

BUSINESS – ENVIRONMENTAL NGO RELATIONSHIP REDEFINED

Semiotic-narrative reading of Enso's and Greenpeace's environmental writings

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ABSTRACT

Much of the current literature on eco-business relationships has taken the definitions of central concepts, such as the environment and environmental protection, for granted. The starting point of this ongoing study is different. Drawing from the linguistic approach to environmental issues the meanings and meaning systems that firms and environmental NGOs attach to nature and its protection or use when they talk or write about environmental protection is taken as the focus of the study itself. By doing so, the study focuses on issues and factors that have generally been ignored and bypassed in the discussions about eco-business relationships. These factors are usually taken-for-granted and unnoticeable but they still influence how the problems are treated in practice. The main purpose of this paper is to show what kind of issues and dimensions related to eco-business relationships one can grasp by using the constructionist approach and the semiotic-narrative text analysis method. This is done through two stages. Firstly, the paper looks at the benefits of the research approach and method used in this study in relation to earlier understandings of eco-business relationships. Secondly, the paper presents some observations from the ongoing analysis of the environmental representations of the Finland-based multinational forest company Enso Group (now called Stora Enso) and Greenpeace. These observations act as grounded guesses about what the final interpretation of the parties' representations revealed in the completed study may be.

Key words: business-NGO relationship, forest industry, linguistic approach, semiotic-narrative analysis

1. FROM SIMPLISTIC TO MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONCEPTUALIZATION OF THE ECO-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

The issue of business – environmental NGO collaboration versus confrontation has become a lively area of debate in environmental management and marketing literature as well as in the Greening of Industry Network (GIN). A common trend has been that of viewing strategic business – NGO partnership building as a positive opportunity and often also as a preferable alternative to the traditional conflict model. In this collaborative framework, however, the focus has not only been on the benefits provided by the partnerships. Instead, it has often been emphasized that collaboration between the parties is not easy and without problems. Thus, while green alliances may offer several benefits to partnering organizations and contribute toward sustainability, there seem to be threats that can turn collaboration between firms and environmental NGOs into a difficult and even a risky activity (e.g. Coddington 1993; Polonsky

1995; Stafford & Hartman 1996; Wasik 1996; Stafford & Hartman 1998). It has also been recognized that in the business – environmental NGO partnerships collaborative elements tend to supplement – rather than replace – elements of conflict (Livesey 1999).

In addition to the complexity and paradoxicalness of the business – environmental NGO partnerships, their ability to reach the criteria of sustainability has been questioned. Many partnerships have appeared to favor incremental progress and to fail to critically examine the adequacy of the present economic and political structures and, thereby, to produce more radical reforms and new modes of social organization that may be required to insure long term sustainability (Poncelet 1999A; Hartman et al. 1999; Rossi et al. 2000).

Recently, an increasing number of statements have entered the discussion according to which business – environmental NGO collaboration may not always be as preferable as has often – directly or indirectly – been suggested. In fact, some studies about business – environmental NGO confrontations have given reason to believe that a confrontational approach may sometimes result in more radical shifts towards sustainability (Rossi 1999; Paget & Morton 1999; Rossi et al. 2000).

It is likely that both collaboration and confrontation as overall business – environmental NGO strategies will exist and be needed. Both approaches are likely to *exist* because there are many kinds of companies and many kinds of environmental NGOs whose attitudes towards a preferred approach vary. On the other hand, the existence of both collaboration and confrontation is likely to be *needed* in promoting sustainability because different types of situations may call for different business – NGO approaches (see Rossi et al. 2000).

This paper argues that in relation to this ongoing discussion about business – environmental NGO relationships there has often been a rather simplistic conceptualization and understanding of the nature of the eco-business relationship. Simplification has generally been made because of the research problem at hand. For example, when focusing on the objective dynamics of eco-business partnerships or conflict incidents one tends to apply a perspective that is external to the viewpoint of the actors and that takes such aspects as the parties' definition of environmental protection as given. Often, the starting point is – implicitly or explicitly – that cooperation between the parties brings together opposing values and competitive interests and mindsets. Indeed, it is not unusual that the relationship between firms and environmental NGOs is reduced to the one between the market and environmentalism or between corporate profits and ecological values.

Naturally contradiction between the interests and values of firms and environmental NGOs generally exists. However, this paper argues that taking the confrontational juxtapositioning of the parties' values and points of view as the starting point without further detailing is very simplistic and will easily lead to myopic conclusions. Treating business – environmental NGO relationships as encounters between competing interests tends to reduce the participants to one-dimensional actors (see Poncelet 1999B). Thereby, it obscures the other dimensions of the situation in relation to which contradiction may even be irrelevant or nonexistent. The narrow definition of the situation tends to not just block the comprehension of the problem but also hinder communication between the parties (Rannikko 1994; Nieminen 1996).

