

NAFTA AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL PARALLEL AGREEMENT:  
HOW NGOS ARE SHAPING DOMESTIC AND BILATERAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN MEXICO

by

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NAFTA AND ITS ENVIRONMENTAL PARALLEL ACCORD:  
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**ABSTRACT**

This study is an analysis of the impact that Non Governmental Organizations have had in the North America Free Trade Agreement negotiating process, and how their transnational strategy has made it possible for environmental NGOs in Mexico to target U.S. Congress in an effort to influence the content of NAFTA's environmental accord, and thus the pattern of future environmental policy in Mexico. The scope of my research is limited to experiences from both Mexico and the U.S., excluding Canada, the third NAFTA participant.

Part of this study is to look at Mexico's developments in environmental policy to date, specifically the strategies taken by the administrations of Echeverria, Portillo, de la Madrid, and Salinas. Along with the strategies of politicians, it is also important to look at other trends in Mexico's emerging environmental movement.

The internal structure and approaches of environmental groups in Mexico will be reviewed, specifically their functions and plans of action. In relation to sustainable development, what these NGOs consider key factors in order to implement successful programs.

I will describe how leading environmental NGO's in both Mexico and the U.S. are coming forth with specific alternatives to replace or improve the current version of NAFTA. What are their recommendations and their strategies to gain constituent support to defeat or amend the agreement once it reaches Congress. What approaches and strategies are most likely to exert the most influence on the final agreement soon to be voted on by Congress.

The exploration of these questions has enabled me to assess whether Mexico's present political system will hinder or encourage NGOs' involvement in the environmental policy making process should NAFTA become a reality.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

There is a saying: "Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States." However, some Mexicans today are theorizing that if only Mexico would get even closer to the United States, it would no longer be financially poor. In essence, this is the thinking behind the creation, and no doubt the eventual implementation, of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, Canada, and the U.S., soon to face Congressional approval in each of the three countries.

By and large this pact is no different than any other trade agreement; its main goal is to phase out trade barriers, such as tariffs and quotas over the next ten years. What makes NAFTA unique, however, is the fact that if approved, it will be the first time in American trade history that environmental and labor issues, both of which stem directly from increased trade activity, are recognized as intrinsic components of an economic trade pact between countries at different levels of industrial development, in this case Mexico and the U.S.

NAFTA has stirred unprecedented bilateral concern on the environmental implications of increased trade between Mexico and the U.S., and transnational NGO coalitions have formed in an effort to influence the content of the trade pact. When Salinas de Gortari, assumed Mexico's presidency in 1988, he

set out to make his administration one of sweeping reforms and new ventures to improve the Mexican economy. Mexico's present administration is convinced that NAFTA will benefit Mexico, but exactly to whom, how, and at whose expense remain unclear. Speaking strictly on trade, NAFTA is the product of neoclassical economic thinking, and as such it assumes that the market forces alone will take care of everything, the benefits from free trade will eventually accrue or "trickle down" to all sectors of society within the countries involved. Thirty years ago, this economic argument would not have been questioned. Today however, and particularly in reference to NAFTA, opposition groups for the first time are conveying a strong message to the negotiators. This message states that trade concerns all, not only businesses and corporations, and it is time that everyone be well aware of the full implications of such transnational pacts. A major issue of debate ever since NAFTA was proposed, has been the pact's potential to worsen Mexico's environmental condition, and lower environmental standards in the U.S. Many opponents to the pact believe that NAFTA, no matter how well it is packaged, will still exacerbate Mexico's social and environmental problems.

Mexico's political system is known for its strong executive body, which unlike the U.S. executive body, has greater powers than Congress to direct the course of national

legislation due largely to the fact that almost all Mexican Congress members are PRI members. The political party PRI has had total control over Mexican politics since 1946, a year which coincidentally also marked a new era of industrialization in Mexico. Thus, it goes without saying that NAFTA will find little, if any, political and institutional obstacles given the dominance of the PRI forces in the Senate; as it stands now, 61 senators are PRI members while only 3 are members of opposition parties.

Congressional approval of NAFTA in the U.S. however, is an entirely different matter. Various opposition groups -- labor, social, environmental, and others -- have embarked on intense lobbying campaigns in an effort to persuade Congress Members to vote "No" on NAFTA, or at least to get two thirds of the Congressional votes to do away with the administration's "fast track" authority. Concurrently, the Mexican government has had to contract U.S. lobbying firms as a strategy to gain NAFTA support in the U.S. Congress.

The passage of NAFTA means more to the Salinas administration than it does to U.S. government officials and the Clinton administration. That is the reason the Salinas team has embarked on an extensive domestic publicity campaign. The administration has also contracted to lobby in Washington, DC. Some of the firms contracted include Burston-Masteller, Fellishman Hillard, and Daniel Edelman for public relations,

and Charles Walker, Joseph O'Neill, TKC International, Gold and Liebengood, and the Broke Group for Lobbying. (Cardenas, L. 1993:40.)

It can be said that it was environmental and social concerns more than anything else that triggered what might be the beginning of a more active role in government affairs -- in this case dealing with environmental protection -- on the part of a wider range of sectors from Mexico's civil society.

With the advent of NAFTA, it so appears that the stage has been set for concerned citizens and groups with non-vested interests to transform their concerns into an actual leverage block against the trade pact as a strictly commercial agreement with no consideration of its repercussions on labor, social, and environmental welfare.

As it is well documented in development literature, the establishment of strong grassroots coalitions has proven to be an effective tactic on the part of traditionally less-powerful groups to affect more sustained control of their surroundings and work out their own solutions or demands to regional environmental problems. In the same vain, representatives from environmental NGOs in Mexico argue that without the inclusion of innovative and appropriate environmental protection mechanisms in NAFTA, future industrial settlements could fall pray to poor or corrupt regional environmental policy and planning considerations.

## **MAIN ARGUMENT**

In this thesis, I argue that regardless of the NAFTA outcome, NGO's coalition-building has been instrumental in raising people's awareness on issues that go well beyond basic economic issues of trade. Issues that are in fact far more critical to quality of life such as pollution, workers' rights, social equity, debt burden, etc., had never been seriously considered by the trade negotiators until the emergence of strong opposition in the three nations. It appears that the U.S. Congress will carefully evaluate all of NAFTA's implications, at least in this country, before accepting the proposed pact as it has been packaged by the trade negotiators.

As proven by the developments on NAFTA, well-informed and organized transnational NGOs' coalitions were the main force behind the establishment of the NAFTA parallel agreements on environment and trade. However, a question remains as to how influential this emerging bilateral NGO coalitions can be in providing and mobilizing a greater number of local Mexican NGOs with strategies that will enable them to achieve social improvements and implement environmental planning in their communities.



## **CHAPTER 1**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY IN MEXICO: A BACKGROUND**

#### **The Echeverria Administration (1970-1976)**

Current Mexican environmental policy development can be said to have its origins during the Luis Echeverria Administration. During this period, governmental environmental strategies were largely influenced by both domestic and international forces. On the domestic side pollution awareness stemmed in Mexico City, the main factor prompting public attention to the problems of urbanization and pollution was the rapid expansion of Mexico City from over three million inhabitants in 1960 to nearly seven million in 1970.

During the 60s and early 70s, it was uncommon to hear of organized public activity protesting the city's deteriorating environmental conditions, and Mexico City newspapers seldom treated these conditions as a special class of environmental problems, they were instead seen as solely urban problems. It was under the advise of a select group of academic and official research institutions attuned to international intellectual currents, that the administration eventually considered direct involvement in environmental issues.

These domestic shifts of attention to environmental issues were reinforced by events in the international arena. The U.S. adoption of the National Environmental Policy Act

(NEPA) in 1969 aroused Mexican interest. And in a symbolic display, in the Summer of 1971, Mexico hosted one of the four preliminary regional meetings on environment and development for the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment; this event further increased public awareness on environmental issues.

In the Spring of 1971 Mexico enacted its first two major environmental initiatives:

- 1) Revising article 73 of the constitution, which dealt with health, to include references to environmental contamination
- 2) The enactment of an ordinary statute entitled *La Ley Federal para Prevenir y Controlar la Contaminacion Ambiental* (Federal Law to Control and Prevent Environmental Pollution)

The new law provided formal bases for the executive branch to enact and implement regulations in the environmental area, the *Secretaria de Salubridad y Asistencia* or SSA (The Secretariat of Health and Assistance) was entrusted with the law's general administration. To implement the new law, the Echeverria Administration promulgated two new regulations. The first, in September 1971, addressed aspects of ambient air-quality problems. The second, in March 1973, went further in specifying standards for the water quality of surface and coastal water, establishing penalties for violations, and creating a provision for "popular action" that would allow

ordinary citizens to file violation complaints with the appropriate agency in order to trigger investigations.

Finally, the language of environmental regulation was applied in the area of urbanization, as the Administration took initial steps to encourage the decentralization of industrial development and human settlement. In January 1972, a new agency within the SSA, the Subsecretaria of Mejoramiento del Ambiente (SMA), was created to implement the 1971 environmental law and coordinate the actions of other government agencies. Staffed largely with medical personnel from the SSA, the new agency was oriented toward public health and education, although it was entrusted with taking the lead in investigative and regulatory affairs.

