

Article

The interconnections between environmental philanthropy and business: insights from the Southern African Nature Foundation

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Abstract

Analyses of environmental philanthropy tend to focus on non-profit organisations and the business sector as unrelated entities. However, the links between business and environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) through philanthropy can be ascribed to a number of factors ranging from the pursuit of commercial interests to the nature and status of NGOs. This article argues that environmental philanthropy, as a mode of giving for the advancement of an environmental cause, can more appropriately be understood by paying attention to the interconnections between NGOs and the business sector. This argument is supported by a case study of the Southern African Nature Foundation, which, from its inception in 1968 to its demise in 1995, had strong links with commerce and industry. The paper concludes that environmental philanthropy is underpinned by shared interests that are pursued through dense networks between philanthropists and environmental lobby groups.

Introduction

The prominence of environmental issues in the policy and public domains has not only led to the proliferation of environmental projects worldwide, but has also opened a platform on which many interest groups can participate in environmental matters. Indeed, individuals, groups, non-governmental organisations, the private sector, governments and institutions of different kinds all contribute towards the framing of environmental issues and debates. This involvement calls for a deeper understanding of how all these actors interact in pursuit of, or in opposition to, certain environmental ideals. Interactions between environmental non-governmental organisations

(NGOs) and their support base, namely, the business sector, have been particularly intense. The linkages between business and NGOs take various forms, one of which is philanthropy.

Involvement in environmental issues thus provides new avenues for exploring the links between business and philanthropy, and for stressing the importance of agency in forging those links. The connections between business and environmental philanthropy cannot be sufficiently understood by studying either the market or NGOs in isolation. These two have mutual influences and are interconnected through a dense network of actors operating at different levels: that is, environmental philanthropy cannot be sufficiently disconnected from the profit-making process that supports it. After all, funds that are made available for philanthropy largely originate from the accumulation of profit over time. In this sense, environmental philanthropy encompasses resources that individuals and companies donate for the preservation of nature and the promotion of activities related to nature conservation and the general health of the planet (Price 1994). Those resources range from cash to the donation of tracts of land for purposes of conservation.

There are a number of different perspectives on the growth of corporate philanthropy and the bases on which it is founded. Newell (2008) is of the view that philanthropy was instrumental in paving the way for neo-colonialism when the empire could no longer rely on coercion to secure legitimacy. In other words, as corporate philanthropy and state power were linked together, corporate philanthropy replaced the retreating empire and served as its remaining arm. From the vantage point of theories of corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate philanthropy emerged variously as: a response to the crisis of legitimacy created by neoliberalism (Bornstein 2003); an attempt to give capitalism a human face (Newell 2008); a way of maintaining existing social relations (Simmel and Jacobson 1965); a marketing strategy (Porter and Kramer 2002); and as a result of shifts in the philosophy of philanthropy (Clotfelter and Ehrlich 1999). In the environmental domain, the growth of corporate philanthropy is ascribed to, among other things, the pressure exerted on companies by environmental activists; the need for companies to develop corporate political strategy; environmental regulations; and the status of the fiscal market (Porter and Kramer 2002; Levy and Egan 2003). With regard to the last point, Bosso (2003) observed that the annual revenues for dominant NGOs in the United States doubled between 1996 and 2000, because there was a healthy fiscal market for environmental

philanthropy in that country in the second half of the 1990s.

Taken together, the rationales for corporate and environmental philanthropy point to the need for a multi-pronged approach to the study of the relationships between the business sector and environmental advocacy groups, and of how philanthropy flows from those relationships. As noted above, there are various viewpoints on the basis for, and nature of, the links between business and ENGOs. One view holds that the business sector prefers to fund mainstream NGOs for environmental research and policy reforms that are congenial to industrial capital (Brulle 2000; Ellison 2003). A counterview holds that donor support is mainly based on recipients' perceived expertise and needs – that there is no consistent favouritism of flagship environmental organisations as recipients of donor funds (Delfin and Tang 2007). While both viewpoints have some merit, they fail to acknowledge the mutual influences between donors and recipients. This article seeks to make a contribution towards the understanding of the symbiotic relationships between business and ENGOs. It argues that flagship status is not pre-given, and that the attainment of this status by ENGOs cannot be divorced from the nature of the environmental philanthropy on which they are founded or the socio-political milieus in which they operate. The article draws on the experiences of one of the oldest and flagship environmental NGOs in Southern Africa, the Southern African Nature Foundation (SANF). It concludes that the SANF provided the platform for linking business and environmental philanthropy under one of the most oppressive regimes of the twentieth century. Before focussing on the SANF, some general comments on environmental philanthropy are in order.

