their governments to support the creation of an international law, we are achieving our goal” (Lu, 2008).

According to the *Jordan Times*, some companies were “removed [from a poster with corporate brands] after their manufacturers joined the campaign, which offers businesses a way out if they meet four conditions: publicly denounce the Dutch and Danish actions in the media, and support the lawsuits and the creation of an international law” (Hindi, 2008). According to the daily, Dutch corporation Zwanenberg had cooperated by publishing a statement in Jordanian newspapers, stating that: “Zwanenberg announces its solidarity with the ‘Messenger of Allah Unites Us Campaign’ in its endeavours to pass an international legislation to stop any insult of any religion including Islam and Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)” (ibid). Elsevier, then, writes that: “a Jordanian boycott owing to de Quran movie Fitna, which was released months ago, has forced Dutch corporations to their knees” (van der Kloor, 2008c). Besides Zwanenberg, another Dutch company, Friesland Foods is identified to have released a similar statement in the Jordanian press as Zwanenberg. Dutch airline KLM, also targeted by the boycott, on the other hand, was quoted saying that “KLM does not meddle with any political or religious movement whatsoever and distances itself from the contents of this controversial movie” (van der Kloor, 2008c).
The statements by Zwanenberg and Friesland Foods are rejected by many Dutch consumers and a large number of talkbackers (348 comments) engage in the polemic on Elsevier’s website. In many talkbacks, the companies—previously boycott targets in Jordan—are threatened with a consumer boycott by Dutch consumers. A general thought is that the companies have thrown fundamental rights such as freedom of speech for a scramble. An overview of the talkbacks in van der Kloor, R. (2008c): ‘Chris Peterson’ writes: “Here is a URL with all of Friesland Food’s corporate brands. Boycott all products of these traitors of free speech.” ‘elfenbankje’ sets out that she has “informed Friesland Foods that I find it ridiculous that they bow for the arabs [sic] and thus bargain free speech and because of that I will not buy their products anymore.” ‘Bert’ comments as follows: “Boycott Jordan! Do not eat Zwan sausages anymore! Avoid Friesland Foods!” Talkbacker ‘eva.m.kellerman’ addresses Friesland Foods by arguing that “your milk is from now on too sour to drink for me and it is about time that your products will be boycotted in Dutch supermarkets.” Talkbacker ‘Anna’ comments that: “[c]ompanies should not meddle with religion. Let us distance ourselves from Zwanberg […] and Friesland-Foods [sic] who sell our freedoms […] no more Zwanenberg and Friesland Foods.” Several commenters provide lists with corporate brands and publish the emails they have sent to both corporations, e.g., talkbacker ‘EdSi-2’ writes:

“You place your economical interest in Jordan above freedom of speech in the Netherlands. This implies that you, when it comes to the crunch, will also prevail your economical interest above the constitutional freedom of speech in force in the Netherlands. Apparently, you prefer to do business with dictatorships then with democracies because you, with your behavior, show to see a human being as just a consumer. Given this attitude, you have, according to me, disqualified yourself as producer of goods I, from now on, intend not to spend any cent on. From now on, your products are on my boycott list.”

Two days later, on June 25th, 2008, Elsevier reports that the initiator of the Jordanian boycott, Sheikh, intends to expand the boycott of the Netherlands to other states. A boycott committee is established in the United Arab Emirates and preparations are made for an expansion to Egypt (van der Kloor, 2008d). Yet, the number of talkbackers is significantly less. Furthermore, the spread of the boycott around the region does not cause more calls for boycotts on Zwanenberg and Friesland Foods. The June 25th article is the last coverage of the Arab boycott of the Netherlands.
4.1.3 Case 3: cartoon crisis

In 2005, a Danish children’s book writer, Kåre Bluitgen, was struck by the idea to write a children’s book about the life of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. However, Bluitgen experienced problems finding an artist to illustrate his book. In Islam, depicting its prophet is generally prohibited, although several historical Islamic sources violate this prohibition. In a conversation with a journalist, Buitgen explains that three illustrators had already refused to illustrate his book because they feared violent reprisals from Islamists (Hansen and Hundevadt, 2008). On September 16th, a telegram was released to Danish news desks stating that “Danish artists fear criticizing Islam.”

This sparked a debate in the country’s media about self-censorship and the fear of criticizing Islam. That day, at an editorial meeting at Denmark’s newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, the idea was suggested to contact the illustrators’ union and ask them all to depict Muhammad the way they saw him. 12 illustrators accepted the invitation and consequently, *Jyllands-Posten* published their drawings on 30 September 2005 accompanied by an article by the paper’s cultural editor, Flemming Rose, in which he explained the background of the cartoon series:

“[s]ome Muslims reject modern, secular society. They make demands for special treatment when they insist on special consideration for their religious feelings. That stance is irreconcilable with a secular democracy and freedom of expression where you have to be ready to accept insults, mockery and ridicule. It’s not always pleasant and nice to experience, and that doesn’t mean religious principles should be made fun of at all costs, but those considerations are secondary in this context” (ibid).

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After the publication of the Muhammad cartoons, five imams convene in an Århus mosque to share their anger and delineate a strategy. According to Hansen and Hundevadt (2008, emphasis added), participants agreed to assent to a battle plan with a total of 19 points:

