

**“CASE STUDY OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION : ITS
RELATIONSHIPS WITH ECONOMIC ORGANIZATIONS AND ITS
CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”**

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a case analysis of the relationships of one environmental organization with various businesses since its inception in 1970. The organization, STOP, is a Montreal-based, grass-roots environmental group that is active at the municipal, regional, national and international levels. It has been involved in many issues such as air quality, water quality, waste management, acid rain, and energy. Data collection is based on more than 70 hours of participant observation, document analysis, and information exchanges with past presidents and members concerning STOP's activities and relationships with the business community. The outcome of this inductive analysis is a typology of STOP's relationships with businesses, which includes informing governments and the public concerning environmental regulations, opposing or amending business projects, participating in multi-stakeholder initiatives, consulting contracts for business organizations and natural alliances with some industries. The analysis shows that the environmental not for profit sector (often referred to as not governmental organizations -NGOs, the “civil society”, the “social economy” or the “third sector”) contributes substantially to the economy and that relationships between environmental NGOs and business firms are and will be a key factor in sustainable development.

Key words : Contribution, environmental group, civil society, economy, sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a case study of one environmental organization through time. It describes its relationships with various business organizations since its inception in 1970. The purpose of the paper is to show the contribution of an environmental not-for-profit organization sector (also often referred to as the not-governmental organizations -NGOs, the “civil society”¹, the “social economy”² or the “third sector”³) in building sustainable development for a New Time.

In the first section of the paper, a theoretical framework for assessing the relationship between an environmental NGO and businesses is presented. The concept of sustainable development is defined. Then, the literatures covering the business-NGO relationship and stakeholder management are reviewed. The second section presents the methodology used for this case study regarding an environmental NGO’s relationships with various businesses. The next section presents the results and analysis in the form of a typology of relationships with examples. A discussion of the contribution of the studied NGO to sustainable development concludes the paper.

Sustainable development. As a result of global environmental degradation, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), better known as the Brundtland Commission, presented the concept of sustainable development as a solution in 1987. The Brundtland Commission diagnosed the source of the problem as the following: an essentially open economic system is pushing against an essentially closed ecological system. The Brundtland solution was to develop a reconciler concept between ecology and economy, namely sustainable development.

The sustainable development concept also includes the highest considerations for the issues of equity and fairness among individuals, social groups, and nations, as well as present and future generations. Starik and Rands (1995), while noticing that numerous political interests have used the term “sustainable development” (each with a different definition of the concept), suggested the following definition. The definition makes reference to reconciliation not only with human collectivities but also with non-humans. They suggest that: “ecological sustainability is the ability of one or more entities, either individually or collectively, to exist and flourish (either unchanged or in evolved forms) for lengthy timeframes, in such a manner that the existence and flourishing of other collectivities of entities is permitted at related levels and in related systems.” (p. 909)

¹ Bendell, 1998;

² Lévesques, 1997;

³ Anheir and Seibel, 1990;

Sustainable development is also a reconciler concept between, on the one hand, the science and techniques pertaining to environmental issues, and the social dimension of policy and decision making. Sustainable development is about employing the economy to the service of societies and about the social control of environmental technical management (Beaud and Beaud, 1993).

In short, sustainable development is a concept with many dimensions, including ecology, economy, and social involvement. This calls for a reconciliation between economic agents (industries, business, consumers) and environmental protection agents (governmental agencies, environmental organizations). This paper will focus its attention on industries, businesses, and environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Environmental NGOs and business relationships. Few studies have addressed the relationships between environmental NGOs and business organizations and the outcomes of such relationships on sustainable development. Until the mid-eighties, the relationships between environmental organizations and business firms have been mostly described as conflictual. Some authors have portrayed the environmentalists as having the upper hand in the political arena (Ullmann, 1986). In contrast, public policy analyses have shown that industrial interests were usually preserved by the political process at the expense of environmental interests (Brickman, Jasanoff and Ilgen, 1985; Grandbois, 1988, 1992; Schrecker, 1987, 1992).

