

**NGO-BUSINESS-PARTNERSHIPS - EXPLORING AND COMPARING THE POTENTIAL OF BRITISH
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS TO PARTNER WITH BUSINESSES OF THE ENERGY
SECTOR**

*Paper prepared for the "58th Political Studies Association Annual Conference",
Swansea, 1-3 April 2008*

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ABSTRACT

This paper enquires why some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) make use of partnerships with the corporate sector as a tool to achieve their environmental objectives whilst others do not. It argues that the potential of NGOs to enter partnerships depends on their specific characteristics such as their organisational resources and structures, as well as values, ideas and attitudes.

This hypothesis is tested for the case of Britain's NGOs and their potential for engagement with the energy industry. Empirical data on the characteristics of NGOs and their attitudes towards partnerships and existing engagement with business has been collected through a questionnaire-based survey of NGOs working on environmental issues of the energy sector, as well as a series of semi-structured interviews with NGO representatives. Based on this data, three clusters of NGOs were identified ("weak radicals", "strong pragmatics" and "strong radicals") with varying potentials to partner with energy businesses and diverse partnership patterns.

These findings are relevant to critically review claims that NGO-business-partnerships offer effective solutions to environmental problems, may have the potential to substitute for governmental and other forms of business regulation, and may contribute to accomplishing a more sustainable society. The results show that only a limited number of NGOs are willing to and/or capable of engaging with (parts of) the energy industry. The resulting limited, selective and/or biased engagement of Britain's NGO community with businesses highlights limitations to the NGOs' ability to transform and regulate business practices through partnerships.

1 INTRODUCTION¹

This paper engages with the debate of the role of non-state actors in environmental governance. It is particularly interested in the relationships between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the corporate sector. An unconventional form of relationship, NGO-business-partnerships, has lately been discovered as an increasingly popular alternative to state-driven solutions to environmental problems, as well as industry self-regulation and governmental regulation, driven by – to name but a few factors – economic globalisation, the salience of the sustainability discourse and a proposed retreat of the state. Popular examples in this debate are partnerships between McDonald and Environmental Defence (recycling), Friends of the Earth and Bodyshop (animal-friendly products), Unilever and WWF (sustainable fishery), the timber industry and NGOs (sustainable forestry), and General Motors and the World Resources Institute (R&D on engines). This paper discusses why some NGOs make use of partnerships with the corporate sector as a tool to achieve their environmental objectives whilst others do not. It explores this question empirically for the case of Britain's NGOs and energy industry.

In response to this question, this paper, on the one hand, argues that different NGOs can have different potential to engage in partnerships with Britain's energy industry. Hence, arguments implying a general move towards a more collaborative relationship between NGOs and the corporate sector are contestable, as are expectations that 'social' or 'civil' regulation through partnerships can substitute for other forms of regulation or that partnerships are a strong tool to solve environmental problems. On the other hand, this varying partnership potential of Britain's NGOs engaged with energy/environment issues is argued to be shaped by organisational and ideational characteristics of NGOs. Hence, in order to analyse the extent to which partnerships emerge and can potentially assume a role in environmental governance, it is necessary (even though not sufficient) to study comparatively types of NGOs that work on the environmental issues in question.

The analysis of this paper is organised as follows: This paper discusses in the second section literature on NGO-business-partnerships. In the third section, it explores accounts describing NGOs and environmental movement in Britain and suggests an analytical approach to systematically differentiate between individual NGOs in Britain and to explore NGO potential for partnerships. Based on a questionnaire-based survey among Britain's NGOs, it then identifies broad NGO clusters whose member NGOs share specific characteristics relevant to their partnership potential. The fourth section illustrates – based on the survey findings and eight semi-structured interviews with NGO representatives – how the previously identified specific characteristics of NGOs of three clusters shape their use of partnerships as a tool to achieve their environmental objectives. The fifth section draws the conclusions of this paper.

2 PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN ENEMIES?

At first glance, the analytical focus of this paper on environmental partnerships in the energy field seems surprising. The year 1995 saw a major conflict between Greenpeace and the oil company Shell over the deep-sea disposal of the oil platform Brent Spar. This event was widely perceived as a symbol of the strength of the environmental NGO Greenpeace and the

¹ This paper is summarising the results of a one-year knowledge transfer research project (09/2006-09/2007). We gratefully acknowledge the partial funding of this project by British Energy plc and helpful comments by Sotiria Theodoropoulou, Jonas Meckling, Angela McClowry and Mette-Marie Roslyng. The usual disclaimer applies.

effectiveness of its highly antagonistic campaigning style, culminating in the occupation of the platform through Greenpeace activists. Prior to this, one prominent set of interactions between groups of the environmental movement and the energy industry in Britain were the protests by the anti-nuclear movement in the 1970s and 1980s.

In spite of these hostilities, increasing attention is being paid to friendly relations between NGOs and the corporate sector in general. Authors discuss the emergence of ‘green alliances’ (Arts 2002), NGO-business-partnerships in pursuit of environmental goals, and alternative, non-state forms of ‘civil regulation’ (Tully 2004) or ‘social regulation’ through rule-setting within partnerships (Haufler 2003). The emergence of collaborative relations is argued to be a result of a number of interrelated factors. Newell (2000) points to the shifts in the power of states, corporate sector and civil society resulting from economic and political globalisation as an important driver for NGO-business-collaborations. As states retreat from regulation and the corporate sector gains power as a result of globalisation processes, the traditional focus of NGOs on the state as actors through which to accomplish their objectives becomes increasingly ineffective and NGOs redirect some of their attention to the corporate sector. NGOs and corporate partners also increasingly recognise concrete benefits of partnerships; commercial ones such as reputational gains, production cost reduction, enhanced marketing, and political ones such as increased lobbying impact and more environment friendly business operations (Bendell 2000; Newell 2000; Waddell 2000). Another factor which stimulated interactions between corporate and environmental organisations is the shift of the international environmental discourse towards ‘sustainability’ and ‘ecological modernisation’, approaches to environmental issues often implying a compatibility of economy and environment (Heap 2000). Both sets of factors point to a convergence of ideas and objectives between NGOs and the corporate sector.