“[t]he most important points included complaints to the Danish government, petitioning Muslim embassies in Denmark to take up the case, writing to Islamic clerics around the world, contacting the influential Al-Azhar University in Cairo and religious leaders in Mecca and asking major media in the Middle East, including the satellite station Al Jazeera, to cover the infamous drawings. At the same time, they would carpet bomb the newspaper with text messages, emails and telephone calls, collect signatures in mosques, organise mass protests in Copenhagen and investigate the possibility of suing the newspaper. They also talked more informally about getting the Islamic world to *mount a boycott of Danish products.*”
The case remained largely ignored in by Danish media, until a demonstration took place on October 14th at Copenhagen’s Town Hall Square attended by approximately 3,000 demonstrators. The matter becomes politicized after ambassadors from Muslim countries appear to be receptive to the clerics’ bid for intervention. Mona Omar Attia, the Egyptian ambassador, took the initiative to draft a letter to Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen in which the ambassadors collectively lamented “the ongoing smear campaign” against Islam and Muslims in Denmark and to “take action against the responsible parties based on the law of the country” (cited in: Hansen and Hundevadt, 2008). In his official response, Danish PM Anders Fogh Rasmussen explained Danish blasphemy laws and the principles behind freedom of speech, but ignored the ambassadors’ request for a meeting, arguing that demands to take actions against the Danish press provided an incorrect basis for discussion (ibid.). The imams from the mosque in Århus played a controversial role by travelling to Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, where they addressed an audience consisting of influential political religious leaders as well as prominent media. With them they brought a portfolio with the cartoons, as well as other material allegedly insulting to Islam. One of the pictures, showing a man with a pig’s snout and ears, was in no way related to the matter but stemmed from a pig squealing contest on a French pig festival.

On December 27th, then, Jyllands-Posten features an article in which it mentions a first boycott call in relation with the cartoons. According to the newspaper: “the leader of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ISESCO, general secretary Aziz Othman al-Twaijr, will invite 57 Muslim member states to cap all political and economic ties with Denmark if the government does not apologize for the drawings” Asked for a reaction, the Egyptian ambassador argues that: “The message from ISESCO must be taken seriously. […] [U]nless the government takes new initiatives, Muslims worldwide will follow the boycott and international pressure against Denmark will increase in strength” (Pinholt, 2005). The boycott intensifies in the course of January 2006, when both religious and political leaders in Saudi Arabia incite to a boycott of Danish goods. In the kingdom, a list is published with all Danish-owned corporations. Saudi retailers threaten to get rid of Danish dairy products, unless an official Danish apology for the drawings will be offered. Finn Hansen, division director of Danish dairy giant Arla was quoted saying that:
“[w]e are in the coming days summoned to meetings with several of our largest clients in Saudi Arabia. They try to push us to take official distance from the drawings. Situation is critical because the Saudi consumers react very collective - including a call for boycott of specific products. We fear being hit by a wave of consumer anger” (Attrup et al. 2006a).

Two days later, the daily report that the boycott has expanded to Kuwait, where two retail chains decide to clear their shelves of Danish products, of which one of them possesses a market share of ca. 50%. Hansen comments that: “[s]o far, we have leveraged down our local production in Saudi Arabia and we are considering whether we should turn down the parts of the production in Denmark” (cited in: Attrup et al., 2006b). On January 30th, Arla, announces that the conflict has escalated to such an extent, that it feels that only the Danish government can solve the issue now. The boycott had turned violently with employees and properties in the region threatened and damaged. Peder Tuborgh, the company’s administrative director, expresses the feeling of impotence against the politically motivated consumer boycott: “[w]e are caught up in the current trade crisis entirely undeserved, and we have no earthly chance of beating again. If consumers in the Middle East have simply decided that they will not buy Danish products, it is a very difficult situation to work with” (Attrup, 2006a). While Jyllands-Posten apologizes for hurting Muslims’ feelings that day, the boycott expands to Libya, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. The paper runs an article in which is claimed that 1,400 jobs in Denmark were put at risk because of the boycott (Attrup and Rasmussen, 2006).

On January 31st, Jyllands-Posten reports of a Buy Danish grassroots campaign in the United States. The organizer behind the campaign underlines the political character of the ‘buycott’ weapon: “[i]t is a typical example of how Americans are taking matters into their own hands. We do not sit and wait for the government to take the lead or do something. We act ourselves out when we experience something as unreasonable or unfair” (cited in: Justen, 2006). As the crisis further unfolds, France is singled out as an additional target for a consumer boycott in the region after republication of the cartoons in French daily Le Soir (Heine, 2006). A week later, after renewed violence in the Middle East and Iran’s decision to cut all ties with Denmark, the European Commission shows Denmark its support by arguing that: “A boycott of Danish goods is by definition a boycott of EU goods. Currently the Commission is looking at the matter, but it is too
early for me to comment on how the EU will react,” according to the Commission’s spokesperson Johannes Laitenberger (cited in: Kongstad, 2006).

After being boycotted for several weeks, Arla decided to appeal to Saudi consumers through advertisements in newspapers and on television in order to take its products to grace again. In the advertisements the company shows understanding for the fact that Muslims’ do not wish to buy Arla’s products anymore. According to Jyllands-Posten the advertisements state that:

“Dear citizens. The years that we have been present in your world, have taught us that justice and tolerance are fundamental values in Islam. We wish to cooperate with Islamic organizations in order to find a solution to the boycott of Arla’s products. We just ask you to think about this and, hopefully, you will reconsider your position on our corporation” (Jyllands-Posten (2006a).

Yet, within Denmark, politicians condemn Arla’s advertisement, arguing that the company gives in to ‘angry Muslims’. A liberal politician, Jens Rohde, was quoted saying that: “Arla is willing to sell its grandmother to be able to sell its goods in dictatorships. I really cannot understand that you can jettison your principles so easily. My freedoms are not for sale for two liters of milk” (cited in: Jyllands-Posten, 2006b). Moreover, a boycott of the dairy companies by Danish consumers is feared now Arla’s advertisements are seen as quashing freedom of speech. As Jyllands-Posten reports: “[t]he Danish dairy farmers fear being hit double hard if Danish consumers opt out of Arla products in protest against the dairy group’s advertisements in Middle Eastern media to get the Muslim consumers to stop the boycott of Arla” (Jyllands-Posten, 2006c).