This paper takes an alternative approach to business – environmental NGO relationships and focuses on issues and dimensions that have generally been ignored and bypassed in the

discussions about them. The paper argues that even though on a general level the eco-business relationship is known to be of a certain kind (e.g. contradiction between nature having intrinsic and nature having instrumental value) there is a need to make that knowledge more understandable. To do so, one has to reveal the premises through which businesses and environmental NGOs give accounts of their stance towards environmental issues. Then, instead of viewing the eco-business relationships as interplays among opposing values and competing interests, the study sort of takes a step backwards and focuses attention to the meanings and meaning systems that firms and environmental NGOs attach to nature and its protection or use when they talk or write about environmental protection. These reality constructions or outlinings are in this study called 'environmental representations'.

The research problem of this paper follows the interpretative (or linguistic) approach to environmental issues that has received increasing attention during the past few years (e.g. Hajer 1995; Cantrill & Oravec 1996; Herndl & Brown 1996; Harré et al 1999; Livesey 1999; Poncelet 1999A; Litmanen 1996). According to this approach, the interpretation of environmental protection is dependent on the linguistic utterances used in a certain context. Thus, even though on a general level environmental protection is understood in a certain common way its deeper content is very unclear and interpretatively flexible. The concept of environmental protection becomes more specific as the result of discussion and the meaning struggle included in it (see Haila 1991, 59-60). It gets its content from, for example, in what way and how consistently the premise of nature's instrumental value is being attached to it. The fact that 'environmental protection' and 'environmental problem' are interpretatively flexible does not only mean that they are defined differently by different actors but also that the definition given by any one actor is not stable. A definition given at some point of time is not the same as the one given at some other point of time.¹

How do we then use this approach to study business – environmental NGO relationships? Referring to earlier studies on the interpretative approach to environmental conflicts (Dietz, Stern & Rycroft 1989; Lake & Johns 1990; Lidskog 1993), Litmanen (1996) states that when an environmental conflict is studied as a social construction it is important to focus on social interaction and view it as the process that takes place in a certain social context and in which intentional and willing actors that interact with each other produce interpretations and definitions about the object of the conflict. This kind of approach, thus, rejects the thinking that the parties share a common, permanent understanding about the nature of the problem. The starting point is that there is no ready-made definition about the object of the conflict. It is socially produced. The question is about the social definition of the problem which is in continual negotiation between the various parties of the conflict. The analyst needs to focus his attention on the meaning struggle since every definition about the situation includes presumptions about what is the problem, who (or what) caused the problem and what has to change in order to solve the problem. Every definition also influences in determining who has the power to solve the issue. The definition of the problem acts as a means to justify those resources that can be mobilized in the conflict situation (Litmanen 1996, 30, 307-308).

¹ Environmental conflict as any other social activity is a sort of social learning process during which the parties learn new things about issues related to the conflict and produce new interpretations and meanings (see Litmanen 1996).

Following the requirements given above, the communication of businesses and environmental NGOs is in this paper seen as social action in which speakers (or writers) construct social reality and, at the same time, persuade their audiences of their views (Torronen 1997, 222).

The benefit of the interpretative approach to eco-business relationships is that it focuses attention to those kind of issues and factors that the traditional realist inspection cannot attain. It examines the so called *symbolic meaning* of environmental protection. The understanding of the symbolic dimension is necessary to explain how firms and environmentalists construct environmental protection. This kind of approach makes the relationship between firms and environmental NGOs more multidimensional and multiexplicable than has generally been the case. The environmental representations of the parties are often so taken-for-granted that one does not recognize them as being information and conceptual outlinings of the reality. Still they have practical meaning. When the arguments of the parties and the reality outlinings necessarily included in them are presented in public discussions, the problem definitions of those outlinings influence how the problems are treated in practice (see Sulkuinen 1997, 14-15).

Thus, by focusing on the reality outlinings that are encountered in the eco-business relationship, the study helps to reveal new issues and dimensions that prevail and influence the relationship. It also helps to see in more detail what kind of questions may need to be answered when sustainability is being sought either through eco-business partnerships or confrontations.

The importance of the constructionist approach to eco-business relationships is increased by today's internationalization and globalization which make those relationships even more complex and multidimensional. For example, since its extension into Asia the Finnish forest industry has faced new challenges in their relations with both local and global environmental NGOs. The Finnish forest company Stora Enso (previously Enso Group) has been criticized by both Finnish (e.g. Nature League) and Thai environmental organizations (Project for Ecological Recovery) for taking part in the pulp mill project that deprived local (Thai) people of their land.

Next we move to the empirical part of the paper which is based on an ongoing study that examines the environmental representations of the Finland-based multinational forest company Enso Group and the international environmental organization Greenpeace, the main parties of the well-known Finnish environmental conflict. First, the paper presents shortly the research design and methodology of the study. Then, some observations (so called working hypotheses) from the ongoing analysis of the environmental representations of Enso and Greenpeace are presented. By doing so, the paper aims to show what kind of issues and dimensions related to eco-business relationships one can grasp by focusing on the meanings and meaning systems that firms and environmental NGOs attach to nature and its protection or use. The observations presented in this paper act as grounded guesses of what the final interpretation of the parties' representations revealed in the completed study may be.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

As mentioned above, this part of the paper deals with the relationship between the forest

company Enso Group (now called Stora Enso) and the environmental organization Greenpeace. Enso has since the end of the 1980s increased its focus and investments on the environmental issues that now form an important part of its business strategy. Greenpeace Finland (now part of Greenpeace Nordic) was in the 1990s the most influential and most visible environmental group involved in the Finnish forest debate. Its international connections helped it to force the Finnish forest industry to change its stance on environmental issues (Rannikko 1996).