Since the mid-eighties, a number of authors have recognized and taken an interest in collaborative relationships between environmental organizations and business firms (Gray, 1989; Waddock, 1989; Pasquero, 1991). Recently, Hartman and Stafford (1997 and 1998) advocated the advantages for businesses to build alliances with environmental groups. Hartman and Stafford (1997) offered illustrations on how “green alliances” have helped companies to develop ecologically-protective programs. These programs have contributed to lower costs and have provided differentiation advantages for companies. “Creative ‘enviropreneurial’ strategies are resulting from green alliances – the collaborative partnerships between business and ecological groups to pursue mutually beneficial goals.” (Hartman and Stafford, 1998, p.62)

Because of the bias of perspectives toward conflict or collaboration, these studies tend to offer a partial view of the relationships between NGOs and businesses. A few studies have described the relationships between environmental NGOs and businesses as complex sets of conflict and collaboration (Westley and Vredenberg, 1991; Kelman, 1992; Clair et al., 1995; Turcotte, 1995,1997; Bendell, 1998). Recently, Bendell (1998) provided examples of business and civil society organization relations ranking from conflicts to collaborations. Previously, Westley and Vredenberg (1991) and Turcotte (1995) had provided examples of business and environmental organizations that included both conflicting and collaborating dimensions.

Westley and Vredenberg (1991) have described a case of collaboration between Loblaws, a grocery chain, and Pollution Probe, an environmental group, in order to develop a line of “green products”. The two collaborating organizations discovered they had divergent views on the “environmental friendliness” of many consumer items but developed common

ground through compromise. However, when the “green line” was launched, Greenpeace criticized it for false representation. According to Westley and Vredenberg (1991), Loblaw and Pollution Probe created a “bridge” between the business milieu and the environmental milieu. This so-called bridge allowed for some collaboration among organizations from these milieus but did not permit to avoid conflicts.

Turcotte (1995), observed that Noranda, a large Canadian mining and smelting company that had a history of conflict with environmental NGOs over acid rain, developed collaborative relationships with environmentalists and conservationist organizations in the early 1990s. While Noranda’s openness to environmentalists’ demands contributes to sustainable development, the philanthropic relationship with a conservationist organization might be interpreted as symbolic management (which from Greenpeace’s perspective would be perceived as “greenwash”).

Stakeholders’ management. These complex relationships between businesses and NGOs should be put in the context of stakeholder management. In the field of strategic management, two theories are opposed concerning corporate social responsibility (CSR). According to the first view, the only responsibility of the corporation is toward its shareholders and it is principally to make profit (Friedman, 1970). According to the second view, CSR extends to many groups or stakeholders such as employees, unions, governments, clients, suppliers, distributors, public interest groups, and society in general (Freeman, 1984). Recently, Starik (1995) advanced the argument that the non-human natural environment can be integrated into the stakeholder management concept. The tenants of this later view, the stakeholders’ view, claim that taking stakeholders into account is a more realistic approach. Even with having in mind shareholder profit maximization as the primary objective, because stakeholders can jeopardize the resource-seeking capabilities of the business organization, they should be taken into consideration in business decisions.

Savage, Nix, Whitehead, and Blair (1991) developed a practical model in order to manage the relationships with stakeholders. This model suggests: (1) defending the organization’s position against stakeholders who represent a high threat and a low potential for cooperation; (2) collaborating with stakeholders who represent a high threat and a high potential for cooperation; (3) involving stakeholders who represent a low threat and a high potential for cooperation; and (4) monitoring stakeholders who represent a low threat and a low potential for cooperation. This practical model provides the framework for understanding the complex relationships between business organizations and environmental NGOs, including the co-occurrence of conflicts (“defend”) and collaborations (“collaborate” and “involve”).

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a case study of an environmental group called STOP. STOP is a non-profit organization regrouping citizens concerned with environmental issues. STOP was founded in 1970 in the province of Quebec, Canada. STOP is a local group active within the region of Montreal and is also involved in actions at the national and the international levels. STOP is concerned with many environmental issues, such as air quality, acid rain, non-smokers rights, water quality, waste management, and energy.