In the beginning of April 2006, articles start to appear in Jyllands-Posten, reporting that the consumer boycott in the Arab world is coming to an end. On April 9th, Jyllands-Posten reports that Arla’s products are back on the shelves of Saudi Arabian supermarkets. Also in other Arab states, the boycott was allegedly coming to an end (Attrup, 2006b).
4.1.4 Case 4: Chinese consumers boycotting France

In Time, Cerles (2008) explains “why China keeps on picking on [French president] Sarkozy”. According to the magazine, there is “nothing new in China being touchy on the subject of Tibet” (ibid.). Yet, contrary to other European leaders who have met the Dalai Lama, France “demonstrated a willingness to bend on diplomatic, political, and human rights conflicts in order to protect trade” (ibid.). The article underlines this statement by explaining that president Sarkozy initially suggested he might boycott the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics if China did not show more flexibility on human rights. However, in April of 2008 the ire of Chinese consumers gets directed at France. In that year, the country’s capital Beijing hosted the Olympic Games. Before the games would take place in August, the Olympic torch was being carried through 20 countries before arriving in Beijing. Protesters denouncing Chinese policy in Tibet threw themselves at one of the torch bearers. Wheelchair-bound Jin Jing was attacked by a number of protesters who were trying to wrench the torch away and extinguish the Olympic flame. Jing’s fierce determination to shield the torch was highly admired by the Chinese public, who has been called ‘the angel in a wheelchair’ and is being celebrated by television chat shows, newspapers and online musical videos (Graham-Harrison, 2008). According to Bremner (2008), after “China, which was also annoyed by the rough passage of the Olympic torch through Paris in April, boycotted French companies and took Paris off the tourist map […] Mr Sarkozy backed down on all fronts.” Hence, in this case, the Chinese government is obviously involved in the boycott effort. China supports or, to say the least, seems not to prevent the boycott of France in a bid to put pressure on France not to meet the Dalai Lama.

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The events that unfolded in Paris became what Graham-Harrison (2008) describes as “a lightning rod for anger about the chaotic protests that have beset the torch relay from London and Paris to San Francisco.” On the internet, Chinese bloggers posted the first posts calling for a boycott of French goods. In the centre stage were retail chain Carrefour and luxury brand from the Louis Vuiton Moet Hennessy Group (Motte, 2008). On April 16th, Le Figaro quoted a blogger stating that: “The French people and government have despised the seriousness of the Olympic flame and the feelings of the Chinese people. […] China cannot be insulted” (ibid). Chinese are called upon not to shop at Carrefour’s starting from May 1st, 2008. In a reaction, Carrefour’s chief
executive José Luis Duran argues that the company “never takes positions on political issues” (ibid.). LVMH, then, responds by saying that: “[t]he group does not interfere in Chinese domestic politics. These calls have absolutely no foundation” (ibid.).

A day later, Le Figaro argues that “patriotism is not an empty word in China” but that “« made in France » stands against Chinese patriotism” (Bembaron, 2008). The French seem not to be worried about the boycott calls. According to the country’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, “the calls for a boycott are caused by a very small minority and we have no knowledge of any effect of these initiatives on our economic relations” (ibid.). Asked for a reaction, the French Federation of Wines and Spirits responds that its products are “are sufficiently established and the Chinese smart enough not to yield to demands for a boycott from minority groups” (ibid.).

According to French daily Libération, protesters could be found at the entrance of one of Carrefour’s Beijing stores. One of them was quoted by the daily telling potential customers that: “[i]f you are patriots, do not enter here, boycott French products” (Nivelle, 2008). On one of the numerous Chinese blogs calling for a boycott of French goods, it could be read that: “[t]he French have defended the Tibetan separatists during the passage of the torch in Paris, stop giving them our money.” (ibid.). The newspaper reports that the Chinese government does not condemn the wave of patriotism. According to a spokesperson of the country’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

“[w]e hope that France will listen carefully to the voice of the Chinese people and will, on a number of recent problems, take an objective and impartial stance, respect the facts, separate the true and false, and like many countries, understand and support the just position and appropriate measures taken by the Chinese government” (ibid.).

On April 19th though, Le Figaro features an article in which it argues that the Chinese government now seeks to curb the anti-French manifestations in the country. According to Portes (2008a), the authorities fear an escalation and argue for the first time since the boycott was mulled that “the patriotic fervor should be channeled efficiently and must be transformed into effective action.” Yet, notwithstanding the Chinese government’s goal to end the waves of patriotism, on April 21st, Le Figaro reports that new protests directed at France had taken place. According to the Communist Party’s daily, “[t]he children of China have the responsibility to show that our country welcomes its friends
around the world with open arms” (Mevel, 2008). Furthermore, in a bid to ease the tensions, the Élysée sends a diplomatic envoy to China (Portes, 2008b). Hereafter, calmness seems to be restored: no more articles on the boycott appear in French papers.

4.1.5 Case 5: Greek consumers boycotting Germany

In the end of 2009, the new Greek government sharply revised up the country’s public deficit figures. Previously, financial rating agencies had downgraded the country’s credit rating, resulting in a rise of the market rate for servicing its massive debts. In February 2010, European leaders pledged to take steps to prevent the possibility of a Greek default and guarantee the euro’s stability. The possibilities of a massive European bailout of Greece were unpopular across Europe, particularly in Germany. German Chancellor Angela Merkel long resisted emergency loans because of fierce German public opposition to the bailout (France24, 2010).

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On February 24th, Greek Daily Kathimerini reports of growing Greek anger at a number of publications in the German press. Two publications particularly sparked the ire of many Greeks. Germany’s Stern magazine featured an article in the form of an open letter to the Greeks from disgruntled German tax payers. The other concerns the front page of the February 22nd edition of Focus magazine depicting a statue of the Venus de Milo making an obscene gesture (Kathimerini, 2010), where the edition was titled ‘Cheats in the Euro family’.

