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Is Blue the new Green?

Colors of the Earth in Corporate PR and Advertisement to communicate Ethical Commitment and Responsibility

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Point of Departure: The rise of ethics communication, ethical product development and responsible-consumer marketing

Ethics and Business do have a turbulent liaison for quite some time. What has been a mostly normative discourse over the past decades has become a matter of jurisdiction, strategic communication and normative debates between different stakeholders.[1] The transition from normative dispute to business case has been caused by massive corporate scandals affecting the way stakeholders deal with corporate issues. Concerns about ethical misbehavior reached a pinnacle in 2002 as a wave of corporate scandals including Enron, Arthur Andersen, and World Com swept across the United States (Newton 2006). Federal legislation and revised industry standards have led to reform in the area of corporate governance (Beauchamp/Bowie 2004: 48). Namely the Enron/Arthur Andersen scandals, which we can date from October and November 2001, also revealed that we were living in an illusion related to shadowy financial reporting - misrepresentation to employees and shareholders of the realities on which their security was based (Goodpaster 2007: 1).

As a consequence laws such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act have been released, that require business organizations to protect individuals, even though this does not always happen in practice (Kley 2004).

To put it more provocative: a considerable scandal produces more progress in the business ethics debate than decades of talk and postulations. As a consequence ethic-programs have been released to assure corporate integrity and responsibility. Corporate Citizenship, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Corporate Governance, Value Management and other concepts are some of the most popular examples. Code of Conduct, Compliance Programs, Value Implementation, Leitbild-approaches, sustainability strategies and many more have been installed to guide the management and all employees (Baumann 2005).

Whereas programs and codes remain largely normative, CSR-reports and sustainability indices have been introduced to evaluate corporations in terms of their social and ecological commitment.

[1] For the discussion see e. g. Beauchamp/Bowie (2004), Brenkert (2006), Carroll (2003), Darley (1996), Donaldson (1982), Freemann (2004), Goodpaster (2007), Johnson/Phillips (2003), Kosolowski (2000), Lochmann (2005), Newton (2006), O'Donnell (2002), Priddat (2007), Provi (2004), Scherer (2006), Sims (2003), Ulrich (2000), Watson (2005).

Furthermore, green, sustainable and ethical funds have been introduced where only shares of companies are collected that meet certain moral standards (Benthin/Vandenhende 2003: 197).

As a consequence to the rise of ethical programs in business the perception of corporations in the public and especially in the media has changed massively over the last years. There is no doubt that the media are reporting ethical problems more frequently and fervently as Carroll and Buchholtz claim (2003: 172).

The attention of the media in return makes (B2B) companies think about their products and their consumers. Moral values and ethics appear to be important for consumers, some speak of the 'moralization of markets' (Stehr 2006), others conclude, that consumer surveys on ethical values produces 'noisy' results (Auger, Devinney2007).

In the following we will discuss the effect of the media perception of business ethics and how this in return affects business ethics. Green Advertisement and The concept of greenwashing and its evolution and wording exemplarily show this mutual interaction.

Business Ethics, Ethics as Business and the birth of Green Advertisement

Ethics has become a substantial business. The programs mentioned above clearly show that managing ethical commitment and positive reputation has become a profitable business for consultants, lawyers, PR agencies and advertisers. Next to the annual or quarterly report, CSR reports have been established communicating ethical commitment to the public.[2] Focusing on reputation-management we find that green advertisement[3] "has spawned a whole industry, as the $35 billion corporate public relations business has responded to corporate clients eager to spread a green veneer" (Rowell 2002: 20). This number might be disproportionate because not all public relations are related to greenwashing, nevertheless is shows the impact of ethics on business. Somewhat more realistic are the numbers presented by Greer and Bruno: "Greenwash around the world bears the mark of professional, multi-million dollar public relations campaigns" (Greer, Bruno 1996: 30).

The main activities of companies to improve their reputation and communicate their commitment to ethical considerations include the following two categories (Donohoe 2006).

[2] Rowell points out ironically: "We care about what you think of us. We want you to know more about how we strive to live up to our principles. This report is part of a dialogue, and we will continue to seek your views" (Rowell 2002a: 36).