The researcher was a participant observer at STOP between 1993 and 1996, which represented more than 70 hours of observations, during which extensive notes were taken concerning STOP members' activities and decision making processes. Documentary analysis was also done, and to this end, a short history of STOP published in 1996 for the 25th anniversary of the group (STOP Press, 1996) was particularly instrumental. The researcher was actually involved in the production of that special issue of STOP Press by researching archival documents (press clippings and internal documents) on STOP's activities. These documents were obtained from past presidents and current members' hand-written documents regarding their perceptions of STOP's achievements under their direction or since their involvement, and also from collaborating with the active president for writing the history.

Data was analyzed through an inductive process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The units of analysis were STOP's activities which might have influence on business or industries. A typology of STOP's relationships with businesses was then developed. Significant examples are presented in the following section to illustrate each category. The discussion on the contribution of environmental NGOs to sustainable development is based on this typology.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The results of the STOP case study provided the basis for developing a typology of the NGO activities having a direct or indirect influence on businesses and industries. This typology includes five categories: Informing governments and the public concerning environmental regulations, opposing or amending specific business projects, participating in multistakeholder collaboration processes, consultation contracts, and natural alliances. For each of these categories, relevant examples are provided in what follows.

Informing Governments and the Public Concerning Environmental Regulations

Turcotte (1995) observed that for the majority of environmental groups, one of the most important initiatives was to monitor and inform governments concerning legislative modifications and law enforcement, which eventually resulted in additional constraints on industry. With this approach, the governments become intermediary agents in the NGO-business relationships. The history of STOP provides numerous examples concerning, among other issues, air quality, water quality, non-smokers' rights, and waste management. STOP's involvement in the issue of air quality is hereby described as a case in point.

Municipal and Regional Levels. Since its establishment in 1970, STOP has been a key watchdog of all aspects of the Montreal Urban Community's (MUC) air pollution control program (emission limits, ambient air monitoring, response to citizens' complaints, enforcement, access to information, and budgets). STOP has helped to provide public support for stronger MUC air quality rules (MUC by-law in 1970, replaced by by-law 44 in 1978, replaced by by-law 90 in 1986) and tougher emission controls in 1998.

Since 1975, STOP has helped citizens with local air pollution problems involving several industrial sources. STOP has helped local residents to document their case. Moreover, it succeeded in obtaining public access to the emission data and pushed for tougher emission

standards. In 1989, helped by data provided by STOP, the MUC adopted laws increasing fines for non-observance of air and water quality regulations. Also, in 1994, STOP helped to convince the MUC to postpone a request by Montreal's oil refineries to burn dirtier fuels. In 1995, after years of STOP's involvement in monitoring and asking questions, and after excessive emission levels were confirmed, the City of Montreal closed its incinerator.

Provincial Level. In 1975, STOP commented on the Quebec government's proposed air quality regulation, which was adopted in 1979 and amended in 1985. Also, since the early 1980s, STOP has urged the government of Quebec and the MUC to implement a mandatory motor vehicle emission inspection and maintenance program (similar to the program in place in Greater Vancouver since 1992). STOP argued that the air quality benefits of stringent emission standards applicable to new vehicles are not realized unless all vehicles are properly maintained. In 1982, STOP testified before a committee of the Quebec National Assembly covering the Montreal Urban Community Act. STOP's principal recommendation was incorporated into the new legislation and the MUC was given jurisdiction over motor vehicle emissions for the first time.

Federal Level. Since its inception, STOP urged the government of Canada to adopt stricter motor vehicle emission standards. In 1981, a House of Commons subcommittee formally endorsed STOP's recommendation that Canada's new passenger car tailpipe standards need to be as severe as in the United States. This finally came to pass, beginning with the 1988 model year. As control technology evolved, more stringent emission control became feasible. In 1995, STOP presented its view to the Cleaner Vehicles and Fuels Advisory Group of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME). In 1986 and 1987, STOP published the Thirteen Million Source Cleanup, a guide to motor vehicle emission standards and pollution control equipment. Following this, the federal government imposed strict emission standards on all new cars.

