

Parks, Politics and Participation

An evaluation of the parks planning policy process in Alberta, Canada



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Master thesis Social and Political Sciences of the Environment

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***" Politics is the art of preventing people from taking part in affairs
which properly concern them"***

(Paul Valery, 1871-1945)

Foreword

As an outdoor sports enthusiast and environmental policy sciences student I believe that questions of nature conservation and protection are of significant importance for our wellbeing. By living in urban landscapes we seem to lose our connection to the natural world. Though in our leisure time it is often a natural area we favor as a destination to relax. The field of tension between nature and development is increasing and policies that take care of both are increasingly important. In my search for an internship in the field of nature conservation policy, I soon found out about a report presented by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society on the state of Alberta's parks. Coming from a small, densely populated country, I wrongly presumed Canada and its abundance of wilderness would not have pressing issues around protected areas. The report concluded otherwise and convinced me that this was where I wanted to go and do my research. Combined with my interest in politics, Alberta would provide an interesting case to learn about modes of governance and to see how different countries work on similar issues. How does a Western country with gigantic land areas deal with nature conservation issues in a complex world? From this perspective I started this thesis; the result lies in front of you.

This research would never have been possible without the help of several people. I would very much like to thank the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Edmonton, for the opportunity I was given to live and work in Canada and their continues support in the research process. In this respect, I want to specifically mention George Newton, who was always supportive and eager to help, and unintentionally became my mentor and coach. Last but not least, I would like to thank Pieter Leroy, my supervisor, who has always been very supportive of my ambitious plans to go abroad.

For me this thesis has learned me a lot about the reality of politics and the disappointing place our beautiful natural world takes on the list of priorities. At the start of this research, I could not have guessed the outcomes, which have changed my view of Canada's parks forever. Although the results are worrying, the process of getting there was highly dynamic and it has given me inspiration to continue and eventually complete this thesis.

Paul Janssen

Nijmegen, March 23, 2009

Table of Content

Foreword	I
Table of Content	II
Summary	V
List of Figures	VII
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Alberta Parks: Managing Interests	1
1.2 Contextual Changes: Shifts in Governance	1
1.3 Research Goal and Questions	3
1.4 Methodology	6
1.5 Readers Guide	7
2 Theoretical Framework	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Shifts in Governance: Changing Contexts	10
2.2.1 The multi-world	10
2.2.2 Shifts in nature conservation policy making	13
2.3 Policy Analysis	14
2.3.1 The policy cycle	14
2.3.2 Agenda setting	16
2.3.3 Concepts and tools for analyzing the policy arena: the network approach	18
2.4 Interactive Policy Making and Participatory Processes	24
2.4.1 Why use an interactive policy process?	24
2.4.2 Experiences with interactive policy making in nature conservation issues	27
2.4.3 Criteria for an interactive policy process	28
2.4.4 Dilemmas in interactive policy processes	31
3 Canada's Parks Policy History	35
3.1 Introduction	35
3.2 History of the Canadian National Park System	35
3.2.1 The recreation era	35
3.2.2 Changing society: changing parks policy	37
3.2.3 Parks as a political issue	37
3.3 Trends in National Park Policy	39
3.3.1 Trends explained	39
3.3.2 Effects of trends	42
3.4 Linking levels: Alberta and the Federal Government	43
3.4 Conclusions	44

4 Alberta: History of the Provincial Parks System	45
4.1 Introduction	45
4.2 Alberta: Province of Extremes	45
4.3 History of Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas: the Policy Domain Context	48
4.4 Endangered Spaces Campaign 1989	50
4.5 Special Places 2000: a Decade of Changes, Shaping the Future?	51
4.5.1 Draft version of 1992	52
4.5.2 Consultation process and the final 1995 policy	54
4.5.3 Political pressure: reframing the policy	55
4.5.4 1995: special places final version	56
4.5.5 Complicated policy: special places failure	58
4.6 Policy Gap 2001-2006	59
4.7 A Century of Changes: Conclusions	63
 5 Change in Alberta: The Parks Planning Framework	 64
5.1 Introduction	64
5.2 Draft Parks Planning Framework Outline	64
5.3 Comparing Policy: Alberta and the Federal Level	68
5.4 Conclusions	72
 6 Interactive Policy Making: Plan for Parks Process	 73
6.1 Introduction	73
6.2 Network Dimension I: Actors	73
6.3 Network Dimension II: Discourses	75
6.4 Network Dimension III: Power and Resources	78
6.5 Evaluating the design of the Parks Planning Framework Consultation Process	84
6.5.1 Methods of participation	84
6.5.2 Actor groups opinions on the process : a participant evaluation	85
6.5.3 Interactive policy making: concerns about the PPF consultation process	87
6.6 Parks Planning Framework Process: Conclusions	91
 7 Conclusions and Reflection	 92
7.1 Introduction	92
7.2 Empiric conclusions	92
7.2.1 Contextual and content changes and trends in parks policy	93
7.2.2 Analyzing the policy arena	94
7.2.3 Evaluating the interactive policy process	94
7.2.4 Primary research question	95
7.3 Theoretical Conclusions	96
7.4 Recommendations	97
7.5 Reflection	98
7.5.1 Reflection on the process	98
7.5.2 Reflection on my experiences	99

References List	100
Appendixes	111
I: Interview Guides	111
II: Map: Alberta's Protected Areas Network	118

Summary

Alberta's parks play an important role in the wellbeing of the residents in the Province. They provide protection for vulnerable natural features, clean air and water on the one hand, and a place for all sorts of recreation on the other. Over the past decades however, this equilibrium is shifting. Increasing wealth and population growth means more people use increasingly higher impact forms of recreation, which present a potential threat to the parks. Without proper policies, legislation and management, parks might lose the exact reason they exist: their special and vulnerable natural values and richness. The government of Alberta acknowledged this problem and initiated an interactive process of creating a new guiding policy for the next ten years, in which the previous issues should be dealt with. In other words, the content of this policy and the outcomes of the interactive policy process are crucial for the subsistence and the quality of protected areas in Alberta. This research analyzes the policy and the policy process in order to understand the outcomes and to elaborate whether or not this process is likely to contribute to solving the problems above.

To do so, three theoretic insights are selected in chapter two. First, the policy process context and the developments therein are important to understand, using multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level tools, to do so. Second, policy theory and the network approach are used to describe and analyze the current parks planning framework policy process and its content. Third, theories of interactive policy making and designing interactive processes are applied to build an evaluative framework. These three perspectives are then combined to analyze the Alberta case, using the following lead question: *How can the Alberta Parks Planning Policy and interactive policy process be explained in the context of multi-level, multi-sector and multi-actor governance?* The case is then divided in three parts, similar to the three-way distinction in theoretic insights.

In chapters three and four an extensive analysis of the historic policy context is made. Alberta has a long and not always smooth history of parks and protected areas. Several National Parks, occupying large areas of Alberta's territory, remain under federal jurisdiction which Albertans perceive as land taken away from the province. The frontier, laissez-faire tradition present in Western Canada, has negative consequences for the relation between the Federal and the Provincial level. Nature conservation and natural resources, two sectors that put their mark on land use in the province, especially cause problems in the multi-level relation. When zoomed in on parks and protected areas policy within Alberta, some interesting insights come forward. There is a long tradition of parks planning using some forms of interactive policy making; however these processes seem to fail more often than to succeed. This is little surprising when considering the socio-political and economic context. Alberta is rich in farmland and natural resources, primarily oil and gas. These two sectors form the backbone of the economy. The conservative party heavily supports these sectors and the laissez-faire tradition popular in this part of Canada. It is thus little surprising that the conservatives hold an overwhelming majority in the Legislative Assembly for the past decades. These factors make that Alberta's environmental and protected areas policies are little progressive and interactive processes often fail, since the government has already made its plans,

using the interactive forum rather as a way to legitimize the policy. With this legacy and context, a new interactive process was started.

When analyzing the new policy document in chapter five, it seems as if not much has changed. The prevailing tone is to keep options open and to make parks accessible for every user. New protected areas, necessary to complete the ecological network, are absent. This is little surprising given the context, but when compared to the National Parks policies some remarkable discrepancies come forward. The national park policy is clear in its guidelines and priorities and always puts protection and ecological integrity first. The prohibition of natural resource development, the clear legislation and management plans and the better funding on the Federal level are characteristic.

In the final chapter, the analysis of the process is made, using three dimensions from the network approach; actors, discourses and resources. These dimensions help to understand the relations in the policy arena and the developments in the interactive process. Two important outcomes are the power and resource imbalance between the actors, and the deep rooted mistrust among them. The second part of this chapter applies the evaluative framework on the Alberta process and concludes that it hardly manages to meet a single criterion. The lack of transparency and openness, the power imbalance between the participants, the limited time allocation, unclear status and lack of commitment, make this process ill-designed and destined to fail. Also, the issue itself, parks and protected areas, is highly politicized due to its historic context and therefore problematic to use in an interactive setting.

The conclusion of this research is that the value of the Alberta interactive planning policy process is doubtful. The network in which actors negotiate, cannot be labeled as an actual network, due to the large imbalance of power and the general mistrust among its participants. Organizing an interactive process with these factors present and within the political context of Alberta is highly challenging and almost impossible. At least a proper time allocation is needed for actors to build trust and agreements and commitments from higher levels to the outcomes are necessary to partially solve the power imbalance. This is very unlikely to happen in the current political and socio-economic context, since the powerful actors have much to lose. Until this changes, either from within government or by intervention from higher levels, interactive policy processes around nature conservation are of little value and the future of protected areas in Alberta is unclear at best.