Despite these initiatives, environmental policy remained a low priority on the Administration's policy agenda. First, environmental problems never received high-level presidential attention. The policy initiatives originated from the middle and upper ranks of the government's techno-political elite, as well as from the professional institutions serving these officials. Secondly, environmental improvement was seen as requiring economic development, thus, pollution enforcement was not stressed; moreover, the actions of SMA remained centralized and confined mainly to Mexico City. Lastly, aspects of the 1971 law were to be administered by at least five separate cabinet-level ministries, supplemented by other

autonomous agencies like *Petroleos Mexicanos* (PEMEX) and by certain implied responsibilities for states and municipalities. Such policy disaggregation created serious ambiguities in jurisdiction and functions.

The same characteristics continued to define environmental policy under the administration of Jose Lopez Portillo, with few exceptions.

### **The Portillo Administration (1976-1982)**

On August 1978, an intersecretarial commission for environmental health was established to coordinate with the *Consejo Nacional de Salud* (National Health Council) and other agencies for the formulation of environmental policy. Beyond this action, no substantially new initiatives were undertaken until the last year of Lopez Portillo's presidency except for several initiatives resulting in part from U.S. pressure.

U.S. influence on Mexican environmental policy stemmed from several sources. A number of border sanitation problems, air pollution, and oil spills became agenda items at the binational level when they were included as part of the U.S.-Mexican Consultative mechanism's functional negotiations that have been ongoing since 1977. In the case of large oil spills, for example, the U.S. pressed Mexico through the consultative mechanism to agree to binational clean up management of future spills.

Domestic developments also provoked government action. Rapid development of the oil fields in the Gulf of Mexico after 1977 led to large-scale deterioration of marine and land resources, erosion, and other environmental problems. By 1979 mass peasant protests against PEMEX were occurring frequently in the oil zones. These activities received wide press coverage. Urban congestion and air pollution in the Federal District also received a great amount of media coverage. Mass protests by labor and civic groups in 1981 -over dangerous levels of toxic particulates emitted by cement plants and other industries in the Mexico area- eventually forced the SMA to close five plants.

Such conditions and demands helped fuel the adoption of several new initiatives by the Lopez Portillo administration in 1981-82. These reforms included the establishment of a program (funded partly by a sixty-million dollar loan from the World Bank) to provide preferential financing for small and medium-sized industries to enable them to adopt antipollution equipment, as well as creating an urban greenbelt in Mexico City.

By far the most significant undertaking was the revision of the 1971 environmental law during the summer and fall of 1981. The new law promulgated in January 1982, substantially reinforced the earlier 1971 Ordinary Statute for the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution. Among its

principal amendments and additions were new chapters addressing problems of marine pollution, radioactive hazards, noise, and the contamination of foodstuffs. The law established new penalties and stiffened extant penalties for violators.

Finally, a significant innovation established new provisions for "popular action", thus creating a procedure for filing public complaints and initiating action against alleged violators by mandating official SSA investigation and public hearing of each issue. Although these changes represented an elaboration of the less detailed provisions in the 1971 law, the heightened priority given to this function reflected a partial response to criticisms of the government's unresponsiveness to public complaints under the earlier legislation.

But as it happened in the previous administration, environmental policy was never actively promoted at the national level. Instead, it remained the domain of middle-level government planners, university researches, and professional organizations, most of them centered in Mexico City. Also, the popular action then occurring was largely ad hoc protest rather than a systematic, well-organized popular movement.

### **The de la Madrid Administration (1982-1988)**

The de la Madrid strategy to deal with a growing wide range of environmental problems had three basic components: developing a strategy for popular mobilization; strengthening environmental statutes and better coordinating administrative responsibilities; and improving performance in the regulatory arena. The popular mobilization initiative was successful in that it promoted public environmental awareness and boosted the formation of more systematic, well-organized popular movements within Mexico's society. Consequently, media attention to environmental subjects rose significantly in 1983 and 1984 in response to the popular mobilization and increasing government activities in this sphere.<sup>1</sup>

In March 1983, a nationwide series of forums on ecological problems was conducted under the auspices of the then recently created cabinet-level ministry, the *Secretaria de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecologia* or *SEDUE* (Secretariat of Urban

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<sup>1</sup> According to David Barkin, the administration attempted to anticipate the environmental movement by encouraging the formation of special interest groups, which helped shape a framework for a state response to environmental problems. At the same time, these new groups were also instrumental in assisting the government to meet demands that were being made for a coherent environmental policy by international banking and developmental agencies as a prerequisite for financial support. This statement shows that the pressure exerted by the international bodies was a critical element in forcing the administration to focus more attention on environmental issues. David Barkin Distorted Development: Mexico in the World Economy, Westview Press, 1990 pp. 42.

Development and Ecology). Their goal was to inform the public of the government's new emphasis on environmental improvement and to solicit public input on environmental concerns relating to various regions and municipalities. These forums were followed by 27 state conferences and 5 regional conferences in 1983 and 1984, which brought together local political leaders from the PRI's sectors, government officials, scholars, and citizen groups to discuss the new environmental program and identify environmental problems.

Paralleling these conferences, a series of four regional conferences were convened by the ecology and environment committee of the *Camara de Diputados* (House of Representatives) focusing on legislative issues in the functional areas of air and water quality, energy development, and soil contamination. These conferences received wide press coverage dramatizing environmental themes. Finally, the culmination of the mobilization initiative was signified by the first National Reunion on Ecology conducted on June 5, 1984.<sup>2</sup>

This campaign had the intended effect of promoting the organization and development of existing and new environmental

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<sup>2</sup> The sections in the Echeverria, Portillo, and de la Madrid sexenios have been taken from a more detailed study conducted by Stephen Mumme, Richard Bath, and Valerie Assetto Policy Development and Environmental Policy in Mexico; Latin American Research Review, volume 23, 1988. pp 7-34.



interest groups and legitimizing their participation in Mexican politics. By the Spring of 1984, several national environmental associations had formed. New national organizations such as the *Movimiento Ecologico Mexicano* (MEM) which united sixty-three national and regional environmental organizations, the *Alianza de Ecologistas Mexicanos* (AEM), and the *Pacto de Ecologistas* (Pacto), were formed with chapters nationwide. Although most of these local chapters were small and tapped mainly an educated, middle class base, the emergence of nationwide organizations was fundamentally a new phenomenon. Such groups now regularly constitute an independent source of pressure for environmental policies, often in direct contradiction with the explicit wishes or interests of their original sponsors. On a lesser scale, the 1983-1984 environmental mobilization also reached urban working-class and rural constituents, whose activists were quick to link socioeconomic demands to environmental concerns. (Mumme 1992:127-128).

Late in the de la Madrid Administration (March 1988), the 1982 law was revised once again. The new law, the *Ley General del Equilibrio Ecologico y Proteccion al Ambiente* (General Law of Ecological Equilibrium and Environmental Protection), clarified the administrative powers of various agencies in the environmental arena and gave SEDUE greater coordinating power in environmental administration. In addition, it required

environmental impact assessments for all federal public works, potentially polluting industries, mining tourist development, and sanitation projects. (Mumme 1992:132).

### **The Salinas Administration (1988-1994)**

Stephen Mumme is a political scientist that has written an analysis on the present administration's environmental reform that reflects Mexico's political and socio-economic factors remarkably well. According to his analysis, in regard to environmental reform, the present administration has adopted what he calls a "preemptive strategy". This strategy was shaped by the new saliency of environmental issues in the Mexican electorate. Increasing coverage of environmental concerns in the media, the campaigns of environmental NGOs, and critiques to the system itself, convinced the Salinas' team of the political volatility of the issue.

The policy thrust of the Salinas administration has been reactive to the challenge of environmental mobilization. His top priority being economic recovery based on rapid liberalization of the economy, has placed ecological matters to a secondary place. But as environmental groups become increasingly involved and critical, they draw attention to the failures and tradeoffs in Mexican development strategy. Containing public demands and managing dissent is instrumental to economic conversion. In this context, the demands of the

newly mobilized environmental groups represent a potential threat that requires careful handling; hence the need for a preemptive environmental policy.

There are two dimensions to Salina's environmental policy reform: Substantive and organizational. On the substantive side, the thrust of Salinas' policy reform is administrative continuity (i.e., retaining SEDUE as the lead agency for environmental policy administration, which in mid 1992 was merged with the *Secretaria de Desarrollo Social* - Secretariat of Social Development - to form SEDESOL) coupled with "tougher" environmental regulation (i.e., the elaboration of an extensive set of regulations and technical standards to give force to the basic law.) Despite these initiatives, the Salinas environmental reform has remained largely formalist and symbolic. Mexico's economic crisis has undermined enforcement of the environmental law. Despite formal regulations, actual implementation remains largely ad hoc.

On the organizational side, expanding arenas for citizen participation in environmental decision making has been a basic theme of the Salinas program. Parallel to the formal changes in the environmental law which allow for increased "Social Participation" in environmental policy development and the process of policy enforcement, the Salinas administration has placed heavy stress on state-society cooperation (i.e., the creation of environmental committees in Mexico's city

district wards). However, the administration was criticized as being selective in its allocation of participative incentives. Various groups had claims of being excluded from government-convened forums and consultations on environmental matters.

Interestingly, these complaints came most strongly from groups that have been directly active in linking criticism of the government's environmental performance to criticism of the political system itself. Such groups include the *Alianza*, the *Partido Verde*, the *Grupo de Cien*, and the *Pacto*, all of which advocate a more radical, grass-roots environmentalism. Thus, even though formal avenues of participation have been expanded, citizen and group involvement remain low. Salinas' organizational reforms, while extensive, have not significantly opened Mexico's environmental policy system to greater influence by environmental groups.