The business of environmental philanthropy

Whether in colonial or postcolonial settings, philanthropy clearly has both differentiated and spatialised agendas. Lambert and Lester (2004:323) observed that 'colonial philanthropists were those people who believed, often passionately, that imperialism was about something more principled than the pursuit of military glory, personal riches or power, and who acted upon that belief in an attempt to influence official policy in the metropole and in the colonies themselves'. According to these authors, colonial philanthropy provided an alternative colonial tradition, which opened avenues for guilty westerners to make a contribution to the developmental cause in the former colonies. This implies that generalisations about philanthropic endeavours should be treated with caution. Nonetheless, the

lack of a coherent framework guiding philanthropy makes it necessary to scrutinise the social utility of philanthropic institutions and organisations. Schramm (2006) observed that since philanthropic foundations in the United States are a product of democratic pluralism and the free-market economy, they serve as a mechanism for the reconstitution of wealth and as an institutional entrepreneur. In this context, philanthropy ‘is intended to apply wealth in ways that preserve democratic pluralism and a free-market economy, thereby promoting the “release of human possibilities” as intended by foundation donors’ (Schramm 2006:359-60).

With regard to environmental philanthropy, there are different views on why the business sector would want to donate funds towards an environmental cause. Critics of environmental philanthropy argue that donors are elites who provide funds for the creation of open spaces, wildlife reserves and wilderness for the enjoyment of the rich. There is thus a circle of elites between business and ENGOs which, in turn, protects the status quo in society, while also marginalising radical environmentalists (Dryzek 1996, Allen 1997, Brulle 2000, Dowie 2001). The idea of a circle of elites is in line with Domhoff’s (1990) formulation of the power elite and its allied components in which non-profit organisations are involved in the development and dissemination of political strategies and policies on the ground. The point here is that those environmentalists who call for radical changes that disrupt the interest of the business sector do not enjoy support from environmental philanthropic organisations or foundations. Delfin and Tang (2007) make use of a three dimensional elite theory which focuses on the composition, ideologies and impact of foundations to develop a critique of donors as elites. They argue that, inconsistent with pluralist and resource-dependency arguments, the pattern of environmental grant-making results from the donor’s perception of the expertise and needs of the recipients rather than as a collusion between elites in ENGOs and foundations. These two views differ on the nature and consequences of philanthropy but they both acknowledge the interests which drive philanthropy.

The business sector’s interest in environmental issues has a long pedigree. Of significance here is the role played by elites in promoting the linkage between business and ENGOs. For example, one of the most influential NGOs, the Club of Rome, has its origin in a meeting of individuals that was organised by the Italian industrial manager and affiliate of Fiat and Olivetti, Dr Aurelio Peccei, in 1968. The Club embarked on projects that sought to understand the interdependence of economic, political, natural and social

components of the world system (Meadows et al 1972). Some of its projects were sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation. Likewise, the connection between business elites and NGOs is nowhere more pronounced than in the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). According to Young (2002), the formative stages of GEF in the 1980s were closely associated with the activities of capitalists such as Michael Sweatman and influential US economist, Robert Repetto, who led the International Conservation Financing Program in 1987. Environmental NGOs supported such financial institutions mainly because they saw them as proving avenues for access to much needed financial resources.

It should be emphasised that the business sector has embraced strategic philanthropy as a way of pursuing social and economic goals simultaneously, and as a response to social pressure. They do so by active co-operation with environmental groups and institutions as opposed to simply an attempt to gain positive publicity. Corporate philanthropy is strategic in the sense that it seeks, among other things, to expand markets, build public image, forge relationships, cut costs, improve competitiveness and influence the development of national and global policies (Porter and Kramer 2002). It also serves as a vehicle for gaining public trust in the market while at the same time weakening the case for regulation. Newell (2008:1069) sees corporate social responsibility as ‘ultimately and inherently a product of the neoliberal political economy from which it emerged and which it aims to legitimate and advance, reproducing its modalities, technologies of governance and failings’.