List of Figures

Figures:

Figure 1: Schematic overview of research division	4
Figure 2: Research Model	6
Figure 3: Multi actor policy making	11
Figure 4: Multi sector issues in nature conservation	12
Figure 5: The Multi level connection	12
Figure 6: The Policy Cycle	14
Figure 7: Three dimensions in the network approach	19
Figure 8: Belief System	20
Figure 9: Resources and power distribution graphic	21
Figure 10: The participation ladder	30
Figure 11: Canada's National Parks System	36
Figure 12: Nature Conservation shifts over time	39
Figure 13: Alberta	45
Figure 14: Alberta's GDP 1995-2005	46
Figure 15: House price index	47
Figure 16: Election results since 1905	48
Figure 17: Spectrum of sites classification	54
Figure 18: Special places nomination process	58
Figure 19: Budget of the Alberta Parks Division over the past two decades adjusted for inflation	60
Figure 20: Alberta's Parks and Protected Areas	65
Figure 21: Number of different protected area types	68
Figure 22: Budget in CAD and staff in FTE per km ² and per site	71
Figure 23: Actor groups involved in the planning process	74
Figure 24: Concentration of power and resources per actor	81
Figure 25: Concentration of power and resources per coalition	82

Tables:

Table 1: Constructing an Environmental Issue	17
Table 2: Characteristics of modes of governance	23
Table 3: Arguments for Citizen Participation	26
Table 4: Criteria for a Policy Issue	29
Table 5: Criteria for an interactive policy process	31
Table 6: Dilemmas in an interactive policy process	32
Table 7: Policy trends and effects on National Parks	42
Table 8: Parks Planning Framework guiding principles groups	66
Table 9: Provincial and Federal Parks Policies Compared	69
Table 10: Discourses among actor groups	76
Table 11: Stakeholder group opinions on the consultation process	86
Table 12: Scores of the Parks Planning Framework Process on the Criteria for meaningful consultation	88

Boxes:

Box 1: The International Connection: Rocky Mountain World Heritage Site	41
Box 2: Consequences of Economic Booms	47
Box 3: Political Context: Elections, Influence and Access	48
Box 4: Resource Situation Compared: Parks Canada and Alberta Parks	71
Box 5: Redrafted Parks Planning Framework: what has changed?	90

1 Introduction

1.1 Alberta Parks: managing interests

Every year over eight million visitors spend their holidays and weekends in Alberta's Parks. They enjoy outdoor recreation in a broad range of activities: from hiking, horse riding, fishing or hunting to just camping out with the family (ACD, 2005). But they all seem bound by one thing: enjoying the overwhelming beauty of Alberta's nature. Not surprisingly, the protection of these natural areas plays an important role in the history of the Province, as for example the first Parks were established as long as hundred-twenty years ago. Furthermore Canadians rank nature as highly important for their quality of life, as a recent study states; "Canada's natural capital, which is preserved in protected areas is a vital component of Canada's social, economic and environmental well-being and has a direct link to the health of the Canadians" (Wilke, 2006). Nature adds enjoyment to peoples lives, as it provides a place to relax and to recreate, and to spend the weekend or vacation. Apart from the 'well-being' and 'intrinsic value'-argument, nature and especially parks, provide opportunities for economic development. Nature-based recreation is big business nowadays and many people make a living out of it. The number of employees in primary recreation has increased with 30,1 percent to 21,534 (figure for 2001) in Alberta within the last decade (ARPA, 2006). Last, the northern parts of Alberta are to a large extent covered with boreal forest. Next to the Amazonian rainforest these play a very important role in the world's carbon cycle and are of vital importance for the future of the entire planet (Bonan et al., 1992). So, nature and parks have a certain value to society in a broad sense and are thus important to protect.

This protection, used to be shaped as reserve like protected areas, in which flora and fauna would be protected from human abolishing. A strict distinction between the areas used for recreation and nature conservation was the common perception in protected areas policy. Throughout the years this conservation discourse has shifted towards a more network of protected areas approach in which nature conservation areas should be connected in order to achieve a healthy and flourishing ecosystem. In the meantime however the above trends of increasing recreation, spending more leisure time outdoors using higher impact tools, puts the conservation of nature under pressure. A dilemma formed gradually: on the one hand increased protected land area was needed to form a network of protected nature, while on the other hand an increasing number of people practice increasingly higher-impact forms of recreation in a larger part of the parks network. CPAWS report 'The state of Alberta's parks and protected areas' (Reeves & Walsh, 2007) reveals some of the urgent problems with parks in Alberta. Among others, it concludes that "*The state of the Provincial Parks and Protected Areas network in Alberta is alarming and immediate action is needed to turn the tide*". Over the last decades the deterioration of these protected areas went slowly but steadily. According to the report, this has several reasons: (1) lack of funding, (2) complex legislation leaving room for other activities to get priority (primarily resource development and high impact recreation) and (3) the (small) size of natural areas. And with climate change being another outside looming threat, proper government policies are needed to guarantee a healthy state of these parks in the near future and conserve the natural beauty for the generations to come (Suffling & Scott, 2001). The government of Alberta recognized some of the problems and decided

that a new long-term policy for parks and protected areas was needed. This had to happen in the fall of 2008, with the input of many interest groups involved in parks issues.

1.2 contextual changes: shifts in governance

Not only the issues of nature conservation have changed over the last decades, the policy making context also saw some significant and influential shifts. These largely take place at the macro level and can be identified as long term trends in governing or administration. In the old world, Westphalian state model, the government was the central and only steering actor in policy making (Krasner, 2001). It was said to have absolute control over its territory and resources and was commonly perceived to act in best interest of its inhabitants. Policy making and politics took place in a central arena, where elected politicians made decisions. This model, however changed throughout the twentieth century and four important shifts in governance took place: (1) from single actor to multi-actor, (2) from single sector to multi-sector, (3) from single level to multi-level and (4) from classical policy making to interactive policy making.

The first shift refers to the increasing number and differentiation of actors involved in policy making nowadays. The image of the state as the single actor with sufficient steering capacity to solve problems has faded under pressure of an increasing inability to handle increasingly complex issues (Gualini, 2006; Pierre & Peters, 2000; Arts & van Tatenhove, 2006). Actors outside the traditional political arena started to organize themselves in order to influence the policy process and to have their interests represented (which of course are not necessarily in the best interest of the environment). NGO's, local interest groups, commercial lobbyists, etc., all claimed a seat at the table of policy making, thus shifting the decision-making process from a single actor, closed door process, to a more inclusive multi-actor world.

The second shift points at the internal changes in government. The issue of nature conservation and parks policy making used to be an almost exclusive part of a single ministry. Due to increasing overlap with other policy fields, however, this position changed. Nature has multiple values and functions (natural resources, health, recreation, agricultural potential, etc.) represented by multiple sectors in government. Since these are increasingly incompatible, the struggle over which department has the mandate to decide over nature conservation issues has intensified (Leroy & Arts, 2006; O'Neill 2001). Except from a societal power struggle (multi-actor) there is also the internal governmental power struggle (multi-sector), which of course is far from unique to nature conservation.

Third, there is an ongoing shift from single level to multi-level. The model of the Westphalian state, in which the sovereign state or national level was assumingly the only significant level of policy making, is increasingly put to the test. Problems, especially in environmental issues, are increasingly complex and transboundary and the state lacks the ability to solve them (Fairbrass & Jordan, 2004; Knill & Liefferink, 2007). Also, effects of problems might be visible in one country, while another is responsible for its causes. The international level thus becomes increasingly important in dealing with these issues. Examples can be found in the Kyoto protocol to fight climate change or the Montreal conference to save the ozone layer. On the other side, though, the nation state seems to lose power to the lower levels as well. As stated under point 1, people are

increasingly vocal and demand influence on the policy content on their own (backyard) level, therewith taking power from the higher levels.

The fourth and last shift basically comes forth from the previous three. The classical political model of debate among chosen representatives in a central policy making arena has faded. The increasing complexity of issues, differentiated and more outspoken interests and the lack of trust in traditional government has lead to the search for new forms of administrating. Interactive policy making, in which interested actors can take part in policy making at certain levels and under certain preconditions is a possible answer. Inviting more actors in the policy process increases the knowledge, creativity and legitimacy of measures. This new form of policy making is no longer isolated, but open and transparent in order to improve the relationship between citizens and political elite.

Dilemma of nature conservation policy: participation

The above shifts bring along an important dilemma in natural resource management, which we are dealing with in the case of parks policy: On the one side there are multiple stakeholders (public) and multiple sectors (within government) with multiple interests that tend not to be compatible. Also, other higher and lower policymaking levels influence the direction of new Provincial policy. To legitimize new policy and to prevent problems with its implementation and enforcement, the administration has to take these interests into account in the decision making process and uses interactive policy making to do so. On the other side, however, there is the looming 'tragedy of the commons'. Nature is a vulnerable asset and needs to be protected for future generations by effective policy and legislation, usually by prohibiting certain high-impact, non-compatible activities. By allowing multiple stakeholders to join in policymaking, the risk of ending with a 'lowest common denominator' policy, that is not in the best interest of protecting nature, is substantial. Hence the quest for the right balance between legitimacy and adequate protection; will an interactive policy process contribute to better parks policy?

1.3 Research goal and questions

Since the end of the previous parks policy episode, the 'Special Places Program' in 2001, Alberta has been struggling with the current disintegrated management policy for parks and in 2007 finally decided a new Park Planning Framework is needed to overcome problems with different stakeholder's interests. The Parks Planning Framework is meant to guide future policy decisions on Alberta's protected areas over the next ten years. Stakeholders from different fields of interest are currently requested to give their opinions on the plan. Policy development cannot simply be regarded as a provincial issue here and now, but has to be analyzed within a broader frame. Therefore the creation process of this framework document is a perfect example of the multi-level, multi-sector and multi-actor developments outlined in the previous section and set within a historic context. The question is to what extent the aforementioned issues influence the newly proposed policy and, connected to that, how valuable they are for making adequate nature conservation policy?