Mumme concludes that Salinas' strategy of economic recovery contradicts objectives established in environmental law in that liberalization, certainly in the short term, is being carried forward with little concern for its environmental impacts. Whether or not the government is successful in attracting credits and technical assistance to address selected environmental problems, these structural contradictions will represent severe constraints on environmental improvement. (Mumme 1992:129-139).

According to a study conducted by the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico, the perception that NAFTA will open up the doors to U.S. polluting firms is fundamentally misleading. To the contrary, the survey results demonstrate that U.S. companies operating in Mexico are actively involved in environmental clean up and protection. In the study, a total of 950 leading U.S. companies were surveyed, 125 responded (a 13% response rate) to a range of questions on their environmental standards and their investments in pollution controls among other things.

Only 46% of the respondents indicated that they were using either the best available technology or U.S. standards to their companies' operations in Mexico. (Kelso, May 1992:32). This 46% really represents a mere 6% of the total 950 U.S. firms surveyed; if this is considered "active" involvement on the part of the firms that have the greatest access -not to mention the means- to clean technologies, it is not difficult to speculate about what the "participation" rate among Mexican firms is, given their comparative disadvantage (in this case being access to clean technology.)

### **Non-governmental efforts in Mexican Environmentalism**

The environmental movement is by no means a phenomenon that was triggered solely by governmental schemes. Opposition parties, particularly those with a left-of-center bent,

invested efforts in the issue. Following is a synopsis of an article written by Wade Graham which illustrates another side of environmentalism in Mexico.

Graham refers to Mexico's embrace of environmentalism in the last two decades as being " a reaction to what is essentially a Third World modernity, with characteristics all its own. Modernity (in Mexico) denotes a peculiar state of affairs in which a fully modern, American-style consumer media culture has been crudely overlain onto an insufficiently dissolved structure of feudal poverty". In the development debate, academics questioned the regime's absolute subordination of ecological issues to industrialization. Mexico's Left soon included environmental issues to its agenda and even received guidance from traditional German liberal Left parties. Why the issue -- and the movement -- appealed to the Left or socialist groups may be explained by the fact that defense of the environment is perceived as a class issue by many Mexicans, a fact which has lead environmentalists to tie their efforts to a broader critique of Mexico's dependency (on foreign forces) and domination by an internal elite.

It is this traditional dependent development which has recently given rise to the call for an alternative way for development, namely, *ecodesarollo* (ecodevelopment). Ecodevelopment advocates' main proposal is the re-formulation of Mexico's development strategy through the scientific

management of resources, the introduction of labor-intensive technologies, and the legislation of a more equitable distribution of land and wealth. The movement favors industrial modernization but one of a more benign variety. Most proponents of *ecodesarollo* are highly nationalistic university trained "intellectuals" who insist that wealth and poverty are Mexico's real forms of pollution; moreover, population growth, they claim, does not represent a problem, if anything, it represents a source of pride.

Graham likens Mexican environmentalism to the pre-1960 American conservation of the "gospel of efficiency type," with the exception of the "aesthetic" component. Furthermore, environmental questions are more strictly and systematically subordinated to purely economic rationales. Thus, he predicts that the "preservationist" valorization of non-human nature that has been common in environmentalism in the U.S., is unlikely to ever penetrate Mexican politics. As it is, environmentalism has had little success fomenting public opinion; environmentalists recognize that their progress has been slow and not terribly effective, this is partly due to the "lack of education and concern" on the part of the citizenship, and partly due to the fact that all activity, in most cases, has been limited to "lyrical declarations." Nevertheless, Graham concludes "recognition of the necessity of grassroots political participation has led to an

unprecedented commitment on the part of environmentalists to join the struggle to democratize Mexico's political institutions" (Graham, Winter 1991:1-16).

As the environmental movement gains strength and diversity through the formation of more groups with a wider range of agendas, cooperation, guidance, and funding/technical assistance among regional, interstate, and foreign NGO's will also increase. The following chapter is intended to provide a general description of environmental NGOs in Mexico, how they evolved and what their main functions and areas of focus are.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **NGOs IN MEXICO: THEIR STRUCTURE AND MANNER OF OPERATION**

#### **Study on Mexican Environmental NGOs**

A study conducted by the *Instituto Aleman de Desarrollo* (German Institute of Development) with the participation of forty established Mexican NGOs, gives an adequate description of the historical development, dynamics, and structure of environmental NGOs currently active in Mexico.<sup>3</sup>

#### **NGO Chronological Formation**

The first Mexican environmental NGO was founded in 1969, followed by eight more created before 1980. Fourteen NGOs formed between 1980 and 1984, and from 1985 on, a large and rapid increase in the formation of these organizations spread throughout the country. A reason for this increase of NGOs was the First National Reunion on Ecology in 1984, where participants from various regions became more attuned to emerging environmental awareness of the escalating pollution problems faced by the nation, and Mexico City in particular.

#### **Basis for group creation**

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<sup>3</sup> This summary of selected statistical data has been compiled from a more extensive investigation conducted by the Instituto Aleman de Desarrollo based in Mexico City. The report, titled *Politica Ambiental en Mexico: El Papel de las Organizaciones no Gubernamentales* was published in April 1990 in Spanish. The English version of the summary presented here is my own translation.

These NGOs were formed to address issues that range from nuclear danger and natural resource conservation, to the lack of public funding for specific projects that could not be carried out within the public sector, and to the desire to establish a network. Slightly more than half of the surveyed NGOs have 12 or less active members. Also, roughly half of the NGOs have a horizontal decision structure, that is, a collective leadership that implicates the participation of several people. Only three groups counted with a formal or informal leader, such groups however, had a leader that tended to be overworked and could easily come apart if the leader left.

#### Financing

Three fourths of the groups have a system of self financing which often includes member contributions and the sale of books or brochures. Nine groups receive some sort of donation in cash or kind, four of which receive them regularly. The area of contributions and donations has not been fully tapped due to the complicated processing of tax deductions.

Almost 50 percent of the groups interviewed receive funding from NGO's abroad (Europe and U.S.). Although funding is used mainly for projects, in some instances it is also used to expand the NGO's resources. Various state dependencies provide funding to 25 percent of these groups, most of which

is directed to specific projects. Five groups have conducted studies or projects under the direction of organizations like UNESCO, FAO, UNICEF, or UNHCR. Some groups have attempted to approach the World Bank in an effort to participate in its "Debt-for-Nature-Swap" program.

### Lines of action

There are seven major areas of work in which most of the groups place emphasis; fewer groups however, conduct more specialized studies or projects in ten main areas. The following list show the number of NGO's that conduct studies or work in those areas:

#### Main areas of work:

Water	19
Environmental Education	18
energy	17
deforestation/forests	16
appropriate technology	15
vegetation/wild life	15
organic agriculture	12

#### Main areas for more specialized study:

Garbage	9
Investigation	8
Air	7
Tourism	4
Fishing	4
Health	4
Refugees	4
Culture/Crafts	4
Biodiversity	4
Urban/Rural planning	1

### Cooperation strategies

Technical counsel and citizen mobilization were found to

be the most common forms of cooperation between the NGOs and their beneficiary groups, peasants and civil society represented the most common groups of beneficiaries. Contact and exchanges between NGOs is not a common practice, which explains why various groups may at times write on the same theme (i.e., garbage). According to the groups which did keep in continuous contact, information exchange was ranked the highest benefit they received from it.

Slightly over half of the NGOs belonged to some type of national association or network, while the remaining did not. In addition, seven groups belonged to regional networks. The most cited benefit from belonging to a network was "access to information", followed by "power to negotiate" and "concrete actions".

Out of the 40 NGOs, 34 cooperate with the public sector. Twenty seven cooperate with institutions at the federal level, out of which at least 16 had contacts with SEDUE (Mexico's EPA); 20 cooperate with state institutions; and 20 with institutions at the municipal level. The types of cooperation include "contacts", financial support (from the public institutions), and consulting services (to the public institutions). Nevertheless, the public sector, and SEDUE in particular, were heavily criticized by most NGOs.

A total of 29 NGOs had contacts with foreign NGOs, from both Europe and the U.S. The types of cooperation include

legal counsel (from foreign NGOs), information exchange, and financial support. In this case, only 11 groups expressed criticism towards the foreign NGOs for "attempting to impose fashions" (such as "women", "ecology", "participation", "indigenous people", etc.) without regard to the autonomy of Mexican groups and the specific problems of the nation, "limiting their financing to short term only", and "paternalism".

#### How are NGOs perceived by the public sector

There was a fair amount of divergence and contradiction in this area. While some expressed that NGOs were too small, others felt that only small groups, with regional or local focus, could work efficiently. Furthermore, NGOs were classified according to three distinct types:

1. Those which file complaints and diffuse information.  
(Grupo de los 100, MEM, Partido Verde, Pacto, Tepeyac)
2. Those which coordinate or work on concrete programs.  
(Amigos de Sian'Kaan, Pronatura, Mariposa Monarca, Comité de Vida Silvestre, GEMA, Tlalpan, Coyoacan, etc.)
3. Those which provide legal advice.  
(Biocenosis, INAINE, etc.)

In addition, there were two predominant tendencies among these environmental NGOs:

- A) Groups that were large and well known and tended to focus on filing complaints; and did not offer their support to SEDUE, the decision-making process, or implementation.
- B) Groups (civil society, initiatives) with a regional or sectorial focus, which had a considerable social base

and conducted successful projects.