The private sector uses donations as an entry point into the environment-related market, hence these donations constitute a central element of environmental philanthropy. The amount of these donations should be understood from two main angles. Firstly, companies determine the nature and amount of donations in support of their commercial interests. Such donations vary according to the size of companies, their marketing strategies and shifting perceptions regarding relative returns on investment. Secondly, NGOs do not have equal access to charity funds. This tends to be determined by the area of focus of the NGOs, quality of leadership, organisational capacity, and the like. Earth Action, for example, which emerged as a pioneering voice for environmental protection in 1990, collapsed in 1996 because ‘its leaders were unable to make the kinds of organisational compromises necessary to adapt to changing external conditions’ (Bosso 2003:399). A detailed discussion of the SANF sheds light on the complex

relationships among ENGOs, philanthropy and capital in southern Africa. The case of the SANF is used in this article to emphasize two important points: that there is a blurring of boundaries between environmental philanthropy and business, and that this process takes place through networks. As will become clear below, the SANF's main goal was to promote a rather narrow view of nature conservation rather than to pursue a broad environmental agenda; and the Foundation sponsored this vision within the perimeters of environmental philanthropy and corporate strategies.

SANF and the South African socio-political milieu

The Foundation was formed on April 14, 1968 by the late South African billionaire, Anton Rupert. Rupert has been described by the media, politicians and environmentalists as a true philanthropist who championed the cause of nature conservation in South Africa and the entire African continent (Dommissie and Esterhuysen 2005, Mbeki 2006, Isaacson 2006, Yeld 2006). The major functions of Rupert's SANF were: to identify high-priority conservation projects within a large-scale strategic framework; purchase land for conservation; carry out fund-raising and distribution of funds; and initiate education and training. Concerned that only one new national park, the Karoo National Park, had been developed in South Africa in 20 years (ie between 1964 and 1984), the Foundation set out to create national parks or to expand existing ones. All these functions were carried out with the central purpose of preserving the natural heritage of southern Africa, especially wildlife (SANF 1989).

To achieve these goals, the Foundation had to deal with two main challenges throughout its years of existence (1968-95). The first challenge was the socio-political environment under apartheid and its implications for nature conservation. The second challenge was to find ways of financing nature conservation projects in South Africa and its neighbouring countries. With regard to the first challenge, apartheid policies were underpinned by constructions of nature that did not only separate humans from non-humans, but that also arranged humans in a hierarchical order on the basis of race (Ramutsindela 2004). Moreover, understandings of the order of nature had direct implications for the racial ordering of South African society. Anker (2004) has argued that there is a link between ecological perspectives and the political goal of racial segregation in South Africa, in particular arguing that the theory of racial segregation as a 'natural order' was informed by that of evolution in ecology. For example, the botanist Bews

(1931:13) commented that nowhere is the comparison between plant ecology and human ecology more interesting than in South Africa ‘where we still have almost every possible stage of development of the human communities’.

The consequences of this and related views were that nature conservation projects such as the creation of national parks and nature reserves were established with little or no regard to the aspirations and interests of black people, who had been placed at the bottom of the evolutionary ladder. A strong body of work demonstrates that black people were removed from most areas currently designated as protected areas in South Africa (Carruthers 1995, Brooks 2000, 2005). Such removals form a strand in apartheid social engineering that was condemned by the international community as a crime against humanity. Racial segregation also meant that black people were not allowed to enjoy protected areas such as national parks like their white counterparts. Under these circumstances, the support for nature conservation came from the white minority. White support for nature conservation was not however automatic, not least because there were different views about how nature should be preserved or used. In particular, the two main white groups in the country, the English and the Afrikaners, were split along ideological lines. The existence of these camps meant that support for nature conservation projects by one camp could potentially jeopardise support from the other. Carruthers (1995) has pointed out that the name of the Afrikaner nationalist figure Paul Kruger was used for the Kruger National Park in order to gain support from the Afrikaner community, while the park itself was a rallying point for unity among different sections of the white community.

The point here is that socio-political conditions could not be ignored in advancing the cause of nature conservation, as they impinged upon the level of support from the white community. This is particularly relevant to nature conservation projects that relied on non-state funding. Sourcing funds from outside the state demanded a strategy that could successfully market nature conservation projects to potential donors. Since the SANF was founded by one of the leaders in commerce and industry, the Afrikaans-speaking business tycoon Anton Rupert, it was natural that its main target for fundraising would be the business sector. However, the business sector had to be convinced that supporting nature conservation was worth its while.