Since then, STOP has supported the introduction of reformulated gasoline and low sulfur diesel fuel for all on road vehicles in Canada. It has argued that the air quality benefits from so-called "alternative fuels" vary widely and that leaner motor vehicle fuels can help to improve air quality. From 1992 to 1994, STOP was an active participant on Environment Canada's advisory Committee that helped to develop the National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI). The NPRI requires larger factories in Canada to report annually on their releases to the environment of more than one hundred chemicals.

International Level. Throughout the 1980s, STOP was an active member of the Canadian Coalition on Acid Rain. STOP argued that Canada would have to clean up its own house before it could hope to influence U.S. action on SO₂ emission reductions from over 200 coal-fired power plants. In 1981, STOP submitted a brief to the House of Commons subcommittee on acid rain and testified at the hearings. The brief focused on the inadequacies of the federal and provincial control programs, particularly on uncontrolled SO₂ emissions from the Noranda copper smelter in northwestern Quebec, and on weak federal NO_x exhaust emission standards for new cars. Several STOP recommendations were incorporated in the first report of the Sub-Committee, entitled "Still Waters". In 1983, STOP's research director spent two weeks in Washington D.C. as a guest of the U.S. Information Agency to pursue Canada-U.S.

Clean Air issues, in particular acid rain. In 1985, STOP's efforts began to bear fruit when Quebec required Noranda to reduce its SO₂ emissions by 50% by 1990. In 1987, Canada imposed tighter NO_x emission rules for new cars. In March 1991, Canada and the United States signed an Air Quality Accord dealing with acid rain and STOP was invited to witness the signing ceremony in Ottawa.

Also, in 1986, STOP presented a brief and made a presentation on the United Nations Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development hearings in Ottawa. A STOP member served on the National Task Force on Environment and Economy that was set up to recommend Canada's response.

With the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement in January 1994, environmentalists feared a reduction in standards and environmental protection. Faced with opposition, the White House proposed side agreements that included the creation of a tri-national Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC). It is made up of a council of ministers from the three countries (Canada, Mexico and the United States), a secretariat and a joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC). The latter is made up of five representatives of varied backgrounds including industry and NGO's from each country. The JPAC has required to hold public hearings across the continent and STOP expanded its watch dog role by regularly attending the JPAC meetings as well as appearing before the ministers in council in 1996, 1998 and 1999.

One of NAFTA's unique provisions is the facility for any citizen to seek redress, through the CEC, for any lack of enforcement of national environmental laws. Although there has been insufficient time to develop case-law for this program, there was an attempt in 1998 to weaken some of its provisions. The JPAC objected and were mandated to hold a public consultation on the matter. STOP was chosen as a participant and spoke out against changes. In 1999, the CEC chose STOP with groups from the United States and Mexico to give presentations in three Mexican cities to community activists on the importance of site specific emission information.

Opposing and Amending Specific Business Projects

In 1993, STOP and many other environmental groups were involved in Montreal's waste management plan. At stake was a contract with the multinational corporation, Foster Wheeler, for the construction and maintenance of an incinerator. A coalition of groups objected to the contract since they believed that its nature and the scope of the equipment employed would discourage efforts to decrease the quantity of waste produced in the first place. In other words, even though the ability of technology (the projected incinerator) to reduce atmospheric emissions was recognized (compared to older incinerators), the incineration option was discredited because it only provided a second-best solution. In addition, this option was applied at the end of the consumption management process, rather than at the source of this consumption.

The project was thus considered by opponents as an unacceptable choice for environmental reasons as well as for economic reasons. Indeed, on that issue, "tax dollars" were central to their arguments. At the end of a public hearing on the issue, the commissioners

recommended the cancellation of the project for environmental, social, and economic reasons. However, the commissioners had only a power of recommendation and, at the time, the local authorities decided to go on with the project. Two years later, the Foster Wheeler contract with the regional waste management agency was finally cancelled as, due to the efforts of opponents such as STOP, more and more mayors changed their view on the value of the incinerator project.