### Conclusions

Judging by the data collected in this study, a rather loosely knit societal mechanism to study and protect ecologically threatened areas has set foot in Mexico City and other regions throughout the country. However, there appears to be a lack of coherent linkage between these groups as well as a systematic plan for collective action. This may be due to the fact that information technologies (i.e., computers) may not be readily available for the organizations' use. Nevertheless, environmental NGOs have a critical role for mobilizing citizens whenever there is governmental inertia in enforcement or other environmental problems affecting a community.

### **Components of an Effective Environmental NGO**

The presence, and pressure, of NGO's and environmental NGOs in particular, is beginning to be felt by established Mexican institutions. As described in the aforementioned study, their numbers are increasing as is the range of activities they are set out to pursue. Although Mexico's environmental movement is far from achieving the sophistication that the environmental movement in the U.S. has, groups from each movement have common missions, as a result, such missions has enabled them to form strong linkages

and veins for mutual cooperation. It is such cooperative efforts, I believe, that have the potential to shape future environmental action on the part of Mexican society.

According to one of the pioneers in the field of environmental journalism in the U.S., Philip Shabecoff, environmentalism is becoming one of the most powerful cultural and political forces of our time. He cites how Presidents Reagan and Bush tried to repeal many of the major environmental laws and open vast tracts of public land to a frontier style resource rush. But their efforts ultimately failed because environmental values had become too deeply planted to be uprooted. However, he argues that the movement will never gain genuine power unless it builds old-fashioned political coalitions with the muscle to make the system respond. But so far, national environmental leaders have ignored some of their natural allies in such a coalition. In fights over acid-rain legislation or the old-growth forests in the Northwest, they have too often been insensitive to the economic consequences of their programs, particularly as they affect workers, minorities and poor people.<sup>4</sup>

However, the advent of the NAFTA as well as other

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<sup>4</sup> This excerpt was taken from a book review article by Dianne Dumanoski in the Boston Globe, April 5, 1993 pp. 33. Book reviewed: Fierce Green Fire.

environmental problems along the Mexico/U.S. border area and the interior, have been instrumental in making workers, minorities and poor people to take action and create their own movements to protect their interests and the welfare of their surroundings.

The following represents a clear example that certain civil society sectors such as peasant organizations initiate movements in order to achieve goals often contradicting to those of other groups. In an investigation on the significance and potential of locally based environmental initiatives (or dynamics of environmental activism), the following conclusions were drawn from observations on environmental activism undertaken by traditional communities:

- 1) Collective action to resist the implementation of environmentally destructive development projects is rarely triggered primarily by an overriding concern to preserve the environment in its existing state, but rather hinges on the lack of sufficient benefits from such projects accruing to local communities.
- 2) Because of their extensive ecological knowledge, societies which are based on sustainable environmental management practices are much better able to accurately assess the true costs and benefits of ecosystem disturbance than any evaluator coming from outside the local area.
- 3) The success of such movements is often due to their ability to form a coalition with regional, national or international groups which have similar interests, and to publicize their grievances and their cause. Such support for local-level activity can come from NGOs with development and equity concerns, from social movements focusing on human rights issues, or from international agencies directed towards environmental conservation.



- 4) Environmental activism does not take place in a vacuum. The impact of such movements - and, indeed, the possibility of collective action being undertaken at all - depends to a large extent on the social, economic, and political structures which influence community dynamics from the local, national and international levels. The importance of structural factors for the success, or even the existence, of collective action means that such action is not undertaken in all circumstances where there is a need and a will to do so. A repressive state can crush organizational efforts at an early stage, while the domination of the economy by outside interests can close off channels of activity on the local level. Similarly, the existence of intra-community repression can prevent class, race or gender-based alliances from forming, and from making their interests felt.
- 5) The need for activism around local environmental issues has put sustainable resource management on the agenda of activist groups and NGO's with wider concerns. For example, the Popular Defence Committee of Durango, Mexico, which was originally organized to obtain housing rights and other basic needs, turned to environmental activism when industrial pollution threatened the water supply of the community. In time, this socially based ecological movement not only widened to include surrounding rural areas in its activities, but also expanded its activities to address problems of sewage disposal, drainage and refuse management. (Vivian 1992:69-71).

In summary, when it comes to implementing new projects, the following can be said of locally based movements: while economic benefits are more important than environmental impacts, sustainable resource management has become an integral part on the agenda of NGOs with wider concerns. Also, local dwellers are better assessors of the impact that a certain project will have in their area. In respect to the relative success of NGOs that achieved their goals, three factors appear to play a critical role: First, coalition

building with regional, national or International groups; second, effective publicity; and third, the condition of local structural factors (social, economic and political).

In view of the importance given to NGO performance, one may ask what exactly makes NGOs perform well. One assessment has been conducted by Charles A. Reilly, which concludes that not all NGOs are created equal, nor are they equally effective in delivering goods and services. In identifying good performers, Reilly has extracted a number of propositions from case studies of development projects supported by the Inter-American Foundation (IAF) in the environmental area. Several studies, evaluations and fellowship research based in Mexico, Central America, Peru and Brazil were used.

The IAF tends to support NGOs that have the following organizational characteristics:

1. concentrate on a single principal task;
2. have an empathetic, self-selected staff and strong leadership;
3. have a flexible organizational style;
4. blend social thrust with technical competence;
5. are good listeners and responsive to clients;
6. are accountable to members, and there is direct membership participation in group decision-making;
7. frequently enjoy influential "sponsors" or advocates in government or business circles.

Regarding the relationship of NGOs to their social environment, the following general observations usually hold:

1. Social service NGOs reach poorer beneficiaries, and provoke less resistance, than production-oriented ones;

2. NGOs require relative autonomy: i.e., control over goal setting and program decision-making without external domination, whether by governments, political parties, religious groups or development agencies.
3. in democratizing settings, NGOs furnish ideas, staff and social "R&D" space for public agencies.

Finally, in a more speculative vain, Reilley sees the following trends emerging among Latin American NGOs during the 1990's:

1. NGOs will tend to higher degrees of specialization, often introducing fees for services.
2. There is a trend towards federative service structures, networks and consortia which offer technical, managerial, educational and financial services to grassroots groups (small businesses), specially at the regional level.
3. NGOs increasingly channel the diffuse energy of social movements and actors, articulating moderated demands and pursuing self-reliance through concrete, pragmatic activities like agricultural marketing, self-help housing, and community services in education and health.
4. NGOs have grown increasingly effective in negotiating pacts with governmental actors for the delivery of goods and services, especially at the local level.

Moreover, based in the analysis of recent case studies and his own participant observation, Reilley puts forward eight preliminary environmental propositions, out of which six relate to this analysis.

- 1) As democratization proceeds in Latin America, much of the social energy and normative concern formerly invested in human rights has been transferred to the environmental arena.
- 2) Rather than impose exogenous models, donors should look first to indigenous social organizations as development vehicles, without romanticizing them.

- 3) Multiclass alliances among the organized poor and middle-class populations alarmed over environmental degradation makes for more effective empowerment. In Durango, Mexico, a 20-year process of popular sector mobilization, land invasion and confrontation has been channelled into a strong alliance between organized squatters, middle classes and local government officials confronting the causes of industrial and urban wastes.
- 4) Environmental initiatives by grassroots support organizations venturing into the legislative arena usually require "friends in high places", technical expertise, as well as demonstrated talent for working among popular groups if they are to be heard.
- 5) NGOs serve as experimental sites for public program initiatives, and have a proven ability to effectively disseminate successful experiences at low cost through their own networks.
- 6) International environmental organizations and movement contribute most effectively within the region when they work in association with indigenous or national NGOs.

Reilley goes on to conclude that environmental problems abound. Too often, they are defined by persons disconnected from the development process. Problem-solving and issue resolution require more enlightened and direct exchange between "insiders" and "outsiders". Resource management and popular participation should be inseparable. Organizations of and for the poor are the obvious, available vehicle for keeping them together. (Reilley 1992:330-31, 342-44).

Reilley's observations are of relevance because they are in many ways similar to the dynamics of the binational NGO coalition process as it reacted to the NAFTA negotiations. However, to his points I must add the importance of analyzing

a participating civil society as a whole, and not only specific project-affected sectors. I believe that much of the apathy on the part of middle and upper-middle sectors in Mexico's society stems from the fact that they share a common naive belief that since it is the function of the state and private companies to deliver vital services such as water, sewerage, electricity, and so on; it is only natural then to expect the state and industry to be fully responsible - and thus take the initiative - for solving the pollution problems associated with the services they create and deliver in the first place.

Unless people are being directly and grossly affected by any type of pollution (i.e., obvious detrimental health effects) few people will bother to organize in any type of pollution awareness, control or prevention activity. A situation that illustrates this observation is not hard to find, for example, a family which I have known for years resides in one of the border towns on the Mexican side. Every so often, the whole family becomes ill, but because the event is sporadic, they simply attribute the illness to something they have eaten and settle in this conviction instead of taking the initiative to find whether their drinking water supply is the source of their illness. This isolated example of people's disposition leads to the question of system-reliance and participation, particularly in relation to NAFTA.

