

# Framing Collective Moral Responsibility for Climate Change: A Longitudinal Frame Analysis of Energy Company Climate Reporting

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August 2024, the Journal of Business Ethics published an article written by Melanie Feeney (former PhD at SBE) together with her colleagues. This article describes a longitudinal qualitative content analysis on how the then largest European investor-owned energy companies have taken to shift their business practices in addressing climate change issues. Our findings reveal three main categories of energy companies: (i) deflecting, (ii) stagnating, and (iii) evolving. We show key differences in the relationship between framing and action over time for each category, revealing how deflecting companies have larger and persistent gaps between green talk and concrete action and how stagnating companies are delaying action despite increased green talk, while evolving companies exhibit a closer link between talk and action that tends to be realised over time. Our analysis reveals how competing approaches to framing collective moral responsibility help understand the trajectories of talk and action across the different categories of energy companies. This research makes several contributions to the literature on organisational hypocrisy and collective moral responsibility in the context of climate change. Our analysis highlights the complex relationship between collective moral responsibility, organisational hypocrisy and climate action, revealing how different collective framings—diffuse, teleological, or agential—can both enable and offset substantive climate action. The study also enriches our understanding of the performative nature of collective moral responsibility by examining its temporal dimensions and showing how an agential, backward-looking focus is associated with more meaningful climate action.

**Keywords** Climate change · Framing · Moral responsibility · Energy companies · Sustainability reporting · Content analysis