The German reports did not go down well with the Greeks. Parliament Speaker Filippo Petsalnikos was quoted saying that the German press had “surpassed all limits” with its “offensive” coverage (ibid.). As a consequence, Petsalnikos summoned the German ambassador, Wolfgang Schultheiß, to convey “not just the displeasure but the outrage of the Greek people at the anti-Hellenic delirium of the German media” (Yannopoulos, 2010). On February 24th, Schultheiß issued a statement arguing that the German embassy regretted that the Greek public regarded the German media reports as offensive. According to Schultheiß, Germany was “firmly at the side of Greece as a partner and friend in the current situation” (ibid.). The row between the countries intensified. Germany’s Zeit Online reports that communists and ultra-conservatives in
the Greek parliament started to demand war reparations for the Second World War. The parties claimed that Germany had looted Greek gold in the war and thereby ruined its economy (Zeit Online, 2010).

In reaction to the publication of Focus, Greek consumers’ organization INKA called for a boycott of German products. In front of the Athens branch of the German chain of consumer electronics, Mediamarkt, pamphlets were distributed stating that:

“INKA, […] in protest at the publication by Focus with Aphrodite depicted with her middle finger raised and a subheading calling Greeks thieves […] calls upon the citizens of the country to boycott all German products. The misrepresentation of a statue of Greek history, beauty and civilization, from a time when there they were eating bananas [sic] on trees is impermissible and unforgivable” (cited in: Boukalas, 2010).

On February 26th, 2010, Germany’s Zeit Online features an article on the boycott call. In the talkbacks to the Zeit Online (2010) article, a large number of calls for counter boycotts can be identified. Talkbacker ‘Peter Schneider’, for example, writes that: “[a]nd we are boycotting Greek products, I know who will give in earliest, not us Germans…” ‘G.b.hindert’ comments on the article by saying that: “[d]o not buy from Greeks!” Another talkbacker also anticipates on a counter boycott, by mentioning that: “when they want to boycott German products, than please…an answer won’t be long in coming when the tourists stay away or when no more olive oil is purchased.” Neither Greek nor German newspapers publish articles on the consumer boycott after February 26th.

4.2 Identifying patterns in TPMCB cases
The next steps in Eisenhardt’s data analysis strategy are (1) identifying within-case patterns for each case and (2) searching for cross-case patterns by juxtaposing the cases. Based on these steps, an emerging model can be developed. By comparing the emerging model with the cases and make the necessary adjustments, a definite model will emerge. In this section, the points of similarity and the differences between the cases will be indicated. Firstly, this procedure highlights relevant unique patterns of the cases. Secondly, similarities in the evolutionary patterns provide the basis for an emerging model.
4.2.1. Points of similarity in the cases

A number of cross-case patterns can be distinguished by juxtaposing the cases. For this study, this means that similarities and dissimilarities can be found in the evolutionary stages the TPMCB cases complete.

A first resemblance in the cases is the existence of a trend (Schoonman, 1991) or a set of opinions which is shared by a part of the population. Trends are closely related to the concept of value area (ibid.). The latter refers to the ethical, social, cultural, economic and political opinions shared by a large part of a society (cf. section 2.2.2). A value area, in other words, indicates the fundamental norms and values of a society. In all of the cases, actors referred to or based themselves on a value area. Since these convictions often appeared to be strongly internalized, I will rather refer to these strong convictions as value areas than as trends. Additionally, the cases showed that the norms and values enclosed in the value areas vary between different societies.

A second similarity is the fact that, in order to give rise to a TPMCB, a critical event has to occur to spark off the call for a boycott. Such an event highlights the diversity of values among the societies involved. The occurrence of a certain event is interpreted in different ways by actors, based on their respective values. In the first case, the publication of a newspaper article ended in fierce reactions from Israeli stakeholders, who condemned the article as anti-Semitic and thus in contradiction with their set of values. Swedish stakeholders, on the other hand, assessed the event based on the value of freedom of the press which should not be violated. In the cases of the Dutch Islam critical movie and the Danish Muhammad cartoons, Dutch and Danish stakeholders assessed the events based on freedom of speech and freedom of the press, whereas stakeholders in the Islamic boycotting nations argued that the Islamic value of a ban on depiction of the Islamic prophet Muhammad was disregarded. In the cases of the Chinese boycott of France and Greek boycott of Germany, then, patriotic feelings were hurt. On the French side, some stakeholders repudiated China organizing the Olympic Games because of what they see as the occupation of Tibet and human rights abuses. Germans, then, argued that they should not foot the bill for Greece’s financial problems.

A third pattern that was visible in the cases was the boycott call. Boycotts were either called for by consumers who organized themselves in boycotting committees or by
individual consumers. As a part of civil society, boycotting committees were shown to channel the disaffection with a certain event. Individual consumers’ boycott calls were found in talkbacks under newspaper articles that reported the critical event. However, individual consumers’ boycott calls do not necessarily develop into TPMCBs. In most cases, the boycott call is only answered by the individual or a small number of others who do not organize themselves in a boycotting committee. In all the cases, though, I found a certain level of organization at a certain stage of the boycotting process.

A fourth similarity that can be distinguished was the importance of the media. From the cases, it follows that the media play an important role in shaping the public opinion (Schoonman, 1991). Therefore, the media are essential for a boycott call to grow into a TPMCB. It may be assumed that without extensive media attention, a TPMCB does not develop since the different stakeholders will not be informed of the issue underlying the boycott call. For a TPMCB to arise, the boycott initiative needs to be brought to the attention of the various stakeholders in a society, including individual consumers and the government, as well as their counterparts in the other society.

4.2.2 Points of dissimilarity in the cases

The cases also show dissimilarities in the way they evolve. The main difference is the moment in which the various stakeholders get involved in the boycott process. The newspaper articles provided mainly information about the involvement of the governmental sphere. Based on the case write-ups, the differences in the moment the governments get involved can be seen in Figure 4.1 on the next page.