What prompts groups to mobilize civilians and what strategies they are using to exert pressures in the negotiations. There is evidence suggesting that binational coordination is a key factor, the implications of bilateral efforts are discussed next.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **NAFTA: HOW IS THE TRADE PACT VIEWED BY MEXICANS**

##### **Results from a Survey Conducted in Mexico City.**

In spite of Salinas tireless campaign to gain Congressional support in the U.S., it appears that his campaigning back home has not been as effective in promoting understanding of NAFTA's implications among all sectors of society. Information in Mexico has amounted to a constant flow of official pronouncements and promises about NAFTA. Articles and speeches from government officials and sympathetic private sector people have appeared regularly in the major capital daily press, radio and television. This is qualitatively different from the publicity and discussion of NAFTA in the U.S. and Canada (Lund and Montano 1992:43).

According to a study recently conducted by Daniel M. Lund, for more than two years the Salinas administration in Mexico has projected NAFTA as a national panacea; a program to attract investment, develop the export production sector, increase jobs, improve salaries, protect consumer prices and product quantity, and generally become the focal point around which to reorganize the national economy. This view of NAFTA has been presented in the most extraordinary media saturation in Mexican political history. Yet, amid such publicity (or propaganda) schemes, the mexican population at large remains

confused and passive.

In short, the survey findings, even if startling, can be said to reflect an accurate representation of public perception in what NAFTA is concerned. The poll suggests that NAFTA is seen as a government project imposed on a difficult situation. The NAFTA project is not identified as a project by the people, or of the nation. In spite of all the publicity, there is a distance between most people and the NAFTA project, one reason being the above mentioned NAFTA publicity and information.

Fully 67.8% of those surveyed felt that the information has been completely unclear or confusing at best. This 67.8% were mostly women and mainly people over thirty and largely working class and marginal in composition; in contrast, young men of the middle and upper class were more likely to be in the groups saying that the information in the media on NAFTA has been "clear" or "very clear". According to the pollers, (in the light of responses to other questions in the poll) it might be seen that this is less a problem of the capacity of the population to understand, and more a comment on the nature and quality of the NAFTA promotional publicity.

In addition, only 6.2% said they knew "enough" about the NAFTA, and 16% said they knew "nothing". Fully 48.1% said they knew "little" and 29.7% said they knew "something". Men were nearly three times as likely as women to say they knew



"enough" and about 2/3 as likely as women to say they knew "nothing". Another element of distance is in the incorrect or confused notions about what the NAFTA means. A startling 45.8% of the population has the idea that NAFTA will facilitate work in the U.S. for them. Moreover, 43.5% believe that NAFTA will protect Mexico from competition with Canada and the U.S. At the same time, 78% have the idea that there will be an improvement in the quality of products made by Mexican industry, and 72.1% feel NAFTA will secure space for Mexican products abroad.

The very status of the NAFTA proposal is an index of confusion. Some 40.9% of the sample are convinced that it has already been approved and is operative, while 23.5% have no idea of its status. The sample shows 76.8% anticipate that NAFTA will attract investment, in the same vein, 63.2% felt that NAFTA will help stimulate more employment, while only 48.1% believed that better wages will come with NAFTA. The following list provides the percentages (in parenthesis) of the population that believed NAFTA was in the interest of that particular sector: Medium and small industry (56.2%), workers (43.9%), small producers in the countryside (37.5%), and the unemployed and marginal sectors (26.8%).

While the survey covered issues of perception, industry, labor and product prices to some detail, it was weak in that it did not acknowledge the issue of potential environmental

threats due to new industrial and manufacturing plants. In spite of said exclusion, the survey is a good indicator of the confusion -- or flat out ignorance -- that prevails among various sectors of the population in regard to expectations from NAFTA (Lund and Montano 1992).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **NGO ALLIANCES: THEIR TRANSNATIONAL STRATEGY AND NAFTA**

#### **The Significance of Governmental Forums in Bringing NGOs Together**

As was pointed out earlier in this report, the June 1985 government sponsored First National Conference on Ecology conducted in Mexico set the precedent for the subsequent creation of a number of environmental groups with diverging goals and agendas as well as an increasing public awareness of the reality of reckless and unregulated pollution throughout Mexico.

Similarly, a public forum entitled "Opening the Debate: Agricultural, Environmental and Labor Dimensions of North American Integration" held on Capitol Hill on January 15, 1991, set the tone in addressing environmental concerns within the NAFTA debate in the ensuing months. At the same time, U.S. Congress was showing signs of taking an increasingly active interest in the evolution of NAFTA, and the conference was oriented toward congressional staffers, but those in attendance included a broad range of NGOs and the press.

The idea of the forum was developed by several groups: the International Labor Rights Education and Research Fund, the National Wildlife Federation, U.S.-Mexico Dialogos, and the Institute for Trade and Agriculture Policy. The forum

served as a critical catalyst for opposition to the fast track authority for the NAFTA negotiations. Not only were there a significant number and a wide diversity of interests represented, but the audience of over 400 was particularly remarkable. A few days later, Canadian and Mexican participants were invited to join their U.S. counterparts to form the somewhat more formal coalition in opposition to fast track. However, representatives of the various organizations concluded that, for the time being, it was better that the national movements remained formally separate. (Thorup, Summer 1991:18.)

The forum's significance was that it helped lay the foundation for the intensive and remarkably successful NGO coalition-building that has continued to exert pressure throughout the NAFTA process.

### **The "Fast Track" Debate and Origins of NGOs' Interest in the NAFTA Negotiations**

Opposition to NAFTA ranged from outright refusal to even consider such an agreement (U.S. labor unions) to a willingness to discuss it as long as certain concerns were addressed (the environmentalists). This disparity in views was bridged by an agreement to jointly oppose fast track approval of a NAFTA rather than oppose NAFTA itself. One of the first groups to express its concern over the NAFTA was the

environmental group Friends of the Earth. In late June 1990, they detailed their reservations in a document submitted to the U.S. International Trade Commission arguing that the negative environmental impact of NAFTA indicated a need to expand the scope of the negotiations beyond trade and investment matters to include environmental considerations.

By the same token, early in October 1990, Mexico followed suit; two separate conferences were organized in which Canadians were invited to discuss the issue of free trade, one by a political party (*Partido de Accion Nacional*), and the other by a pro-Canada network (Common frontiers). Meanwhile, at a meeting in Washington, D.C. in late October 1990, U.S. and Mexican negotiating officials were still publicly rejecting inclusion of issues such as the environment and labor rights within NAFTA. (Thorup 1991:17)

Environmental issues were articulated early in the public debate accompanying NAFTA, partly because activists felt compelled to respond to two events: the September 25, 1990, launching of the Bush Administration's campaign for reauthorization of "fast-track" procedures and the November 27, 1990, communique from Presidents Bush and Salinas committing the United States and Mexico to preparation of a

"comprehensive plan" on the border environment.<sup>6</sup> (Gregory 1992:102).

The debate over NAFTA and the fast track process focused the attention of disparate interest groups on the process of North American economic integration and served as a catalyst to hasten the appearance of multisectoral, cross-border coalitions and working groups. The discussions that the debate provoked enabled participant NGOs to:

- view their specific issues within a broader framework,
- network with a variety of groups with which they would not normally come into contact,
- identify areas of common concern and to explore areas of disagreement,
- create public forums of high visibility at which to express their points of view,
- explore alternative tactics and strategies for the pursuit of their objectives, both trade and non-trade related, with potential political allies, and
- identify sources of intellectual and financial support for their efforts.

The unique political characteristics of each group represented did not preclude the participants from establishing multiple agreements to continue working together

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<sup>6</sup> As a clarification for those unfamiliar with the term, under fast track, Congress approves or disapproves the final text of the agreement, its implementing legislation, and any supporting information submitted by the President *without amendment* within 90 legislative days when tariffs are involved. Laura Gaughan, "Fast Track and Why We Need It for the NAFTA", Business America, April 8, 1991 pp 6.

on specific tasks. In addition, the looseness of the various coalition efforts to defeat fast track seems to have enabled the participants to avoid debilitating ideological battles, producing instead increased flexibility and creativity of response.

In sum, there were a variety of groups working individually and in loosely knit coalitions of diverse types. Some united various sectors within one country (such as *La Red de Accion Frente al Acuerdo de Libre Comercio* in Mexico, Action Canada, and the Ad Hoc Working Group on Trade and Development based in Washington, D.C.); others united a variety of groups within one sector across borders (such as the San Ygnacio working group on the environment). Given that many organizations for civic participation in the U.S. and Canada have a much longer history than the majority of their counterparts in Mexico, there was an asymmetry among them in terms of organizing capacity and representation. The strategy followed by those interested in strengthening the network was to expand participation through ever wider circles of inclusion.

The legacy of the fast track was significant for the participants in the cross-border coalitions for it served as an effective common denominator for discussion and action on the part of groups with very different institutional agendas. It also underscored the enormous impact that these groups can

have on the policy process. One result is that the majority of NGOs will be incorporating more trade-related issues into their work over the next few years. More important still is the initiation of a long process of trust-building, information-sharing, and networking among groups whose eventual areas of influence will in all likelihood transcend the issues of economic integration to include a wide range of other subjects of concern to the U.S. and Mexican governments. (Thorup 1991:22).

### **The Impact of Anti-Fast Track Cross-Border Coalitions**

What had begun as an effort on the part of just a few mid-level staff people in a limited number of environmental and labor groups had expanded by late March 1991 to include the leadership of a number of domestic interest groups. The impact of this effort was three-fold:

- 1) It complicated the process of securing fast track authority for NAFTA;
- 2) it created an informal network of domestic interest groups and grassroots constituencies extending across three countries; and
- 3) it demonstrated the vulnerability of national decisionmakers to non-governmental organizing and lobbying, potentially altering the political parameters of the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Mexico.