The research consists of three parts, that ensue from the above mentioned developments. The first part concentrates on the contextual developments in nature conservation policy in both Canada

and Alberta. These basically shape the scene in which the process takes place. Once this context is clear it is possible to zoom in and analyze the actual subject: the new Alberta parks policy process. Third, within this process, interactive policy making plays a significant role and this research wants to elaborate whether or not this form of policy making contributes to a valuable parks policy.

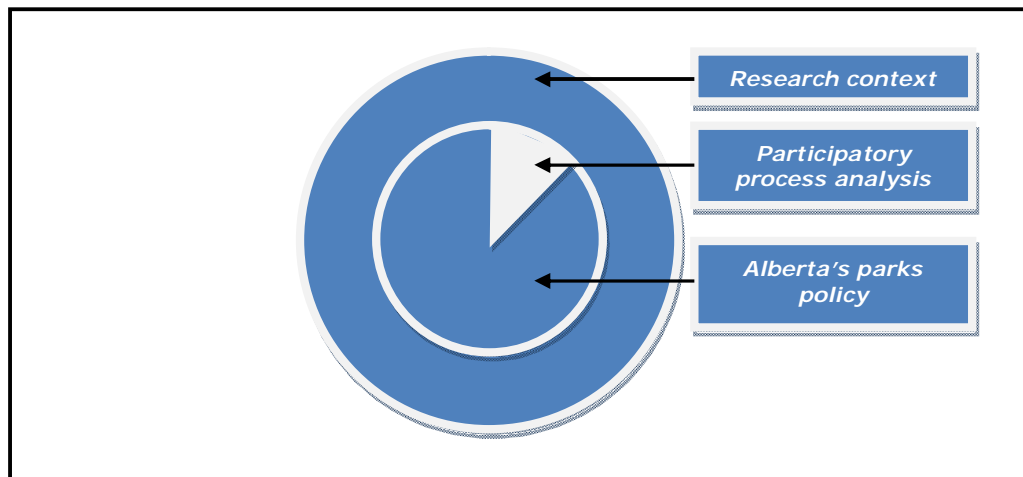


Figure 1: Schematic overview of research division

From the above sketched perspectives the combined goal of this research is:

To contribute to a better understanding of the nature conservation planning of Alberta's Protected Areas, through analyzing the current interactive process of creating a new Provincial parks planning framework and the context in which this takes place.

Deducted from this research goal, the primary research question is:

How can the Alberta Parks Planning Policy and interactive policy process be explained in the context of multi-level, multi-sector and multi-actor governance?

To be able to answer this question, several sub questions need to be addressed, using the three-way distinction (macro contextual factors, parks policy content and the policy process) that was initiated earlier. The first sub question deals with the historic context in nature conservation and parks policy making:

1. *What were the most important trends in Canadian parks planning over the past decades at both the Federal and Provincial level?*

When analyzing policy trends there are two important sides of the medal to be examined: the discursive and the implementation side. The former addresses issues of the 'vision' and thinking about nature conservation and recreation, and the relation and priorities these have in policy. The latter addresses the actual implementation on ground level. The allocation of financial and human resources and the priorities set by announcements and actions of the minister(s) in charge. This results in three extra questions:

- *Is there convergence or rather discrepancy between the Federal and the Provincial level?*
- *How can this be explained and what are the consequences?*
- *What is the influence of the international level on nature conservation in Canada?*

The second question zooms in on the Alberta context and tries to elaborate what has changed between the previous and current parks policies.

II. What has changed between previous and the current parks planning policies in Alberta?

This question still deals with context, but already at a much more detailed level: Alberta. Incidents in the recent past shape today's policy arena and are crucially important in understanding relationships between actors in the current process. The third question concentrates on the current policy process:

III. What stakeholders are involved and how are the interactions among actors shaped in the policy process?

This question again deserves a subdivision that gives more information on the relationships in the policy arena, by addressing the following issues:

- *How do stakeholders experience and explain the changes in policy over time?*
- *Do they see their input reflected in the new Parks Planning Framework?*

Once it is clear *how* the process and document are put together and how this fits in a historic context, the last part of the research can start. This part evaluates the process by using several criteria from interactive policy making theory and compares these to the Alberta situation. The main question here is:

IV. How are the tools of interactive policy making used in Alberta parks planning policy and do they contribute to a better process and result?

To be able to answer this question, again a subdivision is useful:

- *What are the opinions of the participating actors on the process?*
- *What are the results of the process?*

These are the research questions, applicable to the case at hand. As already outlined in the introduction, this should be placed within the broader scientific debate on interactive policy issues and shifts in environmental governance. The next paragraph addresses the research strategy and methodology for answering the research questions.

1.4 Methodology

To be able to answer the questions, the development of Alberta's new parks planning policy will be examined from three different perspectives: (1) the macro-contextual developments of governance, (2) the analysis of policy making around parks and (3) the evaluation of the interactive policy process. In combination, these insights help to understand the current policy process and its outcomes. The research process has been schematically visualized in figure 2 and is further elaborated below.

The development of the Parks Planning Framework is an ongoing process and this research is partially an ex ante evaluation. Nevertheless it is possible to evaluate the process by using criteria from literature and experience in similar studies. Predictions about the effects of the policy process are limited to the extent that it is impossible to know the exact impact of the policy content on the Parks in Alberta. After all, a policy is as good as it's implementation. However, weak policy usually seems to lead to weak implementation. Also, the quality of the policy process influences the quality of the actual policy document and implementation phase. Problems in the initial stages of policy making might thus lead to problems in implementation.

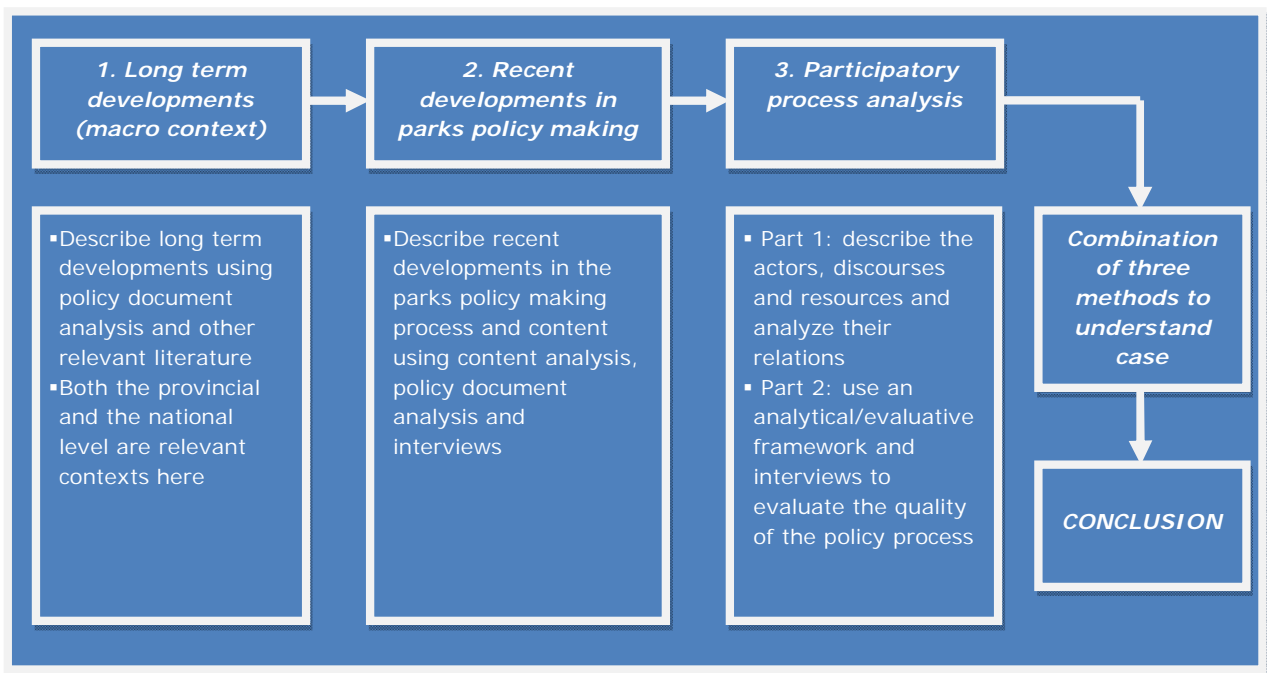


Figure 2: Research Model

The three parts of the research visualized in figure two each require their own methods to complete. The first part in chapter 3 and 4 (the long term, macro context) is a reconstruction of the past. The most suitable way to do this is through both historic policy document analysis and a literature study. Previous research can be a good starting point and is used here as well. The second part of the research, chapter 5, consists of the more recent developments in the parks policy field. Here it is useful to apply similar methods as in the first stage, however the emphasis lies more on the content analysis and less on the literature. Next to written sources, interviews are used to compare the written information with firsthand knowledge and vice versa. This so-called triangulation improves the reliability of the analysis. The third and last stage consist of the analysis of the current and ongoing process in chapter 6. This part is divided in two distinctive subjects: (1)

the analysis of the participatory process itself in which the actors and their interrelations take center stage, and (2) the evaluation of the interactive part of the policy process. The first subject requires a careful study of the current policy document and tools to analyze the process. Interviews and document study are most suitable here. Because the process is ongoing, the researcher could also gather first hand empirical information by attending meetings and briefings. The second subject uses an evaluative set of criteria derived from literature and previous participatory process studies. The criteria will then be applied to the ongoing process. The use of interviews with stakeholders adds information, next to a limited document analysis and first hand empirical information.