[3] It is important to understand that the difference between green advertisement and Greenwash depends on the observer. What the PR industry and also some scholars like Meister (2005) call green advertisement has been interpreted by some activists as Greenwash. The question whether any green advertisement automatically is Greenwash or if there are two different positions with an overlap depends on the ethics ideology applied. From our point of view there are gradual transitions between green advertisement and Greenwash. An advertisement for FSC certified wood for example is a green advertisement because it advertises a green product. As a result green advertisement may create green products or even green markets.

1. Corporate-Sponsored Environmental Educational Materials

2. Corporate Front Groups such as:

3. The Alliance for Responsible CFC Policy

4. National Wilderness Institute

5. The Environmental Conservation Organization

6. The Foundation for Clean Air Progress

To demonstrate how Greenwash works, Donohoe has listed the most impudent claims of Greenwash by Exxon's "Energy Cube". Exxon argues, that "Gasoline is simply solar power hidden in decayed matter" or that "offshore drilling creates reefs for fish" (Donohoe 2006).

Public relation companies are specialized in 'greening' the image of a corporation. Bruce Harrison for example shaped the industry's environmental PR by his book 'Going Green: How to Communicate Your Company's Environmental Commitment' (1993) and by the early 1990s he was advocating the need for the "globalization of greening". New tactics have included companies' forming green-sounding front organizations, entering into partnerships with green groups and buying their way on to the boards of environmental organizations. They have also moved into environmental education and as Rowell defeatistically states: "No place is safe from fake green PR" (Rowell 2002: 20).

In return to the multi million ethics-businesses a group of activists[4] started accusing companies of going green without being green and introduced the term Greenwash.

Rhetorical misuse of Ethics: Greenwash

But what exactly is Greenwash and what transformations has it undergone since its first appearance? Moreover: There is hardly any scholarly literature on Greenwash besides blaming big business[5] or improving PR strategies.

[4] Eveline Lubbers can be seen as an outstanding example ‚fighting' greenwash: "Rather, my aim is to expose those companies that present themselves as born-again ethical enterprises while at the same time resorting to a bag of dirty tricks. I want to make people aware of this double agenda, and conscious that there is a strategic component in virtually every PR act, and in every contact between corporations and stakeholders" (Lubbers 2002a: 11). Another example can be seen in Greer and Bruno's polemic on greenwash: "A logging company cuts timber from natural rainforest, replaces it with plantations of a single exotic species, and calls the project "sustainable forest development." And these corporations, with the help of their business associations and public relations firms, help set the agenda for global negotiations on the crises of environment and development" (Greer, Bruno 1996: 11)

Most of the literature originates from the activist's writings that – as far as my personal judgment as an academic is concerned – has a dramatizing, exaggerating and sometimes even hysterical undertone. The definition of Greenwash from Andy Rowell can be seen as an apt example, describing Greenwash as "painting the deckchairs on the Titanic a lighter shade of green" (Rowell 2002: 25). Therefore the inclusion of Greenwash in the 1999 edition of the Oxford Dictionary was celebrated as a success as the documentation of the World Summit proofs (World Summit 2002). In the Oxford Dictionary Greenwash is defined as "disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image" (Oxford Dictionary 1999[10]). But before Greenwash has been officially recognized by the Oxford Dictionary, the term entered the stage about seven years earlier: In 1992 the "Greenpeace Book on Greenwash" was released at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro" and four years later the same authors have published a monograph on Greenwash, revealing the 20 most scandalous cases of Greenwash (Greer, Bruno 1996).

In short, companies started to adopt the environmental activist's language to thwart the impact of the activists. Therefore the entry in the Oxford Dictionary in 1999 has been considered a success because the moaning about big business co-opting the environmentalist's language has been officially recognized. But just as Greenwash was defined, its very nature was changing, as business's response to environmentalism became more sophisticated. While the preceding decade had seen some of the biggest and worst polluters on the planet redefine themselves as caring, green companies; these same companies now began trying to co-opt the debate through dialogue with the opposition, which again pushed corporations in improving their communication or take more far-reaching steps. Companies "will use media campaigns to recruit public opinion to their cause. But one of their simplest and most successful strategies is to buy their critics" (Monibot 2002: 53). The opposition of companies and environmental activists has been transformed into various forms of cooperation and teamwork. The media has become a driving force in communicating cooperation, disclose scandals and last but not least earn money by publishing (environmental) advertisements.