Even though the anti-fast track coalition did not succeed in their goal, they were, nevertheless, able to claim partial victory. Clearly, the broad-based nature of the coalition



made opposition to fast track more politically attractive to Congress. Congressional opposition included members who were genuinely concerned about environmental issues; others for whom opposing fast track on environmental grounds was easier than arguing the concerns of labor with the attendant risk of being labelled protectionist; some who defended the labor agenda openly; and some who were not particularly interested in the trade issue at all, but for whom this represented an opportunity to underscore Congressional autonomy vis-a-vis the executive branch and/or to raise the profile of the democratic party. (Thorup 1991:20).

The success of the anti-fast track coalition in galvanizing Congress and capturing media attention led to an increasing sense of urgency - even desperation - among supporters of the agreement during the months of March and April 1991. Mexican officials were also feeling the effects of the attack on fast track. Having decided that the environmental critique of the NAFTA was the most dangerous of the prospects for fast track approval, they launched a campaign to demonstrate Mexico's commitment to environmental protection. In a bold move in mid-March, President Salinas closed the largest oil refinery - and a major source of air pollution - in Mexico City. Finally, after an emergency mini-summit with President Bush in early April, President Salinas embarked on a seven-city speaking tour of the U.S. and Canada

to convince hold-outs of the need for fast track. (Thorup 1991:21).

More recently, on September 1992, the Ministers responsible for the environment in each of the three countries, announced their intention of creating a North American commission on environmental cooperation. Soon after, 23 Mexican environmental NGOs and other counterparts in Canada and the U.S. drafted a detailed proposal for the establishment of a North American Commission on Trade and the Environment; this document was the first most comprehensive submission by members of the Mexican environmental community for inclusion in the parallel agreement of NAFTA (Aridjis 1993:7).

### ***The Action Plan As a Strategy to Win Fast-Track Approval***

On March 7, 1991 Representative Dan Rostenkowsky, Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, and Senator Lloyd Bensten, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, sent a letter to President Bush advising him that approval of fast track was in danger unless the Administration quickly indicated what steps it would take to address the concerns of the opposition in the areas of environmental, health, and safety standards and with regard to workers' rights. The possibility of establishing parallel negotiations on the environment and workers' rights was also included in the letter. In response, U.S. Trade Representative Carla Hills

promised to work with Congress to address these concerns by May 1. (Thorup 1991:19).

On May 1, 1991, The Administration released its *Action Plan*, which promised to "include environmental issues related to trade in NAFTA," and to address several specific environmental concerns. Both Bensten and Rostenkowski - and staunch NAFTA opponent, House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt - reacted favorably to the President's proposal. Because the *Action Plan* appeared to satisfy some of the environmental issues surrounding NAFTA, it caused a serious split in the environmental front by prompting several major, Washington, D.C.-based environmental organizations (principally the Natural Resources Defense Council and the National Wildlife Federation) to support the administration's bid for fast-track reauthorization. (Gregory 1992:105).

The Administration's *Action Plan* offered among other things:

- To create an environmental review;
- To assist workers and industries negatively affected by the agreement (reversing the early position of the Administration);
- To exclude any discussion of immigration from the trade pact;
- To add a representative of the NGOs to the Advisory Committee on Trade Policy and Negotiations (World Wildlife Fund) and to invite environmental representatives to participate in each of the NAFTA advisory committees on intergovernmental policy:  
Services policy (Natural Resources Defense Council),

Investment policy (National Wildlife Federation),  
Industry policy (Nature Conservancy), and  
Agriculture policy (National Audubon Society); and

- To pursue environment issues and develop a border environmental plan with Mexico *in parallel with* the trade negotiations.

Some environmentalists criticized the appointments to the NAFTA advisory committees. Moreover, the president did not appoint environmentalists to other advisory committees, such as those on automobiles, energy, land transportation, intellectual property rights, and dispute resolution, even though the decisions of these committees will have significant environmental implications.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the Administration's proposal was aimed particularly at securing the support of environmentalists and went further to meet their concerns than those of labor. It is interesting to note that the same concessions that pleased some special interest groups in the U.S. effectively narrowed the bargaining room of the Mexican government and thus were likely to increase opposition in Mexico to the agreement (Thorup 1991:26).

The volatile political climate following the fast-track debate forced the U.S. administration into the role of environmental guardian during the NAFTA negotiations. According to some groups, the result has been to booster rhetoric and hollow assurances, but no real progress in environmental protection mechanisms within NAFTA was made

(Gregory 1992:103).

The decision to move along separate parallel tracks, instead of integrating trade and environment issues directly within the NAFTA negotiations, has remained one of the most controversial aspects of the Bush plan. Since the provisions will be discussed separately, enforcement remains unclear. In addition, the document did not include provisions that would come into operation if Mexico does not comply, for example, in enforcing its environmental laws (Gregory 1992:107). In sum, the final configuration of the negotiations both substantively - in terms of the issues that will be addressed - and procedurally, was fundamentally affected by the efforts of a variety of groups acting both individually and in concert.

### **Criticism of Plans Resulting from the Parallel Negotiations**

Even though the "parallel track" was created due to continued pressure from environmental groups in the three countries, the process by which the documents were developed by the negotiating teams was weak and only to some extent took into account the recommendations brought forward by various NGOs. For one, according to a review published by the Grupo de los Cien (Group of 100), the parallel process was limited to Mexico-U.S. border region environmental problems, moreover, the company commissioned to conduct the border region study was from northeastern U.S., a firm with little knowledge or

experience on the environmental condition of the border area. On August 1991, a draft of this border plan was issued for public comment. SEDUE and EPA organized 17 public hearings along the border area, at which representatives of several Mexican NGOs along with hundreds of Mexican and U.S. citizens gave testimony on the inadequacy of the draft. Major criticisms focussed on lack of financing, an emphasis on recommendations for future study rather than plans for immediate action, failure to address health-related issues of border pollution, insufficient attention to problems associated with hazardous waste, and inadequate (in Mexico, virtually non-existent) public access to information, etc. The heavily revised plan, which had minimal Mexican input, was released by EPA and SEDUE in February 1992 as the Integrated Plan for the Mexican-U.S. Border Area (Aridjis 1993:3).

Within the parallel framework, economic and business concerns have been addressed almost entirely within the trade agreement itself. Conversely, the environmental "track" has led to two administration documents, the Integrated Environmental Plan for the U.S. Border Area and the Review of U.S.-Mexico Environmental Issues, both of which have been criticized for being high in rhetoric and lacking in specifics. Except in a very few instances, the former document is so non-specific as to be justifiably characterized as an exercise in issue identification rather than problem

solving (Gregory 1992:108). As for the latter document, it is considered to be devoid of substantive content.

According to Robert W. Benson, a professor of international environmental law and a specialist in Latin American affairs at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, NAFTA's side agreements will not fix an already flawed trade pact. He charges Clinton's decisions on the issue as being dictated by short-term politics rather than an analysis of long-term costs and benefits. His argument maintains that a serious analysis of NAFTA must account for the following possible negative effects:

- An unprecedented harm to species, forests, soil and water if fossil fuel-intensive manufacturing of goods is accelerated. No NAFTA negotiator has calculated these costs;
- The uprooting of some 13 million Mexican peasants from the countryside, many of whom will migrate to city slums or to the U.S. This figure was calculated by the Mexican undersecretariat of agricultural planning, and it is seen as the inevitable cost of the "modernization" of Mexican farming by capital-intensive, chemical-intensive agribusiness, which NAFTA and other programs promote;
- A potential "lightening up" on many of U.S. food, safety, and environmental laws and transboundary inspections;
- The bill to clean up environmental pollution will not be paid. Estimates for partial clean up of the maquiladora project along the U.S.-Mexico border range from \$5 to \$50 billion. Yet the two governments have allocated little more than \$.5 billion;
- The implications of transferring public decisions from U.S. legislative, administrative, and judicial institutions to small groups of non-elected and

possibly unaccountable trade experts.

Benson argues that for President Salinas, NAFTA is more important as a public relations tool for the PRI than as a trade deal, and makes reference to the fact that voters, workers, and journalists in Mexico have not been able to speak for themselves about NAFTA. He goes on to say that it is impossible to have NAFTA and develop social justice and a clean environment, and that it has been a desire for personal influence in Washington what has rushed lobbyists to draft compromising side agreements that ignore basic social and environmental facts (Benson 1993).

### **The NAFTA Parallel Process and Recent Developments**

As of today, the NAFTA negotiations are ongoing. When the final text will reach Congress is not definite, but when it does, pressure groups will play a key role in the final outcome of the trade agreement. The focus on the U.S. Congress is critical because it is only here that NAFTA opposition groups can actually influence the way the enabling legislation to NAFTA is handled or whether the pact is approved at all, this is not the case for Mexico and Canada.

On December 17, 1992, NAFTA was signed by the Presidents of Mexico, Canada and the United States. Submitted along with this agreement were the outlines for a proposed North American Environmental Commission (NAEC) and an Integrated Border



Environmental Plan, two institutional mechanisms designed to foster voluntary cooperation between the three countries in resolving environmental problems. However, the adequacy of both mechanisms has been seriously questioned by many environmental groups. (Kamp, Land, Durazo 1993:26).