As outlined, qualitative interviewing plays an important role in this research. Among others it should give more insight in stakeholder's discourses and perceptions on the way parks are or should be managed and on their opinions on the policy process. As the relatively short time frame and the huge number of actors involved in the process makes it impossible to talk to every single one of the stakeholders, stakeholder groups have to be selected. They are identified on the basis of what interests in society a group represents. The most important and influential actors from each group are approached for interviewing. Although this is a relatively small sample size of about 10-15 respondents, it does not necessarily influence the validity and quality of the analysis (Ananda and Herath, 2003; Martin et al., 2000). The information of the interviews is cross referenced with written sources to prevent irregularities and mainly serve as an additional source of information that is not commonly available through policy documents and reports. A relatively minor role is played by quantitative methods. They are used to make an inventory of the allocated resources for parks, in order to analyze whether and to what extent the written policy is actually being implemented.

1.5 Readers Guide

This thesis contains seven chapters, of which chapters three to six contain the actual empirical research. This chapter introduced the subject and addressed the research questions and a methodological account. In the second chapter a comprehensive outline of the theory is given to build a theoretic framework, used for the analysis of the empiric part. Chapters three and four elaborate the historic context of the parks planning policy process at two different levels. Three deals with the developments at the Federal level, while four will zoom in on the provincial level. The provincial analysis in chapter four also points out the most significant socio-economic and political development contexts. In chapter five the research arrives at the actual case study of the current Alberta parks planning policy document. It will outline the document and place the newly proposed framework in perspective, by comparing it to the Federal parks policies. This leads to the process analysis of chapter six which consists of two distinctive parts: in the first the policy arena and the actors and interactions therein are analyzed, while the second part is an evaluation of the interactive part of the policy process. Finally the seventh and last chapter draws conclusions and answers the research questions outlined in section 1.3. Last, it reviews the research process and identifies further research opportunities within the field of Alberta's parks policies and the broader field of interactive policy making.

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

To be able to make a thorough analysis of the developments in Alberta's nature conservation policy it is important to select the right tools and concepts. This chapter elaborates the different theoretic considerations that form the analysis framework. There are primarily three important theoretical points of view that will be used to construct the framework. First, some insights in the shifts in governance in nature conservation will be elaborated below. This provides concepts to study long term changes in (environmental) policy and is therefore perfectly suited to describe the contexts of the of the actual subject in chapter 3 and 4. The second approach is what I call the 'policy analysis framework', in which I combine multiple insights from policy analysis theorists and scientists like Van de Graaf and Hoppe (1992), Dunn (1994), Hannigan (2006), Parsons (1995) and Kingdon (1995), with the tools from the network approach (Adam and Kriesi, 2007; Kickert et al., 1997). These will provide the necessary tools for an in-depth analysis of Alberta's nature conservation policies and process. Third, concepts to elaborate and evaluate interactive policy processes are needed in addition to the policy analysis framework. In the work of Arnstein (1969), Pröpper & Steenbeek (2001), Irvin & Stansbury (2004), OECD (2001), Dorcey & McDaniels (2001) and others, many concepts can be found to construct an evaluation framework, which will be outlined in the last part of this chapter. But before that, some basic terms need introduction.

Policy and participation: explaining terminology

For starters, there are some important questions that need answering: what are we actually talking about, what do the key-terms mean and how are they used? What is (nature conservation) 'policy' and an 'interactive policy process' and why is it important? The term *policy* has been explained by many different theories from different scholars (Parsons, 1995; Dunn, 1994; Hoogerwerf, 1989; Van de Graaf & Hoppe, 1992). Often it is (wrongly) associated solely with governments or administration. Policy occurs in various institutions like schools, companies or non-governmental organizations. Although still a widely debated and controversial term in academic circles, most writers agree it at least seems to refer to the following (Heclo, 1972, pp. 84):

"Policy is pursuing certain goals (purposiveness), using certain resources in a certain order of time."

Although clear and compact, this definition is still broad and does not include the fact that 'doing nothing at all' can be policy as well (Dye, 1975). So how can *policy* be properly defined? Since any definition is plagued by flaws of exclusion, I follow Hogwood and Gunn (1984, pp. 13-19). They do not give a definition of policy, for the simple reason that it is impossible to think of one covering every aspect, but instead list characteristics that are commonly associated with the term 'policy':

1. 'Policy' is different from 'decision', as policy refers to a series of decisions. Also decision is connected to a single actor, while policy refers to the interactions between the actors.

2. 'Policy' has to be distinguished from 'administration', since policy is made to support a certain administration.
3. 'Policy' refers to both behavior and intentions. Not only explicit goals are important, but also the way in which they are interpreted.
4. 'Policy' refers to both action and non-action. Doing nothing can be policy as well.
5. The outcomes of policy can be foreseen and unforeseen.
6. 'Policy' is acting to achieve goals, but those goals can also be interpretations in hindsight.
7. 'Policy' and its implementation implicate cooperation between many actors and the creation of relationships between them.
8. In government 'policy', one actor has a key-role, but is not exclusively a government organization.
9. 'Policy' is subjective; its definition depends on the observer of a certain policy.

These characteristics combined could be identified as 'policy'. In this research *nature conservation policy* refers to public policy concerned with the management of existing, and establishment of new protected areas, in order to preserve nature and its biological diversity for future generations (Soulé, 1985). When speaking about '*public policy*' it becomes inextricably linked to *political* decisions, since government (or public) policy can only be implemented when politically approved. The latter is a key-point in this thesis, because this implicates that policy is thus a matter of *political* preference, and not so much of the broad *public* 'interest' (Parsons, 1995, pp. 14).

After having discussed the term 'policy', there is another theoretic problem. Is government policy solely determined within the realm of politics, and who is involved in politics? The answer to the former is no; public policy decisions are made by politicians, but influenced and sometimes even determined by 'stakeholders' or citizens (Kickert et al., 1997; De Bruijn et al., 2002). So who is involved? Stakeholders are actors that have a specific interest in a certain policy and are therefore different from the public, that only has a general (or public) interest (Dorcey and McDaniels, 2001, pp. 250). Nowadays, particularly stakeholders are increasingly involved in policy making through new forms of interactive policy processes (Dorcey & McDaniels. 2001; Pröpper & Steenbeek, 2001). Pröpper and Steenbeek (2001, pp. 15) define an interactive policy process as:

"a method of policy-making in which governments, as early as possible, involve citizens, societal organizations, companies and/or other governments in the policy process, to cooperate transparently in the preparation, determination, implementation and/or evaluation of a certain policy".

According to Dorcey and McDaniels (2001, pp. 250) there are two basic distinctions in interactive policy processes: consultation and participation. In a consultation process the stakeholders have a pure advisory role, as in a participation process the stakeholders actually have a certain amount of decision-making power (the above will be elaborated extensively in section 2.4).

2.2 Shifts in governance: changing contexts

Policy making has gone through many significant changes in the past century and will continue to do so. These changes, or shifts in governance have important implications and help shape policies, also in nature conservation issues. Thus understanding these, can help us in understanding policy. In other words, it will provide insights in the context of the current process and could help to locate and understand problems and opportunities.

2.2.1 The multi-world

Our contemporary society is very complicated and consists of many different people, with different opinions, norms, values and visions. These so called *discourses* (Hajer, 1997) reflect how people view the world around them and are *socially constitutive*: they influence behavior, interactions, decisions and institutions. As discourses differ from person to person, society's views on nature (and its functions and use) differ. Nature therefore is, apart from its intrinsic value, (socially) 'constructed' (Hannigan, 2006; Simmons, 1993; van den Born et al., 2000). Nature has thus become multi-interpretable and multifunctional, and with this multi-functionality come multi-interest and multiple stakeholders. At the same time the responsibility for nature conservation policy has been in the hands of (Western) governments for as long as there is policymaking in this area. However a dilemma is forming, since the same government has responsibility for health care, infrastructure, economy, mobility, education and a dozen other issues. A fair amount of these issues are not necessarily compatible, e.g. simply compromise each other. In various cases in different policy fields the government has proven this task is becoming increasingly complex and accompanied by unknown risks, resulting in failure. See for example the Love Canal case (Levine, 1982). In other words, the steering capacity of the government seems to have decreased over the past decades. In terms of protected areas a 'tragedy of the commons' is looming, as everybody wants to have access to the protected areas, to pursue their own interest, therewith loosing the overall goal of protection out of sight (Ostrom, 1990). These multi-world issues have resulted in three major shifts: multi-actor, multi-sector and multi-level.

Single actor to Multi actor

Over the last two decades, many authors pointed at the problem of the limited steering capacity of governments and at the shift towards more shared, interconnected responsibility in policy making (Gualini, 2006; Pierre & Peters, 2000; Arts & van Tatenhove, 2006). As outlined above, this limited capacity is not surprising, as in contemporary society, policy decisions are no longer solely an internal government issue. On the one hand society has lost its trust in government, because of the various cases in which the government was not capable of making adequate policies. Citizens start to demand more direct influence on the policy process. On the other hand, governments realize they cannot solve the increasingly complex problems anymore and ask for input from society and stakeholders (see section 2.4). In this so called *multi-actor governance* scenario responsibilities for policy are shared between the government and other actors (figure 3). Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), actor-coalitions or business (groups) take part in the policy decision making process, give knowledge input and share responsibility for a certain policy in which they have particular interest. In return they will support the policy and its implementation. By doing so, the government not only reinforces the legitimacy of its policies, but also avoids

potentially huge costs in the enforcement of rules that are regarded as illegitimate by the stakeholders involved (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1994; Ostrom, 1990). There are plenty examples in different policy fields and from local to national scale (Ostrom, 1997).

