

III Encontro de Ensino e Pesquisa em Administração e Contabilidade

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**Applying Films on Environmental Cases  
to Discuss Corporate Response and Ethics**

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Marcelo Henriques de Brito, 2011

**Motivation for this work**

- environmental issues entangle technical challenges and passionate human feelings amid complex communication and ethical issues, including managerial dispute and government lethargy
- recent environmental accidents: hefty BP oil spill (second quarter 2010) and Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant radioactive leakage (March 2011)
- distinguish external from internal environmental investigations, which may lead to or result from lawsuits
- productive debate may be triggered from seeing scenes and hearing dialogues based on real situations
- belief that lectures and research should also quote films and plays, exploring similarities, differences and particularities among them
- apply the IEA Communication Model (Henriques de Brito, 2003)
- course “Strategic Financial Management with Globalisation” held in English at Ibmecc-RJ (www.ibmeccrj.br) with Brazilian and international students

Marcelo Henriques de Brito, 2011

**Environmental Cases**

**Fiction reflects Reality !**  
plots intertwined discussed in:

HENRIQUES DE BRITO, Marcelo; “Applying Films on Environmental Cases to Discuss Corporate Response and Ethics”. EnEPO 2011 - ANPAD, November 2011.  
Marcelo Henriques de Brito, 2011

**Interaction with the IEA-Model**

HENRIQUES DE BRITO; “Applying the Interest-Expectation-Attitude Model to International Relationship”. III International Conference on Discourse, Communication and the Enterprise (DICOEN 2005), September, 2005.  
HENRIQUES DE BRITO; “Crise e Prosperidade Comercial, Financeira e Política”. Figure 3.1-6, Probatius, 2003.  
Marcelo Henriques de Brito, 2011

**Final remarks**

Entrepreneurs and executives should be concerned about environmental liabilities and damages, and be able to handle threatening environmental claims.

Issues better debated by witnesses rather than by readers.

Article ends with suggested strategic issues to focus on.

Marcelo Henriques de Brito, 2011

**Marcelo Henriques de Brito**

- Education**
  - Ph.D. degree from École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne EPFL - (Switzerland).
  - Degree in Business from “Universidade Mackenzie” (São Paulo), achieving the prize “Prêmio de Mérito Acadêmico em Administração” bestowed by the “Conselho Regional de Administração São Paulo” (CRA-SP)
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## Applying Films on Environmental Cases to Discuss Corporate Response and Ethics

**Autoria:** Marcelo Henriques de Brito

Famous environmental claims implicating well-known corporations have already been reviewed by several publications, such as "Corporate Crime and Violence" (Russell Mokhiber, 1988). Such publications may not eventually achieve to either stress or even imply to a broader audience the relevance of passionate human feelings amid complex communication and ethical issues underlying investigation cases of environmental accidents and damages. Actually, an appealing debate may be triggered more quickly and easily after the participants have watched scenes and heard dialogues, as if the audience had witnessed a real event. Under these circumstances, a group may discuss and fix better some messages on human relationship and information management related to environmental claims. These issues are specially significant when it is challenging to identify successfully who caused a pollution or an environmental accident so as to sue the guilty and to settle an appropriate compensation. Eventually, ties between corporations and the government may account for attempts to delay or clog a reasonable outcome.

These issues are even more relevant after the hefty BP oil spill during the second quarter 2010 and the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant radioactive leakage beginning in March 2011 after an earthquake followed by a tsunami. Both cases raised the awareness of the difficulties to immediately stop two major leakages, besides evidencing managerial troubles and government lethargy.

Thus, the purpose of this article is to discuss the plots in the films "A Civil Action" (Steven Zaillian, 1998), "Erin Brockovich" (Steven Sonderbergh, 2000), "Fast Food Nation" (Richard Linklater, 2006) and "The China Syndrome" (James Bridges, 1978), as well as in the 1882 play "An Enemy of The People" by Henrik Ibsen. Similarities and differences are explored, as well as the challenges to carry out those investigations and the lessons that might be inferred from the steps taken to unravel them.

This information is also used to apply the IEA Communication Model, which has been used in several fields of knowledge. Moreover, this work also explores the idea of using well-known films to stimulate participants to get personally involved with stories which are indeed famous case studies based on real situations. Although scientific papers traditionally quote academic articles and reference books, a new research trend may deem valid to carry out research by quoting well-known films and notable documentaries, which may be easily obtained as DVD or Blu-ray. Such approach may also ease the relationship between academics and those practitioners who tend to shun a priori hypothetical discussions of intangible issues or conceivable cases.

Therefore, the contents of this work may be useful for professors and facilitators fostering discussions with students or environmental specialists, as well as entrepreneurs and managers willing to assess better those issues related to environmental management and law enforcement. The debate may also comprise how corporations abiding environmental and social responsibility should respond to unfortunate environmental casualties.

## 1 Introduction

During the second quarter of 2010, the press reported world-wide the increasing environmental disaster caused by the oil spill from a BP damaged underwater well on April 2010, although unarguably BP did struggle to quickly plug the erupted well, fruitlessly nonetheless during several weeks (The Economist, 2010). The BP oil spill illustrated that a serious environmental accident may overthrow the top management of a company, undermine its financial stability and decrease the wealth of its owners or shareholders, besides ultimately contributing both to damage the reputation of the whole industry to which the company belongs and to jeopardise the economy of the region in which the company is located.

About almost a year later, a tsunami following a severe earthquake damaged the Fukushima Dai-ich nuclear-power plant. At first, plant managers and Japanese authorities did not clearly acknowledge the release of radiation and actually did attempt to deny the seriousness of the aftermath of the catastrophe in March 2011. Moreover, the natural disaster in Japan unveiled an astounding lack of leadership (The Economist, 2011). Likewise the BP oil leakage, the nuclear accident in Japan drew the attention to the relevance of rapid response, accountability and transparency of both corporations and the government during an environmental accident. Shoddy management worsens a clear-cut damage and its remedies.

There are several publications which did report several other environmental claims, such as “Corporate Crime and Violence” (Russell Mokhiber, 1988). Furthermore, there are already some valuable films about environmental cases, such as “A Civil Action” (Steven Zaillian, 1998), “Erin Brockovich” (Steven Soderbergh, 2000), “Fast Food Nation” (Richard Linklater, 2006) and “The China Syndrome” (James Bridges, 1978), as well as the classic play “An Enemy of The People” (Henrik Ibsen, 1882). Besides being worthwhile to explore similarities and differences between those plots, that famous play and the four mentioned films may be suitable to foster an analysis of both the verbal communication (such as: choices of words, ways of conceiving a speech) and the non-verbal communication (including vocal intonation, facial aspect or body movements as indicative of feeling) of people during an environmental investigation. Moreover, using the ‘IEA Model’ that Henriques de Brito developed and applied in several areas of knowledge, as behavioural finance (Henriques de Brito, 2003), international relationships (Henriques de Brito, 2005a), environmental management (Henriques de Brito, 2005b) and insurance marketing (Henriques de Brito, 2009), this paper shows how the ‘IEA Communication Model’ (The IEAC Model) may be useful to analyse the mentioned plots in order to improve communication skills and knowledge for environmental investigation and management.