More recently, in late February, in preparation to the side accords' negotiations that begun March 17, the National Economic Council (NEC) published a draft paper on NAFTA Environmental options which was later merged with options for the U.S. negotiating position on a labor standards accord. This integrated paper, along with a USTR-prepared paper on import surges, formed the basis for initial parallel environmental discussions on March 2 and 3, 1993. (Inside U.S. Trade, 1993:S-5)

In the draft, reference is made to the following concerns:

- that closer economic integration with Mexico will adversely affect the environment in the U.S.-Mexico border area;
- that Mexico does not adequately enforce its environmental standards, and such lax enforcement is detrimental for both the environment as well as U.S. industry competitiveness;
- that no oversight mechanism currently exists to continually monitor, and work to improve, the state of the North American environment; and
- that increased funding will be necessary to address the concerns above.

As an option, the work group has developed a package of

measures designed to address the concerns mentioned above, following is a summary of these measures:

- measures related to the U.S.-Mexico border (such as the 1983 La Paz Agreement. However, while helpful in paper, this package has been criticized for inadequate funding/implementation);
- the establishment of a North American Commission for the Environment (NACE) (which would have at least three functions: facilitating implementation of NAFTA environmental provisions; monitoring; and to serve as a point of inquiry);
- various other measures to address enforcement and other issues (such as other bilateral agreements and their consolidation, to avoid a proliferation of working groups under various agreements; increasing technical assistance to Mexico; the adoption of community right-to-know laws, which tend to promote citizen involvement and governmental responsiveness; etc.); and
- funding options to assist in carrying out the above. There are at least two aspects to the funding issue: to what extent, and from what sources, the U.S. will fund environmental activities on the U.S. side of the Mexico-U.S. border; and to what extent and from what sources the U.S. will assist Mexico in addressing environmental concerns. Funding options that have been proposed include:
  - funding all NAFTA-related environmental commitments through reallocation within agency budgets;
  - creation of a special North American Development Bank (President Salinas);
  - assessment of a transaction fee (border "user fee") on goods or investment crossing the border with the proceeds directed to border environmental restoration (Congressional: Baucus/Gephardt/de la Garza/Moynihan).

Moreover, according to the NEC report, the Clinton administration assumes it must finish negotiating side accords accords by June 1, 1993 if those pacts are to be passed concurrently with the legislation implementing NAFTA. This

timetable confirms that the administration has committed to gain passage of NAFTA by the Jan. 1, 1994 target date for implementation. However, three Senators who oppose NAFTA as currently drafted are asking their Senate colleagues to join them in urging President Clinton not to be bound by the target date so that they can consult more fully with Congress on the NAFTA side accords, whose negotiation began March 17, 1993. (Inside U.S. Trade, 1993:S6-9).

There exists a special need to safeguard Mexico's already ravaged environment, this stems from the fact that while both the U.S. and Canada have very sophisticated environmental legislation, enforcement mechanisms and programs, Mexico does not. Consequently, an important strategy initiated by some Mexican environmental groups has been to coordinate with groups in the U.S. border states, this binational strategy has afforded the groups involved to jointly assess the potential environmental impacts of NAFTA in both Mexico and the U.S. Pressing pollution problems associated with the Maquiladora project have been the basis of their arguments against NAFTA as it is presently packaged. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The maquiladoras are assembly co-production plants along the U.S.-Mexico border that have been operated by U.S. companies since 1965. Under the maquiladora program, components made in the U.S. are sent to Mexico for assembly, utilizing Mexico's less expensive labor. The finished products are then sent back to the U.S. or exported abroad. According to a source, this type of co-production with Mexico has helped many U.S. companies face international competition

Clearly, without some kind of concerted and well coordinated binational technical environmental assistance, information exchange, and coherent administrative programs from established environmental NGOs, Mexico - with its new and as yet loosely coordinated environmental institutions, and its green movement's infant stage - is not adequately equipped to bring about effective environmental alleviation or pollution prevention programs.

One way in which the civilian force from both nations proceeded to call attention to the issues of environment, labor, and sustainable development not acknowledged in NAFTA was by forming coalitions and conducting a series of forums. Typically, these forums were (and still are) organized so that government officials, legislators, NGO's, scholars, special interest groups, and concerned participants come together in an effort to come up with proposals to address the issues of labor and environment in NAFTA.

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and increase exports. The NAFTA will eliminate maquiladora rules that prevent U.S. companies from selling in Mexico the products they assemble there. Formerly, maquiladoras could sell only 20 percent of their products in Mexico. Under NAFTA, U.S. companies with maquiladoras can sell 100 percent of their product in the Mexican market (Backgrounder, April 9, 1993:9). There are approximately 2,000 maquiladora manufacturing plants employing 500,000 in northern Mexico, this program is a vital component of the border economy (Magnusson and others, 1992:24).

### **What After the "Fast Track"? A look Into a Bilateral Forum**

On February 19, 1993, a forum on Mexican Environmental and Health issues was conducted on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. The forum was sponsored by four Mexican Organizations (Group of 100 (Artists and Intellectuals), Independent Institute for Ecological Research (INAIN), Dana Association, and the Veracruz Environmental Network); and five U.S. Organizations (Arizona Toxics Information, Border Ecology Project, Border Health and Environment Network, Natural Resources Defense Council, and the Texas Center for Policy Studies).

The Group of 100 is one of the various organizations that are actively promoting environmental policy options for NAFTA. According to Homero Aridjis (President of the Grupo of 100), environmental groups in Mexico have taken two sides in respect to NAFTA: acceptance of the agreement, provided it guarantees effective protection of the environment and human health, or outright rejection. A strategy taken by the Group of 100 early in 1991 was to develop contacts with American and Canadian environmental groups, this ties have been a critical element in affording groups in Mexico with the support and leverage needed to influence the NAFTA negotiations (Aridjis 1993:1).

On the U.S. side, two NGOs appear to have been instrumental in actively and successfully bringing other

environmental organizations from the two nations to develop options: the Border Ecology Project and the Natural Resources Defense Council. On February 1993, the BEP jointly with Proyecto Fronterizo de Educacion Ambiental produced a working draft on Environmental and Health Issues in the Interior of Mexico: Options for transnational safeguards, a report compiled by researches from the U.S. and Mexico.

In the same manner, the Texas Center for Policy Studies brought together ideas and suggestions from representatives in various environmental and community groups in the U.S./Mexico border region in producing its September 1992 paper, NAFTA and the U.S./Mexico Border Environment: Options for Congressional Action. Clearly, coordinated binational efforts are a key element to develop comprehensive solutions for the potentially adverse industrial impacts should NAFTA realize.

### **First Congressional Hearings on NAFTA**

Shortly after this event, on February 24, 1993 to be precise, began a series of hearings before Congress around the issues of labor and the environment. With this rounds, the debate on NAFTA -- with the new Congress and under a Democrat administration -- takes on a new political context much different from the one that prevailed last year. Such

hearings are the result of the pressure of new Congress Members concerned over NAFTA's supplemental agreements.

Among the Members and experts called to testify on the first hearing were Richard Gephardt, Ron Weiden (Oregon Representative), Colby (United Food and Commercial Workers Union), Stewart Hudson (National Wildlife Federation), and Gary Hufbauer (International Institute of Economics). Experts testifying on February 25th included Prof. John Bailey (Georgetown University), Jorge Castaneda (Visiting professor at Princeton University), Andrew Reding (World Policy Institute Analyst), Prof. Adolfo Aguilar Zinser (UNAM), Christopher Whalen (Editor and Consultant), and Mariclaire Acosta (Mexican Human Rights Commission).

According to Lori Wallach, of Public Citizen, the majority of the new Congressmembers (more than 70 out of 110) have a critical position toward NAFTA (Brooks and Coson, Wed. 24, 1993:45). The hearings will provide Members with a balanced exposition on the wide range of issues, so that they can better assess the implications of their vote once the "fast track" Congressional debate starts this year.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DEALING WITH CROSS-BORDER ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS: OTHER NGOs' STRATEGIES**

#### **Border Area Toxic Waste Dumps Proposals: Instrumental in the Initiation of Local and State Bilateral Coalitions.**

According to an analysis conducted by the Texas Center for Policy Studies in conjunction with Bioconservacion A.C., the proposal for the construction of three large toxic waste dumps in the state of Texas (by Chemical Waste Management, Inc, and Texcor) early in 1992, spurred unprecedented binational interest among governmental and non-governmental organizations alike. The sites were to serve as landfills for Polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) waste and certain radioactive wastes from uranium mining and milling.

The Texas Center assessment calls to the attention that despite the battle over the construction of these toxic waste sites, there have been some "benefits" that will hopefully become a lasting part of the institutional and legal system for dealing with border environmental issues, a system which was by and large the major force behind the pressure on the NAFTA to recognize the environmental effects of trade. They summarize these "benefits" in three parts:

- 1) The participation of Mexican state and local governmental entities and environmental groups in the Texas permit proceedings is a very important precedent. It helps ensure that the Texas Water Commission will have information on the potential adverse cross-border



impacts of the proposed sites and it already has resulted in development of significant new information on the transboundary nature of groundwater aquifers in the middle Texas/Mexico border region.

- 2) The proceedings have increased understanding and cross-border cooperation between U.S. and Mexican residents, through joint protest actions, consultations and coordinated political strategies. This increased cooperation has been evident at both the informal level and more formally through non-governmental organizations.
- 3) The situation has provided an opening for unprecedented cross-border cooperation at the state-to-state and local-to-local level, breaking out the traditional dominance of Washington, D.C. and Mexico City. Combined with Mexico's increasing decentralization of environmental responsibilities, this opening has important implications for enhancing the role of states and local governments in dealing with transboundary environmental issues. (Texas Center for Policy Studies and Bioconservacion A.C., 1992).