In view of these drivers, energy policy and industry in Britain are an interesting case study. Whilst a legacy of antagonisms, for example over nuclear issues, seems to lower the likelihood of partnerships, other factors create a more conducive environment for partnerships between NGOs and business to emerge in Britain’s energy field. Commencing with the nuclear debate in the 1970s, environmental considerations became increasingly important in the energy field, culminating in the 2003 Energy White Paper “Our Energy Future – Creating a low carbon economy” (DTI 2003) with its emphasis on climate change. This created a strong interest and presence of NGOs in energy issues. Moreover, the government gradually conceded its control over the British energy industry with the advent of the privatisation and deregulation wave under the Thatcher government, strengthening the importance of corporate actors and their decisions (Helm 2001). Furthermore, as an illustration of an endorsement by the industry of the corporate responsibility and sustainability discourses, the majority of Britain’s largest energy companies are part of the United Nation’s Global Compact, the world’s largest voluntary corporate responsibility initiative, and/or are members of the Energy Savings Trust, an organisation jointly established by energy industry and government to promote energy savings. Other schemes with varying numbers of involved U.K.-based energy companies are the corporate responsibility reporting in accordance with the Global Reporting Initiative, compliance with the environmental management standard ISO 14001, various initiatives by Business in the Community (BITC), the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, etc.

Critical observers of partnership schemes, however, point to a number of problems with partnerships: On the one hand, they refer to problems concerning the co-ordination between the two partners. Arts (2002), for instance, points to the in-built tensions resulting from power asymmetries between the partners, as well as cultural differences between corporate and non-

corporate organisation, reflected, for instance, in different perceptions of the rules of engagement or the underlying norms and values of the partnership. On the other hand, scholars highlight problems concerning partnerships within the broader environmental governance landscape. Some argue that NGO-business-partnerships – due to their limited scope and scale, as well as the ‘softness’ of rules – can only complement governmental environmental governance (Arts 2002). Other critics go further: Tully (2002) argues that partnerships can even weaken governmental environmental governance by encouraging deregulation. Levy (1997) argues that partnerships – rather than triggering the systemic change Levy argues is needed for sustainability – reinforces society’s status quo, power structure and marginalises more radical environmentalists.

Given the broadly ‘benign climate’ for partnerships in Britain, it is intriguing to explore whether past antagonisms have been overcome, to what extent NGOs are willing and able to use partnerships with Britain’s energy industry and whether an analysis of Britain’s NGOs’ partnership potential reflects the issues raised by critical observers of NGO-business-partnerships.

3 NGOS IN BRITAIN – A DIVERSE LANDSCAPE

Non-governmental organisations² have attracted substantial scholarly and political attention in recent years, especially in the aftermath of campaigns such as Brent Spar and the protests against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle 1999. Whilst these prominent examples point to the successes of one single NGO, Greenpeace, and the international NGO scene, Britain’s NGO community has also been discussed.

3.1 BRITAIN’S NGOS – STRONG AND MODERATE?

On the one hand, there are general accounts of Britain’s environmental groups. McCormick describes the groups in Britain as part of “the oldest, strongest, best-organized and most widely supported environmental lobby in the world” (1991:34). This is underlined by claims that one in five British are members of environmental organisations (Johnston and Jowell 1999). Moreover, scholars point to an increasing institutionalisation of environmental groups into policy-making communities, for example, as experts (Rootes 2000; Rootes 2003). Finally, in addition to strength and institutionalisation, Rootes (2003) stresses the moderate and domesticated character of the environmental movement in Britain.

This relatively uniform vision of Britain’s NGO scene, on the other hand, has to be revisited in view of other literature. Rawcliffe (1998) discusses four phases of the evolution of the environmental movement in Britain, each associated with different environmental NGOs, including the late 19th century conservationist organisations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the interwar organisations such as Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) with broader environmental concerns, the 1960s and 1970s mass movement organisations such as Greenpeace and Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), and the loosely co-ordinated direct action networks such as Earth First! from the 1990s. This historical diversity is reinforced by the dynamics within the movement. Rootes, for instance, suggests that the emergence of Earth First! and other radical groups is a response to the

² NGOs are conventionally defined as organisations that are autonomous from the state, not profit-oriented, oriented towards a public good such as the environment, draw on voluntary contributions, and have shared values (Take 2002:38-42).

increasing institutionalisation of some of the previously radical movement organisations such as Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth (Rootes 2003).

Whilst the initial descriptions point to the relevance, organisational strength and relatively pragmatic and moderate stance of Britain's NGOs in environmental politics, the latter aspects, stressing diversity and dynamism of Britain's NGO community, highlight the need to analyse the NGO community in a more detailed fashion, and investigate what this diversity implies for the NGOs' partnership potential.

3.2 ORDERING DIVERSITY - THE TWO ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS

This paper analyses the current landscape of Britain's NGOs involved in the energy/environment field based on two dominant conceptions of NGOs, namely NGOs as resources mobilising organisations and as value-oriented movement-rooted organisations. The purpose of this analysis is to identify characteristics of NGOs that shape their potential to partner with business.

The first analytical dimension primarily draws on the resource mobilisation approach (RMA) (see Gamson 1975; McCarthy and Zald 1977; Tully 1978). This approach focuses on the need of NGOs to mobilise political resources (e.g. public support, expertise, financial resources) in order to survive and pursue its political goals. This dependence on political resources is reflected in their organisational structures and resources. It is, for instance, argued that more hierarchically structured and professionalised organisations are more effective in mobilising donations and public support (see Gamson 1975; Tully 1978). The resource mobilisation approach can be extended by the political opportunity structure approach (POSA) which highlights the embeddedness of NGOs in broader political and economic structures (see Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986; Tarrow 1988). It proposes that the characteristics of a political system (such as the concentration or fragmentation of decision-making systems) shape the political and organisational strategies of NGOs. For Britain, scholars have noted that some British NGOs have mirrored the centralised and London-centred organisational structures of the British state; others point to the acquisition of political skills – such as special environmental expertise and the willingness to accept any outcome of the policy community negotiations – by NGOs to operate within the policy community environment that shapes British policy-making (see Rawcliffe 1998:55; Take 2002:297-298). In short, RMA and POSA stress that the nature of Britain's NGOs is strongly shaped by the importance of organisational structures and resources as means to acquire relevant political resources and operate successfully in Britain's political system. Therefore, this paper suggests the dimension 'capacity to act' compounding organisational structures and resources as one out of two dimensions helping to analyse NGOs in Britain.