Multistakeholder Collaboration Processes (MCP)

A multistakeholder collaborative process (MCP) is defined as an interaction mechanism at the "domain" level based on a consensual decision-making process that brings together various stakeholders (Wood and Gray, 1991), in order to accomplish a "metamission" or to solve a "metaproblem". A domain is defined as a diverse group of stakeholders who are linked by a shared problem or a mutual interest. In other words, MCP refers to collaborative initiatives among the representatives of firms, industry, governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations. MCPs have often been presented as new mechanisms of coordination between various stakeholders and economic organizations in order to solve metaproblems, which neither the market alone, nor the regulatory approaches could solve (Kellman, 1992).

In Canada, the report of the National Workforce on the Environment and the Economy (1987) recommended the creation of a National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy to gather the stakeholders concerned with environmental issues (governments, businesses, environmental organizations, unions, universities, and first nations). This approach has rapidly been adopted at various levels of government (federal, provincial, regional, municipal) and in 1995, more than two hundred MCPs were accounted for across Canada (Babin, 1995). The CEC consults widely with the three countries and STOP representatives have been involved in several multistakeholder working groups drawn from the three countries. Since 1989, STOP has been involved in more than twenty multistakeholder committees and collaboration processes, such as the Nitrogen Oxides (NO_x) and Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC), Management Plan advisory committee organized under the auspices of the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME), the National Packaging Protocol Task Force, the Federal-Provincial Acid Rain Task Group, the National Pollutant Release Inventory Working Group, and the "3R Collaboration Roundtable".

Author (1997) thoroughly studied the case of the "3R Collaboration Roundtable". In this specific case, the MCP provided a space for interaction among the participants, giving them opportunity to listen to each other and express their views on ways to influence current practices by intervention on the markets, by regulation, or by way of cultural change. In short, the MCP offered the opportunity to develop consensus on general statements, to learn about the domain, and to incrementally innovate. This, in turn, contributed to giving a direction to the domain, to incrementally augmenting the tractability of problems covered, and finally to leading to "small-wins" in environmental problem-solving. (See Author 1997a, b for more information on the outcomes and limits of this MCP). Studies of more cases will be needed to fully assess the value of MCPs toward sustainable development.

Consultation Contracts

In the 1990s, STOP received financial compensation from Hydro-Quebec, a major utility company in Quebec, in exchange for consultation services. In the fall of 1993, the strategic planning department of Hydro-Quebec initiated a consultation which was supposed to be concluded in 1995 with the publication of the development plan for 1995. The rules for public participation within this “business consultation” process were established by Hydro-Quebec: the company was consulting on issues over which it had control; the company was ready to be influenced through the consultation but was to remain responsible for its decisions. The purpose of the consultation was to obtain input from organizations, representative of various stakeholders in society (Hydro-Quebec report, 1994). A financial compensation (between \$18,000 and \$25,000) was made available by Hydro-Quebec to support the participation of NGOs.

Furthermore, in the fall of 1993, the consultation officially started. For the first year and a half, meetings were regularly organized where representatives from business, professional, social, and environmental groups met to express their views on Hydro-Quebec options. The views of the various participants were most often conflicting. Unfortunately, it is not possible to assess the outcomes of that business consultation as it was postponed and eventually cancelled when a ministerial public hearing on energy was announced. Nevertheless, in 1996 and 1997, STOP received other consulting contracts from Hydro-Quebec to provide written reports on STOP’s perspective on energy and environment-related issues.

Natural Alliances

Author (1995) described the “natural alliances” between environmental groups and those industries or companies that gave rise to alternatives which were less harmful to the environment. The naming of this category was inspired by the fact that natural alliances alternatively or simultaneously refer to: (1) alliances that develop “naturally” because the actors have common interests; and (2) the common interests are related to respect for the natural environment.

Suggesting Improvements. The relationships of many environmental groups with the public transport industry provide a prime example for natural alliances. STOP has often supported public transportation as a way to protect the environment and thus could be seen as a promoter of that industry. However, STOP’s initiative toward public transportation was not limited to the promotion of its use but also included critical comments for service improvements. Over the years, STOP has taken many opportunities to offer critical comments and suggestions for improving the service of the *Société de Transport de la Communauté Urbaine de Montréal* (STCUM). For instance, STOP was very critical of the design of the new buses introduced by the STCUM in 1996 as they were uncomfortable for passengers. The rationale behind this critical approach was that for attaining the objective of increasing the use of public transportation, the quality of the service should not only be maintained (despite an

often difficult financial situation for public transportation firms) but it should also be improved.

