CSR, an essentially contested concept, has become a mainstream discourse in corporate governance as well as in the development world. It has made possible bringing together erstwhile “enemies” – corporations and NGOs within the discourse of responsible corporations under the much broader framework of sustainable development. Its lack of a universally accepted definition makes CSR a “site of discourse argumentation and struggle”. While much of the existing literature seems to assume that corporations shape the discourse and the outcomes of CSR activities, the fact that NGOs are interacting and defining the reality they find themselves suggest that they also shape the discourse, depending on the relative power of the NGOs vis-à-vis corporations. They do so by either changing the contours of the discourse as in the case of the Guimaras oil spill or reinforce it as in the case of watershed protection in Negros Occidental.

This thesis sought to understand how the CSR discourse is constructed and changed at the interface of corporations and NGOs, the factors that contribute to its framing or reframing, and the effects on the practices of actors involved. It focused on environmental NGOs and their role in shaping the corporation’s discourse because ENGOs have had a longer history of dealing with corporations and are generally perceived to have some clout borne out of its experiences and successes. Their origins in grassroots development work also make it valid to hypothesize that the ENGOs’ perceptions of the common good and what would count as corporate social responsibility would not necessarily be congruent with those of the corporate world.

Understanding the discursive struggle over CSR and its outcomes for both corporations and ENGOs is a significant endeavor. As W.I. Thomas noted in 1929, it does not matter whether or not the interpretation is correct. If men define the situation as real, they are in their consequences. As such insights regarding how best to push corporations through the CSR discourse towards caring for the environment and ENGOs towards establishing partnerships for sustainable development are valuable.

The thesis focused on two cases of ENGO-corporate relations – confrontational and collaborative. Four organizations figured directly in this study. Greenpeace Southeast Asia and its counterpart in the Philippines as it interfaced with Petron Corporation in the Guimaras oil spill and NFEFI and San Miguel Bacolod in the rehabilitation of the Negros watershed. As shown in the previous chapters, other organizations became significant agents as well – the corporate foundations of Petron and Greenpeace which shared much of the corporation’s perspectives and WWF, which interestingly offered another variant of ENGO-corporate relations in its tie-up with Petron in the wake of the Guimaras oil spill.

The thesis argues that discourse is a social practice that should be understood in its socio-cultural and organizational context; that it is a site of struggle and could be constitutive and restraining at the same time; and that discourse affects the social identity and social relations of the organization and its targets.