The data of the study consists of environmental writings from representatives of Enso and Greenpeace. The analysis starts from the environmental articles in the Enso staff magazine during 1985-1998 and the forestry related articles in the magazine of Greenpeace Finland during 1989-1997. Additional data includes Enso's environmental reports and Greenpeace's forest industry press releases and informative material.² Since the focus of the study is the meaning struggle included in the discussion of the forest industry and the environment, the interest of the analyst focuses on those kinds of writings or parts of the writings in which the authors give accounts of or state their opinions about the environmental issues of the forest industry. In this paper, two of Enso's writings and two of Greenpeace's writings are under closer scrutiny.

The starting point of the analysis is that when Enso and Greenpeace write about environmental matters, they simultaneously come to express the values and other premises that they hold about the environment and its protection or use. These values and other premises map what is acceptable and unacceptable, meaningful and meaningless in their representations. They also determine which arguments are legitimate in the discussions about environmental protection, who are the legitimate participants, etc. (see Litmanen 1996).

To examine Enso's and Greenpeace's environmental representations the study uses the semiotic-narrative text analysis method which analyzes the language used by the actors as well as the classification systems that are inherent in their language use and that structure and give meaning to their activity (Greimas 1979). The benefit with the 'semiotic-narrative reading' of the parties' environmental writings is that it offers a "meta language" that takes the inspection of Enso's and Greenpeace's environmental representations to the level that is detached from the everyday experience. Using the semiotic-narrative meta language it is possible to reveal such aspects of the topic – in this case, the shared values and other premises on which Enso's and Greenpeace's arguments about environmental protection are based – that the often-used realist inspection cannot attain (Tarasti 1996).

² The writers of the environmental articles of the Enso staff magazine come from various levels and departments within the company including, for example, the CEO, the Senior Executive Vice President, Executive Vice Presidents, environmental managers, forest managers, environmental protection managers, and plant managers. Sometimes Enso's articles were written by one of the editors of the staff magazine, but in most cases the editor was quoting some other company representative. Greenpeace's material was collected from the years 1989-1997, from the time a national branch of the organization was founded in Finland until it was closed at the end of 1997. In May 1998, Greenpeace merged its local branches in Sweden, Norway and Finland into a regional branch – Greenpeace Nordic – which takes actions in all three countries and nowadays also in Denmark.

The study aims to reveal both differences and similarities in Enso's and Greenpeace's environmental representations. It is likely that the two parties share some elements in their representations since they both do take part in the same discussion about the forest industry and the environment. In this discussion the parties try to convince others by appealing to the assumed common areas of understanding (see Alasuutari 1996, 14-15).

2.1 Tools of the analysis

One of the conceptual tools of the analysis used in the study is the actant model of A.J.Greimas, the founder of the Paris school of semiotics. The background of the model is in structural linguistics, and it is based on the thought according to which the semantic micro universe of a certain text can be presented as a simple miniature story, as an actant structure, which can tell about the nature of the reality constructed by that text. The model can thus be used to discover (decode) the hidden content – or at least certain dimensions of it – of what is being said about the environment and its protection or use in Enso's and Greenpeace's environmental writings (Greimas 1979, 197-206; Gahmberg 1986).³

The model is based on the idea that the way people think and, thus, construct social reality, resembles the logic of action. Therefore, the reality outlinings of a certain text can best be understood from the point of view of action. The narrative structures reduced from the text act as descriptive elements of the action. When using the actant model, a single writing is reduced and reconstructed into a story in which the intentions and interrelationships of the various actors or objects of the text are described as tensions between different actantial positions. The actantial positions included in the actant model are general relational categories repeated in all stories (Sulkunen 1997, 39-42; Korhonen & Oksanen 1997, 57).

In the background of the model is the idea that there is a state of balance which is disturbed by something that causes a certain series of actions in order to return the balance (Gahmberg 1999). The core of the story is the relationship between *the subject* and *the object*. *The sender* motivates the subject to strive for the object, and it defines the value goals of the action. *The helper* supports the subject whereas *the anti-subject* and *the adversary* try to prevent the subject from attaining the object. At the end of the task, *the receiver* rates the performance through a reward or a punishment. The model as a whole is based on the contradictory intentions of the actants which create tensions in the story. The main tension grows out of the contradiction between the value realities transmitted by the subject and the anti-subject. Thus, the stories tell about some elementary contradiction and some way to solve that contradiction. By doing this the stories picture values accepted and rejected by the culture. (Greimas 1979, 197-206; Ahonen 1984; Salosaari 1989, 102-104; Korhonen & Oksanen 1997, 56-58)

³ The actant model is part of the general theoretical framework of the Paris school of semiotics of Greimas. In the theory, the actant model represents the basic model of the so called narrative grammar. As in many other studies that have used the analytical tools of greimassian theory, this study applies the actant model rather freely. Its main function is to help the analyst to discover meanings from the text, and it does not include the whole greimassian philosophy of signification.