Here we have to distinguish two channels of communicating ethics (or greenwashing).

Corporate Communication advertising in the media and communicating an image and shaping their brand identity with intend and by design

Media Commuication reporting about companies and their ethical or unethical behaviour.

There are of course considerable overlaps between the two channels and a magazine for example as far as it depends on ads, certainly thinks about harming a company's reputation. As a consequence a more advanced ways of Greenwash has been introduced as will be shown later.

At the World Summit 2002 Greenwash has been defined differently in order to integrate transformations in corporate behaviour of communicating responsibility: Greenwash is the "phenomenon of socially and environmentally destructive corporations attempting to preserve and

[5] Activists literature: Bruno 1992, Greer/Bruno 1996, Lubbers 2002. PR literature: Harrison 1993. furthermore the literature on Greenwash mainly was written in the early nineties. Green ads and campaigns and the accusation of Greenwash has lost impact in the last years and has changed into different forms of communication strategies integrating activists (bluewash).

expand their markets by posing as friends of the environment and leaders in the struggle to eradicate poverty" (World Summit 2002).

In this definition Greenwash not only serves for improving the reputation but also to expand the market by communicating to produce environmentally friendly products even if this is not the case. We will come back to marketcreation by moral goods in the chapter on bluetec.

Greenwash is not only about improving reputation by advertisements or PR. Companies understood that it is its own identity that has to be changed in order to improve reputation outside. Therefore corporations have notified the public that there has been a profound change in corporate culture. Some common manifestations of this new concern for environmental image and performance are (following Greer, Bruno 1996: 30f):

7. Corporate restructuring to include environmental issues, e.g., environmental officers at high levels, or new environmental departments within a corporation.

8. Corporate environmental programs like waste minimization, waste reduction, and product stewardship.

9. Responses to public concern about the environment; sometimes, these responses take place even when not required by law.

10. Environmental themes in advertising and public relations.

11. Voluntary environmental policies, codes of conduct, and guiding principles.

What is remarkable about this enumeration of 'manifestations' is the voluntary basis of corporate action. No doubt, "the corporate perspective on environmental and social issues is self-serving" (Greer, Bruno 1996: 241). But for some reason companies invest money in actions that are not required by law and that impose limitations to them. This can be seen from two points of view:

1. Companies realized that ethical behaviour beyond the scope of business processes and jurisdiction is part of the business.

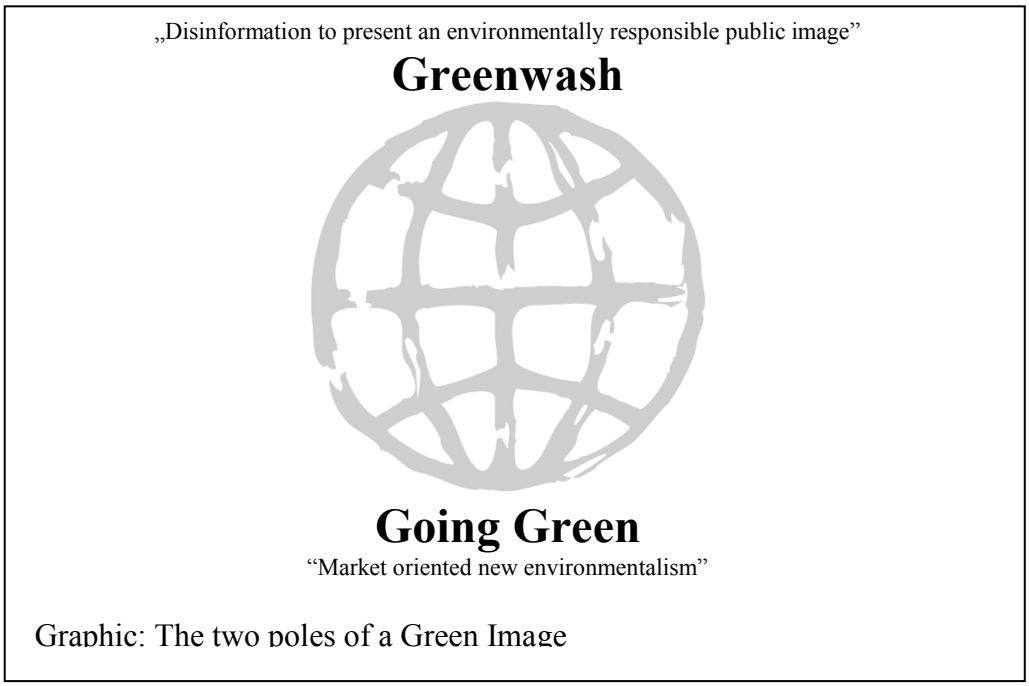
2. Taking up responsibility represents "political danger" because companies "convince governments and intergovemmental organizations to abdicate further their responsibility to regulate and hold accountable the TNCs" (Greer, Bruno 1996: 41).