It is important to emphasise that the SANF needed funds to establish new national parks or to expand existing ones through the purchase of land, and for the translocation of wildlife. The SANF was concerned about the slow pace at which national parks were being created and the fact that only a small

percentage of the country's land mass was under conservation (approximately 3 per cent in 1985) (SANF 1985). For this reason, the SANF established the National Parks Trust Fund in 1985, a trust fund into which companies could make their cash donations. Donations could also be in the form of sponsorship of specific projects, bequests or matched giving. Bequests, in the form of money, shares, assurance policies and land, were exempt from estate duty and donations tax. 'Matched giving' meant that the SANF put up a sum of money for a specific project and the corporate sector was challenged to match it. In theory it was the need for funds for nature conservation, rather than the outright motive for profit-making, that brought philanthropists and the business sector together. This initial approach was in line with the existing national trend – at the time, commercial influences inside protected areas were not strong. For example, before the 1980s, the then National Parks Board (currently South African National Parks) had no clear policy on commercial activities in the country's protected areas. The National Parks Board used the turnover from national parks to augment the yearly state-in-aid grants for administration, rather than as profit. However, the creation of the National Trust Fund epitomised an important juncture at which Rupert's circle of friends in commerce and nature conservation came together, and from which a clearly articulated relationship between business and environmental philanthropy was to emerge.

Cultivating business support

Obviously, if you have an industrialised society, you will have waste products. And it's all good and well talking about wanting to protect our environment to ensure our survival, but if we can't make the grade in the economic sense then there's not going to be money for conservation. (Allan Heydorn in SANF 1989:9)

The above quotation by the Director of the SANF in 1989, Allan Heydorn, suggests that the Foundation sought to garner business support by demonstrating the links between business interests and nature conservation. Unlike other environmental NGOs, such as Earth First and bioregional movements, which condemned industrialisation and its consequent economic growth (see Sale 1985; Aberley 1999), the SANF promoted the view that South African companies should strive for economic growth but should do so without neglecting the wellbeing of the physical environmental in which they were located. This view is in line with theories of corporate philanthropy which hold that the private sector's involvement in environmental issues is informed primarily by profit rather than the negative impact that the sector

might have on the environment (Newell 2005).

The business-friendly approach adopted by the SANF was appreciated by large companies such as the National Beverage Services, Anglo American, de Beers and so on, not least because it neither threatened their commercial interests nor suggested any attempt to disrupt their operations. The approach taken was that economic growth was necessary for poverty alleviation, which would, in turn, ensure the wellbeing of the environment. In what amounts to a checking of the excesses of *laissez-faire* capitalism, the Foundation argued that the deterioration of the environment threatened the survival of the inhabitants on which the existence of companies depended. It directly equated the threat to human survival to the threat to the market, using the following words: ‘concern for the future of the life-sustaining natural resources of southern Africa is no more, or less, than the concern for the future of the subcontinent’s habitants and, therefore, corporate survival’ (SANF 1990:45). These sentiments were echoed by corporate members of the SANF such as the South African Breweries, which maintained that, ‘as a mass consumer oriented company, we rely on the increasing upliftment of consumers’ lifestyles in order to improve profits. An improved environment is essential for this to take place’ (SANF 1990: 50). By the same token, Gold Fields commented:

without gold, the quality of every South African’s life would have been poorer. At the same time, we cannot afford to utilise our resources at the cost of the environment ... By playing our part in eradicating poverty, unemployment and ignorance, we believe we can help to arrest the indiscriminate destruction of our environment. (SANF 1988:56)

These examples are referred to in order to highlight the point that the approach adopted by the SANF was embraced by big business. The links between the SANF and companies, and the manifestations of the links in various ways, appear to validate some of the claims made by elite theorists – namely that a circle of elites exists between NGOs and the business sector, and that the absence of a threat to capital accumulation is a necessary condition for the formation of such circles. Given that the SANF was not the only environmental NGO in the country, it is important to establish the reasons why it attracted most of the country’s major companies. The business sector was involved in the creation of the SANF, with 72 companies supporting the SANF in its first year of operation, 1968. The trustees of the SANF, who shaped the policies of the Foundation, were business people. In light of the debate on why private foundations support flagship

environmental NGOs, referred to above, probing the reasons why SANF was so attractive to the business sector could shed light on that debate.