How do we, then, benefit from using this kind of method of text analysis? Is it not enough to state, for example, that Enso wants to maintain the competitiveness of the forest industry and tries to remove the threat caused by the environmentalists? And would it not be possible to get this message through the normal reading of Enso's texts? Why do we need this kind of complex model to understand rather simple messages? The main benefit of using the actant model and/or other kinds of semiotic tools is that they take the analysis to a level that is detached from everyday language and that offers totally different concepts, a meta-language, to analyze the phenomenon. The new theoretical links formed with these concepts are ultimately able to reveal new things from the objects of the analysis – environmental representations of Enso and Greenpeace – that the normal reading of the text would not be able to attain. With semiotic tools one can reach the symbolic dimension of what is being said by getting "behind" the manifest text and showing how the parties' environmental representations, in fact, act and do things. By doing this, one can reveal how certain taken-for-granted things are multiexplicable and more complex than is generally believed (see Tarasti 1996).

3. SEMIOTIC-NARRATIVE READING OF ENSO'S AND GREENPEACE'S ENVIRONMENTAL WRITINGS

Next, two of Enso's writings and two of Greenpeace's writings⁴ are analyzed using the greimassian actant model. Since there is not enough space for full descriptions (including quotes from the original writings) of how the actant models were originally constructed from each writing, only a short summary of the content of the writings is given.⁵ After each summary, the actant model based on the content of the writing under consideration is presented in pictorial form. After all actant models have been presented, three perspectives of how to read and analyze them are given to show what kind of issues in business – environmental NGO relationship one can grasp by using this kind of text analysis method.

3.1 Semiotic-narrative analysis of Enso's writings from the years 1985 and 1996

Enso Writing #1

The article from the year 1985 tells of how the recent public discussion about forestry has accused the forest economy of using too effective and heavy forest renewal methods. The writing states that in the discussion, realities and main issues have received too little attention compared to opinions. Conservationists that have criticized the activities of the forest

⁴ The following writings are analyzed (the titles are translations from Finnish): 'Main issues forgotten in forest discussions', Enso-Gutzeit staff magazine, 1985, 1, pp. 4-5; 'Sustainable development thinking is here to stay', Enso staff magazine, 1996, 3, pp. 5-7; 'Forest industry as the campaign object of Greenpeace', Greenpeace, 1990, 2, pp. 11-13; 'Pressure at Enso's gates continues', Greenpeace, 1996, 3, p. 1.

⁵ A more detailed description of how the actant models were constructed can be found in the article published in Finnish in the Acta Semiotica Fennica (Joutsenvirta 2000).

economy want to turn the forest economy softer and demand it to use older renewal methods. According to the article, these demands are, however, based on unreliable evidence, single subjective information and insufficient background information without knowledge of the total picture. The writing argues that from the point of view of the factual realities, the demands of the criticizers are impossible to implement, and that one of the realities is that forest utilization is one of the bases of the Finns' well-being. Finland lives from forests which are the basis of the Finnish economy. The Finnish forest economy has, thus, a social obligation to be productive, economic and competitive and to continue its current activities. According to the article, harvesting the current amount of wood would not be possible without modern machinery and harvesting technology. Even statistics show that forests grow and the wood supply increases.

The content of the writing can be reduced and reconstructed into the story represented by the following actant model.

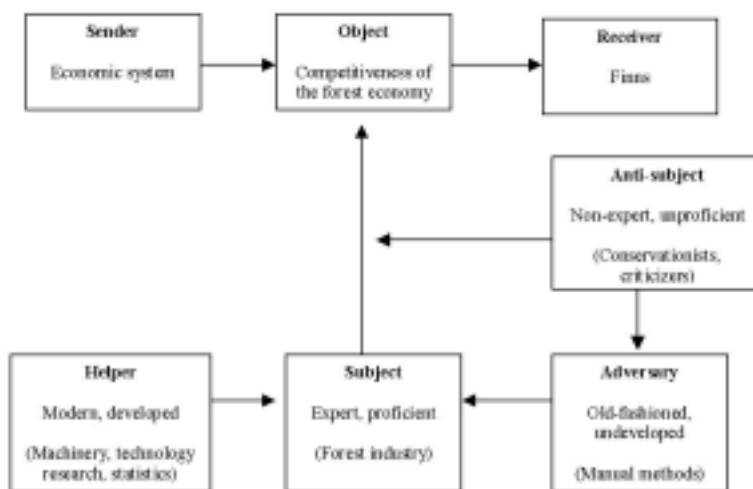


Figure 1 The actant model of Enso's writing from the year 1985

Enso Writing #2

The article from the year 1996 deals with the effects of ecological values on the activities of the Finnish forest industry. According to the writing, environmental issues test the ability of the forest companies to react and change their activities, to communicate and manage their organizations as well as to find information and spread their own views. The writing describes how the forest industry has faced criticism which mistakenly equates Finnish forest use with that of the rain forests. The main reason is that people are uninformed, which gives space to imagination. According to the writing, the difficulties of the Finnish forest sector in terms of publicity also stem from the fact that the industry is not used to socializing with end