Greenwash: a mistake by the activists or mindful corporate stratagem of 'Going Green'?

If explanation 1 is right, the activists have been mistaken in labelling environmental efforts of companies as Greenwash because corporations only slowly realize that they have to change their

corporate culture, identity and most of all their products to survive global competition. Tokar therefore speaks of a "new corporate environmentalism", that goes much farther than adopting environmental language, airing television commercials, promoting "environmental products" or infiltrating high-profile environmental groups, which can be summarized under the label Greenwash. The "new corporate envirionmentalism" represents a "wholesale effort to recast environmental protection based on a model of commercial transactions within the capitalist marketplace" (Tokar 1997: 35). And as early as 1989 Robert Stavins declared that "A new environmentalism has emerged, that embraces ... market-oriented environmental protection policies" (Stavins 1989: 5).

Nevertheless there seems to be some right in accusing corporations of painting their surface in another color than what the real color is like. At the end of the day it depends on every individual case if we have to deal with Greenwash or with new corporate environmentalism. Examples can be found for both poles. Because of this communicative spectrum it might help to understand the issue of a green image or more general of corporate environmental ethics as spectrum of ideal types as the following graphic suggests:



Graphic: The two poles of a Green Image

Innovative forms of Greenwash: Bluewash

A green image nevertheless is a desirable brand-identity-component. In times of climate change, a nobel prize for environmental issues for Al Gore and the "moralization of markets" (Stehr 2006) corporations need to address issues of social responsibility including environmental friendly performance. 'Green' as a label on the other hand is attributed not only positive: The media controls and accuses misuse and corporate scandals. A good reputation therefore is a *must*, not a *nice to have*. Green evokes associations of alternative ways not necessarily being conform with profit-oriented business. In politics the 'Greens' can be seen as opponents of free market ideology. Therefore a green image not always is a suitable symbol of communicating ethical activity and social responsibility.

If we follow the definition of Greenwash as described above, alternative forms of "disinformation disseminated by an organization so as to present an environmentally responsible public image" (Oxford Dictionary 1999) have emerged. Analogue to Greenwash the term Bluewash has been established. The authors of 'Greenwash' paved the road in the chapter "Greenwash Goes GIobal: The Corporate Hijack of UNCED": "UNCED is perhaps the best example to date; corporate influence on the Earth Summit undermined parts of Agenda 21. Proposals to regulate, or even monitor, the practices of large corporations were mostly[6] removed from UNCED documents" (Greer, Bruno 1996: 24). Once again a public relations expert has been hired, describing himself as: "… spending large resources not on actual environmental change, but on creating a "green image" for the client…"[7]

Global Greenwash still remains within the idea of creating an environmentally fiendly image. But the next step departing from here is beyond environment towards global values represented by the UN. Debates on global governance and global ethics dominated the debate in the late 90ies (Wilkinson 2005). The UN itself became a moral authority for global values and governance. The term Bluewash was born, 'blue' being the color of the UN corporate identity (logo and flags) and – also of major importance, the color of the helmets of the UN-troops. Bluewash besides corporate bluewash is also used to describe the attempt to grant retrospective legitimacy to an illegal occupation.[8] In this paper nevertheless the position of Bluewash will be dealt with from a corporate perspective.