As can be seen in Figure 4.1, governments of states that reject events in other states get involved shortly after the critical event has taken place. This was in the case for Greece, Jordan/Malaysia, Israel, the Muslim States and China. I use the term critical event for those events that lead to the boycott call, for example the publication of the Muhammad cartoons. One might assume that governments get involved in the process already before a critical event has taken place as governments monitor what happens in other states and anticipate the birth of important issues. Yet, the case write-ups only provide clear information about the moments at which governments officially utter themselves about the critical event.
In the case of the Dutch movie, the Dutch government got involved before the movie was launched with its warnings for reputational damage and economic consequences. In the case of the Swedish newspaper article the Swedish embassy in Tel Aviv reacts to statements by representatives of the Israeli government. In the Danish case, on the other hand, the Danish government chose to keep aloof from the situation that ensued because of the publication of the cartoons, hiding itself behind the country’s blasphemy laws and freedom of speech. Nevertheless, the Danish government is forced to get involved when the crisis unfolds further and foreign governments decide to cut all ties with the country.

The French government also reacts relatively late and the Élysée only sends a diplomatic envoy to China after a number of days in which French corporations are being boycotted. Although a first official reaction from the Chinese government is reported after the critical event, it may be assumed that the Chinese government was involved in the process already at a very early stage. This can be explained by the country’s political system. In the absence of freedom of speech, the Chinese government decides when Chinese citizens are allowed to show their dissatisfaction with the critical event that took place in France and when it has to stop. Finally, a government can assess the situation and determine that the matter is not severe enough to get involved with. In the Greek attempt to boycott German companies, no traces could be found of involvement of German politicians, except for a reaction of the German ambassador in Greece after being summoned by the Greek government.
Another difference that can be distinguished concerns the moments in which boycott calls are answered with calls for counter boycotts. Talkbackers were shown to be very quick with calls for counter boycotts. In effect, in all cases calls for boycotts were answered with calls for counter boycotts. These calls, however, stem from individual consumers. An organized counter boycott was only found in the case of the Danish cartoons, in which a grassroots boycotting campaign was organized in the United States.

In conclusion, the cases show similarities as well as dissimilarities. Yet, the dissimilarities concern the moment at which certain stages take place. This strengthens the previous notion that a model of the evolution of TPMCBs should not be modeled as a natural history model in which an issue sequentially moves through a number of stages.

4.3 Toward a model of TPMCBs

Based on the patterns that were identified in the five cases in the preceding section, a model can be developed in which the evolution of TPMCBs is reflected. As can be seen in Figure 4.2, the model draws from Lamertz et al.’s (2003) symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution (cf. section 2.1.6). As was set forth before, this model of issue evolution was developed in reaction to a number of shortcomings of natural history models. Issues, for example, can be solved in other arenas than the governmental. Furthermore, it was argued that evolution is not always linear as stages may be skipped or issues may cycle back through stages (cf. section 2.1.4). From the cases, it followed that TPMCBs show variation in the moments in which the diverse stakeholders (government, market organizations, civil society organizations, and individual consumers) get involved in the process. Moreover, the cases showed diversity in the moments in which boycott calls took place. Contrary to natural history models, a model based on the symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution can incorporate the different moments in which these events occur. Furthermore, Aula and Mantere’s (2008) arena model was incorporated (cf. section 2.2.3). The latter model indicates stakeholder involvement and meaning making as a result of social interaction among the stakeholders.
Figure 4.2 shows the model of TPMCB evolution. In chapter 1, I argued that TPMCBs have a cross border character. Figure 1.2, modified van Tulder and van der Zwart’s (2006) societal triangle model by expanding the model with two societies: society x and society y. These two societies represent the transnational character of TPMCBc, which involve at least two states. Stages of the model are either positioned at the top or the bottom of the model, indicating that a certain action takes place in this society. Stages can also be positioned on the interface between the two societies. This indicates that the stage has relevance for both societies.

Drawing from the symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution, the model of TPMCB evolution assumes a structure. In their model, Lamertz et al. (2003: 84) stress institutional elements. Hence, their enacted structure is defined as “a set of shared agreements that emerges as social actors ‘work out’ the terms under which they will engage in joint acts and a set of institutional rules that guide future actions.” In my model, actors’ future actions are not guided by institutional rules, but by Schoonman’s (1991) value areas. Societies are assumed to have a set of value areas which function as an interpretative frame (Weick, 1995).

Figure 4.2 A model of TPMCB evolution
Just as in the model of Lamertz et al. (2003), the assumed agreements in the structure include rules of conduct and the role expectations for participants in the social structure. In my model, these assumed agreements stem from a balance in the value areas of the respective societies. Balance is assumed to exist when there is no clash between societies on the grounds of dissimilar values. The stability of the structure depends on the level of mutual understanding. It is expected that societies with more similar value areas share a structure that is more stable than the structure between societies with largely diverging value areas. This leads to the expectation that TPMCBs will be more likely to occur between states which values vary to a greater extent.

This balanced situation is threatened when pressure is exerted on the structure. As was explained in section 2.1.6, pressure originates in environmental conditions which may impact the structure’s development and maintenance because they shape the processes of interpretation and enactment among the system’s actors. In the case of TPMCBs, pressure is exerted on the structure because a critical event takes place in one society, which clashes with the value areas in the other society. In the cases, pressure was exerted on the enacted structure through the publication of articles in the media (the case of Sweden and Israel and the case of Germany and Greece), through cartoons (Denmark and the Islamic world), through movies (the Netherlands and the Islamic world) and through an attempt to extinct the Olympic flame (the case of France and China). As followed from section 4.2.2, stakeholders in different societies seem to assess the exerted pressure based on a number of convictions in which the values areas of their society were shown to play an important role in the case write-ups. Because of the pressure that is exerted on the structure, stakeholder misalignment can emerge. The pressure has led to critically low levels of understanding between the stakeholders in the different societies. Hence, in the model can be seen that the pressure that was exerted on the structure through events that took place in society x result in a boycott call in society y.

In order to give rise to a boycott, the boycott call needs to draw the attention of the various stakeholders. The media play an important role in this. Yet, attention should not only be seen as public attention as is the case in the model of Lamertz et al. (2003). Characteristically, governments play an important role in the TPMCB. Contacts
between government organizations can take place without interference of the press. Yet, it is assumed that without attention, TPMCBS will not succeed, since a number of individual consumers will have to participate in the boycott. A quick discontinuation of the boycott can thus be expected in case the boycott call is not answered.