consumers. When consumers suddenly become curious, one needs to be able to communicate directly to hundreds of millions of people in the middle of a fast media game which does not only play with facts. The writing states that the salary of the people in the Finnish forestry sector is paid by an European consumer who is interested in environmental issues. He rates the quality of the work that takes place in the Finnish forests. The German market especially represents the market where the ecocompetitiveness of the Finnish forest industry is measured. According to the writing, it is easy for the environmentalists to influence the German market since the Germans' attitude towards forests is mythical and the forests represent living wild creatures for them. The end of the article describes how the Finnish forestry sector has to choose its own counter strategy. It has to be able to tell about its activities more actively and effectively to the consumers. One problem with Finnish forest protection politics has been a lack of definition. And it is senseless that the forest industry has had to suffer from it. There is a need to create a strategy for national growth and sustainability.

The content of the writing opens up as the following narrative actant structure:

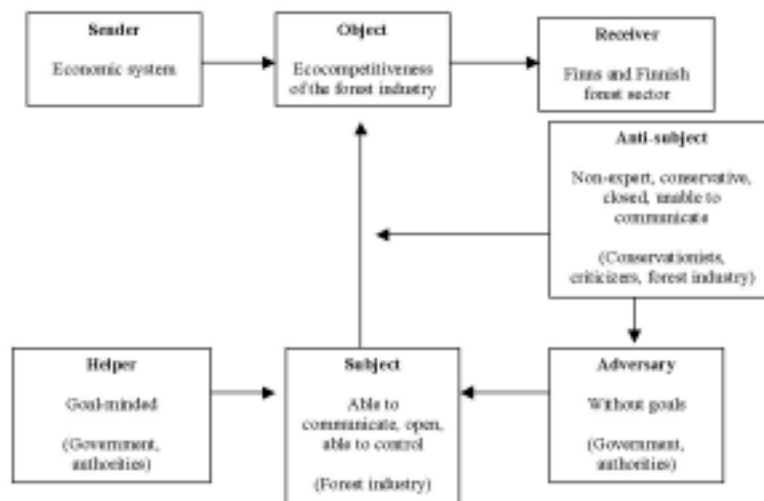


Figure 2 The actant model of Enso's writing from the year 1996

3.2 Semiotic-narrative analysis of Greenpeace's writings from the years 1990 and 1996

Greenpeace Writing #1

The 1990 writing starts with the disclosure of Greenpeace that the paper industry as well as the authorities have kept secret how much the plants that produce bleached pulp emit dioxin effluents. The chemical forest industry is named as a significant source of effluents and the biggest single source of dirt in lakes and rivers in Finland. The writing wonders why the Finnish forest industry still uses bleaching chemicals. At the same time it praises Swedish and German forest industries which, because of the actions of Greenpeace and other pressure

groups, produce chlorine free pulp. The Finnish forest industry is accused of belittling the problem and the authorities of not putting any restrictions on chlorine effluents. The article describes how Greenpeace has worked to stop chlorine bleaching. It demands that the Finnish forest industry start producing chlorine free pulp and utilize technology that makes it possible. The end of the article praises the forest industry in neighbouring countries of being able to read the messages from the markets and of caring for lake and river systems more than the Finnish industry.

The content of the writing can be reduced and reconstructed into the story represented by the following actant model.