## 2 Brief review of the plots in the scripts

This section describes the plots in four films “A Civil Action”, “Erin Brockovich”, “Fast Food Nation” and “The China Syndrome”, as well as in Ibsen’s play “An Enemy of The People”. Incidentally, all the words and expressions between quotation marks do appear in the films’ subtitles or are quotes of Ibsen’s play, using the English translation by R. Farquharson Sharp, which the Project Gutenberg EBook released.

### 2.1 “A Civil Action” (Steven Zaillian, 1998)

This film was directed by Steven Zaillian, who also wrote the screenplay, which was based on the book by Jonathan Harr, who reported a true case of environmental pollution in Woburn, Massachusetts, during the 1980s. Jan Schlichtmann (played by John Travolta) was an ambitious personal injury lawyer who would basically acknowledge the amount of money a lawsuit would provide him. Therefore, at first, he was not willing to be the plaintiff’s attorney against those responsible for health problems (as cancer and leukaemia) in Woburn,

because there was no proven link between the industrial waste of local companies and the groundwater contamination, which in turn was causing health problems to the inhabitants of Woburn. The population had only a hunch that the health problems had “something to do with the city's drinking water”, because of its “funny” taste. Consequently, the illness and death of children did gather their parents to investigate the situation more carefully so as to find out what happened and also to seek for apologies, without knowing who was accountable nonetheless. Although one mother did try several times to convince Schlichtmann’s firm to investigate the problem, he only agreed to take legal action against two wealthy industries in the region, when he believed that the chances of success were very high and that the case would turn out to be very profitable to his firm and beneficial to his reputation.

However, the investigation and the court proceedings were harder and more challenging than previously conceived. The defendants’ lawyers were highly prepared, seasoned and very tough. Their clients were powerful corporations. A judge ruling the case was sympathetic to the defendants’ interests, confirming a statement outspoken in the film that “the odds of surviving a game of Russian roulette are better than winning a case at trial. 12 times better”.

Gradually, Jan Schlichtmann considered that money would not be the main driving force anymore in his quest against the polluters. He became less nimble and not inclined to accept settlement offers. Actually he developed into a stubborn attorney, who would sincerely and proudly believe that his claim was completely right, and that he would hence be able to win outrageous demands. However, Schlichtmann and his partners were soon overwhelmed with paperwork, running out of money, and without the required serenity to follow the lawsuit. Quarrels made them split apart. Schlichtmann was left alone and befell financially ruined, but he still managed to win a small amount for the families.

During many years, Schlichtmann had to pull down dramatically his standard of living. Some years later, he was ultimately able to pay his debts. Moreover, the US EPA (Environmental Protection Agency in the USA) would finally and successfully sue the main offending companies, make them pay substantial amount of money and end their activities.

## **2.2 “Erin Brockovich” (Steven Soderbergh, 2000)**

This film was directed by Steven Soderbergh with a screenplay by Susannah Grant, based on a true story of a woman called Erin Brockovich (played by Julia Roberts), who, at the beginning of the film, was an unemployed single mother of three children and was desperate to get a job with income, specially after her personal injury lawyer surprisingly lost a car accident lawsuit, leaving her without the likely deserved and needed compensation. Thus, running out of money, she begged her lawyer in that lawsuit, Edward L. Masry, to give her a job, although she had no formal education, besides displaying rude and awkward manners. Contrarily to his initial will, he finally accepted to hire her as a file clerk in his firm.

Incidentally, she comes across with a pro bono case. In its files, there was a real estate purchase proposal from a powerful energy corporation mingled together with blood samples and medical records. Feeling that this situation was rather bizarre, Erin decides to diligently scrutinize the particulars of the case. Through interviews and water sample analysis results, she soon grasps that the energy corporation wanted to buy that house in Hinkel in order to prevent the company from being sued for polluting with industrial sewage the underground water, which the household was using to drink and bathe. Furthermore, Erin realised that other residents of Hinkel did receive similar proposals, even though the households were not able to grasp the hidden intention of the energy corporation and the link between the environmental damage and the diseases leading even to death.

With her unique sensibility and assertive attitude, Erin managed to collect hundreds of signatures of plaintiffs who accepted the challenge of a ‘binding arbitration’ decision instead of an ordinary trial with a jury. That choice was “the best shot to get everyone some money



now”, according to Ed Masry, who also frankly warned them during his speech at Hinkel that: “I’d like you to keep this date in mind: 1978! That’s the year of the Love Canal controversy. They’re still waiting for their money! Think about where you’ll be in 15 or 20 years.”

The arbitration judge ruled favourably to the plaintiffs, also using an important piece of evidence that Erin received from a former employee of the defendant company, who at first seemed to be an unpleasant man. After telling Erin that he had to virtually destroy all the records which would prove that the energy corporation knew about the water contamination and its aftermath, he still kept evidence which would ultimately incriminate the corporation. That piece of evidence proved that top executives at the headquarters knew about the aquifer contamination, but deliberately decided not to disclose the information about the pollution or to remedy the environmental damage and health problems thereby. The settlement amount to the plaintiffs was the biggest ever awarded hitherto on a direct-action lawsuit in the USA and there were other environmental lawsuits pending.

### 2.3 “Fast Food Nation” (Richard Linklater, 2006)

Fast Food Nation is the title of Eric Schlosser’s non-fiction book and of its loose film adaptation directed by Richard Linklater, who with Schlosser wrote the screenplay. There are basically three interconnected stories, each one tackling different issues. The longest plot begins with a successful and illegal border crossing, which further develops into a story about the harsh labour conditions of illegal Mexican immigrants in a meat factory in the USA. Despite the relevance of this social problem, this subject is beyond the scope of this work.

Another story depicts the assignment of Don Anderson (played by Greg Kinnear), a vice president of marketing at a hamburger chain. He had to check why a test with its main hamburger meat would reveal fecal coliform counts “just off the charts”, which could endanger the sales of the most popular menu item of that hamburger chain. During a biased guided visit of the meatpacking processing plant, Don was not able to identify a probable contamination source. Afterwards, Don had the opportunity to talk to Rudy Martin, a former cattle supplier to that big plant. Rudy and his Mexican maid freely reported to Don the safety violations and the untrained employees at the “gut table”, where the meat was separated from the intestines and the stomachs. A slackly job would not prevent the residual waste matter still inside the guts from mixing with the meat, causing its contamination “every day”. Later, Don also grasped that the meat contamination was linked to illegal corporate executive behaviour. There was a corporate turf battle, in which Don had to avoid involvement, once he wanted to keep his job. He decided hence to recommend “some additional testing in the near future and see what that shows”, as if irrefutable evidence was not available. Finally, he presented ‘business as usual’ to the board a campaign to launch a new burger.

A third case was about an “environmental policy discussion group” with young teenagers. Wrathful with all the environmental problems caused by that meatpacking processing plant, a member of that group wanted to start a “letter-writing campaign not only to the state water quality board but to various editorial organizations” with the support of a professor. However, an aggressive activist in the group convinced them that such way of protesting would be ineffective by arguing that the state governor “received two hundred thousand dollars last year” from that company and that the Head of the environmental committee in the state senate was “married to a top exec” of that same company. Thus, the belligerent activist instigated “some action”.