In the next stage of the process, the stakeholders from the two societies meet one another in an arena of meaning making. The boycott’s stakeholders that enter the arena bring their own value areas when entering the arena. In this arena, a process of social interaction takes place in which the stakeholders negotiate the issue that underlies the boycott. Through communication, meaning is negotiated. This can take place in the media, but contacts between the different stakeholders can also have a direct character and take place without the media. Yet, direct interaction between the stakeholders will be brought back to the arena. Individual consumers, for example, often need new media messages to determine if they choose for boycott discontinuation or boycott perpetuation. In the arena, market organizations find themselves confronted with multiple and pluriform audiences. As was shown in the cases, showing agreement or even respect for the values from certain stakeholders may upset other stakeholders with conflicting values.

As a result of the process of meaning making which has taken place in the arena, stakeholder realignment will take place. Realignment should be understood as a new configuration between the conflicting values of the both societies over the critical event. The outcome of the battle for meaning making that took place in the arena, can lead to diverging outcomes. On the one hand, boycotters in society y can deem fit the realigned structure. In this situation, the arena has resulted in a solution for the event that put pressure on the previous structure. In the case of TPMCBs this might take place when the government of the ‘offending’ society changes its policies or condemns the actions that were seen as insulting. This might result into the discontinuation of the boycott. Yet, when foreign governments do not comply with the demands of the boycotters, the realigned structure might not be accepted and, a result of this, the boycott might drag on. Even more so, the boycott might spread to include a larger number of societies. This boycott expansion was shown in the cases of the Dutch movie and the Danish cartoons. The realigned structure might also be rejected by the stakeholders of the society in which the event took place with which stakeholders in the other society disagreed. As
became particularly clear in the case of the Dutch movie, individual consumers in this society might call for a counter boycott, when they reject the results of the battle for meaning in the arena and the realigned structure that it generates.

4.4 Synthesis
Following Eisenhardt’s (1989) steps of how to proceed in the analysis, this chapter commenced with detailed write-ups of five TPMCB cases. The detailed write-ups provided the possibility to identify within-case patterns for each case. Points of similarity and dissimilarity between the cases were discussed. In doing so, the results of cross-case juxtaposing were presented. As was set forth, the main differences between the cases were (1) the moment in which actors get involved and (2) the moment in which boycotts are called for. Through a process of iteration, in which the emerging model was constantly adjusted to the cases, a definite model of TPMCB evolution was developed.
In the preceding chapter, a model of TPMCB evolution was developed. This chapter will discuss what the model can show and what not. Consequently, the limitations of the model will be discussed. Furthermore, the model will be confronted with the previous literature in order to gain insight in to what extent and in which way the model of TPMCB may contribute to received knowledge. Finally, the practical significance of the study will be touched upon.

5.1 Assessing the model of TPMCB evolution

Juxtaposing detailed write-ups of the five boycott cases, my analysis has resulted in a model of a phenomenon largely overlooked in academics, namely TPMCBs. I aimed to establish a general model of TPMCB evolution. The identification of cross-case patterns and patterns unique for single cases enabled me to determine what is typical for the TPMCB phenomenon and what belongs to the realm of case specific events. As was argued in the previous chapter, the cases vary particularly in (1) the moments in which actors get involved in the process and (2) the moments in which they take certain actions. The debate in the field of Issue Management (cf. section 2.1) which has presented a large number of objections against naturalist history models of issue evolution has strong relevance for the model of TPMCB evolution for building a general model of TPMCB evolution would not have been possible if fashioned after such a model. As a result of this, my model does not provide a model of TPMCB evolution in which evolution is linear. In my model, stages in the model can be skipped. This becomes particularly visible in the model which assumes that without attention, a boycott call can result into a call for a counter boycott, without moving through other stages. Given the absence of cross-case patterns indicating the moments in which relevant stakeholders get involved and in which they show certain behavior, my model cannot account for individual stakeholders’ behavior. On the other hand, including the arena model in the TPMCB has made it possible to indicate the importance of the
process of social interactions between the relevant stakeholders and the result of the process of meaning making for the continuation or discontinuation of a boycott.

An important advantage of the model is its ability to demonstrate the cross-border character of TPMCBs. The model assumes two societies with their specific value areas. Building on Lamertz et al. (2003) an enacted structure is assumed, but in my model mutual understanding is based on the extent to which value areas are similar. From the cases followed the importance of value gaps between the respective values of the societies at stake, who each have their own way of assessing the critical event. The model thus provides a theoretical explanation for the process prior to the actual boycott call based on diverging assessments of critical events originating in conflicting values.

Where calls for TPMCBs originate in conflicting values highlighted by critical events, boycott efforts need attention to succeed. This notion is reflected in the model. Attention makes stakeholders aware of the boycott effort and is a precondition for them to meet one another in the arena. I have thus shown the role of particularly the media in the development of TPMCBs. In the model, boycott continuation or perpetuation depends on the result of the battle for meaning that takes place in the arena. Once more, the model cannot explain which actions by which actors result into boycott continuation or perpetuation. As cross-case comparison did not provide a general pattern on this point.

5.2 Limitations of the study
The study suffers the disadvantages of a case study with a relative small number of cases. As I argued before, limited resources and time prompted to limit the study to the analysis of a number of five cases. Indeed, the results of this study cannot serve as a ground for making generalizations to populations. Yet, they do provide a basis to build a theoretical model. I have selected information-rich cases in order to provide a good understanding of the phenomenon.

Furthermore, the aim to provide a general model of TPMCB evolution was complicated by the large number of stakeholders and their diverging interests. Variation was not only discovered between dissimilar stakeholders, but also between similar stakeholders in
different societies. Governments, as important stakeholders were found to behave in different ways. The Chinese government, for example, interfered intensively in the matter. In the Chinese context, in which freedom of speech is not guaranteed to the same extent as in Western societies, the government tolerates eruptions of nationalism, but boycotts have to stop when the government decides so. Therefore, the end of a boycott is the result of different considerations than in other cases. This would add up to the problems that would be encountered while trying to specify the specific behavior of the stakeholders.