Information on Environmental Services. Since 1970, STOP has notified the public that the sewage on the Island of Montreal was not treated in any manner before being discharged in the St-Lawrence River. STOP multiplied efforts to sensitize municipal, regional, and provincial authorities on the issue and also filed legal suits to put an end to this situation. In 1975, the regional agency responsible for environment services, the *Communauté Urbaine de Montréal* (CUM), started the construction of a collection system to transfer the sewage water to a purification plant. The purification plant construction started in 1980 and it became operational in 1988, but only a modest portion of the Island sewage water was then treated. STOP pursued its sensitization efforts and succeeded in convincing the authorities to add, to the physical treatment initially planned, chemical treatments which would extract phosphates and most of the heavy metals. Since 1996, all of the Island sewage water is being purified with a physico-chemical treatment. STOP activities have thus contributed not only to obtaining a better environment, but also to creating opportunities for the environmental service-related industries.

Industry Development. Since 1970, STOP has been involved in the selective collection of domestic waste industry. As shown in Table 1, this involvement has pertained not only to informing governments with a view to promoting this industry and to public education but also to the operational level. Indeed, STOP and other NGOs have been instrumental in the experimentation with selective collection operations and in the further development of that industry in Quebec.

Intermediary. Another example of a natural alliance took place when STOP took the initiative to act as an intermediary between selective waste collection companies and the waste management authority. In 1993, Don Wedge, an active STOP's member, was informed that the public agency responsible for waste management in the Montreal suburbs was about to reject bids for selective waste collection and recycling on the basis that these bids were too costly. STOP members were afraid that this would lead to a total abandonment of selective collection and recycling. They began discussing the issue with the managers of the various companies involved. They discovered operational and financial problems in the formulation of the tenders and wrote a report, pointing out to the agency and to the public that the problems were related to the specifics of the calls for tenders and not to the selective collection per se. As a result, the calls for tenders were amended, bids were selected and the collective selection activities continued.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The analysis showed that the NGO relationships with business organizations and industries included a complex set of conflicts and collaborations. What are the influences of these relationships on the economic, ecological and social dimensions of sustainable development?

Informing governments and the public concerning environmental regulations and the need for stricter enforcement, as well as opposing and amending specific business development projects, are most often perceived to be in conflict with business interests and economic development. This view, however, should be nuanced by two considerations.

The first one pertains to the fragmentation of business and industrial communities. There exist competition and conflicts of interest among industries. For instance, the gas industry is in competition with the hydroelectric industry to sell energy. There are also conflicts of interest regarding environmental regulations within an industry. For instance, environmental leaders within an industry (or “best of sector”) might consider more stringent regulations favourably as it would “level the playing field”. These leaders would then profit from a competitive advantage over their rivals: while the leaders will have already gained the “know-how” by managing these environmental constraints, competitors will suffer from significant operational burdens.

The second consideration pertains to an argument put forward by Porter and Van der Linde (1995). According to these famous authors in the field of strategy, properly designed environmental standards can trigger innovations that lower the total cost of a product (resource productivity), improve its value, and thus improve competitiveness. This view is contrary to the prevailing view that environmental regulations erode competitiveness. The improvement in resource productivity is often the key to enhancing competitiveness. Epstein and Roy (1997) also claimed that managing environmental issues effectively contributes to competitive advantage, especially when environmentally-related cost data are identified with the support of managerial accountants.

Thus, influencing environmental regulations and enforcement, as well as opposing and amending specific business projects would not only contribute to protecting the environment, but also would contribute to achieving a better (or at least different) economic development. This development is based on a longer-term perspective and takes into account the views and interests of a greater number of stakeholders, which corresponds to sustainable development.

Participation in multistakeholder initiatives and consultation contracts reflects the building of “bridges” (Westley and Vredenberg, 1991) between business organizations and environmental NGOs. They provide ground for dialogue.