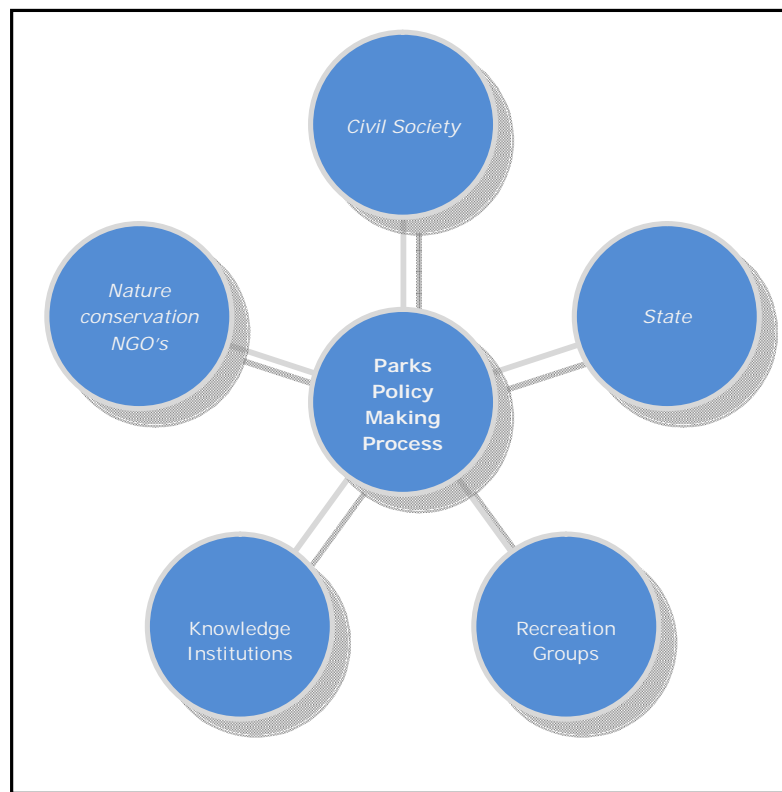


Figure 3: Multi-actor policy making

Single sector to Multi sector

Except for multiple actors (outside government) and multiple levels (other than the actual policy level; see next section), there are multiple sectors (within government) involved in nature conservation policy making. Times when nature was primarily important as a source of building material and managed this way, have long since past us. In the nineteen thirties recreation was added to the spectrum of functions for nature and by that it became a multi sector issue. It would take another couple of decades, however, before it was recognized as a multi sector issue. In the late nineteen sixties, nature conservation was added as a function, parallel with other forms of resource development, primarily oil. No less than five sectors (forestry resource development, agriculture, energy, recreation and conservation) are directly involved in nowadays nature policy making in Alberta, not to mention departments like infrastructure or public health who have a potential interest too. Increasingly complex problems add to the interconnectedness, since environmental issues are also socio-economic issues. And similar to the different actor interests, the different sector interests aren't necessarily compatible either. Governments face problems coordinating the several interests within their own apparatus, as the different departments (or sectors) struggle internally over who has the mandate to manage nature (Leroy & Arts, 2006; O'Neill 2001) (figure 4). This means multi-actor and multi-sector governance are inextricably connected and important to take into consideration when analyzing (Provincial) Park Policy.

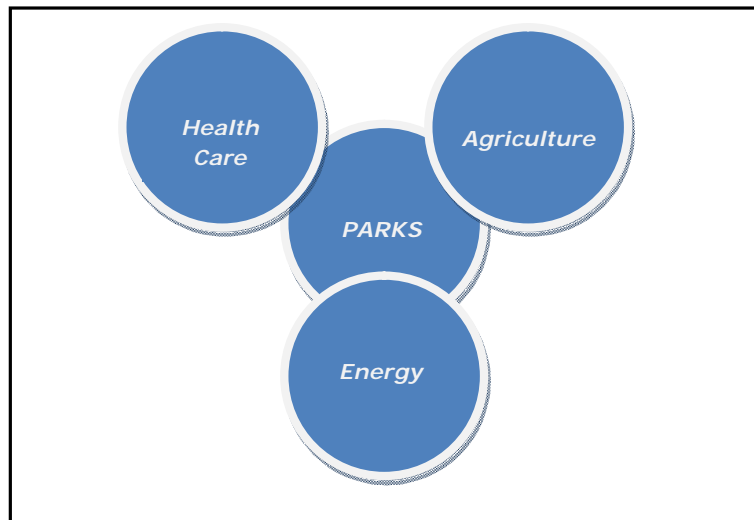


Figure 4: Multi-sector issues in Nature Conservation

Single level to Multi level

Parallel with multi-actor governance, another shift has taken place over the last decades. Policy decisions on one governmental level are influenced by other levels, regardless the official sovereignty of the nation. This is known as *multi-level governance* (Pierre & Peters, 2000; Fairbrass & Jordan, 2004; Knill & Liefferink, 2007) (figure 5). Although the national level is commonly perceived as the most important level, two processes seem to increase the influence of other levels. This is especially true for environmental problems, which are often transboundary, thus multi-level (see: Leroy and Arts, 2006; Barry, 1999). On the one hand, environmental problems (like climate change) increase in scope (due to globalization) and become more difficult or impossible to solve from a national perspective. This increases the use of the international level to make agreements on environmental standards or to tackle a problem (Fairbrass & Jordan, 2004; Knill & Liefferink, 2007). The 1987 international protocol of Montreal to ban CFC's in order to prevent depletion of the ozone layer is a commonly used example. Although this is an example of a successful international agreement, Parson (2001) contests the true influence of international treaties on lower level policy making, since the power to implement them still rests with the lower levels. Nevertheless he acknowledges the increasing influence of the international level on policy making.

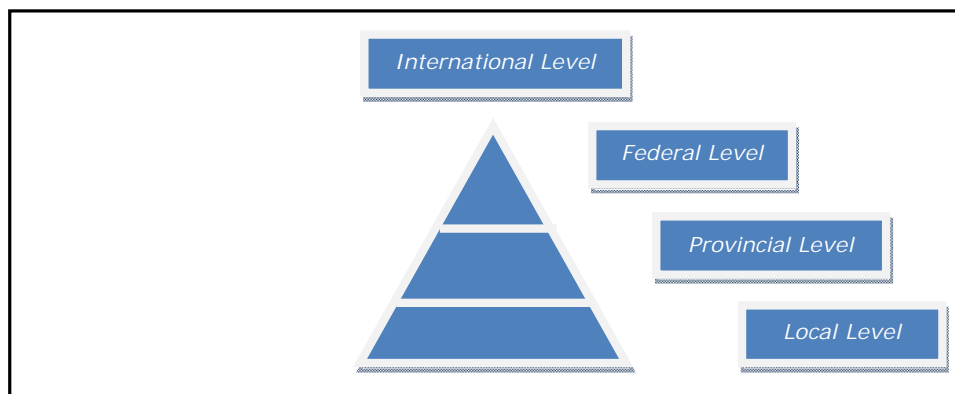


Figure 5: The Multi-level connection

On the other hand, the local level influence on the national policy process increases. As outlined earlier, information and experts in policy making are increasingly ambiguous, or simply mistrusted by citizens. As a result, citizens demand influence on the policy process (see section 2.4) (Stiglitz, 2007, pp. 19-24; Lafferty & Meadowcroft, 1996). Through self-organization and the participation in environmental advocacy groups, citizens attempt to increase their voice in local environmental policy making since the 1970s (Driessen & Glasbergen, 2000). Although wide-spread in Western societies, these trends are affected by specific political contexts. In a more authoritative regulatory style, the (national) government will try to keep its power, thus less willing to decentralize authority. In a more open and liberal regulatory style, governments seem more favorable to initiatives of deliberation (Van Waarden, 1999) (see section 2.3.3). This appears to be true for both up scaling (signing on to international treaties) and downscaling (decentralizing authority to lower administrative levels). Section 2.4 will go deeper into the changes in democracy and aspects of participation and involvement in policy making.

2.2.2 Shifts in Nature Conservation Policy making

Apart from the above governance shifts in policy making in many different policy fields the western world, there have been some significant changes in nature conservation thinking as well, which are inextricably connected to these governance shifts. Three influential shifts will be taken into account here: (1) the shift towards networks, (2) the introduction of biodiversity and sustainability and (3) the dual mandate issue. The first refers to the shifts in thinking about protected areas. In the first half of the twentieth century, nature conservation was primarily shaped by the installment of specific protected areas with important or unique values, determined by biologists. However, research and knowledge developed around species migration and ecological processes and the idea of protecting nature within a fenced off, small area rapidly lost its appeal (Sayer, 1995). The Gaia theory seeing the world as an organism, in which everything is interconnected, contributed to this development (Lovelock, 1979). Instead of protected islands, nature conservation had to be shaped in networks. Interconnected protected areas, forming a large network, in which species could freely move and develop, became the new leading discourse in thinking about nature conservation.

The second important shift, connected to the previous, was the introduction of new terms like biodiversity and sustainability. According to Hannigan (2006) the former was especially important, since it marked a change in thinking about nature in three ways. First, nature was once again seen as a valuable resource, only this time it had to be protected. Biodiversity meant genetic variation, which is becoming increasingly important in medicine research. Second, conservation biology became accepted as a science and was closely related to the biodiversity concept. Research and knowledge increased during the nineteen seventies and eighties. Third and last, biodiversity as a concept paved the way for treaties to protect species, like the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973. These treaties significantly helped nature conservation, worldwide (Hannigan, 2006). Also, the introduction of sustainability (Brundtland, 1987) increased the attention for the fact that natural resources are not infinite.

Third and last important shift in nature conservation is the increasing complexity of the dual mandate for protected areas. Ever since the first installment of protected areas they seem to have served two goals: protecting nature and providing a place for humans to enjoy it. But with the

growth of the population and the increase of leisure time on one hand and the decreasing of natural landscapes on the other, the dual mandate came under stress. The recreation aspect slowly became more important and conservation could be threatened. The tension between the two increasingly influences nature conservation policy making (Rootes, 1998).