The second analytical dimension emphasises value orientation and collective identities of NGOs, thereby embedding them more firmly in social movements, defined as loosely coordinated networks motivated by shared environmental concern and values (see Rootes 2000:5). The organisations' formative values influence political objectives, activities and organisational resources. In Dalton's words, the political identity of an organisation provides "the basis for attracting a certain type of membership, [is] projecting an image of the group to potential allies and opponents, and [is] making the strategic and tactical decisions of the organisations" (Dalton 1994:11). In short, identity approaches emphasise value and ideational orientation of an NGO as shaping the NGOs' nature. Therefore, this paper suggests the dimension 'orientation of action' comprising values and policy ideas of NGOs as the other dimension helping to analyse NGOs in Britain.

This paper uses these two analytical dimensions to organise the organisational diversity in Britain's NGO landscape. However, these two dimensions are also relevant for the study of the NGOs' partnership potential. Partnership literature agrees on a number of general requirements for collaborative schemes to work. The prerequisites can be distinguished into two broad categories, namely material-organisational aspects, and immaterial aspects. The material prerequisites primarily refer to the necessary professionalisation of NGOs, the creation of an appropriate institutional infrastructure within each partner and for resolving conflicts between the parties, as well as the continued presence of qualified managers to manage the partnership (Miller, Chen et al. 2004:405; Heap 1999:35). Immaterial prerequisites are of great importance. One of the core challenges of collaborations between NGOs and industry is the fact that non-profit and for-profit organisational cultures need to be combined. Scholars stress the importance of a shared vision and goals, as well as transparency of each organisations' objectives and interests, the full endorsement and dedication on both sides of and to the scheme, as well as a long-term orientation for the collaborative scheme (Heap 1999; Hartmann and Stafford 1996:145). The two types of prerequisites, the material-organisational and the immaterial, mirror the two analytical dimensions, the 'capacity to act' and 'orientation of action' respectively, underlining the relevance of the two NGO dimensions to explore their partnership potential.

3.3 METHODS AND THE OPERATIONALISATION OF THE TWO DIMENSIONS

The two dimensions of the NGO nature are explored through a questionnaire-based survey of Britain's NGOs working in the energy/environment field. A questionnaire-based survey is a strong tool for measuring the attitudes and eliciting specific data from a relatively large number of NGOs that work in the relevant field. Its standardised design also ensures the comparability of data. Of the 41 organisations contacted between February and September 2007, twenty-one NGOs responded to the questionnaire (51%). The 41 organisations were selected on the basis of existing directories of Britain's green groups (Milner 1994; Cowell 1995), complemented by NGOs mentioned in other literature (Rootes 2000; Take 2002; Rawcliffe 1998) and organisations participating in recent energy-related public consultations (e.g. the 'Energy Challenge' consultation, January-April 2006, DTI).

In order to be relevant for a questionnaire-based survey of Britain's NGOs concerned with energy/environment issues, the two broad dimensions have to be operationalised in greater detail. The operationalisation of the analytical dimensions is summarised in figure 1.

Figure 1: Analytical dimensions for NGO analysis

Dimensions	Elements	Aspects (Question number)	Example higher potential	Example lower potential
Capacity to act	Decision making (1)		Executive Board	Member assembly
	Staff (2)		Large	Small
	Budget (3)		Large	Small
	Operational level (4)		Many levels, incl international	Local
Orientation of action	Attitudes towards energy issues	Thematic context (5)	Energy efficiency	Nuclear issues
		Fuel sources (6)	Promotion of source	Abolition of source
		Industry Structure (7)	Mixed	Decentralised generation only
	Attitudes towards other actors	Government (8)	Partner	Industry capture
		Businesses (9)	Partner	Adversary
	Description of own organisation (10)		Service	Advocacy
	Main funding sources (11)		Corporate sponsorship	Membership fees

The ‘capacity to act’ is broken down into four elements: **(i)** the decision-making structures (see Question 1 in figure 1), **(ii)** number of full-time staff (see Question 2), **(iii)** annual revenues (see Question 3), and **(iv)** the political levels at which NGOs operate (i.e. international v local) (see Question 4). It is assumed that the ‘capacity to act’ is greater if decision-making structures are more concentrated and hierarchical, human and financial resources are greater, and operations take place across several political levels and/or at the higher levels.

Whilst NGOs are differentiated by their relatively greater or smaller ‘capacity to act’, the second dimension distinguishes NGOs by their relative degrees of ‘pragmatism’ or ‘radicalism’. A more pragmatic value and policy orientation of NGOs implies that the respective NGOs are relatively more likely to accept that, in order to pursue their objectives, compromises and collaborations with other actors (government; industry), as well as the acceptance of parts of wider politico-economic structures (existing market and industry structures; market rules; political norms, processes and structures) are required. A more radical orientation prioritises the pursuit of NGOs’ value-based objectives without compromising, collaborating or accepting parts of politico-economic structures. This differentiation broadly follows existing categorisations of NGOs such as Breitmeier and Rittbergers’s pragmatic versus fundamental NGOs (Breitmeier and Rittberger 1998) or Heap’s differentiation between eco-activists, reformers, and supporters of market-based environmentalism (Heap 2000).