Amber, who recently left her job at the hamburger chain, because she was willing to “do something else”, brought a suggestion to that group which she had just joined. She spoke slowly, with a soft voice, and using a question: “what if we cut the fence...and let them out?” She then detailed her proposal related to the cow in the feedlot: “Let them run free. I mean, that - ... That might get some attention.” The belligerent activist immediately sympathized

with the idea, rated it as “beautiful”, which motivated a more detailed speech by Amber.

Although Amber’s plan to liberate the cows was considered to be “a really good idea”, the group member who suggested the “letter-writing campaign” decided to warn his peers that: “any destruction of private property ... can be considered in violation of the Patriot Act. It can be considered an act of terrorism. You can go to prison for, like, 10 years.” Such treat was turned down by the belligerent activist. During the night, the group carried out the plan to set free the confined cattle. To their astonishment, the cattle would not leave, but the group managed to escape without being caught. Later, they attempted to extract lessons from their unsuccessful venture, besides wondering: “How come, in real life, the bad guys always win”.

The idea that big businesses may be evil (with “bad guys”) and mighty (“always win”) altogether has appeared in other plays and films, which would stress how ordinary individuals may be cheated or even abused by corporations. Specifically about how the fast food industry would interact with its customers in a biased way, the documentary film “Super Size Me” (Morgan Spurlock, 2004) suggested that fast food could be blamed for several health problems, including the increasing spread of obesity throughout U.S. society. Despite all harsh criticism about corporate cover-up attempts and ruthless attitudes, political freedom and economic liberty subsist in the USA, where it is possible to shoot and show such films.

#### 2.4 “*The China Syndrome*” (James Bridges, 1979)

James Bridges directed “The China Syndrome” and took part in writing its screenplay together with Mike Gray and T.S. Cook. This fictional story was based on the hypothetical situation of a nuclear plant meltdown in the USA. The TV reporter Kimberly Wells (played by Jane Fonda) was willing to carry out real investigative reporting, instead of presenting popular soft news, albeit very successfully. She received the opportunity to do a special newscast on energy. Together with a sarcastic, though “award-winning”, cameraman called Richard Adams (played by Michael Douglas), she visited a nuclear power plant. Its public relations (PR) guided their visit through that plant in service.

Unexpectedly, they witnessed a rapid emergency shutdown of a nuclear reactor (known as “scram”) when they were in a room from which they could oversee through a bulletproof and soundproof glass the inside of the plant’s control room. Without authorisation and breaking security rules, Richard secretly filmed the extreme reactions of the technicians in the control room and the blinking lights of the control panel during the operational problem.

At first, the TV crew thought that the network would be happy with their scoop, but their managers in collusion with the plant’s PR did cover-up the broadcast of the incident, which would probably jeopardise the energy corporation goal to successfully obtain at that moment a license for a new nuclear plant. Nevertheless, Richard exhibited the confidential footage to a group of experts, after stealing the film that had been locked in a vault. This disclosure brought the information that a “China Syndrome” accident almost occurred at the power plant, nonetheless the reason for the incident still remained unclear up to that time.

A preliminary hearing led to an inconclusive report about the causes of the incident. The nuclear plant was allowed to operate again. However, Jack Godell (played by Jack Lemmon), the shift supervisor at the nuclear plant when the scram occurred, carried out independently an investigation. He discovered irregularities in the contractor’s documentation of a pump support structure, which would require costly and time-consuming new radiographs of welds, which in turn would delay the plant start-up and, hence, extend income losses.

Disgruntled with the order to bring up to full power a plant without fulfilling minimum safety requirements, Godell agreed to help anonymously the TV crew to disclose evidence about the insufficient safety conditions of that nuclear plant. A car chase almost killed a courier, who was carrying several X-rays of welds, which had been falsified. Later, Godell escaped from a deadly car chase too. After managing to safely arrive at the power plant and

noticing that the reactor was at full power, he seized the control room and threatened to flood the containment with radiation in order to force an interview on live TV. The police received permission to encroach into the plant, but took some time to burst the doors into the control room, once the plant was designed to prevent a forced entry into that control room. Simultaneously, technicians took steps to scram the plant, so as to neutralise Godell's threat to damage the plant for good. The technicians eventually managed a plant scram at about the same time that the police shot and killed Godell, who before dying felt the shudder following the scram, which led to further damages, but again without large-scale casualties.

The plant's PR and major officials tried to control the press' attention with statements to minimize the event and to portray Godell as an insane person, who would also be drinking. Ultimately, Kimberly Wells accomplished to interview a respectable plant technician, who did attest that Godell was the "sanest man I ever knew", actually a "hero", besides having reason to believe that the plant was not safe and that an investigation was important. Deeply touched by the circumstances, Kimberley additionally broadcasted that "Jack Godell was about to present evidence that he believed would show that this plant should be shut down".

The story in the film should also be related to the discussion about the role of the press amid the heated debate in the USA about the original investigative coverage of The Watergate Case that had successfully been conducted by two reporters of The Washington Post. Their names are mentioned in the film "The China Syndrome" by Kimberly Wells, immediately after asking Godell: "Don't you think that reporters serve a public function? There's Woodward, Bernstein". Coincidentally, the film was released in the USA, some days before the Three Mile Island nuclear accident, which did not turn out to be a "China Syndrome", but added credibility to the hypothetical situation. The film's plot is still plausible in view of the unfoldment of the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear plant damage in Japan in March 2011.

### 2.5 *"An Enemy of The People" (Henrik Ibsen, 1882)*

In 1882, Henrik Ibsen published the play "An Enemy of The People", with a plot that seems at first to be quite simple. The Medical Officer of the Municipal Baths, Doctor Thomas Stockmann, found out that waste from a tannery infected the water to drink and to bathe in it, after sending "samples, both of the drinking-water and of the sea-water, up to the University, to have an accurate analysis made by a chemist" (Act I). On the other hand, Peter Stockmann, the Mayor of the town and Doctor Stockmann's elder brother, found out that the suggestions to stop the aquifer contamination would cost "too much", would last "two whole years" and in the meantime would oblige the authorities to close the Baths (Act II). Moreover, the disclosure of the water contamination would ruin business opportunities, shrink employment possibilities, and abate tax income in that town. Therefore, the Mayor Peter Stockmann persuaded gradually and successfully the leading businessmen, the press and the population to ignore Dr. Stockmann's warnings, refute his recommendations, and deem him to be "an enemy of the people". Despite all the social pressure, the lack of riches, and even an insidious offer followed by a deceiving suspicion (i.e. Dr. Stockmann would be involved in a scheme to manipulate the price of the shares of the Baths – Act V), he stuck to his opinions, praised his integrity and proudly announced at the end of the play that "the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone." Although it is attractive to support this statement and to sympathise with Dr. Stockmann's, Ibsen's script allows of other interpretations and debates.