A definition of Bluewash is offered in the publications of the World Summit in 2002. Here Bluewash is understood as 'humanitarian' instead of 'environmental' themes:

More recently, companies have been touting their commitment to humanitarian causes like poverty eradication, disaster relief, human rights and sustainable development. Drawing on greenwash techniques, companies from industries like tobacco and mining tell heart warming, personal stories of how their money has helped make a difference.The humanitarian-themed variant of greenwash is called "bluewash" —for the color of the United Nations flag. Classic bluewash is the corporate association with the UN itself as the ultimate symbol of human rights." (World Summit 2002)

As a starting point to understand the manifestation of Bluewash we need to go back to 1999, when United Nations then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan first introduced the idea of a Global Compact to the audience of the World Economic Forum. In 2000 the Global Compact officially was launched at UN headquaraters to bring the corporate world into the UN by adopting sustainable and socially responsible policies and reporting. The motivation for the UN following Kofi Annan are the common challenges for which the UN and business have to find 'common ground'. The

[6] The 'Hijackers' was a group of lobbyists called 'the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD). A grouping of some 48 chiefexecutives or chairmen from industrial sectors including energy, chemicals, forestry, pesticides, transportation, finance, and communications - attempted to take over the UNCED stage to claim TNCs had voluntarily turned the corner onto a new path of sustainability and are leaders of sustainable development" (Greer, Bruno 1996: 28).

[7] See Greer, Bruno (1996: 30) from the Burson-Marsteller brochure.

[8] The term Bluewash with regard to UN troops has also been used by Monbiot describing Indian troops send to the Irak in 2003 as 'liberal hope' (Monbiot 2003).

Global Compact is only one out of many initiatives from the UN to establish partnerships with the corporate world.[9]

In essence the Global Compact consist of 10 principles distilled from key environmental, labor and human rights agreements from the UN. Participation is voluntary and there is no monitoring or screening whether or not the ten principles are followed. This is one of the main critique points of the Global Compact and the 'entrance' for misuse and the precondition for the rise of bluewash as part of corporate branding. Thus companies get a chance to "bluewash" their image by wrapping themselves in the flag of the United Nations. Bruno, the author of the Greenpeace Greenwash book comments on the Global Compact: The downside of the initiative is that corporations use the membership in the Global Compact to primarily communicate their commitment and dedication to their stakeholders. Analogue to Greenwash the term Bluewash was born: "In choosing to enter a partnership at a time when corporate power was at a zenith and its own leverage light, the UN allowed the most powerful corporations to 'bluewash' themselves - to spiff up their public image - without getting much in return" (Bruno, Karliner 2005). Precedent-setting for Bluewash is the photograph of the handshake of Kofi Annan and Nike CEO Phil Knight in front of a large blue UN flag. This example went into the literatue as "marketing bonanza for companies like Nike" (Bruno, Karliner 2000).

Photo Credit: Reuters New Media, Inc (July 26, 2000)

Bluewash (and Greenwash) in the meantime have been institutionalized. The World Summit awards companies and organizations for their misleading communication and engagement. Next to the usual suspects in 2002 UNICEF has been ajudicated the Bluewash award. Bruno and Karliner already in 2000 cautioned the UN about diffusing their values and predicted the "compromising of its values" (Bruno, Karliner 2000). The award was given because of UNICEF's partnership with McDonald's. From the explanatory statement: "Thirty years ago, kids were the partners with Unicef, as they collected pennies for other children on Halloween. Now, McDonald's is Unicef's partner, and you can pick up your Unicef penny box while eating a Big Mac & soda. Is McDonald's food good for kids? Nevermind, Unicef needs their money. McUnicef—"You Can't Make This Stuff Up.""

[9] Other UN institutions include "those dealing with the environment (UNEP), labor standards (ILO), refugees (UNHCR), sustainable human development (UNDP), children (UNICEF), public health (WHO), industrialization (UNIDO), and science, education and culture (UNESCO)" (Bruno, Karliner 2000).

This judgement of the World Summin 2002 however represents and isolated case and corporate stories of Bluewash and Greenwash continue. The World Summit 2002 award conversely shows that the moral attribution first of all is a matter of perspective. Up to now nobody raised his or her voice against Unicef's partnership with Volvic (the water company). Contrariwise the *volvic-for-unicef.com* initiative has been awarded (Germany's) 'most effective commercial spot' in 2006.

The issues of Bluewash and Greenwash exist nevertheless, but they have also been transformed by "the moralization of the markets" (Stehr 2006), depending on the consumer and his preferences. In addition as the Greens, Greenpeace and the Bluewash award for Unicef indicate, the integrity of the colors by the original institutions has been transformed. Green has lost much of its attracttiveness and has been replaced by the predominant color of the globe – blue – to communicate environmental issues.