Theoretical development by Hofstede (1980) and Pestoff (1990) can be helpful in attempting to evaluate the value for a company and for society of consulting critical NGOs, such as STOP. Indeed, in order to ward off the tendency to listen only to those who shared an organization’s own values, Hofstede (1980) suggested that firms should be open to the insights provided by civic action groups. In fact, these groups are essential to the spread of social and political innovations which the institutional and political establishments could never generate on their own. Pestoff (1990) described how the Swedish government had institutionalized a role of “counter-power” for nonprofit consumer organizations by giving them official mandates within regulatory agencies. According to Pestoff (1990), the institutionalization of dialogue between civic action groups and businesses could be more efficient at the company

level, as well as at the collective level, since social demands would thereby be acknowledged more readily.

The “bridges” and the dialogue contribute to sustainable development by attaining a more efficient economy. “Sustainable Development leaves no illusions about the importance of developing multiparty collaborative structures to complement the power of competition.” (Roome, 1998, p. 273)

The natural alliances show the contribution of the environmental NGO to make an alternative economy into a more sustainable economy. Indeed, by acting as a promoter and, in some cases, as a developer of more environmentally friendly industries, the environmental NGO contributes significantly to sustainable development.

The natural alliances do not preclude the environmental NGO from criticizing its natural business ally. The outcomes of the critical dialogue that then arise should be understood in the context of the previous discussions about the institutionalization of dialogue between civic action groups and economic organizations (Pestoff, 1990) and about competitiveness (Porter and Van der Linde, 1995). The dialogue should accelerate the economic organization’s capability of integrating new demands from the clientele rather than having to wait for a buy/no buy response from the market. The increased demands and constraints should stimulate innovation and enhance the competitiveness of the business organization.

In conclusion, the case study showed that the environmental NGO, STOP, through its various types of relationships with business organizations, contributed to many dimensions of sustainable development. Informing governments and the public concerning environmental regulations, opposing and amending specific business development projects, and participating in multistakeholder initiatives consultation contracts and natural alliances, all contribute not only to the ecological and social (participation) dimensions but also to the economic dimension of sustainable development.

Table 1 part I (of II)
 Involvement of the environmental group STOP in the development of the selective collection
 of waste industry in Quebec

Year	Events	Type of activities		
		Operations	Public education	Informing governments
1970	STOP's volunteers organized the selective collection of newspapers and glass.	✓	(✓)	
1974	STOP organized the selective collection of 78,000 telephone books (the equivalent of 2,500 trees).	✓	(✓)	
1979	STOP organized a competition, «Renaissance», to promote the reuse of products and material.		✓	
1979	STOP presented to the Quebec Government a petition asking to introduce a deposit system for wine bottles.		(✓)	✓
1981	A STOP brief recommended to the Quebec Government to orient its grants and policies, in order to promote the installation of de-inking plant and the development of stable markets for recycled material.	(✓)		✓

Table 1 part II (of II)

Involvement of the environmental group STOP in the development of the selective collection of waste industry in Quebec

Year	Events	Type of activities		
		Operations	Public education	Informing governments
1989	Since, STOP closely monitors the activities of the <i>Régie Intercommunale de Gestion des Déchets sur l'île de Montréal</i> (RIGDIM, regional agency responsible for waste management).	(✓)		✓
1993	Following many unsuccessful calls for services, the RIGDIM voted to cancel the door-to-door selective collection of waste program. STOP took the initiative to consult the entrepreneurs and showed to the RIGDIM that the higher costs of the bids were pertaining to the specifics of the calls fortenders. Following this initiative, the calls for tenders were revised with more efficient specifications, the initial vote was cancelled and the door-to-door selective collection of waste was resumed.	(✓)		✓
1995	STOP informed the public that domestic waste selective collection proved to be a profitable activity. By analyzing the case of one municipality, STOP showed that door-to-door selective collection was not more expensive than traditional waste collection. Following this, another municipality became the first in Quebec to be paid by the company providing the selective collection services.	(✓)		✓

✓ Category of activity to which the event corresponds.

(✓) The event has an influence on this category of activity.

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