Ibsen showed how Dr. Stockmann with sound technical arguments turned out to be "an enemy of the people", although ironically his primary expectation was to be acclaimed for having done "a service to his native town and to his fellow-citizens" (Act I). Such turnabout may be analysed from diverging perspectives, being interesting to examine if his behaviour during the plot did facilitate or even help his opponents to accomplish their goal.

Furthermore, Ibsen was aware that the findings of an environmental investigation could

have broader implications, regardless of the merit of both the results and the expert who brought them out. Using the character Peter Stockmann, Ibsen pointed out clearly that: “The matter in hand is not simply a scientific one. It is a complicated matter, and has its economic as well as its technical side.” (Act II). The same idea was repeated throughout Act II and stressed the interdisciplinary approach of environmental themes.

A dialogue during Act II exemplified the difficulty to explain scientific results to an ordinary person. Morten Kiil, a tanner, required more details about the causal agent of the water-pipes contamination, which he assumed to be a “kind of beast”. At once, Dr. Stockmann set forth the accurate technical term (“infusoria”). Undisturbed with the rectification and after checking that “a lot of these beasts” were in the pipes, Morten Kiil further verified that “no one can see them”. He considered the issue to be hence “the finest story I have ever heard” and inferred that Dr. Stockmann “will never get the Mayor to believe a thing like that”. Such behaviour was still likely in 1882, since the play was published about thirty years after the British physician John Snow theorised in 1854 a causality between unclean water and cholera outbreak. As RIFKIN (2004) emphasised: “most scientists, at the time, did not share Snow's view. They believed that cholera was carried by airborne contamination. The scientific link between polluted water and cholera wasn't discovered until thirty years later”. Thus, Ibsen's dialogue reflected indeed a possible remnant doubt in 1882.

Once technical opinions may be both disputable and imbricated with other issues, new and complex problems usually pose an open clash between managers and experts. The conflict between technical knowledge and management skills is latent in the play and blended with a conflict between brothers. While Dr. Thomas Stockmann understood the truth about the water condition, did not want to be remiss in his duties and had plenty ideas, his brother Peter truly believed that “when it is a question of putting an idea into practical shape, you have to apply to a man of different mettle” (Act I). Moreover, Peter urged that his established authority in the town entitled him to require obedience from Thomas, besides thinking that he “should be able to keep some check” on Thomas, because the former “helped to improve the financial position” of the latter (Act II). Would Peter and Thomas not be brothers, the relationship between both would surely be different.

The development of the increasingly strained relationship between a single individual and all others in his community may lead the audience to support Dr. Stockmann's struggle to tell the truth, to shun any sly compromise and to do what was “right”, regardless of the might of the authority, the interests of the established institutions, and the irrational behaviour of the crowd. However, it remains to be analysed whether in the long run Dr. Stockmann would still stay happy being alone. Furthermore, one might wonder if Dr. Stockmann should have been less assertive and more flexible, exposing his ideas in a better way, so as to work out with a group a creative agreement. Mutual concessions could lessen further illnesses and eventually deaths and, hence, be a better outcome to everybody in the long run, since the plays ends leaving the idea that nothing would change, at least not in the short term.

Indeed an undoubtedly misfortune might have to occur to usher undesirable measures. This reactive way of proceeding may be seen in the first half of the film “Jaws” (Steven Spielberg, 1975), which is related to Ibsen's story. Likewise in Ibsen's plot, the town mayor led a cover-up to not ruin the summer tourist season. Thus, he did not accept to close the beaches based on the assumption that a woman was killed by a shark. However, a second shark attack that killed a boy provided the opportunity for the new police chief to shut down the beaches for 24 hours. Without any concrete and unquestionable evidence that the shark would not attack again, not only did the mayor decide to open the beaches during a National holiday weekend but he also motivated the bathing in the sea. He thought he was “acting in the town's best interest”. Nevertheless, a supplementary shark attack compelled him to ultimately sign a voucher to hire a contractor to kill the shark.



### 3 Discussions about the environmental investigations

In movies based on true stories (as “Erin Brockovich”, “A Civil Action” and “Fast Food Nation”), there are normally some discrepancies between actual events and the screenplay. On the other hand, the plots in the film “The China Syndrome” and in the play “An Enemy of The People” are fictional, although based on plausible events, as previously shown. Consequently, there is reliable and sundry material for the discussion that follows.

#### 3.1 Similarities, differences and particularities among the scripts

The plot in the film “Erin Brockovich” showed that the conclusions of an investigation set by a corporation (internal investigation) tend to be confidential and employed differently from those findings resulting from an opened investigation (external investigation), which are usually initiated and performed by an independent team. Thus, despite the effort to understand the reasons and scope of the contamination, the results of internal investigations tend not to be disclosed when there is a threat of other great losses (“Fast Food Nation” and “An Enemy of The People”) or when a serious lawsuit is likely (“Erin Brockovich”).

Although the previously described environmental investigations presented some common goals (i.e.: understand what had happened and why; identify the current situation; and list recommendations to stop the casualties and to avoid further problems), lawsuits do impinge additional targets. As a rule, an investigation related to a lawsuit should determine and indisputably prove who would be legally accountable for the environmental accident or pollution so as to successfully oblige the guilty to prevent and stop a wrongful act, besides enforcing the blameable parties to recover a damaged area or clean-up a polluted source of water. Another goal amid a lawsuit case is to estimate the amount that would probably be awarded as compensation together with punitive damages so as to even assess the fairness of a settlement offer, eventually proposed by the defendant.

Environmental investigation cases may hence be classified into two groups, depending on whether there is a lawsuit. Another way of classifying them focuses on who will perform the investigations, since there are internal and external investigations, although the two types of investigations were ultimately linked at the end of “Erin Brockovich”. Table 1 exhibits the combined results of sorting the environmental investigations cases as previously described.

Table 1 Sorting environmental investigations cases

	with a lawsuit	without a lawsuit
internal investigations	Erin Brockovich	Fast Food Nation An Enemy of The People
external investigations	A Civil Action Erin Brockovich	The China Syndrome

The more detailed Table 2 is required to discuss better the relationships and the dissimilarities between the plots formerly reported, so as to extract messages and lessons about environmental investigations. A quick inspection of the information in Table 2 should reveal that the chances of being successfully recognised for carrying out a “fair, sound and technical” environmental investigation are not so straightforward. Although there are several objective methods for conducting an environmental impact assessment, including among them a methodology with an original sketch and related tables to sort out environmental aspects and impacts (Henriques de Brito, 2005c), the successful accomplishment of environmental investigations seems to be sparked by an entrenched personal interest: to find out the “truth” and to develop the investigations with passion linked to a strong ethical feeling of doing “the right thing”, besides relying on able human communication to obtain crucial information.