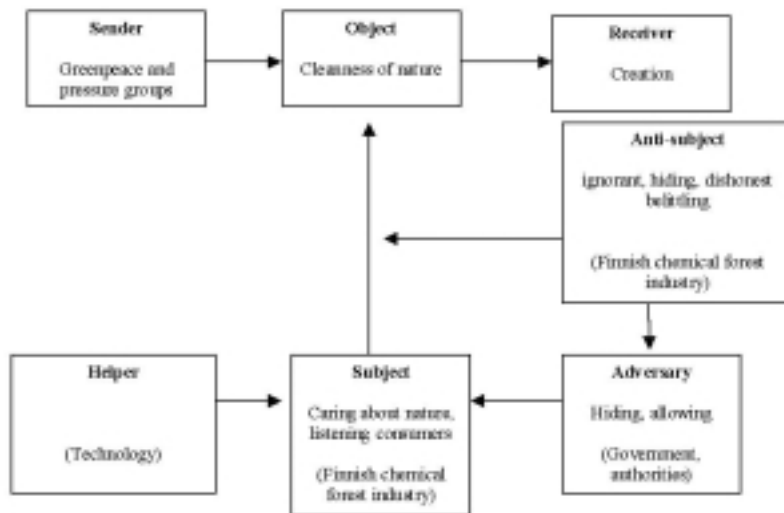


Figure 3 The actant model of Greenpeace's writing from the year 1990

Greenpeace Writing #2

In the 1996 writing, Greenpeace is worried about the state of Europe's last old growth forests located in Karelia. According to the article, there is a real danger that those forests which are essential for biodiversity have been cut before planned projects for their protection have been completed. One has to act fast to try to prevent further cuttings in the valuable forests of Karelia. The writing describes how Finnish forest companies are, at present, cutting the area which, without doubt, is old growth forest. Greenpeace tries to prevent these cuttings and pressures the companies to stop them. Greenpeace has made Enso's lies public by revealing evidence of its cuttings. The evidence includes video material and the statements of two competent researchers who say those areas are valuable. According to the article, Enso is escaping its responsibility and trying to mislead people by stating that its does not cut in the protected area. The writing states that this is not the point. The point is that Enso is buying wood from an area worth protecting. Enso is defending itself by referring to invalid information. After its cutting was made public, Enso suggested that environmentalists and

Enso should jointly take inventory of the forests. Greenpeace refuses since it thinks that the forests of the area are, without doubt, old growth forests.

The content of the writing opens up as the following narrative actant structure:

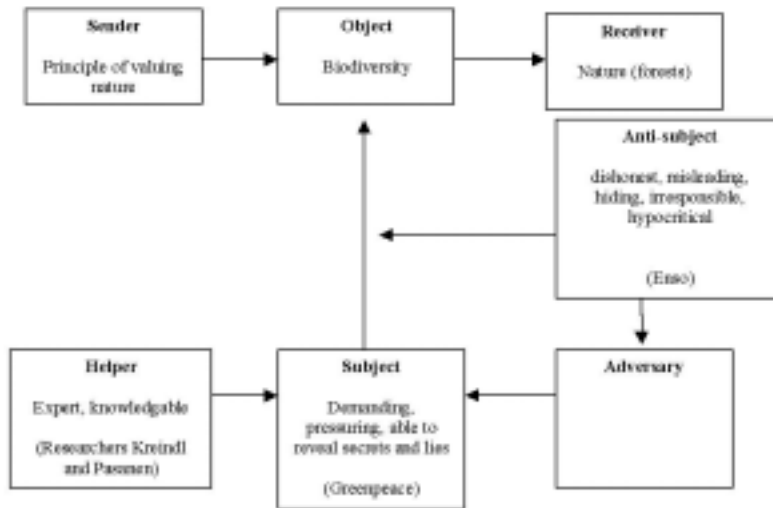


Figure 4 The actant model of Greenpeace's writing from the year 1996

4. PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS FROM THE ANALYSIS

Next, three perspectives of how to read and analyze the actant models described above are presented here to show, what kind of issues and dimensions related to eco-business relationships one can grasp by using a semiotic-narrative reading of the parties' writings. It is important to note that the issues presented below are only preliminary observations from the ongoing analysis. The writings still need further analysis.

4.1 Occupiers of actantial positions and their characteristics

Interesting observations can, first of all, be produced by analyzing and comparing which actors or objects occupy the different actantial positions of the models as well as what their characteristics are. For example, the main tension of the story rises from the contradiction between the value realities transmitted by the subject and the anti-subject. The characteristics of the subject describe the acceptable and desirable values whereas those of the anti-subject give information about unacceptable and undesirable values in the reality constructed by the writing. To give another example, the relationship between the sender and the subject gives essential information about the norms of the reality, such as its structural necessities, the sources of motivation and legitimization, and relationships between an individual and society

(see Sulkunen 1997, 40-42; Torronen 1997, 225).

In the reality outlinings appearing in Enso's writings, the authorizing starting point of the action is the economic system and the principle of economic well-being maintained by that system. Thus, the subject-hero acts as an advocate of the economic system and as an actor which aims at fulfilling the obligations set upon it by society. Being motivated and justified by the economic system, the subject-hero, which in both Enso's stories is the forest industry, aims at saving the competitiveness or ecocompetitiveness of the forest industry. In order to win the value object, the subject has to beat the anti-subject which in the 1985 writing is represented by the environmentalists and the critics but which in the 1996 writing also includes the forest industry. The actorial occupiers of the subject and anti-subject positions may, overall, seem quite natural. However, the characteristics attached to the subject and the anti-subject reflect how Enso aims at enhancing certain issues and preventing certain others when it constructs environmental protection. The characteristics with which one is able to succeed in the realities described by the stories have somewhat changed in time. In the 1985 writing the characteristic of the subject was dominated by expertise whereas in the 1996 writing this characteristic was accompanied by interactive skillfulness, openness and the ability to control things. On the other hand, the characteristic with which one will not succeed in the reality described by the story was in the 1985 writing 'unexpertise'. In the 1996 writing, the undesirable and unacceptable values also included interactive 'unskillfulness', conservativeness and uncommunicativeness.