The 'orientation of action' is disaggregated into four elements: **(i)** The first element is the NGOs' attitudes on various energy issues (see Questions 5-7 in figure 1). First, it is assumed that some issues associated with energy policy and industry are linked to more confrontational attitudes vis-à-vis other actors than other issues (see Question 5). For instance, NGOs working on nuclear waste and the nuclear fuel source in general can be expected to be more radical due to the historically conflictual relations with government and industry (Rüdig 1990). Similarly, pollution issues associated with energy production is also argued to have a greater affinity to radical ideas than pragmatic ones. According to Rootes (2003), a broad spectrum of urban, industrial and pollution issues has accounted for about 20% of all environmental protest events between 1988 and 1997. In contrast to these relatively conflictual issues, energy saving issues and emissions and climate change appear to be less confrontational issues in the energy field. Gough and Shackley, for instance, argue that climate change politics by NGOs is 'respectable' politics: "Compared to the single-issue campaigning style generally associated with the approach of NGOs to environmental (...) risk issues, climate change ushers in a new era of engagement that empowers NGOs by giving them a place at the negotiating table" (2001:329). A convergence of corporate and governmental objectives with those of NGOs in respect to energy efficiency is, for instance, reflected in the successful establishment and work of the Energy Savings Trust whose members include the majority of large energy companies of the UK. Secondly, the attitudes (promotion, reduction, abolition) towards various fuel sources (renewables, gas, coal, nuclear) is investigated (see Question 6 in figure 3). Calls for abolition point to a more radical orientation. This is based on a rationale that the complete abolition of any of the currently used fuel sources is problematic in view of current energy structures and energy security challenges. This reflects the DTI's argument that as a result of the abolition of any fuel source (here: nuclear), "we would be reliant on a more limited number of technologies to achieve our goals, some of which (e.g. carbon capture and storage) are yet to be proven at a commercial scale with power generation. This would expose the UK to greater security of supply risks" (DTI 2007:17). Thirdly, the NGOs were asked about their vision about the structure of the energy industry and market (see Question 7). Similar to the question concerning fuel sources, pragmatism is reflected in an acceptance of a diverse structure comprising smaller and large companies, and decentralised and centralised production structures. NGOs exclusively demanding one type of industry are assumed to be holding more radical attitudes.

(ii) The second element in question investigates the attitudes of NGOs towards other actors. First, the NGO is questioned about how they perceive corporate actors (see Question 9). Pragmatic organisations are expected to perceive them as partners, more radical ones as adversaries. Secondly, the same question is asked about the NGOs' attitude towards government where possible responses oscillate between government as partner and industry-captured government (see Question 8).

(iii) The third element investigates the self-perception of NGOs (see Question 10). The question is based on the differentiation between advocacy, service and educational NGOs whereby service and educational NGOs are expected to be more pragmatic than advocacy organisations. Service organisation need to be pragmatic in order to attract assignments whilst educational organisations are assumed to consider more balanced information than advocacy organisations that can be expected to be more focused on getting their specific views across. The difference between advocacy and other types of NGOs is further reinforced by the fact that educational and service NGOs are often institutionalised as 'charities' that have to abstain from public politics whilst advocacy organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace choose the corporate form Limited Company (Rootes, Seel et al. 2000).

(iv) The fourth element analyses the main sources of funding of NGOs (see Question 11). Whilst predominant reliance on membership fees and individual donations is associated with relatively more radical leanings, government, corporate funding and consultancy work shows a more pragmatic attitude towards other actors in the energy/environment field.

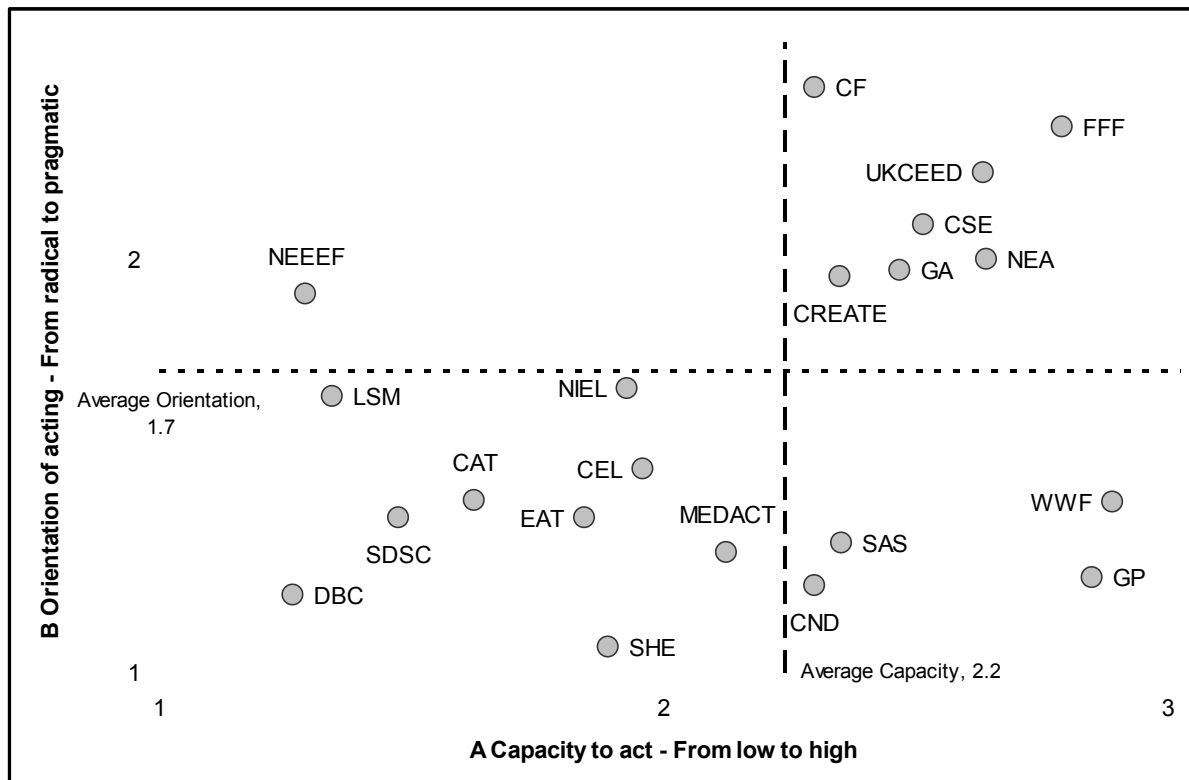
Even though all eight elements make some contribution to exploring the NGOs' capacity to act and orientation of action, they are only proxies. By using four elements for each of the two dimensions, a relatively reliable and comparable approximation of the capacities and orientation is made possible.