Table 2 Confronting details of five environmental investigations cases

	A Civil Action	Erin Brockovich	Fast Food Nation	China Syndrome	An Enemy of The People
plot's source	a true story	a true story	a non-fiction book	credible cases	credible cases
environmental damage	Industrial pollution of a water source	Industrial pollution of a water source	Cow manure contaminating the meat	No external damage, but almost a dreadful nuclear accident	A tannery contaminated water to drink and to bathe in it
event that sparked the investigation	Parents wanting to know why their children were becoming sick and dying of cancer and leukaemia	Medical records and blood samples mixed together in a real estate pro bono case file	An independent study pointed out manure amid the burger meat	A scam at a nuclear power plant during a TV crew visit	Illness among tourists the year before could be linked to the sanitary conditions of the baths.
who started the investigation	A mother who lost a son A personal injury lawyer who was not willing at first to accept the case	A single mother with three kids and desperate to have a job (with income)	A corporate vice president for marketing	A cameraman who witnessed and secretly filmed a nuclear incident	The respectable Medical Officer to the Baths
what happened to the main character at the plot's end	Stayed alone and he lost all his personal assets	She was promoted, got a new office, and earned US\$ 2 million	To keep his job, he suggested inconclusive evidence as if nothing had happened	TV crew released the news after the police squad shot an insider, whose sanity was attested by a peer	He stayed alone, unemployed, despised by everybody in the town, but feeling "free"
what happened to business at the plot's end	There was a small settlement, but later the firms were closed	Company was sued and other claims were filed	Nothing, business as usual	The broadcast of the lack of safety of the plant that should be shut	Nothing
main reason for non-disclosure	Industries would have to pay substantial amounts (for clean-up and fines) and still could be closed	Corporation did not want to be liable for several illnesses and deaths	Sales of burger would plunge and contractor would disclose unpleasant information about a top executive	Corporation was seeking a license for a new facility Great loss of income if the plant would not produce and supply energy	The town needed the tourists There was neither money or time to stop the water contamination
barriers during the investigation	Lack of money, time and team cohesion during the investigation	Mounting expenses, persecution, mistrust from some plaintiffs	A careful prepared guided visit to impress the executive, who did not want to lose the job	Plant's PR effort to cover-up TV afraid of a lawsuit Life threat with two car chases	Mayor did not want to disclose the case and he was also the doctor's brother and boss
role of the justice or the government	The judge once favoured the plaintiffs but also ruled against them. EPA sued the firms	Judge accepted further investigation; County water board allowed access to files	Not applicable	Government supported the corporation Police shot an informer	Mayor supported the businesses and was against the doctor's attitudes
how the problem was understood	Documents were found and insider confirmed how the contamination happened.	Documents were found, samples were collected, and a specialist and two whistle-blowers reported	Personal talk with a former cattle supplier and his maid	Independent experts and an insider confirmed the treat Forged x-rays were found	Doctor sent water samples up to the University to have an accurate analysis made by a chemist
reasons for key person to help or to co-operate	Employee had children and was touched about the deaths, hence "burden of guilt"	Social pressure from the community; and a cousin's death	Resentment with the meatpacking processing firm	Telling the truth and a mother statement on the TV inspired the technical expert	With his political goals, the newspaper editor begun at first to support the doctor

Although Jan Schlichtmann (in “A Civil Action”) and also Dr Thomas Stockmann (in “An Enemy of The People”) began their environmental cases differently, at the end of the plots both were strongly convinced that they were right, albeit they were gradually being left alone and without riches. On the other hand, Erin Brockovich, who at the beginning was struggling by herself to survive, ends with friends and quite wealthy, although she remained quite stubborn. The persistence and maverick style of Richard Adams (in “The China Syndrome”) was also important to motivate the charming and hesitant Kimberly Wells, who eventually did manage to disclose the incident and the danger of a fictional nuclear plant.

The evidence from the above-mentioned cases do not allow of either the acceptance or the rejection that both an assertive behaviour and an outright technical claim would insure an immediate and successful outcome, measured in terms of personal wealth or social recognition (as initially expected by Jan Schlichtmann in “A Civil Action” and by Dr. Stockmann in “An Enemy of The People”, respectively). By those standards, both men failed. On the other hand, the main women in the films “Erin Brockovich” and “The China Syndrome” carried out their investigations with progressively more attention, enthusiasm and success, by gaining confidence and boosting self esteem. This behaviour pinpoints the relevance of personal involvement at work. However, whereas Jan Schlichtmann would fear or deny emotional commitment during professional activities by saying: “In fact the lawyer who shares his client's pain, in my opinion, does his client such a grave disservice he should have his licence to practice law taken away. It clouds his judgement”, Erin Brokovich would not only accept, but she did actually accentuate the personal meaning of her investigation: “Not personal? That is my work! My sweat! My time away from my kids! If that's not personal, I don't know what is.” Anyway, at the end of the plots, those characters were happy with their personal involvement, regardless of financial earnings or social recognition.

Sometimes an open recognition is not even possible, particularly in the case of internal investigations. In the film “Erin Brockovich” the energy corporation took quietly and in a strategic way all the steps to avoid being sued. There was probably no glamour in the work of those employees in charge of a cover-up. Actually, they might have worked with mixed feelings, since corporations do constrain (besides forbidding) their employees to disclose any unfavourable information about them. As clearly shown in the film “The China Syndrome”, a respectable plant technician was surely uncomfortable when he ultimately decided to contradict the prior corporate statement that his colleague Godell would be insane. On the other hand, Don Anderson in “Fast Food Nation” realised that his findings should be kept to himself, as soon as he understood that he should let the case rest, so as to keep his job. Such outcome may be considered to be an example of ‘agency theory’, when managers take the best decision for themselves, disregarding shareholders’ and stakeholders’ interests altogether.

Conversely, Dr. Stockmann disclosed the results of his private investigation and later he did not obey the order to publicly deny his statements about the organisation in which he was as a matter of fact an employee. Actually, he did break the managerial hierarchy, since the stockholders did not want to disclose the issue, as soon as they realised the far-reaching consequences. Finally, the Baths Committee dismissed Dr. Stockmann. A similar ending almost occurred in “The China Syndrome”. The TV crew did imagine that their scoop would be broadcasted immediately, but their managers in collusion with the plant’s PR decided to cover-up. Instead of manifestly disagreeing with an order (as Dr. Stockmann did), Kimberly Wells and particularly Richard Adams pursued their investigation in silence, improving their findings, and waiting for the right moment to broadcast or disclose them.

Timing plays a great role during an investigation. Not only it is relevant to pay attention to the precise moment to gather or grasp crucial facts, but also to when the findings should be disclosed. Without authorisation and breaking security rules, Richard Adams had the insight to secretly film the incident that he was fortuitously witnessing, albeit not understanding

everything. He was also concerned to quickly broadcast the news to avoid a cover-up attempt, which did occur. Then, he dexterously stole the film so as to show it to experts instead of leaving that footage locked in the vault from where it could eventually be removed. On the other hand, his opponents were very nimble to neutralise Richard's strategy on time.

Destiny also changes decisions. In both films, "Erin Brockovich" and "A Civil Action", the link between illness and water contaminated was not at all clear to the inhabitants, which did not know what they should do. In both stories, two women searched law firms, which at first were not interested in the case. However, minor evidences of a major problem stirred up the curiosity of Schlichtmann and Brockovich, and both became increasingly concerned with their investigation. Driving back home, Schlichtmann discovered by chance evidences of water pollution close to a factory, whereas Brockovich ran into a file with odd records while organising documents. Chance played also a decisive role in sparking an investigation in the film "The China Syndrome" with the unexpected scam during the visit of the TV crew, although the plant's PR did plan a biased guided visit to cause a good impression, likewise the visit that the meat processing plant manager planned to Don Anderson in "Fast Food Nation".