On January 27, 1993, judge Gordon Hardin recommended the State of Texas to deny the license for operation to Texcor Industries, Inc. Instrumental to such decision were: the involvement of the legislative body of the State of Coahuila and "el Comité Internacional de Protección al Ambiente" (a binational NGO), as well as a technical impact assessment conducted by two Mexican environmental specialists<sup>6</sup> (Orduna 1993, 1992:3).

The comprehensive technical study conducted by the two Mexican environmental specialist is noteworthy considering a

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<sup>6</sup> Namely Juan M. Berlanga, a geologist/mathematician, and Juan Rodriguez, a seismologist. For details see: La Jornada; El País section, November 30, 1992 and Francisco Orduna, January 28, 1993.

recent report issued by el Instituto Nacional de Ecologia (INE) in Mexico. Said report forecasts that in 1993 Mexico City alone will have to spend about 500 million dollars on environmental consulting services from firms and specialists abroad. The reason for such prediction is that there are only 80 graduated Environmental Engineers in Mexico, and such small number can hardly be expected to meet the growing demands for technical services such as environmental audits needed by the 650 industries located in Mexico City. At the present time, there are 150 national firms specialized in environmental consulting and some of them have associated with foreign firms due mainly to their lack of expertise in certain areas (Enciso 1993).

However, there are two events that force one to look with more scrutiny to how does the INE, which is one of the foremost Institutes for Ecological studies, arrives to the conclusions of its studies, and to what extent are their recommendations reliable.

First, a leading environmental NGO, El Grupo de los Cien (The Group of 100) has charged the relationship between INE, ChWM, el Grupo ICA (an industrial consortium), and el Instituto Mexicano del Petroleo (the Mexican Institute of Petroleum) to be "scandalous", a relationship which could well be a model of what NAFTA will be in respect to ecological matters (Grupo de los Cien, Dec. 1992).

Second, In spite of a proven bad record and environmentally detrimental outcomes of similar projects conducted in the U.S. (described in the Greenpeace Report), ChWM has managed to gain approval from the State of Jalisco to build a toxic waste plant in that state. According to the governor of the State of Jalisco, Mexico generates about 6.5 tons of toxic waste each year, and it is estimated that the actual capacity to treat this waste is less than 15 percent. The plant is the first of its type so far built in Latin America (Mar de la Paz, Feb. 1993:17).

Thus, while proposals to build toxic waste sites in a border area of Texas adjacent to the Mexican state of Coahuila sparked strong opposition from Coahuila's citizens groups and state legislators, such reaction of opposition was never demonstrated by the people or legislators of the state of Jalisco when the decision to build the toxic waste plants in their region was announced. Not surprisingly, the state of Jalisco has recently approved the installation of the toxic waste sites.

#### **Opposition to NAFTA From Sides Other than Environmental.**

On March 9, 1993, a forum on NAFTA titled "Six Views from Three Countries" was conducted at the Kennedy School of Government. One of the speakers, Robert Z. Lawrence, an Economist and a Harvard professor, speaking on behalf of the

U.S. side, remarked the following: "The idea of foreign firms establishing manufacturing plants in Mexico is not new by any means, the Maquiladora program is a good example of that, a program which has proven to be a success for both Mexico and the participating firms; what Mexico needs to do now is exploit this type of program to its fullest, the NAFTA is designed precisely to ease the process for doing just that." <sup>7</sup>

Apparently, for this speaker there is nothing wrong with Mexico using to its fullest (or "exploiting" as he put it) its competitive advantage on labor. So much for his sophisticated economic argument in favor of exporting U.S. manufacturing if he fails to see the wide range of social and ecological implications, both in Mexico and the U.S.

If NAFTA were to really bring such benefits to the populations of the countries involved, then there would be no opposition movements becoming as active as they have in the past two years. On October of last year, about 300 members of about 20 organizations which represented various interest such as labor, social, human rights, and political parties in U.S., Mexico, and Canada, conducted a protest

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<sup>7</sup> The forum was sponsored by The Center for International Affairs' Programs on Canada and Latin America, and the Center for Business and Government PIC. There were two speakers for each country, one of the speakers for Mexico was Jorge Castaneda, a well known scholar from the UNAM (Mexico) who is currently a visiting Professor at Princeton University.

near the border in Ciudad Juarez, in opposition to NAFTA. A member of a Worker Union Organization in Mexico stated that the signing of NAFTA was conducted in spite of the fact that current Mexican workers wages' buying power is one-third less than that of 1983 (Ibarra, Oct. 25, 1992:37). Other opponents (some of which were not present at this protest) include: Greenpeace, the National Union of grain producers, Public Citizen, Coalition Rainbow (headed by Jesse Jackson), the coalition formed by Citizen Trade Watch and the Alliance for Responsible Trade -- which coordinates more than a hundred organizations opposed to the actual version of NAFTA (Brooks, Dec. 17, 1992:39).

#### **Other Alternatives to the Current NAFTA.**

On February 8, 1991, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, head of Mexico's Partido Revolucionario Democratico (PRD), presented a talk in New York in which he proposed the *Continental Development and Trade Initiative* as an alternative framework for economic integration. He stressed that a solid development and trade agreement that would benefit all parties involved would take time to build, cautioning that "a short-sighted and narrow trade agreement will only bring prosperity for the few and a loss of hope for the many" (Thorup 1991:19).

In a similar vein, Jorge Castaneda, a Mexican academic,

adds that as far as Mexico is concerned, leaving trade to the free market means giving free rein to those who command it: the most powerful, the richest. Moreover, NAFTA is strictly an economic agreement, one that does not include other possible issues such as social, political, environmental, and cultural; thus, NAFTA is an accord fundamentally opposed to the idea of planning, to choosing what each country will produce, to defining how established goals will be met, and to clarifying how certain sectors will be protected or exposed in order to reach long-term objectives. He has proposed that an alternative agreement ideally must include the following:

- Compensatory financing or the creation of regional funds (i.e., a tax on cross-border transactions, as proposed by Representative Richard Gephardt or taxing the windfall profits that some companies would make by moving to Mexico);
- Industrial planning (i.e., trilateral industrial policy -- a strategic alliance between the private sector and states to capture markets, develop technologies, achieve dynamic competitive advantages, and reach new levels of competitiveness);
- A common regulatory framework (i.e., By creating a trilateral economic commission to plan what type of industries should be developed and where, how each stage will be reached, where the money will come from to reach that stage, and what regulations will be established);
- Dealing with worker mobility (i.e., Mexico should have insisted on the gradual and selective liberalization of migration. The governments are opening borders to goods and capital flows, while labor, Mexico's main export, is barred from entry);

- Harmonization of upward labor standards and workers' rights (i.e., not just labor legislation but also implementation of standards. A social charter is the best way of starting to minimize differences between productivity and wages, it does not guarantee it, but it is a start. In regard to workers, they should be allowed to organize and negotiate collectively at a continental level);
- An environmental and consumer protection charter (i.e., a code of conduct for labor and the environment such as the one proposed by the *Coalicion para la Justicia en las Maquiladoras* -- Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras -- a bi-national body made up of workers and social groups in the U.S. and Mexico); and
- A broad multi-purpose dispute-resolution mechanism (i.e., such a mechanism would provide sanctions for those who violate standards for labor, environment and consumer protection. Organized citizens and governmental bodies from each country should be able to use this mechanism to report violations and demand inspections, monitoring, control, and, if necessary, a ruling and the determination of a sanction).  
(Castaneda and Heredia 1992:675-683).

## CONCLUSIONS

The NAFTA process is unique in that it has spurred an unprecedented attention -- from various sectors of the Mexican and U.S. population -- in environmental issues beyond the border area. The arguments against it as a suitable and comprehensive trade pact were too compelling to be ignored by the negotiators, who have acknowledged the issues brought forth by active NGOs with their decision to include the parallel accords.

In this thesis, I have attempted to demonstrate that the NAFTA process has in fact been affected by the mobilization of environmental and other NGOs from both Mexico and the U.S., such transnational strategy has proven to be a viable route for the inclusion of environmental safeguards in NAFTA. However, a question remains about the viability of the these NGOs' transnational strategies after the pact is submitted to Congress and implemented.

Based on events which are directly and indirectly linked to NAFTA, the coordination and accomplishments of concerned NGOs is a sign that Congressional approval of NAFTA might become a difficult process if NGOs sustain their successful coalition-building strategy. The controversial nature of the pact in itself, Salinas extensive local media strategy on NAFTA, and the Mexican government's lobbying



strategy in the U.S. Congress, clearly reflect that NAFTA opposition groups have become a challenging block to NAFTA's commercial strategists.

It is only recently that the Salinas administration has decentralized environmental protection and planning strategies to the states and municipalities rather than relying in a sole central body, in this case Sedesol. Thus, municipalities have now more autonomy to develop land use strategies, environmental enforcement mechanisms, siting decisions, and other programs.

The advent of NAFTA represents an opportunity for both domestic and bilateral NGOs to go beyond the implications of trade and empower community groups to participate in their region's environmental policy decision-making and contribute in local and regional development projects resulting from NAFTA.

Steps necessary for an increasing and sustained role of NGOs include, but are not limited to, institution building, greater access to information technologies, environmental awareness educational programs, the promotion of community-based social action groups, and stronger and more coherent linkages among intra-regional groups.

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