2.3 Policy Analysis

Now that the most important shifts have been outlined, the actual theoretical framework will be constructed: policy analysis. This deals with important questions like 'how is policy made', 'who decides what is on the agenda' and 'what are the components of the policy process'? These questions require tools to answer them and this section will outline the tools needed to do so. Three concepts are chosen here: (1) theories of the policy cycle, (2) agenda setting theories and (3) the network approach. These should provide a framework to elaborate and understand Alberta's nature conservation policy and context.

2.3.1 The policy cycle

The given definitions and characteristics of 'policy' in section 2.1 attempt to define policy as a concept. However they fail to explain *how* policy is made. The policy cycle model, presented by May and Wildavsky in 1978 and further adapted by many authors (see: Dunn, 1994; Van de Graaf & Hoppe, 1992; Driessen & Glasbergen, 2002), elaborates the policy process in five different stages (figure 6). In the first phase of *ideology formation*, a certain issue or problem comes afloat in society, due to previous policy outcomes and autonomous developments. Ideas about the problems are formed. The second phase deals with *agenda setting*. The societal agenda has

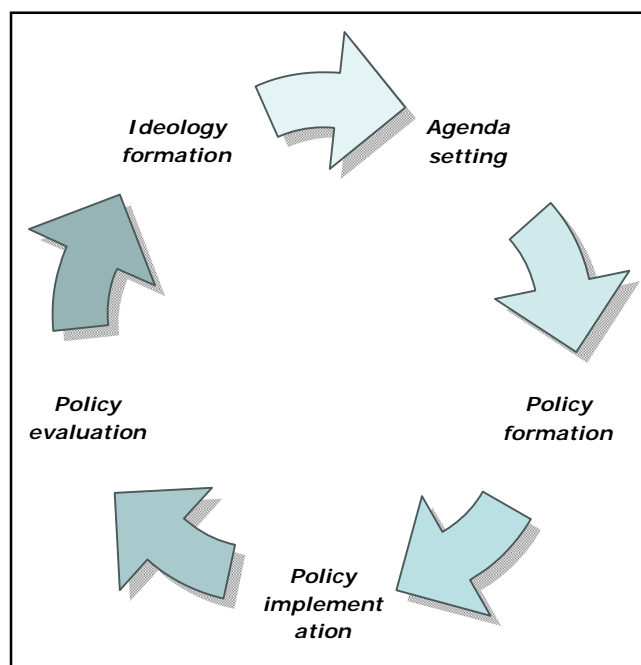


Figure 6: The Policy Cycle
(based on: Parsons, 1995, pp. 77; Driessen et al., 2000, pp. 79)

partially been set by the processes in the first stage, while the political or policy agenda is the second threshold. The issue has to make it to the political agenda. How and why this happens will be outlined in the next section. Once on the political agenda, the third phase of *policy formation*

has arrived. In this phase, ideas about the characteristics of the problem and possible solutions are developed in the political arena. Once the problem has been fully analyzed and a solution and measures are chosen and decisions are made, the fourth phase of *policy implementation* has arrived. In this phase the measures, determined in the policy formation phase, are carried out. The last phase is the *policy evaluation* phase, in which the solutions and implemented measures are evaluated based upon a series of criteria: sufficiency, legitimacy, efficiency, effectiveness, and others. Often in this stage, new problems arise and the cycle will start over again. The policy cycle model is a useful tool to describe and analyze a certain policy process in order to present a clear overview, even though it is often criticised for being too simple and ignoring the dynamics of a policy process (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993; Parsons, 1995). Parsons (1995, pp. 79) states:

"The real world is far more complicated and not composed of tidy neat steps, phases and cycles. The idea of dividing up policy-making in such a way greatly overstates the rational nature of policy making and gives a false picture of a process which is not a conveyor belt in which agenda-setting takes place at one end of the line and implementation and evaluation takes place at the other..."

The critique can be summarized in two points: (1) The process is iterative rather than consecutive and (2) the process is interactive, rather than automated. The former refers to the fact that the phases in the policy cycle do not follow one another neatly, and neither is one phase closed before the next one 'starts'. In the real world all phases run in parallel and might influence each other. The latter refers to the significance of the surrounding context, which is in constant interaction with the policy makers. For example when in the policy formation phase, certain societal events might influence the context and greatly reduce the options for solutions and simply put everything back to the ideology phase. The nuclear accident in Chernobyl put the issue of nuclear energy high on the social and political agenda and made governments reassess whether plans for building a nuclear power plant were an appropriate solution to solve electricity demand at the time. Twenty years later, climate change has inverted this issue and nuclear power is back on the agenda.

While the model greatly reduces complexity, it needs to be complimented by other tools and concepts to be able to fully understand each 'phase' and its context (Parsons, 1995, pp. 80). Since this research concentrates on a policy-making process that is ongoing, it is useful to provide additional tools for analyzing the first three stages of the policy process. The last two phases have not yet (fully) arrived and it is therefore complex to try and explore them ex ante. Nevertheless some predictions concerning the implementation phase, can be made, based on the (expected) outcomes of the policy formation process.

The first two, the *ideology formation* and *agenda setting* phase both deal with issues of agenda setting (why is this issue important and why does it make it to the political agenda?). Theories about agenda setting explain these and will be addressed below. The third phase deals with the actual political decision-making process (why are certain solutions and measures preferred over others?). The network approach elaborated in section 2.2 is the right tool to answer these questions, since it elaborates the most important aspects of why and how certain decisions are made in the policy arena.

2.3.2 Agenda setting

Agenda-setting might be the most important step in the policy cycle as issues need to be 'visible' and perceived as imminent before they reach the agenda. In agenda theory there is a distinction between the *public agenda* and the *political agenda*. The former refers to all issues that are subject of discussion in society. The latter refers to all issues that are under attention of policy-makers and are discussed in policy-making circles (Driessen & Glasbergen, 2002, pp. 103). The two are closely related in a (Western) democracy, as one could argue that the public holds the absolute power, so the public opinion determines which issues are on the political agenda (Parsons, 1995, pp. 110). Part of this argument is obviously true; however more complex, contextual factors determine what is and what is not on the agenda.

Cobb & Elder (1972) distinguish three types of agenda-setting based on the public-political agenda distinction. First, an issue might reach the agenda through a public initiative. Societal groups place an issue in the spotlight, often by using mass-media, thereby raising the issue's profile. Policy-makers will pick up these issues and put them on the political agenda to satisfy their voters. For example problems concerning climate change demanded more attention in many countries through Al Gore's movie. The second type is political mobilization. Politicians or policy-makers place their issue on the political agenda and try to gain public support, thus placing the issue on the public agenda. To do so, they mobilise their grassroots and like-minded non-governmental organizations, to influence the public opinion. An example can be found in the U.S. war on terror and the invasion of Iraq, which was initiated by the government for which it tried to find support afterwards. The last type, deals with internal influence. Politicians or policy-makers place their issues on the political agenda, but do not seek public support. Since an issue only has to reach the political agenda before policy can be made, the support of the public can be ignored (Driessen & Glasbergen, 2002, pp. 103). In reality this seldom is a successful route, as in the long run, policies that are deemed illegitimate will be ignored or even sabotaged, making implementation impossible (Ostrom, 1990; 2007).

These types of agenda-setting help to understand *how* issues end up on both agendas, yet they fail to explain *why* they do. To understand why issues make it to the agenda, three concepts are key: *naming and framing*, *knowledge* and *policy windows*. These are extensively elaborated in the work of Hannigan (2006), who describes them, in terms of the 'construction of an environmental problem'. He explains the construction of an environmental problem and the appearing of it on the agenda in three stages: *problem assembling*, *problem presenting* and *problem contesting* (table 1). In the first column, the problem is assembled by gathering evidence that 'something is wrong'. The evidence can be derived from scientific studies, but also from lay, or local knowledge. As argued by Wynne (1996), Jasanoff (1990) and others, claims made on the basis of lay knowledge may be just as valuable and legitimate as their scientific counterparts. The evidence is categorized in a way that it can be presented convincing and orderly. Simple and clear knowledge and terminology are key, since complex and difficult to understand concepts are far less likely to stick around (Hannigan, 2006, pp. 67). Also, contextual factors, like history, time, place, etc., play a crucial role in the assembling of the problem; what is perceived as a problem in one certain time and place, is not necessarily perceived similar in another (Irwin, 2001). This phase is termed 'naming' the problem.

	<i>Problem Assembling</i>	<i>Problem Presenting</i>	<i>Problem Contesting</i>
<u>What happens?</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discovering the problem ▪ Naming the problem ▪ Establishing (scientific) parameters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commanding attention ▪ Legitimizing the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobilizing (political) support ▪ Invoking action
<u>Central forum?</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Science 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mass Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Politics
<u>Strategies for success?</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creating an experiential focus ▪ Streamlining knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Linkage to popular issues ▪ Use of dramatic language and images 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Networking ▪ Opening Policy Windows ▪ Developing expertise
<u>Potential failures?</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lack of clarity ▪ Ambiguity and conflicting scientific evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Problem not visible ▪ Declining novelty (public no longer interested) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Issue fatigue ▪ Countervailing claims

Table 1: Constructing an environmental issue (adapted from: Hannigan, 2006, pp. 68)

The second column is most important in agenda setting, as in this phase the problem is presented to the public. In other words, the issue entrepreneurs attempt to legitimize their claims and put the issue on the public agenda. In order to achieve this, the problem must be perceived as novel (or at least parts of it), important and understandable, similar to the criteria for news (Hannigan, 2006, pp. 70). To do so, dramatisation in describing the issue is often used. An example is the use of the picture of a polar bear on an ice floe surrounded by water, as a symbol for climate change. A second strategy to legitimize claims is to connect them to (shock) events, like a natural disaster or large scale accident. For example the renewed attention for the dangers of chemical plants in urban areas after the accident in Bhopal, India. However, events are not limited to disasters and accidents. They can also be found in the publishing of a popular book or movie, or the change of government which is perceived progressive (or regressive) towards certain (environmental) issues (Staggenborg, 1993). Mass media play a central role in the second phase, since legitimizing a claim is often the result of public attention, moral debate and support (Parsons, 1995, pp. 113). Creating a certain image of a problem in order to manipulate the public appeal and broaden attention, is what is called 'framing' (Snow et al., 1986). Mass media is often the forum through which the frame is presented.