All the five plots in Table 2 relied on the fortunate help of technical specialists, such as experts with knowledge of chemistry ("Erin Brockovich") or nuclear energy ("The China Syndrome"), but also on the providential aid of whistleblowers (insiders). Several reasons may explain why someone previously loyal to an organisation would become unfaithful. The motives may be burden of guilt ("A Civil Action"), revenge, disgruntlement or resentment ("Fast Food Nation"), social pressure ("Erin Brockovich"), political ambition ("An Enemy of The People") and personal integrity ("The China Syndrome"), as well as agreement with the government and psychological sickness. These two latter possibilities appear commingled in the film "The Informant!" (Steven Soderbergh, 2009). Such true story about an insider and corporate price-fixing should draw the attention to the fact that some whistleblowers may not be always reliable, misleading an investigation. Additionally, investigators should bear in mind that whistleblowers and their family usually endure a huge pressure and tend to be reluctant to talk, as clearly shown in the film "The Insider" (Michael Mann, 1999), about a top executive, who disclosed confidential information about his former employer and the tobacco industry during an interview, which a main TV network in the USA decided not to broadcast, being hence a similar cover-up attempt as in the fictional plot "The China Syndrome".

Whistleblowers will give valuable information if they feel comfortable. For example, when a former employee at the energy corporation was about to give Erin Brockovich precious information, she called excitedly Ed Masry, who serenely instructed her to: "Go back and see if he'll make a declaration", "But be careful. Don't scare him off", "Stay calm", "Don't pepper him with questions", "People wanna tell their story. Just let him talk". She followed Ed's guidelines and finally the informer told to her that he did not destroy some relevant documents that he had to shred. Thus, unique opportunities should be exploited calmly at the right time, at the right place, with the right people and also with the right approach, as Jan Schlichtmann finally realised: "Do you know how sometimes you get so close to something that you lose sight of it? I kept looking for someone who saw Riley dumping barrels of poison, when I... what I should've been looking for was someone who helped him clean it up."

The four films discussed in this work were all produced in the USA and did accurately reflect the prevailing conditions in that country at a given moment. In other countries, the stories would probably be different, since both the laws and the structure of government agencies do change. For example, "binding arbitration" for an environmental claim would not be possible in Brazil. Thus, the ending showed in the film "Erin Brockovich" would not be a practicable outcome, according to the current Brazilian Law. Moreover, the settlement offers in the plot "A Civil Action" would not be feasible in Brazil, where a broad environment lawsuit would be sponsored by the Public Prosecution Department (known as "Ministério



Público”) and not by a single lawyer or a private law firm.

The different approaches between the Brazilian and the US Law are in tandem with the distinct outlook that Brazilian and American citizens have about the relationship between the government and businesses. Brazilians tend to support the idea that the government should play a major role in business, according to an extensive research by ALMEIDA (2007, chapter 7). Such mindset clashes with the American ideology tending to praise individual autonomy and believing that it is possible to rely on market forces with bridled governmental interference. This American point of view is validated in RIFKIN (2004), who contrasted it with the European way-of-thinking and way-of-living outlook. The same author also showed how Americans and Europeans diverge on environmental issues.

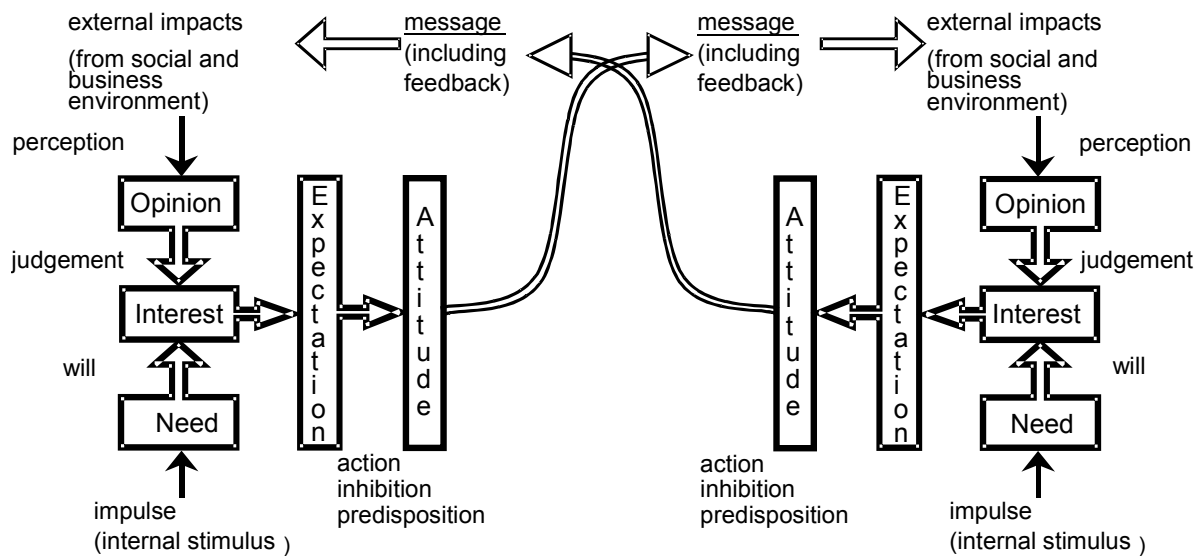
Even if details of environmental lawsuits may vary according to the culture and the corresponding law, debates with the above mentioned American films may display the particulars of the environmental legislation in another country and the possible advantages or disadvantages of the discrepancies. Furthermore, some messages on human communication and negotiation are world-wide applicable, as well as the basic motivation to search or hide the truth, to fight for ideas and recognition, and to defend friends or persons sharing common interests. These attitudes are in the plot that Ibsen conceived in Europe more than a century ago and that still has links to both true and fictional stories in the USA. The audience examining the unfolding of the stories in the plots should identify suitable, awkward or mistaken attitudes, which resulted from interests connected with strategies to address environmental liabilities and accidents, as discussed below with The IEAC Model.

### **3.2 A short presentation of The IEA Communication Model (The IEAC Model)**

Briefly, ‘The IEA Model’ (Henriques de Brito, 2003) is a visual representation of how human attitudes (action, inhibition or predisposition) result from a personal evaluation of expectations about future outcomes and the related current interests, which in turn rely on an intimate settlement of personal needs (as hunger) with personal opinions (e.g. what is suitable to eat). Whereas internal stimulus and, hence, personal needs generate individual wills, individual judgements are backed by personal opinions that rely on how someone perceived, processed and internalised information available in the social and business environment (as statements or publications). Therefore, without any appraisal of worth, relevance or merit, the term interest simply denotes the outcome of a personal settlement of needs and opinions, leading to an attitude, which may either be a set of procedures or a simple message.