3.4 THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS – BRITAIN'S NGOs THROUGH THE TWO-DIMENSIONAL LENS

The results from the questionnaire-based survey can be presented in a scatterplot (see figure 2). The figure shows the distribution of organisations along two axes. The axes in the figure represent on the one hand, vertically, the values for the orientation, ranging from radical to pragmatic ones. On the other hand, horizontally, the values for the capacity to act, illustrating different degrees of resource endowment and organisational structures, from low to high, are presented. The figure is divided by two lines, representing the average values for the two analytical dimensions. These lines help identify those organisations exceeding and falling short of the average values. The distribution of NGOs in the scatterplot is based on the assignment of different scores to each NGO's responses to the survey questions and the subsequent calculation of average values of all response scores of each NGO for the two dimensions³.

³ Details on the score assignment and the questionnaire can be found in the annex A.

Figure 2: Britain's NGO in the energy/environment field surveyed⁴



Three clusters of British NGOs can be identified and differentiated on the basis of the survey. They refer broadly to those NGOs situated within the three most populated quadrants with below average values for capacity and orientation (“weak radicals” in Quadrant III), above average values for the two dimensions (“strong pragmatics” in Quadrant II), and above average value for capacity and below average value for orientation (“strong radicals” in Quadrant IV). These broad characterisations of the clusters can be further refined. The following tables (see figures 3 and 4) break down the responses separately for each of the two dimensions and present the share of NGOs by cluster and across the entire sample that affirmed the proposed answer. Whilst not all of the organisations within a quadrant share these characteristics, a significant proportion does, making more general statements about the NGOs in clusters possible. Moreover, it is possible to identify critical characteristics that differentiate the majority of organisations in one cluster from that in another.

There are a number of interesting differences between the characteristics shared by NGOs of one cluster to the other, and between them and the total sample. These details makes it possible to describe and differentiate the NGO clusters in greater details, and gain better

⁴ Acronyms: CND = Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; CSE = Centre for Sustainable Energy; CREATE = Centre for Research, Education, and Training in Energy; CEL = Christian Ecology Link; CAT = Communities against Toxics; CF = Conservation Foundation; DBC = Druridge Bay Campaign; EAT = Environmental Awareness Trust; FFF = Forum for the Future; GA = Green Alliance; GP = Greenpeace; LSM = Life Style Movement; NEA = National Energy Action; NEEEF = North East Environmental Education Forum; NIEL = Northern Ireland Environment Link; SDSC = Shut Down Sizewell Campaign; SHE = Stop Hinkley Expansion; SAS = Surfers against Sewage; WWF = World Wide Fund for Nature UK; UKCEED = UK Centre for Economic and Environmental Development.

foundations from which to undertake the analysis of the partnership potential. Furthermore, in order to triangulate the survey findings, eight interviews were undertaken with representatives of NGOs of different clusters⁵.

Figure 3: ‘Capacity to act’ of different NGO clusters

Questions	Responses	QIII	QII	QIV	All
		n ⁶ =9	n=7	n=4	n=21
1 Decision-making	Trustee Board	33%	71%	25%	43%
	Executive Board	55%	86%	100%	71%
	Local groups	22%	0	0	10%
	Volunteer assembly	22%	0	0	14%
	Member assembly	22%	0	25%	14%
	Member organisations	33%	0	0	14%
2 Staff numbers	Largest 20% of NGOs	0	29%	50%	
	Largest 21-40%	0	43%	25%	
	Largest 41-60%	22%	14%	25%	
	Largest 61-80%	33%	14%	0	
	Largest 81-100%	44%	0	0	
3 Revenue	Richest 20% of NGOs	0	20%	100%	
	Richest 21-40%	11%	60%	0	
	Richest 41-60%	22%	20%	0	
	Richest 61-80%	44%	0	0	
	Richest 81-100%	22%	0	0	
4 Operational level	Local	56%	71%	75%	62%
	Regional	56%	71%	100%	71%
	National	89%	100%	100%	95%
	International	22%	57%	75%	43%

⁵ See annex B for details.

⁶ The default number of responses is mentioned in this row of the table. However, fewer responses have been received for the question on annual revenue (QII – n=5; QIV – n=2).

Figure 4: ‘Orientation of action’ of different NGO clusters

Questions	Responses	QIII	QII	QIV	All
		n ⁷ =9	n=7	n=4	n=21
5 Thematic context	Nuclear	56%	14%	100%	48%
	Pollution	67%	14%	50%	43%
	Climate change	67%	86%	50%	71%
	Energy saving	78%	100%	50%	76%
6 Fuel sources	Promotion	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Reduction	50%	50%	100%	63%
	Abolition	63%	50%	75%	58%
7 Industry structure	Non-combinations	43%	50%	100%	56%
	Combinations	58%	50%	0	44%
8 Government	Partner	0	29%	0	15%
	Open minded	25%	29%	25%	25%
	Industry capture	38%	0	0	20%
	Campaign target	63%	57%	100%	65%
9 Energy businesses	Partner	0	43%	25%	25%
	Open minded	25%	57%	25%	35%
	Adversary	25%	14%	50%	25%
	Campaign target	25%	57%	100%	55%
10 Own organisation	Advocacy	78%	43%	100%	67%
	Service	11%	86%	0	33%
	Education	56%	43%	50%	52%
	Info provider to NGOs	11%	57%	0	24%
	Umbrella NGO	22%	29%	0	19%
11 Two largest funding sources	Government	22%	100%	0	43%
	Corporate	0	57%	0	19%
	Individual donations	67%	0	75%	43%
	Member fees	67%	0	100%	48%
	Consultancy	0	57%	0	24%
	Merchandising	0	0	25%	10%