When a problem is assembled and legitimized (columns 1 and 2), it can reach the third phase: problem contesting. In this phase a problem might reach the political agenda. Whether or not this happens, depends on several factors. First of all the issue should not be a political threatening issue, which means it cannot threaten existing power bases, demand radical changes or be incompatible with core values of policy makers. Second, the possible solutions or measures should be deemed feasible by legislators. Third, the 'time has to be right'. An environmental issue is easily pushed of the agenda, when larger and more imminent (economic or social) threats are faced (Solesbury, 1976, pp. 392-395). The current, worldwide economic crisis makes a perfect example. Fourth, the issue should endure ongoing support from scientific evidence and mass media, since it will be heavily contested in the political arena. After all, there are more issues craving for attention and resources (Hannigan, 2006, pp. 73). To successfully reach and stay on the political agenda, an issue has to be brokered by skilled entrepreneurs in a networking environment. The above factors, combined with contextual circumstances and simple luck, might open a 'policy window', making

room for change (Kingdon, 1995). Although this sounds rather vague and random, the policy process and agenda setting does seem to depend on factors that are difficult to categorize and there are little general rules covering every situation.

2.3.3 Concepts and tools for analyzing the policy arena: the network approach

The previous section described tools to analyze the state of the policy process, however it did not provide tools for substance analysis. The *network approach*, by Adam and Kriesi (2007) and Kickert, Klijn and Koppenjan (1997) provides the necessary tools. Its roots lie in various other concepts and grew from combined research on agenda-setting, interest groups or actors and inter-organizational theory (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 129). The observations of increasing scope, sectoralization, decentralization, fragmentation and informatization of policy making, combined with a government who is no longer the central steering force in the process (section 2.2), stand at the cradle of the approach. Many other approaches, like Sabatiers (1993; 2007) Advocacy Coalition Approach, or Arts, Van Tatenhove and Leroy's (2000; 2006) Policy Arrangements Approach are closely related and use similar basics, or even identical concepts. The network approach basically states that policy making happens in networks, in which all actors struggle over policy substance. The definition, given by Kickert et al. (1997, pp. 6), states that policy networks consist of:

"more or less stable patterns of social relations between independent actors, which take shape around specific policy problems and/or policy programs."

When analyzing a network, Adam and Kriesi (2007, pp. 133) use a two dimensional typology to capture the characteristics of a network: (1) a set of actors and (2) the relations between those actors. When translated to specific concepts to understand the developments in a certain network, these characteristics can be divided in three dimensions (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 131):

- actors and their coalitions involved in the policy arena;
- the policy discourses, entailing the norms, values, the definitions of the 'problem' and approaches to solutions of the actors involved;
- the division of resources between actors, leading to differences in power and influence;

These three are closely related, hence change in one dimension is likely to have impacts on one or more of the other. Analyzing each dimension, can reveal changes in the other and in the arena or as a whole. This interrelatedness is visualized by using the a triangle figure (figure 7). There is however, one other important 'dimension', that is crucially important, but operates at a different level; the policy context. All networks operate within a specific socio-economic and political context, which has a significant influence on the processes within the network (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 137-143). According to Kickert et al. (1997):

"Not only does policy making take place in settings where there are many actors [actors dimension] and there is ambiguity regarding preferences [discourses dimension], information and strategy chosen [power and resources dimension], but it also occurs within certain inter-organizational networks of a more lasting nature [the context]".

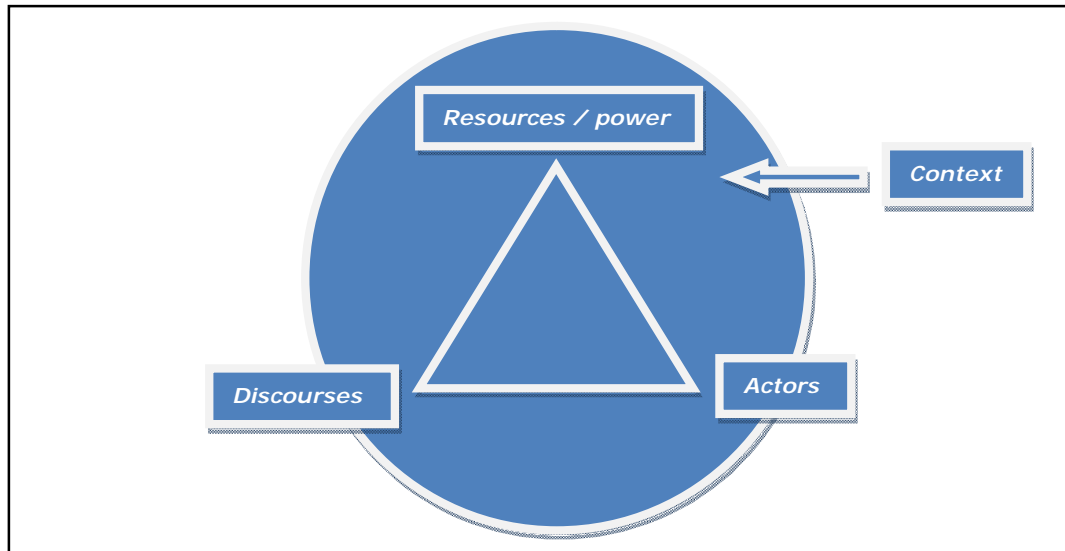


Figure 7: Three dimensions in the network approach

The context is represented by the round figure in which the triangle, or the policy network, is situated in figure 7. The three intra-network dimensions and the contextual dimension are further elaborated below.

Actors

The actor dimension is the first and very important dimension - without actors and interactions, the other dimensions are meaningless and there is no network- and it makes a suitable starting point for analysis. By starting the analysis from this dimension, a relatively quick and thorough overview of who is involved in the policy arena around a certain issue, can be created (Adam and Kriesi, 2007 pp. 133). The analysis in this dimension starts with identifying the relevant actors in a certain process and to distinguish between key-players and peripheral ones. Actors that represent similar interests can be grouped to make a more orderly description. According to Kingdon (1995), this can be done by studying relevant documents and/or gathering information 'in the field'. This is a complicated process, since many actors operate on the background, both in and outside the arena, thus influencing the process via the backdoor.

Discourses

After having identified the key-players in a certain policy network, it is useful to continue with an analysis of the discourses present in the policy arena. Discourses might indicate why actors form coalitions in a certain process. A discourse is a set of beliefs and preferences that determine how a certain actor perceives the world and the problems therein (Hajer, 1997, pp. 13). Although it covers the matter, it does not explain how the concept works and why exactly actor coalitions are formed. Liefferink (2006, pp. 58) also underscores this point and suggests two levels of discourses: a macro-level that refers to general ideas about the organization of society and relationships between state, market and civil society, and a second, meso- or micro-level which refers to ideas about a concrete policy issue. Although this gives more conceptual tools to elaborate discourses, it still fails to provide sufficient explanatory power. To overcome this problem I will use Sabatier's 'belief-system' concept, from his ACF approach. Although Sabatier's concept does not fully cover a

discourse, the former describes distinguishable features of the latter (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 131).

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's (1993) '*belief system*' was originally developed for Sabatier's Advocacy Coalition Approach, and provides a more comprehensive tool that will be added to the network tools, used in this research. It has been tested and used in several cases around nature conservation issues and proven fruitful (for example: Ellison, 1998; Lertzman et al., 1996). A belief-system describes an actor's discourse in three dimensions (figure 8): (1) *deep core beliefs*, (2) *policy core beliefs* and (3) *secondary beliefs* (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1993; 1994). The first refers to broad normative and ontological assumptions about human nature, the relative priority of fundamental values and ideas about the organization of society. The traditional left-right distinction used in political sciences, also operates in this dimension. The assumptions, ideas

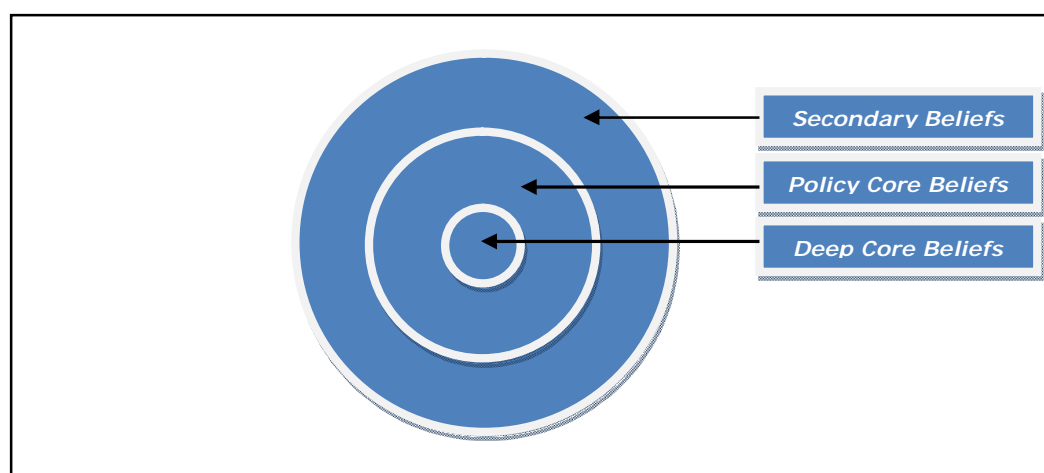


Figure 8: Belief System (Sabatier and Jenkins Smith, 1993)

and preferences in this dimension have formed largely in childhood and further throughout an actor's life and are, thus, very difficult to change (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, pp. 194). The second dimension are 'applications of deep core beliefs' and influence how an actor perceives a certain policy problem issue and problems with that issue (for example nature conservation policy in Alberta). The *policy core beliefs* are issue wide in scope and deal with ideas about how significant a problem is and how it can be solved. It deals with fundamental policy choices and is also difficult to change (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, pp. 195). Identifying policy core beliefs is an important step in identifying coalitions among actors in a certain policy arena, since the 'glue' that holds coalitions together is 'stickiest' in this dimension. The third and last dimension of the belief system are the *secondary beliefs*. These deal with specific preferences on how to handle the current policy problem and are narrow in scope. Examples are detailed rules or budgetary issues. In other words they concentrate on the instrumental and implementation level, rather than on the more ideological level on which the policy- and deep core beliefs act. This makes them easier to change and open to negotiation with other actors in the arena (Sabatier and Weible, 2007, pp. 195-196). For example in the Alberta nature conservation policy domain, actors might disagree on whether or not to allow tourism exploitation in protected areas (policy core belief), but they might agree on restricting human access to steep, high-alpine areas, because it is dangerous and vegetation is fragile

