



Charlotte Videau (Erasmus, MA1 GI): contribution to the *Greenwashers of the year* (2022), award, cohosted by the Consumer Council & KHiO.

As part of the theory course T2—theory development—in 2022, Charlotte Videau, during her Erasmus exchange, made a pitch for the *Greenwashers of the year*: that is, a collaborative project between the Consumer Council in Norway—a government financed 3rd sector organisation for the legal protection of consumer rights—in Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHIO).

Her case for the pitch was the water producer Volvic—a subsidiary of the French dairy brand Danone—advertising its water with a carbon neutral bottle. By this carbon-neutral vehicle we get access to the Volvic water, directly from under a volcano in Auvergne, which in France has been the national “water tower” for generations, but is now depleted from water exploitation.

Charlotte Videau points to the beginning signs of desertification in the area, and hence her contribution was relevant in the framework of Axis 2 of *Greenwashers of the year* lineup: **erosion**. She also takes interest in the broader local impact—based on research and numbers from the [CNRS](#): as, for instance the impact on agriculture and the public access to natural resources.

Moreover, the water-bottle plastic is a natural produce derived from sugar cane, but still is plastic; with the unavoidable impact on wildlife natural environment. In a broader scope, her Greenwasher pitch raises the following problem: Volvic is one, among many brands, selling as much an idea of natural purity as clean water: it sells the geological idea of sub-volcanic recesses.

This can add to the naturban palette indicated by Espen Brække Grønneberg’s pitch (4/5). Or, provide the people with not access to this sort of habitat, a little piece of it: given the the human ability of learning by samples, a bottle of volcanic water from Auvergne can act as a tributary to an image of the world. Though with no real connection to making the earth a better place.

By “connection” we mean looping with sustainable *circularity* which, naturally, cannot be part of the equation of a product *taken out* from a natural ecosphere to be *transported* to any part of the world where there might be a *demand* for it. By that effect, it removes the attention from the water (which is natural by definition) to direct our attention to a plant-resourced plastic.

This mechanism of *emulation*, *substitution* and *erasure* is that equivalent of *erosion* in the semiotic world of cultural signs. Accordingly, the impact is not only local and natural, but impacts fabric of cultural relations globally. The difference runs between a *metonym*—inviting the consumer with a fragment of fact—and the *synecdoche* that loops a cause with a preferred outcome.

In Norway, the government’s sustainable policy evidently can be seen as a case of public Greenwashing—queried in both Sophie Cabrera and Mohammad Ghasemi’s pitches—inasmuch as cleaning up the environment is a prerogative of the wealthy, in an affluent part of the world, and Norway builds an emission-free precinct, while providing fossil fuels to the rest of the world.

That is, according to the semiotics of the *metonym*. If analysed in terms of a *synecdoche*, we will find alternative outcomes piggybacking on the metonym: for instance, investing in the development of low-emission technologies—producing electrical power—from the income of fossil fuel sales. And a similar argument for life ways that are viable in more than one place on the planet.