The “weak radicals” group includes NGOs such as SHE, SDSC, DBC, and CAT. These organisations are closely associated with the relatively radical anti-nuclear and environmental movement of the 1970s and 1980s, e.g. through their founding generation and leadership, as reflected in their above average interest in the nuclear fuel source and the abolition of nuclear power (see Questions 5 and 6 in figure 3). The founders of these organisations were often “local concern people” (NGOIII.1), driven by the ‘panic’ that new hazardous sites would be situated nearby (NGOIII.2). This ‘local concern’ is reflected in the emphasis of some of the interviewed organisations on local operations⁸, as well as their advocacy orientation (see

⁷ The default number of responses is mentioned in this row of the table. However, fewer responses have been received for the question on on fuel sources (QIII – n=8; QII – n=6); industry structure (QIII – n=7; QII – n=6; QIV – n=2), perception of government (QIII – n=8); and perception of energy businesses (QIII – n=7).

⁸ Whilst the questionnaire responses indicate that operations of “weak radicals” take place on all levels and predominantly on national level (see Question 4 in figure 2), interviews stress the local bias of their work. One representative described the NGO’s operations as “really focusing on local issues but reaching out” (NGOIII.2)

Question 10 in figure 2). The organisations predominantly target governments to accomplish their objectives, rather than business organisations (see Questions 8 and 9). However, this is not necessarily because they do not perceive businesses as important. Rather, in the words of one representative, “it is just that we cannot do everything” (NGOIII.3). The movement roots also show in the NGOs’ heavy reliance on volunteers (mirrored in their relatively limited human resources) and individual donations. Moreover, compared to the other clusters and the total sample, decision-making structures are less hierarchical and centralised, allowing members, volunteers, local groups and organisations a greater say (see Question 1).

The “strong pragmatics” group includes NGOs such as FFF, GA and CSE. Members of this cluster are often founded to complement the confrontational approach of other NGOs and seek partnership with the corporate and public sectors, as reflected in their relatively favourable attitude towards business (see Question 9). One interviewee’s organisation’s founders reasoned that “there must be room for a different approach: As well as throwing stones at companies, [there needs to be] some place to sit down and talk constructively” (NGOII.1). Rather than advocacy organisations, this group’s organisations often define themselves as service providing organisations (see Question 10). This service orientation is also reflected in the choice of issues many of the organisations work on – non-conflictual issues where NGO expertise is welcomed by business and government (see Question 5). All organisations have operational foci on energy efficiency/savings, and the vast majority also works on climate change and emission reduction issues while nuclear fuel is only of concern to a small share of “strong pragmatics” NGOs. In contrast to the “weak radicals”, “strong pragmatics” acquire resources primarily from institutional sources such as the government and corporations but also through fees for consultancy work for public and corporate organisations (see Question 11), reflecting their comparatively favourable attitude towards business and their service orientation.

The “strong radicals” group consists of prominent organisations such as WWF UK, GP, CND, and SAS. Their predominantly advocacy operations take place on multiple levels (from local to international) (see Questions 10 and 4) and cover multiple issues (see Question 5), reflecting their strong capacity often based on contributions by large memberships (see Question 11), substantial human resources (see Question 2) and professionalised organisational structures (see Question 1). Moreover, they target both government and business (see Questions 8 and 9). As one representative put it, “we have teams to engage with government, for example, to look into smarter regulation; we have teams for business relations, as well. And some of our campaigns are consumer-facing” (NGOIV.1). They broadly share the critical attitude in terms of relevant issues and other stakeholders in the field of the “weak radicals” (see Questions 5-9).

These three NGO clusters – based on a deeper analysis of the organisations within the scatterplot quadrants – raise the question whether and to what extent these different types of organisations make use of the tool of partnerships with the energy industry.

4 PARTNERSHIPS AS A TOOL OF BRITAIN’S NGOS?

It is argued that the partnership potential of NGOs is shaped by the characteristics of NGOs, in particular in respect to their orientation of action and capacity to act. The greater the

whilst another argued “since our organisation is limited, we look to other organisations such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and Nuclear Free Local Authorities for support for national issues” (NGOIII.1).

capacity to act and the more pragmatic the orientation, the greater is the potential of NGOs to engage in a partnership with the energy industry. Therefore, “strong pragmatics” are expected to be the organisations that engage with the energy industry most substantially whilst “weak radicals” organisations, radical and with limited capacity, should be the least active group of organisations in terms of partnership. Whether these expectations are correct or need to be qualified is explored through survey data and interviews.

In the survey, the NGOs were asked whether or not they engage in a list of different ways of engaging with business (see Stafford and Hartmann 1996). The responses are summarised in figure 5.

Figure 5: NGOs and types of engagement with business organisations in the energy field

Question	Responses	QIII	QII	QIV	All
		n=9	n=7	n=4	n=21
12 Types of engagement	Provision of info	13%	42%	100%	42%
	Exchange of info	38%	57%	75%	53%
	Sponsorship	0	57%	25%	26%
	Consulting & Services	0	57%	0	16%
	Licensing of NGO name	0	0	0	0
	Product endorsement	25%	57%	25%	32%
	Task force (e.g. ‘greening business’)	0	42%	25%	21%
	Public policy alliance	38%	42%	25%	37%

The findings seem to broadly confirm the expectations. The “strong pragmatics” group engages with business in seven out of the eight proposed ways. Moreover, the share of “strong pragmatics” NGOs that engage in a particular way with business is in most cases above the share of all surveyed organisations that engage with businesses in the particular way in question. Mirroring this, “weak radicals” only engages in four out of eight ways and in most cases their share is below the overall share. “Strong radicals” organisations – thanks to their greater ‘capacity’ – are between “strong pragmatics” and “weak radicals” in terms of scope of engagement and share. However, some of the figures do not seem to fit this picture: most conspicuously, a significant share of “weak radicals” organisations engages in public policy alliances and product endorsement schemes with business. Furthermore, “strong radicals” engage more extensively with business in terms of lower intensity engagement than “strong pragmatics”. This raises the question how NGOs in the different clusters engage with energy companies, and whether their organisational characteristics can help to explain their use of partnerships.