Given that an action to communicate a thought is in fact a specific kind of attitude, it is feasible to connect two IEA Models, each one representing a person engaged in a human communication. Figure 1 exhibits The ‘IEA Communication Model’ (The ‘IEAC Model’), which is actually an improved alternative to the existing communication models, as described in textbooks, such as Adler e Rodman (2000, chapter 1). The IEAC Model reveals that a given verbal communication (with words) linked with a non-verbal communication (with gestures) should be perceived by others, who, in turn, may or not react with a feedback. If properly perceived, a feedback may inform how and if a message was understood and accepted.

The IEAC Model signs that a conversation or a negotiation will continue, as long the interlocutors are interested in the relationship, besides expecting a favourable outcome by exchanging information. Furthermore, according to lyrics of the Brazilian song “Wave” (Tom Jobim, 1967): “it is impossible to be happy alone”. Consequently, people normally like to establish relationships. However, the recollection of the outcome of previous meetings as well as current verbal and non-verbal feedback may change the course of a present conversation by shifting judgements and subsequently halting an interest to continue the dialogue. Indeed, bigoted pursuit of private interests, disregarding the others, may jeopardise short-term individual accomplishments and threat favourable collective achievements in the future.



Source: Translated and adapted from Henriques-de-Brito (2003)

Figure 1 Interaction with the 'IEAC Model' (The 'IEA Communication Model')

### 3.3 Discussions at the light of the IEA Model

In Ibsen's play, the bigoted interaction between the brothers Thomas and Peter Stockmann was one of the main causes to an unfavourable outcome to everybody, since the play ends without not even hinting an eventual solution to the initial environmental problem. Using the IEAC Model, it is possible to understand why those brothers had difficulties to relate to each other. The way they would formulate their interests were affected by their different backgrounds, regardless of how their needs would coincide or differ. Where and how they had lived certainly did affect their opinions about various issues and accordingly each one's interests, as acknowledged by Dr. Thomas Stockmann when talking to his brother: "You have lived all your life in these surroundings, and your impressions have been blunted. But I, who have been buried all these years in my little corner up north, almost without ever seeing a stranger who might bring new ideas with him—well, in my case it has just the same effect as if I had been transported into the middle of a crowded city" (Act I).

Dr. Stockmann's long-term loneliness and his astonishment with "a crowded city" may in fact rise doubts about his ability to communicate with others and about his teamwork willingness. Such traits are essential for those carrying out an environmental investigation to which the African proverb "if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." applies perfectly, since the more there are people contributing to the investigation, the better should be its outcome, even if it may last longer. Presumably, Dr. Stockmann was not use to exchange ideas or ready to reach an agreement by mutual concessions. Of course, he would relate with other people differently than his brother. Moreover, the brothers Thomas and Peter Stockmann would not have similar interests, expectations and consequently attitudes, because their perception and opinion about a 'truth' would not be the same, let alone the fact that a 'truth' may naturally vary with time. This knowledge leads us to be aware of the importance of how and when to express an idea, regardless of whether it is right or wrong.

Once new facts may appear, a given truth may become a falsehood. For example, after having "investigated the matter most conscientiously", Dr. Stockmann did change his mind about "the excellent sanitary conditions" of the Baths, which he did recommend in an unpublished article (Act I). However, he perceived as reliable "an accurate analysis made by a

chemist” at the University (Act I). He did also recognise that “we men can go about forming our judgments, when in reality we are as blind as any moles” (Act I). Therefore, the way of disclosing information must deem changes or corrections in the future. Consequently, an institutional communication must be dealt carefully and professionally, since there is a borderline between deceit for hiding the truth and naïveté for revealing it extemporaneously.

An assumed truth may bump into interests of third parties or powerful people, alone or amid groups, sparking diverse reactions. One of these attitudes can be attempts to cover-up: by withholding vital information from the public; by distorting or eventually destroying key evidence; by silencing respectable technicians who are aware about the truth; by not allowing debates on the findings; and by obtaining support from judges and authorities to dishonestly conceal the facts and mislead the public opinion (“An Enemy of The People”). Other possible attitudes are: intimidating phone calls (“Erin Brockovich”); life-threatening chase (“The China Syndrome”); burdening stratagem tricks as paperwork overload (“A Civil Action”); and attacks on the opponent’s personality rather than rebutting the ideas at stake (as all main characters in the four above-mentioned plots endured). Consequently, professionals in charge of investigations should be aware of plausible attempts to overturn an idea deemed unsuitable, besides assessing the need for precaution against threats.

Regardless of its validity, a “truth” must be communicated in a way that ordinary people can easily understand it. The Mayor Peter Stockmann had a tactful skill in handling disputable issues and also in manipulating public opinion - which for him was “an extremely mutable thing” (Act V). Such attitude may be unwelcome by some high-qualified technicians. When Jack Godell in “The China Syndrome” had his chance to be interviewed in a live coverage direct from the nuclear plant control room, this statement led the cameraman Richard Adams to grumble: “Don't be so technical”. Thus, when addressing to an audience not acquainted with technical issues, experts should shun precise technical terms and employ colloquial expressions. All relevant messages or commands should be short and straightforward, with small sentences and without interweaving ideas. Even though a sophisticated blend of ideas might be nice and accurate, the audience may become puzzled about what to think (i.e. opinion to retain) and do (i.e. attitude to take). The opponents’ effort to manipulate the audience’s comprehension so as to hamper the original desirable action becomes easier. They may just baffle the meaning of the blend of ideas, also by applying the simple and direct message in the quote credited to Harry Truman: “If you cannot convince them confuse them”.

Actually, Dr. Stockmann was right to phrase the following analogy: “Because it is not merely a question of water-supply and drains now, you know. No—it is the whole of our social life that we have got to purify and disinfect.” (Act III). This belief is in tandem with the gist of a book by GLADWELL (2000) “Ideas and products and messages spread just like viruses do”. Both elegant analogies mix an abstract point of view with an actual concrete situation. Besides sounding strange, at least initially, the intertwinement of two diverse concepts may be confusing and ultimately blur the main idea. Dr. Stockmann became so concerned about the ‘social contamination’ that he did not focus on the ‘water contamination’ anymore, which suited his opponents. The best message is the one resulting from an example, as in the film “Jaws”. Noticing that the beach was full, but that nobody was in the water (probably fearing a shark attack), instead of giving speeches to big audiences, the town mayor asked separately key people to “get in the water”, because “then others go”, using his words.

There are indeed techniques to argue effectively, regardless of the merit of the point of view, as clearly illustrated in the film “Thank You For Smoking” (Jason Reitman, 2005). Nick Naylor, a tobacco industry lobbyist (played by Aaron Eckhart), explained to his son “that’s the beauty of argument, because if you argue correctly, you’re never wrong”, besides clarifying shortly after that negotiation “is not an argument”. Such concepts do point out conflicting attitudes during inquiries. On the one hand investigators should consider other

people's opinions about whether additional evidence is required to complete properly an investigation, without giving the impression of a negotiation. On the other hand, investigators should find out independently if they have enough information to suitably prove their opinions so as to transmit confidence when arguing. Actually, a thorough research of similar themes and cases, usually in no time, is also essential to structure and sustain a faultless premise so that the syllogism does not fall apart during a debate, where "weapons are words", as shown in the film "The Great Debaters" (Denzel Washington, 2007) inspired on true facts.