More Innovative forms of Greenwash: And green turns blue: The case of the automotive industries (bluetec, bluemotion)

The responsibility and freedom of the consumer probably is the most effective force in influencing environmental issues of corporations (Pfau/Säverin 2006). Environmental and generally ethical issues are increasingly important for companies selling products to consumers (B2C) and to a certain degree also to suppliers (B2B) as far as the B2B company is certified. However, value can be added to products if they satisfy the need of the consumer and if the consumer demands a moral surplus or environmental or sustainability attributes, product designer and corporate strategy will follow (Priddat 2000).

But moving from one corner of the ring to another takes time and causes brand-inconsistenciey. This could be witnessed at the 62nd "International Motor Show Cars" (IAA) in 2007. The automotive industry is asked to come up with environmental friendly solutions in times when the Nobel Prize for Peace is given to support an antidote to climate change.

Automotive industries, a key industry in terms of consumer responsibility to climate change and CO2 emissions, declared at the IAA to produce environmentally friendly cars. To promote environmental friendly Diesel engines (that are already popular (and subsidized) in Europe but not in the U.S.) German automotive industries came up with the concept of BlueTec (Mercedes-Benz) or Bluemotion (VW, Audi). Green apparently would not fit the premium brand image of driving-pleasure and acceleration. For BMW even the blue-label is unsuitable and BMW therefore calls its Diesel technology 'efficient dynamics').

Diesel technology here works as an alternative to eco-friendly hybrid cars. The Volkswagen Polo Bluemotion has been tested better in CO_2 emissions and eco-friendliness than the Toyota Prius ("Another Road to eco-heaven"[10]).

[10] The title of a Financial Times article from 27. Oct. 2007, that again communicates the idea of indulgence when investing in eco-friendly technology.

The obsolete but in some areas still prevailing green-image of tree-huggers is entirely inconsistent with the idea of 'sheer driving pleasure' as BMW's corporate-claim is. Hence, driving in the premium Hi-Tec segment is about pleasure and the question is: would any abnegation be a let go? 'Sacrifice' is the word, Mercedes-Benz uses in the form of a rhetorical negation: "As such, BLUETEC is an environmentally friendly technology, but one that doesn't sacrifice performance or driving pleasure" (http://www.bluetec.com/?p=86#more-86).

However, BlueTec has nothing in common with Bluewash understood as above, since no UN-organization is involved. Still it seems worth thinking if we have a case of Greenwash under a blue lable? The following text from the Mercedes-Benz homepage "www.bluetec.com" gives cause for suspicion:

"One of the best features of BLUETEC is that it gets the most of every drop of diesel fuel[11]. Our new Mercedes-Benz BLUETEC web special illustrates the idea by allowing Internet users from all over the world who care about conserving natural resources and actively preventing air pollution to plant a virtual flower" (ibid.).

Eventually the idea of not-scarifying driving pleasure and of planting virtual flowers on the bluetec-internetpage makes suspicion rise that the exemplary BlueTec initiative can be seen as Greenwash – falling short of the kown categories of Greenwash as well as Bluewash. It Green-wash communicated with the color blue.

Why Blue is the new Green in green advertisement

The case of Bluetec falls under the category of green advertisement and even Greenwash. As a next step we need so solve the paradox of blue communicating green issues without being Bluewash. The most plausible interpretation in our view is the transformation of environmental issues from the local to the global level. In their book on Greenwash the two authors Greer and Bruno (1996) have a chapter: Greenwash is going global. If we take 'global' and 'globalization' literally we need to think of our planet. And if we look at our planet in total from above, we see that the earth consists of about 82 % of water. For that reason the earth is also called the 'blue planet'. In the focus of globalized values green representing forests, grass and flowers, blue is the globalized green. It is not some singular forest, the whole earth and with it the global climate is in danger, as environmentalists keep telling us. Two advertisements very clearly indicate the transition from green to blue communicating environmental ethics.

The first is a German ad for Mercedes-Benz saying:

The most important thing about a Mercedes:

There are more important things than it.