Interviewees of “weak radicals” organisations of Quadrant III point to two issues to explain their limited engagement with business. On the one hand, “it comes down to resources. (...) It is not that we don’t think business is important or partnerships cannot have benefits. [...] But we are just a bunch of volunteers so we do the things we can do and as well as we can but we leave the rest to the ‘bigger’ people” (NGOIII.3). On the other hand, the need for a strong overlap in terms of values and objectives is stressed. As one NGO put it, “we have to wholeheartedly support what they are doing. And we assume that they support what we do” (NGOIII.3). This requirement is particularly problematic given the strong interest of “weak radicals” in nuclear issues. In the words of one NGO, “I don’t think in the case of the nuclear industry, this [a partnership, K.K.] is ever going to be possible. I mean the whole existence of

the nuclear sites is against the interests of the local community. (...)” (NGOIII.2). These two issues also shape the actual partnerships “weak radicals” engage in. Lack of resources and local focus of operations imply an interest in schemes that generate resources (such as an NGO-promoted energy/fuel source switching scheme linked to a donation to an NGO, see interview with NGOIII.3) and the often futile search for local partners (see interviews with NGOIII.1; NGOIII.2). The strong interest in a value and objective overlap is reflected in the fact that “weak radicals” only collaborated with renewables companies. Partnerships with renewables companies also explain the unexpectedly strong presence of “weak radicals” organisations in some categories of figure 5. In short, “weak radicals”, if partnering with business at all, engage mostly locally, on a limited scale and/or with the renewables segment of the energy industry, reflecting their limited resources and critical ideas as predominantly local single-issue groups.

Interviews with “strong pragmatics” organisations of Quadrant II reinforced the importance of the fact that founding rationale and organisational model of “strong pragmatics” endorse a collaborative relationship with other stakeholders in the environmental policy field such as businesses and government, thereby explaining the broad scope and scale of partnerships with energy companies. The endorsement of partnerships and a favourable opinion of the potential role of businesses in the environment has two implications that shape the character of partnerships “strong pragmatics” engage in. On the one hand, NGOs are less insistent on a perfect match in terms of organisational values as long as both sides’ interests are served. One interviewed NGO actively seeks partnerships with companies by trying “to find common areas of interest (...); what are the issues for business with a specific environmental policy” (NGOII.2). Another one stresses: “I don’t think we should be picky. I mean anybody can go and work with ‘The Body Shop’. If you get a major company such as Tesco to change their ways a little, this can make quite a difference” (NGOII.1). On the other hand, partnership schemes – as integral part of the organisational model of the NGOs – are initiated to gain financial resources. Whilst “strong pragmatics” often provide at least expertise and dedicated human resources to the partnership, business often pays regular ‘fees’ in exchange. In short, “strong pragmatics” engage with a broad range of companies (even if their environmental credentials are not impeccable) in a flexible, professionalised and institutionalised manner, reflecting their strong resource base, professional organisation, pragmatism and founding rationale.

“Strong radicals” of Quadrant IV display a different patterns of engagement with business. One NGO representative described its engagement as follows: “[W]ithin business relations, our three main approaches are convening meetings where we have roundtables where industry people are grappling with the big issues, we have a partnering approach where we look at bilateral partnerships to drive the transformation of a business, and we have campaigns, as well, where we go public and criticise commercial practices” (NGOIV.1). This quote is underlined by the survey results: “Strong radicals” either engage in low intensity engagement types such as one-way provision and exchange of information, hereby, for example, relying on their expertise, or in higher intensity ones such as public policy alliances and task forces. Moreover, the reference to the alternative option of public campaigning shows the NGOs’ capacity to act, and the relative strength and independence of their position within the partnership. This relatively strong position is also reflected in the fact that partnerships are not restricted to those with renewable companies, as partnerships such as the one between

Greenpeace and RWE npower concerning the renewable electricity product ‘Juice’ show⁹. However, even though a wider range of partners is considered by “strong radicals”, these partners face a strong partner with relatively strict rules of engagement. As one of the interviewees noted: “We are pursuing a partnership with one of the big players [but only] if the right commitment [to forward-looking improvement, specific targets and to support our engagement with government] is in place” (NGOIV.1). In short, if “strong radicals” engage in interactions with business beyond low-intensity information provision and exchanges, they do so with a wider range of businesses than “weak radicals” but also with stronger interest than “strong pragmatics” in pushing through their own objectives – even at the costs of the survival of the partnership.

The discussion of this section underlines the arguments made in the beginning of this paper: The NGOs’ use of the tool ‘partnership with business’ and some of the characteristics of the schemes is diverse and can be linked to the each NGOs’ ‘capacity to act’ and ‘orientation of action’. In short, the comparative analysis of this study shows that there are limitations to the NGOs’ interest and capability to make use of partnerships with companies of the British energy industry as a tool to pursue their objectives.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of this paper illustrates a number of issues: First, it shows that generalisations about Britain’s environmental NGOs and movement as ‘moderate’, ‘institutionalised’ and ‘strong’ are inaccurate when looking at the segment of NGOs concerned with environmental issues in the energy field. Rather, the scatterplot illustrates the diversity of Britain’s NGOs in their ideational and political orientation, as well as their capacity to act. Secondly, it illustrates that generalisations about a rise in partnerships between NGOs and businesses have to be treated with caution. In the case of Britain’s energy/environment field, some NGOs (“strong pragmatics” in particular) have endorsed partnerships with energy companies as a tool to achieve their environmental objectives whilst others reject and/or cannot handle the burden of (some types of) partnerships with (parts of) the energy industry. This limited, selective and/or biased engagement of Britain’s NGO community with businesses casts doubts on the ability of NGO-business-partnerships to replace other forms of business regulation, serve as an effective solution to environmental problems and/or as a step towards systemic change towards sustainability, confirming some of the concerns voiced by critical observers. In short, NGO-business-partnerships are a tool of limited effectiveness for socio-ecological governance in the field of energy. Both, the first and the second issue, stress diversity and the need for a comparative and detailed analysis. Such an analysis was at the heart of this paper. It relates the diversity in Britain’s NGO landscape to the variety in the interactions between NGOs and energy companies in Britain. The third issue this paper raises is therefore to stress the advantages of an analysis of the distinct characteristics of NGOs (and NGO clusters) as a means to better understand the potential for NGO-business-partnerships in Britain’s energy/environment field, and learn about the limitations of the partnership tool in environmental governance.