Another limitation concerns the accessibility of material. This limitation originates in my personal language skills and the availability of sources. My language skills do not include Hebrew, Arab, Chinese or Greek. Therefore, case write-ups had to be based on unofficial translations, English language newspaper articles from these nations or on newspaper articles from the states involved in the boycott with a language I do speak. It was, for example, hard to find what the opinions of Chinese talkbackers were as these are provided in Chinese. Since I think that incorporating these statements in this research is important, I have asked a native speaker of Chinese to help me. Furthermore, the access to relevant information was restricted by national regulations concerning freedom of the press. It may be assumed that in certain states, most notably China, the available information was not as objective as in other cases—especially given the sensitivity of the issues underlying TPMCBs. Since the study relies on sources from all over the world, newspaper articles were selected from newspapers that offered online databases. Access rights to certain newspapers’ databases further decreased the number of newspapers that could be used. The sources used can therefore be colored by the newspapers’ backgrounds. However, through iteration among different sources from the same state and the other state involved, I have tried to provide balanced case write-ups.

5.3 Theoretical contributions
This study extends van Tulder and van der Zwart’s (2006) model of the societal triangle by adding another society to the model and establish the links between the two societies. This adjusted model enabled me to introduce TPMCBs as (1) a cross-border phenomenon and as (2) a phenomenon that has its origins in the limited means of
individual citizens to influence policies of other states, which increasingly affect them given the process of intensifying globalization.

I have also extended the usage of the Aula and Manetere’s (2008) arena model by including multiple and pluriform audiences, where the original model assumes one public. This adjustment underlies the idea that MNEs find themselves through their presence in different state confronted with audiences that make their own assessments based on their respective set of values.

In addition, my characterization of TPMCBs elaborates on the symbolic interactionist model of issue evolution (Lamertz et al., 2003). The model’s emphasis on institutional elements was replaced with the concept of value areas which was adopted from Schoonman (1991). Lamertz et al. (2003) assume an enacted structure which can be seen as a set of shared agreements based on a number of institutional rules. In my model, on the other hand, the enacted structured is based on the value areas of the societies involved. The model of TPMCB evolution has shown that the model that was built by Lamertz et al. (2003) can be modified and applied to situations in which the focus is not on institutional rules.

The literature review based on Issue Management and Reputation Management has proved to be helpful in analyzing the TPMCB phenomenon. From Issue Management, I adopted the idea of the issue life cycle. Especially the internal debate within Issue Management concerning the shortcomings of natural history models of issue evolutions. My findings indicate that a general model of TPMCB evolution can be built, but that the phenomenon is too specific to account for the actions of relevant stakeholders. Notwithstanding the above points, the main contribution of this study is to provide a first theoretical model about a phenomenon that has increasing significance for MNEs in an era of increasing globalization.

5.4 Practical significance

The possibilities MNEs have at their disposal to avoid becoming a target of a TPMCB are limited. As argued by an employee of Danish company Arla, “[w]e are caught up in the current trade crisis entirely undeserved, and we have no earthly chance of beating
again. If consumers in the Middle East have simply decided that they will not buy Danish products, it is a very difficult situation to work with” (Attrup, 2006a).

Moreover, it is hard to provide general advice for how to react to crisis situation. The Fitna case, for example, shows that engaging too much with the boycotting stakeholders and agreeing with them to some extent proved problematic due to the backlash at home. A same logic applies to the study’s practical significance for governments. In the case of the Danish cartoons, the Danish government got involved at a very late stage, arguing that freedom of the press made it inappropriate for the government to comment on the contents of a newspaper. In the Fitna case, on the other hand, Dutch government and civil society got engaged in the TPMCB process at a very early stage, i.e.: they already warned for possible boycott threats before the critical event took place. This, however, has not prevented boycott groups from targeting Dutch MNEs with a TPMCB.

Yet, the findings of this study could give the initial impetus to MNEs to reflect on the extent to which they are and wish to be associated with a certain nation state. Although out of the scope of this study, it needs to be mentioned that many MNEs actively emphasize their connection to a certain state. A clear example is IKEA which unmistakably underlines its Swedish identity. Labeling products’ provenance can be beneficial if consumers in foreign markets hold positive views of the state an MNE wishes to be associated with. Yet, critical events highlighting the diverse views of audiences in different states may quickly change favorable views into negative ones, with possible implications for consumers’ purchasing behavior.

5.5 Synthesis
This chapter discussed the model of TPMCB evolution that was presented in the previous chapter. I discussed what the model can show and what it cannot show. Consequently, a number of limitations of the study were touched upon. The section on theoretical implications discussed the model in light of the theoretical notions presented in the literature review. Finally, the practical significance of this study for MNEs was discussed. In the next chapter an answer will be formulated to the central question of this study and directions for further research will be formulated.
Conclusion and suggestions for further research

In the previous chapter, the results of the analysis were discussed. This chapter, then, consists of three parts. First, based on the research conducted, a clear and consistent answer to the central question will be formulated. Hereafter, I will translate the results of the study into recommendations for MNEs that might become the possible targets of TPMCBs. Finally, suggestions for further research will be suggested.