[11] In the term ‚Diesel fuel' the novelty of Diesel as a commen fuel is expressed. In Europe where Diesel is as common as regular Benzine, Diesel alone serves as synonym for fuel.

Green and Blue are combined like teeth of a zipper holding our planet together. What applies for the forest and the bays, also applies for the sky and the mountains.

On the Threshold of authenticity and the impracticality of going beyond Green- and Bluewash

In the literature we do not only find accusations and investigative blaming of corporations, but also suggestions what to do better. We think that it is impossible to practically achieve a purely ethical reputation or clean record not being suspicious for Green- or Bluewash. This has to do with the communicational aspects of ethics and authenticity. There will always be someone to challenge the communicated position by proposing an antithesis.

This in return is essential for values and norms to evolve and therefore welcome to establish an ethical aware culture – in the organization as well as in the consumer's mind. In the following we will present two attempts how to establish a clean record – and why we think in how far the two attempts failed, although they are striking motivations how to do things better.

The first is from the authors of Greenwash, Greer and Bruno, who at the end of their book propose the way "From Greenwash to Green". In this chapter the authors concentrate on production and what criteria clean production has to meet (Greer, Bruno 1996: 243f.):

- non-toxic;
- energy efficient;
- made using renewable materials
- maintain the viability of the ecosystem

- and community
- made from non-renewable materials previously extracted
- durable and reusable;
- easy to dismantle, repair, and rebuild;
- appropriately packaged for direkt distribution
- Furthermore, clean production systems:
- are non-polluting throughout their entire life cycle;
- preserve diversity in nature and culture;
- support the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Our critique focuses basically on the difference of Green and Clean. Terms that are used synonymously by the two authors. Green – as the shift from green to blue as medial representation has shown above – is an ideology employed in a political and strategic way as dialectical force to encounter corporate communication and power. 'Clean' as an idealistic corrective principle serves the idea to better things put forward by those who perceive the need to change. The proposed criteria for clean in the sense of green production collide with a fundamental insight of the value chain and economic growth: the principle of cost degression. If all the criteria would be applied, the global economy most likely would see a fatal loss of dynamic, necessary to maintain the pathdependend status we are into. A global crisis would be one possible scenario of a clean world.

Not to be mistaken: All criteria are worth to be considered to enforce a environmentally friendly mode of production not giving further way to climate change and toxic contamination. But at the end of the day the consumer alone, being the 'merciless boss'[12] of all corporations, decides what to buy and thus rewards companies for what they are doing. And if they do any wrong or if they fail to maintain a good reputation, the collected consumer decisions will punish them by not buying products. But only if the consumer is aware of his responsibility – and power.

The second example from Donohoe proposes six 'solutions' to encounter "pseudoscience, greenwash, bluewash, and sponsored curricula". Unlike Greer and Bruno, Donohoe focuses on education to prevent corporate disinformation. This makes absolutely sense, if we consider the responsible consumer's point of view. He also takes the media into account when he demands higher standards for journalism and alternative media. Donohoe's ideas are (Donohoe 2006):

- Increase funding of public education
- Independent scientific review of school curricula

[12] The consumer as ‚merciless boss' is a quote from the architect Mises van der Rohe, quoted in Stehr (2007).

- Prohibit use of sponsored curricula
- Establish safeguards to corporate involvement in academic research
- Higher standards of journalism
- Support alternative media
- Consumer responsibility

But – and here Donohoe makes the same mistake as Greer and Bruno – the media and the perception of ethics reformulated by the media is a consumer product as any other, too: it satisfies a need and this transaction is coordinated by the individual decision of the media consumer and his scarce resource of attention.

Conclusion

As shown above, the case of ethics and ethics-communication is rather complex and inscrutable. Serious commitment, cursory confessions and strategic communication go hand in hand. The colors green and blue work as medial connotations. But is goes without saying that there are different angles and perspectives how colors are used to communicate ethical or PR-motivated issues. For some marketeers ethics is nothing but a PR-strategy to market goods and services, especially in the B2B sector (Liebl 2002), where direct communication to consumers is initiated and maintained. Therefore we propose a communication-ethics-based model based on dialectics to create awareness of the complexity of corporate ethics communication. Following the old Latin diction of 'quis dixit' (who said it) it is essential to understand the communicational relationship between speaker and receiver.

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