What this paper also shows is that further empirical research is necessary to fully understand the potential role of NGO-business-partnerships as pieces of ‘civil regulation’ in Britain’s

⁹ RWE npower operates about 8,000MW of coal-, oil-, and gas-fired power stations. But there are also limits to partnerships with non-renewables companies: In a personal communication, a representative of a Q4 NGO excluded any collaboration with the nuclear industry.

energy/environment field: On the one hand, one important type of British NGOs, namely the traditional conservationist organisations, such as Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) or the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) did not take part in this survey even though they engage with energy and climate policy. On the other hand, 'it takes two to tango', i.e. in order to learn more about partnerships in Britain's energy sector, it is not sufficient to study NGO potential only but necessary to also investigate the industry attitude. Thirdly, whilst the analysis of this paper treated the NGOs' potential for partnerships with businesses across different segments of the energy industry uniformly, the questionnaire responses also underlined that all NGOs have a relatively greater potential to partner with companies from the renewables segment of the energy industry. In response to the fuel source question 6, all NGOs advocated the promotion of renewables – in strong contrast to the overwhelmingly negative opinion on nuclear (almost 90% of NGOs advocated for abolition or reduction of nuclear power in Britain's fuel mix). Hence, a disaggregation of the partnership potential along sectoral lines is another avenue for future research.

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ANNEX

A SCORE ASSIGNMENT –

In order to illustrate different degrees of pragmatism/radicalism and resource endowment, three different scores have in almost all cases been assigned to different responses (1; 2; 3) where 3 is the highest score assigned. It therefore indicates a relatively high capacity to act and a relatively pragmatic ideational and normative orientation of an organisation.

Figure 6: Score assignment ‘Capacity to act’

Questions	Response Options	Scores
1 Decision-Making	Board of Trustees	3
	Executive Board ¹⁰	3
	Local groups/outlets	1
	Assembly Volunteers	1
	Assembly Members	1
	Member organisations	1
2 Number of staff ¹¹	Largest-20% of surveyed NGOs	3
	Largest -21%-40%	2.5
	Largest -41%-60%	2
	Largest -61%-80%	1.5
	Largest -81%-100%	1
3 Annual revenue ¹²	Richest-20% of surveyed NGOs	3
	Richest -21%-40%	2.5
	Richest -41%-60%	2
	Richest -61%-80%	1.5
	Richest -81%-100%	1
4 Level of operations	International	3
	National	3
	Regional	2
	Local	1
	(# of operational levels/4)x3	1-3
Calculation of question score	Sum of scores of responses / number of responses	1-3
Calculation of total score	(A1 + A2 + A3 + A4) / number of aspects	1-3

¹⁰ Includes elected leadership, secretariat.

¹¹ Only paid staff, for the entire NGO.

¹² Annual revenue for the entire NGO.

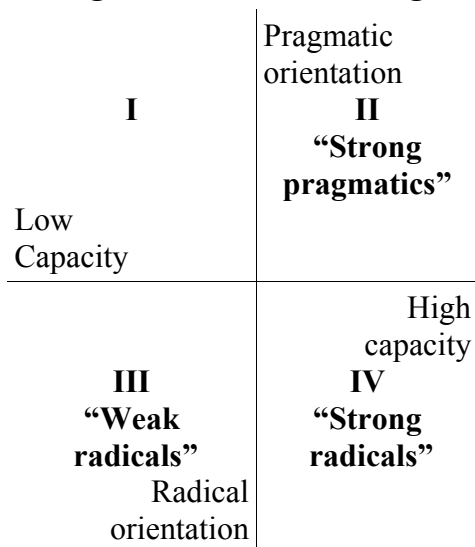
Figure 7: Score assignment ‘Orientation of action’

Questions	Response Options	Scores
5 Thematic context	Fuel source / Nuclear	1
	Pollution	1
	Emissions	2
	Energy saving / efficiency	3
	Consumer protection	3
6 Fuel sources	Abolition of a specific fuel	1
	Reduction of a specific fuel	2
	Promotion of a specific fuel	3
7 Energy industry	Decentralised (1)	If (1)+(2) and/or (3)+(4), then 3. If not, 1.
	Centralised (2)	
	Small producers (3)	
	Large producers (4)	
8 Government	Partner	3
	Open-minded towards NGO	2
	Industry captured	1
	Highly important for NGO goals	2
	Low importance for NGO goals	1
	Campaign target ¹³	1
9 Corporate actors	Partner	3
	Open-minded towards NGO	2
	Adversaries	1
	Highly important for NGO goals	2
	Low importance for NGO goals	1
	Campaign target	1
10 Own organisation	Advocacy	1
	Service	3
	Educational organisation	2
	Info provider to other NGOs	2
	Umbrella organisation	2
11 Two most important funding sources	Government	2
	EU	2
	Corporate	3
	Individual donations by supporters	1
	Membership fees	1
	Consultancy work	3
	Merchandising sales	2
Calculation of question score	Sum of scores of responses / number of responses	1-3
Calculation of total score	(B1 + B2 + B3 + B4) / number of aspects	1-3

¹³ Targeted through information provision, lobbying and/or public protest.

B INTERVIEWEES

Figure 8: Interview coding



Position in landscape	Code / Date
Quadrant I	NGO I.1 / July 2007
Quadrant II	NGO II.1 / July 2007
	NGO II.2 / July 2007
	NGO II.3 / July 2007
Quadrant III	NGO III.1 / July 2007
	NGO III.2 / July 2007
	NGO III.3 / July 2007
Quadrant IV	NGO IV.1 / Dec 2007