To bring the above semiotic reading to a more general level, the way Enso in its two writings constructs and gives meaning to environmental protection can be characterized as *dependent and subordinate to the economic system*. It seems to take place through a setting that values *expertise, interaction skillfulness, openness and the ability to control things* and that sees their opposite values as threats, as things that threaten the basic balance in the reality constructed by the writings. Furthermore, the observation that the forest industry in the 1996 writing occupied both the subject and the anti-subject positions gives an indication of an *internal conflict* that has taken place inside the forest industry.

The fact that ecocompetitiveness is the object value in the 1996 writing seems natural when this observation is compared to earlier knowledge about the entrance and integration of environmental issues in companies' activities. The environmental behavior of Finnish companies began to change at the beginning of the 1990's when environmental issues started to be seen as an element of business strategy instead of an external disturbance (Lovio 1995).

In Greenpeace's writings, the appearing reality outlinings, generally speaking and understandably, seem to approach environmental protection using quite different premises than those of Enso's. Furthermore, the 1990 writing seems to approach the problem area from a different point of view than the 1996 writing. This becomes evident, most of all, in the occupying actors of the sender and the subject positions. In the 1990 writing, the sender position is occupied by Greenpeace and other pressure groups that represent the principle of security and health. The subject-hero is the Finnish chemical forest industry. In the 1996 writing, however, the sender position is occupied by the principle of valuing nature, and Greenpeace is located in the subject-hero position. Thus, Greenpeace takes different actantial positions in the two writings. In the sender position it represents the source that sets the value goals of the action and that motivates and obliges the subject-hero to pursue the value object,

whereas in the subject position Greenpeace represents those values and characteristics with which one is able to succeed in the reality constructed by the writing.

The authorizing starting point of the action is in Greenpeace's reality outlinings very different from that of Enso's. In Enso's writings, the subject-hero acts as an advocate of the economic system and as an actor which aims at fulfilling the obligations set upon it by society (external obligation). Greenpeace's writings present as the authorizing starting point a more universal ethical principle which, if necessary, may question the norms of the prevailing society (see Kohlberg 1984). Furthermore, the obligation set upon the subject may also be internal which makes the action self-guided instead of subordinate to some external source or system. In the 1990 writing, the subject is the Finnish chemical forest industry which aims at achieving the 'cleanness' of nature. This action is motivated and justified by the principle represented by Greenpeace and other pressure groups (external obligation). The subject is able to beat the anti-subject – also the Finnish chemical forest industry – by being alert to the demands of consumers and by caring about nature. In the 1996 writing, on the other hand, the subject is Greenpeace which aims at obtaining biodiversity. The principle that motivates and justifies the subject's action is not given by any external source as in the other writings. Instead, it is set by the subject itself (internal obligation). In this story, the subject is able to beat the anti-subject, Enso, by being demanding, pressuring and able to reveal secrets and lies. In the 1990 writing, the anti-subject is equipped with ignorance and belittling, whereas in the 1996 writing, its characteristics include irresponsibility and hypocriticism. In both of Greenpeace's writings, the anti-subject is also characterized as being dishonest and concealing.

To bring the semiotic reading of Greenpeace's writings to a more general level, the way the environmentalist organization in its two writings constructs and gives meaning to environmental protection can be characterized as either self-guided or subordinate to some external source. In both cases, the authorizing starting point is a more universal ethical principle which may question the norms of the prevailing society. Unlike Enso's reality constructs, it seems to take place through a setting that values *honesty, responsibility, caring, the ability to be demanding and to reveal secrets* and that sees their opposite values as things that threaten the basic balance of the reality constructed by the writings.

4.2 Modal definitions of the action

Secondly, the actant models can be read as stories in which obligation, desire, power and knowledge adjust social relationships and give meaning to the actions. Thus, this approach views the tensions of the story as being based on the modal definitions of the action, the main modalities being *obligation (having-to)*, *desire (wanting-to)*, *power (being-able-to)* and *knowledge (knowing-how-to)*. The modalities determine the subject's modal competence, its intentionality, and they give the subjects and the objects of the story various characteristics and facilities in relation to each other and to the reality created by the story (Korhonen & Oksanen 1997, 61-64; Gahmberg 1986, 65). Thus, by focusing on the modal competences of the subjects, one is able to examine the factors that motivate and facilitate the action. In practice this means that, for example, the subject 'forest industry' does not only strive for the object 'ecocompetitiveness'. Rather, the event gets its meaning from the fact that the forest industry *is able to* do it and that this action is motivated by the *external obligation* (see

Sulkunen 1997, 41-42). The analysis of the subjects' modal competences takes the focus of the analyst to the dynamic aspects of the narrative structures.

It seems that in the two Enso writings the subject-hero's intention to get the object is charged with the modality 'being-able-to'. In the 1985 writing, the subject performs as an actor that, by having the expertise and the right objective information, *is able to* focus on the basic obligations of the forest industry and, thereby, to attain competitiveness in the forest industry. In the 1996 writing, the subject turns out to be an actor that, by being open, able to communicate and control, *is able to* earn the public acceptance of its activities and, thereby, to attain ecocompetitiveness in the forest industry. Thus, in order to beat the anti-subject and attain the object, the subject's intention seems to be modalized with 'being-able-to'.