Irreverent, phoney or unconventional personal behaviour may back the opponents' intentions to discredit a statement by discrediting the personality of who posted it. Such 'ad hominem' way of arguing appeared at the beginning of the film "Erin Brockovich" and was applied to disgrace Dr. Stockmann in Ibsen's play. Indeed, previous attitudes will influence future credibility, notably if someone recalls them. By reminding the jury in "A Civil Action" that the plaintiff's lawyer Jan Schlichtmann was a personal injury lawyer, the defendant's attorney Facher tried to disqualify his rival by stating: "The idea of civil court and personal injury law by nature - though no-one likes to say it out loud, least of all the personal injury lawyer himself - is money. Money for suffering. Money for death". This sort of insinuation would actually turn out to be totally unfair in that lawsuit. Moreover, there might be attempts to humiliate an adversary by emphasising his or her lack of a specific knowledge (e.g. about legal procedures). This dirty strategy did not intimidate Erin Brockovich, who did not feel uncomfortable for working out her first environmental investigation lawsuit. She who would unrestrainedly say: "I hate lawyers. I just work for 'em."

Vigorous statements may not be so effective as suggestions spoken firmly, but serenely, and preferably appearing candidness. In "Fast Food Nation", Amber successfully suggested to set the cow free speaking softly, in a sweet way, although there was no fondness in her idea. Who is perceived as presenting a moderate attitude seems to gather support and succeed, despite hidden intentions. In Ibsen's play, the businessman Aslaksen praised moderation as "the greatest virtue in a citizen" (Act II). Later on, Aslaksen indicated that: "I have never changed, except perhaps to become a little more moderate, you see. My heart is still with the people; but I don't deny that my reason has a certain bias towards the authorities—the local ones, I mean" (Act III). During a gathering of crowd of townspeople he stressed that: "I am a quiet and peaceable man, who believes in discreet moderation, and—and—in moderate discretion. All my friends can bear witness to that" (Act IV). Then, several voices cheered him. A similar kind of moderated behaviour to preserve the status quo may be identified in "The China Syndrome". After knowing that the scam could be the lead story, a top TV manager decided: "It looks like a great story, but we don't know exactly what it is. It's totally irresponsible to go on the air without checking the facts." In the next day, he resolved that: "The film stays in the vault". Although Richard Adams was very angry, Kimberly Wells recognised that: "I am not ashamed that I've got a good job... and I have every intention of keeping it and getting a better one. ... If that means they've got me, then they've got me".

Although the fear of losses (e.g. Kimberley could lose her job, and the TV network could lose prestige with the authorities or even be sued) motivates moderation, the uncertainty about some details may justify a prudent behaviour before an irrevocable judgment. This aspect was for instance clearly depicted in the film "12 Angry Men" (Sidney Lumet, 1957), which showed how one man (played by Henry Fonda) gradually and correctly changed the opinion of a whole jury about a defendant in a murder trial, although initially the guilt seemed to be obvious. Although worthwhile, it is beyond the scope of this work to contrast the behaviour of Henry Fonda's character with the attitudes of Dr. Stockmann and to assess if the latter behaving as the former could have avoided becoming "an enemy of the people".



#### 4 Conclusions

Although the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant radioactive leakage in 2011 eventually occurred because of a natural catastrophe (“Force Majeure” or “Act of God”), that accident does foster the debate about the safety of nuclear plants and how to avoid future environmental hazards. On the other hand, the clear-cut sureness of BP’s link to the huge environmental damage in 2010 is actually an exception, since the rather usually small scale of other environmental accidents and crimes may cloud the judgement about the liability of a certain company or business. Therefore, entrepreneurs and executives should be concerned about environmental liabilities and damages, as well as being able to handle environmental claims threatening the organisations they own or work for. During environmental investigation cases, special attention must be focused on passionate human behaviours and attitudes, which incidentally are better debated by witnesses (who saw the actions and heard the voices and sounds) rather than by readers (who only read a report and should infer the emotions and imagine the ways of expressions).

This article was conceived with the fundamental idea that appealing and useful debates are triggered more easily after the participants have watched scenes and heard sounds, as if they had witnessed a real event. Under such circumstances, a group may discuss and fix better lessons on human relationship and information management related to environmental liabilities and accidents, when it might be challenging to identify successfully the guilty and to settle an appropriate compensation with a defendant, who might have been negligent, reckless, unskilled or even deceitful. Though further work may suggest other plots, the here discussed stories that are backed by actual facts enable several strategic issues to focus on.

Firstly, inference, recommendations and suggestions from environmental investigations impart broad technical, economical, legal and social implications, outreaching significantly those conclusions resulting from usual technical research. Therefore, although management of an environmental investigation is easier with technological understanding, such previous know-how is not really decisive for a successful environmental investigation.

Secondly, bottlenecks to a successful environmental investigation usually are: lack of money; time shortage; paperwork overload; absence or deficiency of political skills; and insufficient legal knowledge.

Thirdly, despite hard and honest work, chance normally plays a significant role at the outcome of environmental investigations, since circumstances may unveil the opportunity to witness certain events, may help or hamper the disclosure of relevant information or may motivate the contribution of experts, insiders and other whistleblowers.

Fourthly, the way-of-communicating has a decisive impact on the outcome of arguments and negotiations. Thus, effective persuasive attitudes require the planning of: the information to gather; the statements to listen; the steps to take; the words to utter; and the feelings to express, although it is also important to be assertive, spontaneous and even stubborn, without ever giving the opponent reasons to dismiss an argument in an ad hominem manner. An inept behaviour would produce disastrous results, as portrayed by the maladroit Dr. Stockmann in Ibsen’s play.

Fifthly, sometimes the judicial system and the government may overlook a business flaw or even support a cover-up, although this promptness may be lessened by irrefutable evidences or even change with time.

Last but not least, the harder the obstacle, the more relevant is the personal resolution to accomplish a significant goal, regardless of the expectation to be awarded sometime with more money or social prestige. Those who from the outset conducted with passion and inner belief an investigation, as Erin Brockovich did, will probably agree that the stages of such challenging activity may be summarized with a famous quote credited to Mahatma Gandhi: “First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.”

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Director	Year	Original Title	Title in Brazil
BRIDGES, James	1979	The China Syndrome	Síndrome da China
LINKLATER, Richard	2006	Fast Food Nation	Nação Fast Food
LUMET, Sidney	1957	12 Angry Men	12 Homens e Uma Sentença
MANN, Michael	1999	The Insider	O Informante
REITMAN, Jason	2005	Thank You For Smoking	Obrigado Por Fumar
SONDERBERG, Steven	2000	Erin Brockovich	Erin Brockovich
SONDERBERG, Steven	2009	The Informant!	O Desinformante!
SPIELBERG, Steven	1975	Jaws	Tubarão
SPURLOCK, Morgan	2004	Super Size Me	Super Size Me
WASHINGTON, Denzel	2007	The Great Debaters	O Grande Desafio
ZAILLIAN, Steven	1998	A Civil Action	A Qualquer Preço