The reasons why the SANF gained support from big business were, firstly, that its membership was restricted to companies only. On the surface, the restriction was based on the principle that opening membership to individuals would deny other environmental NGOs, which rely heavily on donations from individuals, their main source of revenue (Ramutsindela 2007). In reality, the restriction meant that the SANF had a monopoly of corporate membership over and above other environmental NGOs such as the Wildlife Society. The SANF became the main beneficiary of corporate social responsibility, a philosophy which it worked hard to stimulate.

Secondly, as the only local arm of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in the southern African region, the SANF had access to the financial resources at the disposal of WWF International. In addition, its links with WWF International also exposed it to the latest trends in environmental thinking. Thirdly, its Board of Trustees was made up of the best well-known and most influential business people in the country. Over the years, the chairpersons of the Board included people such as Gavin Relly (Chairperson of Anglo-American). Fourthly, the SANF successfully presented itself as *the* leading environmental NGO in the continent. This image was based on the SANF's expertise in nature conservation projects and fundraising, and its intimate relationship with the WWF. Companies found this presentation credible and treated it as such. The implication of the successful image was that SANF became the only avenue for companies wanting to get involved in nature conservation projects that had a national, regional and global reach. This view is succinctly stated by the Managing Director of Southern Life (a major insurance company), Neil Chapman, who maintained that his company was involved with the SANF because:

we believe the SANF is a world leader in identifying priorities, assembling support and, most important of all, in achieving major breakthroughs in both education of people, and acquisition of important areas of land in the form of reserves. (SANF 1989:45)

Fifthly, and most importantly, SANF marketed nature conservation as a business opportunity, the 'green boardroom', as the Foundation called it. The notion of the 'green boardroom' suggests that companies, as corporate members of the SANF, were to consider investing in nature conservation projects as a wise business strategy. The Foundation described its main goal for corporate sponsorship as follows:

at the top of the SANF's list for corporate sponsorship of conservation programmes is a hunt for a company to donate a nature reserve to the nation. All that's needed is a sponsor willing to give about R1m in return for which the foundation guarantees substantial, long term publicity benefits for the sponsor. (SANF 1988:30)

On these grounds, it could be argued that the SANF crafted a corporate political strategy and carefully blended it with market strategies and corporate social responsibility. This was done in the late 1980s when the struggle against apartheid was at its highest peak. There was thus no distinction between corporate philanthropy and market strategies. Philanthropy and business complemented each other.

Corporate sponsorship as two-way profit

Eco-responsibility is good for business in various ways, including developing a good image for consumers who are sensitive to environmental issues. Such sensitivity in the late 1980s was particularly important for companies that aimed to reach an overseas market, where the environmental and consumer lobby groups were strong. The SANF demonstrated an awareness of the existence of this market in Europe and North America by referring to Canada, where one person in every five was said to be actively involved in wildlife-related activities (Ramutsindela 2007). In the Foundation's business language, the bigger the number of people involved in nature conservation-related activities, the bigger the potential market. That market could of course be best accessed through the SANF, because of its extensive links with environmental NGOs that operate under the umbrella of WWF international. For example, the SANF's bias towards wildlife meant that corporate members could improve their branding through wildlife. Wildlife branding was used by companies such as Price Forbes Federale Volkskas Group (insurance brokers), Gold Fields (mining), and Cadbury (chocolate). Mazda had established its own Wildlife Fund but decided to support the SANF projects in order to promote its brand more widely. According to the Marketing Director of Mazda in 1990, Sean Bownes, the 'green' brand would make Mazda stand out in a competitive market place (SANF 1990). (The question of whether or not it actually did stand out requires further research).

Other companies adopted an environmentally friendly posture. For example, Philips advertised one of its battery products in the pages of the SANF publications as 'the New Philips Alkaline' which it described in the following words:

Simply put, there is no other battery in South Africa like it. It offers more constant power and a longer life than any comparable alkaline battery available here (guaranteed to exceed IEC international standards). It is the only battery with metal jacket, which explains why it's the only one guaranteed leakproof. And it has an expiry date stamped on the bottom. So you can check its freshness before you buy. But, if the Philips Green Alkaline offers a good deal more, it also offers a good deal less; the lowest percentage of mercury of any alkaline battery, and absolutely no cadmium. The Green Alkaline is the only battery in this country to be virtually free of both these dangerous environmental pollutants. (SANF 1990:57)