6.1 Answering the central question

The research endeavor was driven by a perceived theoretical gap. The social phenomenon that was coined the *transnational politically motivated consumer boycott* in this study appeared to be largely absent from scientific literature. For this reason, the study had an exploratory character which was reflected in the research problem, which stated that the study “seeks to understand how the TPMCBs evolve from the build-up of the boycott’s announcement to its final stages and which are the relevant actors involved in the process” (cf. section 1.7.1). Addressing this knowledge problem, I formulated the central question of the study as follows: *How do TPMCBs evolve and what are the relevant actors involved in the process?*

6.1.1 TPMCB evolution

Based on an analysis of five TPMCB cases, a model of TPMCB evolution was built. As was argued extensively before, a number of cross-case patterns could be identified that were incorporated in the model. On the other hand, the studied TPMCBs varied in (1) the moment the different actors get involved and (2) the moment in which these actors display certain behavior. These points of similarity and dissimilarity are incorporated in the model. The model establishes the idea that a gap in values between two different societies underlies the TPMCB process. When an actor in society $x$ does something that is in the other society perceived as violating important values, the action can become a
critical event. This critical event can put such pressure on the level of understanding between the two societies that it results in stakeholder misalignment, in which mutual understanding is damaged. A boycott is then called for by actors in society y. Depending on the degree of attention that is given to the boycott call, the TPMCBs stakeholders get involved. Yet, the model cannot specify which actors get involved at a certain point in time and what actions they perform. This is caused by the variety between the cases in this point. The arena model (Aula and Mantere, 2008) was incorporated in the model to show that the boycott call is followed by a contest for meaning making. Based on the events in the arena, realignment takes place, in which mutual understanding is restored or not. If mutual understanding between the societies is restored, boycotts are thought to fade away. Yet, if the result of the meaning making battle is rejected by the different actors, continuation or event expansion of the boycott to other societies might take place in society y. Furthermore, calls for a counterboycott can be expected in society x.

6.1.2 Relevant actors
Van Tulder and van der Zwart’s (2006) societal triangle has informed the analysis to an important extent. The model and my own adjustments to it have paved the way for identification of the relevant actors or stakeholders in TPMCBs. Interestingly, the stakeholders belonging to the three societal spheres, state, market and civil society, were all involved in this phenomenon. The state was represented by a number of governmental stakeholders, most notably politicians and diplomats. The market was represented by the MNEs that are active in the different societies. It was determined that their position can be fragile, because they find themselves confronted with multiple and pluriform audiences that assess critical events in different ways. Civil society was represented by groups launching boycott efforts. A certain degree of organization was deemed needed for a boycott group to be part of civil society. Finally, a very important role is played by individual customers. The success of a boycott effort is eventually determined by the willingness of individual customers to participate in the boycott. Only a high level of engagement could damage MNEs corporate performance to such an extent that foreign government would consider changing the challenged policy.
6.2 Recommendations for MNEs

Although the study explicitly aimed to contribute to theory building, the second objective of the study aims to formulate tools for formulating a strategic response to TPMCBs by increasing knowledge about the phenomenon (cf. section 1.8). In this section, I will therefore provide a number of recommendations for MNEs. These recommendations are particularly relevant for those MNEs active in societies with highly diverging values.

First of all, MNEs active in markets with highly diverging markets should be aware of the possibility that they might become the target of a TPMCB. As was established in this study, MNEs can be targeted by boycotts while they are not seen as offending parties. Strategic responses of MNEs should therefore also be formulated for situations in which the MNE is not directly ‘doing something wrong’. The growing interconnectedness between stakeholders at a global scale will make the occurrence of TPMCBs more likely.

Secondly, MNEs should be aware of the notion that they will encounter multiple and pluriform audiences. Specific corporate behavior can be accepted by stakeholders in one export market whereas stakeholders in another can fully reject this behavior. This calls for local responsiveness which incorporates sensitivities that stem from the societies’ respective value areas.

Thirdly, and closely related to the previous points, statements made by MNEs or their behavior in once society can spark the ire of stakeholders in other societies. As followed from the cases, showing understanding for stakeholders in one society that feel aggrieved can backfire on the MNE in other markets, when stakeholders feel that the MNE sides with the other. Although the analysis did not provide an unequivocal view, it looks like trying to stand aloof and wait until the storm has blown over has its benefits over speaking out in certain TPMCB situations.
6.3 Suggestions for further research

A number of interesting points came up during the research that could not be included in this study but which provide suggestions for further research.

A pattern that became clear in my analysis is the fact that MNEs which are closely associated with a certain state seem to have a greater risk of becoming TPMCB targets. In the Israeli boycott of Sweden, for example, business icons like retailer IKEA, alcoholic spirits brand Absolut Vodka and automobile manufactures Saab and Volvo were quickly identified as boycott targets, where the Chinese TPMCB of France was mainly directed at France’s Carrefour supermarket chain. Boycotting groups were found to provide detailed lists of well-known brands associated with the boycotted state, as well as less familiar brands. The talkbacks, on the other hand, revealed that individual consumers share a strong tendency to focus their boycott efforts on MNEs whose alleged country of provenance is well-known or easily recognized. Apart from the practical consequences this might have for MNEs (cf. section 5.4), further research is needed to determine if the suggested relationship between a clearly visible or well-known country of origin makes an MNE more prone to becoming the target of TPMCBs.

In this line, further research could focus on branding, which deliberately tries to associate a brand with a certain state. Earlier mentioned IKEA is a clear example of an MNE that hitches a ride on the reputation of the Swedish state. Some brands even incorporate the name of their country of origin in their brand name, for example fashion company Tiger of Sweden. From the analysis, it followed that states’ reputations can quickly change as critical events lead to consumers having a less favorable impression of the state and its MNEs. Further research is thus suggested to try to determine under what conditions associating an MNE with a state is beneficial for corporate performance.

Furthermore, given the exploratory character of this study, further research needs to be conducted in order to test the model for larger number of TMPCB cases. Deductively testing the TPMCB model that was developed in this study can show its explanatory power and possibly establish a closer link between theory and the empirical data.
Finally, future research is needed to get a better picture of the behavior of the individual stakeholders in the TPMCB process as no clear patterns were found in this study. Yet, the close interconnectedness between the societal actors and their mutual interdependence makes the outcome of TPMCBs for MNEs largely dependent on non-market actors, most notably on governments. Particularly researchers active in the field of Business and Society, as well as Political Scientists, could contribute to developing tools for MNE’s responses to boycott calls if more clarity is provided about which policies can limit potential damages as a result of TPMCBs.
References