In the two Greenpeace writings, on the other hand, the subject-hero's intention to get the object seems to be charged especially with the modality 'wanting-to'. Thus, in order to beat the anti-subject and attain the object, the subject's intention seems to be modalized with desire. In the 1990 writing, the subject's desire is produced by an external force (Greenpeace and other pressure groups) whereas in the 1996 writing, the desire springs up from the subject itself.

This difference between the environmental representations of Enso and Greenpeace is interesting in the sense that according to the greimassian classification of different modalities 'being-able-to' represents the so called exotactic modality that requires at least two subjects and that defines the subject's 'doing'. 'Wanting-to', on the other hand, represents the endotactic modality that takes place inside one and the same subject and that defines the subject's 'being' (Salosaari 1989, 79; Tarasti 1990, 74).

These preliminary observations of the modalities may indicate, for example, that in Enso's writings acceptable and desirable changes in business actions toward the environment are associated with resources and capabilities, which are often gained from outside the company. However, in Greenpeace's writings, acceptable and desirable changes in business actions stem more from companies' values, goals and inner desires (see Ahonen 1987, 17).

4.3 Shared topics in the parties' representations

A third way to read the actant models drawn from Enso's and Greenpeace's environmental writings is to find such elements and topics from them that they both seem to share. As mentioned above, this is interesting in the sense that the parties do take part in the same discussion about the forest industry and the environment. In this discussion the parties try to convince others by appealing to the assumed common areas of understanding (Alasuutari 1996, 14-15). In this paper, one example of the shared topics is given, and it deals with the topic of *responsibility*. The observation given below is based not only from the actant models presented above but also from the larger data set that is not included in this paper but that is included in the study as a whole.

When looking at the shared elements in Enso's and Greenpeace's actant models, both parties seem to touch upon and conceptualize the topic of responsibility. However, the way the nature of responsibility is represented in their texts differs. In Enso's writings, responsibility seems to be constructed as the kind that has to do with the fulfilling of obligations set by society. The

question seems to be about *a shared responsibility* that is given to everyone in society. In Greenpeace's writings, on the other hand, responsibility seems to be constructed as the kind that has to do with altruistically caring about and taking responsibility of others. The question seems to be about *a human (individual) virtue*. Thus, whereas Enso seems to conceptualize responsibility as being based on social elementary values, Greenpeace seems to attach responsibility to individual elementary values (see e.g. Salosaari 1989, 73; Tarasti 1990, 52-53).

The way responsibility is represented in Enso's and Greenpeace's writings will be examined further since the concept of responsibility has been seen as important in the search for sustainability (e.g. Hartman et al. 1999). It has been stated that all parties (e.g. companies, nation states, other institutions) should act responsibly for the future. But what kind of responsibility are we talking about in this context? What kind of meanings are attached to responsibility when different parties talk about it in the context of sustainable development? These kind of questions may be essential in the search for potential contributions to global sustainability.

The observations presented above come from the ongoing analysis of the environmental representations of Enso and Greenpeace. They will act as working hypotheses when aiming to produce a final interpretation of the parties' representations. The analysis will proceed by looking for such things as mutual denominators of the characteristics of different actants in Enso's and Greenpeace's writings. Through the further reduction of the actant models the analyst aims eventually to reach the level of deep structure in order to discover the elementary value structure of Enso's and Greenpeace's environmental representations (Ahonen 1984; Gahmberg 1986).

5. CONCLUSION

This paper focused on the 'environmental representations' of businesses and environmentalists. The term refers to the meanings and meaning systems that firms and environmental NGOs attach to nature and its protection or use when they talk or write about environmental protection. Thus, the paper analyzed the reality outlinings that appear in the environmental writings of the two parties and that cannot be attained through the normal, everyday reading of the texts. In this paper, those outlinings were approached through the semiotic-narrative text analysis method.

This paper was based on an ongoing study that aims at revealing the premises through which the multinational forest company Enso Group (now called Stora Enso) and environmental organization Greenpeace give accounts of their stance towards environmental issues. The actant models and some observations from them presented in this paper are simply the beginning of the analysis rather than the end. However, they have helped to exemplify what kind of issues and dimensions related to eco-business relationships one can grasp by focusing on the parties' environmental representations and using the constructionist approach and the semiotic-narrative text analysis method.

This paper argues that the approach used in this study makes the relationship between firms and environmental NGOs more multidimensional and multiexplicable than has generally been

the case and reveals issues that have been ignored and bypassed in the discussions about eco-business relationships. Even though these issues are usually taken-for-granted and, thus, unnoticeable, they still influence how the problems are treated in practice. The importance of the constructionist approach to eco-business relationships is increased by today's internationalization and globalization which make those relationships even more complex and multidimensional.

Thus, the final interpretation of Enso's and Greenpeace's environmental representations to be revealed in the completed study aims to find new, earlier unidentified dimensions from the business – environmental NGO relationship. By doing that, it tries to discover new ways to approach and view the relationship and to help to see in more detail what kind of questions and problems one faces when sustainability is sought either through eco-business partnerships or confrontations.

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