Whereas this example of a battery demonstrates environmental concerns beyond narrow interests in protected areas, the SANF's corporate political strategy was built around the more traditional flora and fauna. For example, the campaign to save the proteas in the Cape was linked to a strategy to commercialise the flowers. The Foundation had control over a 25 hectare area, Protea Heights, bequeathed to it by the Batchelor family and from which it generated around R150,000 from the sale of flowers in the 1980s (SANF 1988). The SANF President, Anton Rupert, underlined the commercial value of the proteas by suggesting that 'Israel earned more foreign exchange annually from sales of one flower species, which it had originally obtained from [South Africa], than [South Africa's] entire flower industry earned' (SANF 1988:14). The message here was that there was a big international flower market that South African business should harness by involving themselves in nature conservation, especially the protection of the proteas. In the Foundation's view, the proteas could be protected by commercial cultivation of superior quality flowers for the market. It hoped that those cultivated flowers would not only create a market demand, but would – most importantly – put the pickers of wild-growing flowers out of business, thereby leaving naturally grown flowers safe. In this sense, the commercial cultivation of proteas was a two-pronged strategy which simultaneously targeted the market and conservation.

In the same way, the Distillers group was also attracted to the nature-based market and committed itself to a five-yearly sponsorship of the Fleur du Cap (Flowers of the Cape) exhibition. The first exhibition attracted 70,000 visitors in 1983 and 'raised R250 000 for the Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden endangered plant laboratories, and for the purchase of the 6 000ha Oorlogskloof fynbos reserve' (SANF 1989:41). The Distillers used the exhibition to promote the sale of wine, emphasising the point that wine and

the fynbos are both integral parts of life in the Cape.

In the last years of its existence, especially between 1988 and 1993, the SANF emphasised the social dimension in its marketing strategy. It projected itself as a foundation that was not only concerned with nature conservation, but which had also prioritised ‘addressing the needs of the people of southern Africa along with those of wildlife – conservation for, and of people’ (SANF 1990:34). The reasons for this change in the marketing strategy are threefold. Firstly, with the intensity of the struggle against apartheid and with signs of the end of apartheid rule on the horizon, the Foundation wanted to position itself favourably to the new political dispensation. In practice, this meant showing interest in social issues such as poverty, as these were to be critical for future political agendas and action (SANF 1990, 1991). In the SANF’s view, social issues were a vehicle through which support for conservation from historically disadvantaged people could be gained. Secondly, the emphasis on the needs of the people by the Foundation was part of a global trend in nature conservation. In the early 1990s the Foundation translated the global vision of the publication *Caring for the Earth* into the South African context (Yeld 1993). It saw the changing political situation in South Africa as offering the opportunity to test the principles for sustainable living set out in this document, which included improving the quality of life and providing a framework for integrating development and conservation. A third reason why the SANF broadened its scope of responsibility was in order to intensify its campaign for corporate sponsorship. Companies interested in social development could invest in nature conservation projects precisely because these projects also aimed at poverty alleviation. These changes in the strategies of the SANF are further evidence that the socio-political milieu inevitably impacts on the survival and profile of ENGOs.

Conclusion

In considering the nature of environmental philanthropy, the links between the SANF and business are instructive. In contrast to the view that flagship environmental NGOs attract funding only because of their expertise, the case of the SANF reveals that the boundaries between environmental NGOs and business are blurred and that there are a network of mutual influences between the two. The SANF did not emerge as a leading environmental NGO on its own. The business sector was, from the onset, its pillar of strength, and it gained advantage over other NGOs by monopolising corporate

membership. This observation does not invalidate the role played by the leadership in the growth of the Foundation. Rather, it challenges the tendency to separate environmental NGOs from the business sector in the analysis of environmental philanthropy. This article supports the view that environmental philanthropy is underpinned by business interests (Bansal and Roth 2000) which are expressed as social responsibility (Rumney 2007; Newell 2008). In other words, investment in nature conservation forms part of business strategy, by which companies seek to enhance their image and to create or expand markets. The case of SANF has also shown that the strategy depends on the nature of the links between business and environmental NGOs. The board of trustees of the SANF, the National Parks Trust Fund and corporate membership were crucial for maintaining a circle of the elites, as a compositional theory of the elite would suggest (Roelofs 2003). In summary, environmental philanthropy offers opportunities for understanding the relationships between business and environmental lobby groups, and the conditions under which those relationships are developed. Those relationships are, in turn, important for understanding various aspects of environmental philanthropy and the implications of these aspects for philanthropy in a globalized neoliberal environment.

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