(secondary beliefs). By using this three-way distinction to elaborate the discourses, a more extensive overview can be made, which helps to understand why coalitions act the way they do.

Power and Resources

In a certain policy network actors have certain resources that provide a certain amount of influence on the process: power. Crucial in the process is that none of the actors holds absolute power to control the network, but all, to a different degree, depend on each other (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 134; Rhodes and March, 1992). Financial resources are often central, but this is not necessarily the case. Besides *money*, three other resources - *personnel*, *knowledge* and *legitimacy* - are important (Kickert et al., 1997, pp. 21). Personnel allows an actor to gather information, attend meetings and in general to 'be involved and make his voice heard'. Knowledge is another important issue. As outlined in the introduction, problem solving and policy making have become a complex and technical process. Experts often have a substantial impact on the process, thus knowledge of both content and process might prove crucial for actors to play along and to be taken seriously. Last, legitimacy can play an important role. It deals with the question 'why certain actors are at the table?'. Actors can have different sources of legitimacy, for instance an extensive grassroots network (an advocacy organization) or a political mandate given to them via the democratic process (a government agency). Representation is closely related to this issue and will be dealt with in section 2.4.4.

After having outlined above that coalitions can be formed on the basis of shared discourses, resources are another major reason for actors to team up. This does not necessarily happen purposefully, but might be the result of circumstances in which two or more actor's resources are interdependent; actors are 'driven into each other's arms' (Kickert et al., 1997, pp. 21; Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 134). Coalitions formed for reasons of sharing resources are termed '*resource coalitions*'. Although often more visible in the process, resource coalitions are usually formed for practical reasons on a project by project basis, while discourse coalitions are more durable and

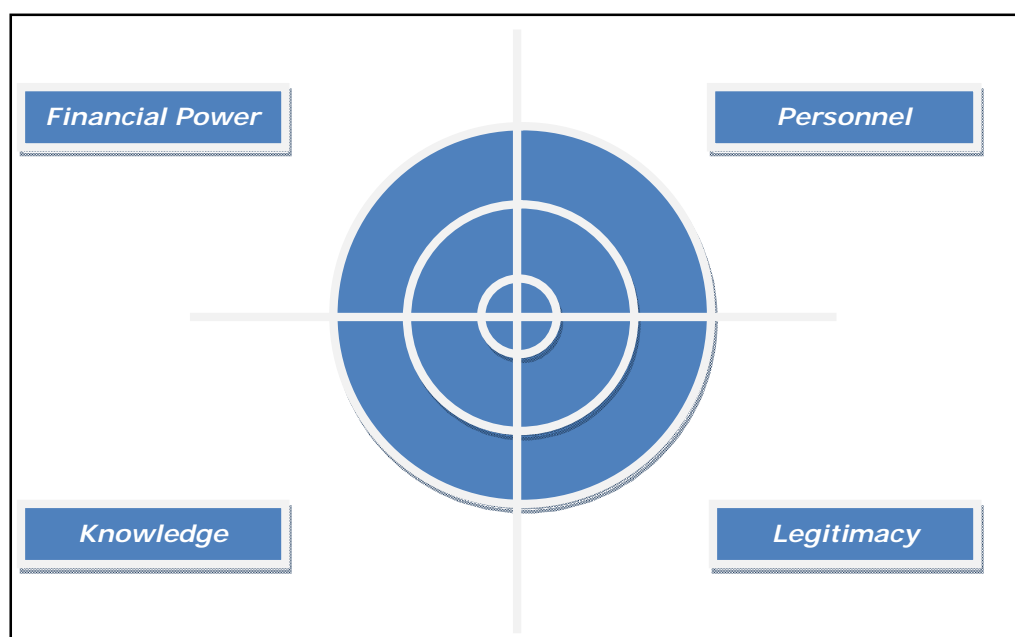


Figure 9: Resources and power distribution graphic

might last outside a certain policy process. After all, the latter are based on more fundamental, deep rooted views, instead of practical issues. Throughout a policy process actors attempt to improve their resource situation and coalitions might change adapting to new developments (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 55). For example an advocacy organization might start a campaign to raise public awareness and support on a certain issue, use this to pressure other actors; a change in discursive power could appear. Resource coalitions and actors can be mapped using figure 9, that outlines the position of each coalition on the four points mentioned above. By plotting each actor in every quadrant of the circle, an overview of 'power' is given. The closer one is to the center, the more power an actor or coalition has.

Connected to the power dimension is also the use of *rules of interaction*. These refer to procedural rules that deal with issues like voting and agenda setting, but also with unwritten rules like traditions of using courts to settle conflicts. They are also important indicators for the state of the process. How much (political) attention and priority is given to a certain policy issue (see also next section) and, more important, how is this translated in a mandate for a certain government department or agency? These deal with both the process (management) side, but also with substance (rules might provide power to certain actors). Therefore they are closely linked to both the *actor* and *power and resources* dimension.

Context

The last dimension in the network approach is the context. Adam and Kriesi (2007, pp. 148) divide them in three different 'levels': the *transnational*, the *national* and the *policy domain specific* context. The first is partially compatible with the shifts in governance and abstract changes in society described in section 2.2.1. However some of these are policy domain specific as well. The transnational context also deals with the international policy arena of international treaties, but is most relevant in a European Union setting. The second, the national context, also has some multi-level governance similarities, however it is deals with more than just that and is crucially important. The role of the state, the socio-economic climate and the regulatory style are key-issues (note that 'national' refers to the level with has the greatest authoritative power over a certain area, this might be the province in certain constitutional arrangements): First the socio-economic situation might influence decisions, discourses and strategies, but it might also change the resources of actors and coalitions.

A second important issue is what Adam and Kriesi (2007, pp. 138) have named the "*formal national institutional structure*". They take over Lijphart's (1999) distinction in democracies: consensus- versus majoritarian democracies. The former refers to democracies in which power is shared between several institutions, the latter refers to democracies that concentrate power in the hands of a small number of political institutions and actors. In other words, shared or concentrated power. The sharing of power is assumed to contribute to a well-functioning network, while a concentrated power will contribute to a dead-lock in a network (Kickert et al., 1997, pp. 25). Similar to Lijphart, Van Waarden (1999) refers to these characteristics, though he uses a three-way typology for 'modes of governance' (table 2). The first mode of governance is referred to as an 'etatist' government planning system. If government holds absolute power to control the process and is able to determine or change all the rules, the policy arena is virtually non-existent.

Whatever an actor's actions or initiatives, chances for change are limited and the democratic process is in a deadlock. Two other relevant planning systems are the liberal-pluralist system and the neo-corporatist system. The former is a more open and market oriented system in which no single actor fully controls the process. The government however still holds decision making power, but might be open to interactive policy making under certain circumstances. The third mode is also market oriented and open, but government has to make decisions and implement policy in cooperation with other actors. It makes this mode most suitable for interactive policy processes (Pierre and Peters, 2000, pp. 119). These three modes of governance form a triangle that puts them all opposite each other. The three other dimensions of network approach, help to identify which mode of governance one is dealing with in a certain policy process. Of course, none of these modes are likely to appear in their pure form, but the point is that certain modes allow certain types of policy making. Thus identifying modes of governance might help to explain why interactive policy processes are feasible or not (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 145).

<i><u>Characteristics</u></i> <i><u>Ideal types</u></i>	<i>Access</i> <i>(number of</i> <i>actors that have</i> <i>a certain</i> <i>influence)</i>	<i>Control over</i> <i>major</i> <i>resources</i>	<i>Prevailing rule</i> <i>of interaction</i>	<i>General</i> <i>character of</i> <i>substantive</i> <i>discourses</i>
Etatism	low	state	instrumentality	imposed
Liberal-pluralism	high	spread	competition	conflicting
Neo-corporatism	limited	shared	negotiation	agreed

Table 2: Characteristics of modes of governance (adapted from Liefferink, 2006, pp 62)

The last contextual dimension level deals with policy specific and domain specific issues. Three characteristics are important here: (1) the importance of the policy issue, (2) the economic and technological developments and (3) the change of ideas and knowledge on the issue (Adam and Kriesi, 2007, pp. 142-143). When an issue is perceived important by many actors, they will likely try to participate in the network, increasing complexity. Issues that lack importance are easier to deal with for a government, since policies generate less resistance and will be accepted more quietly. The change in economic situation or a new technology might also have influence on an issue. For instance the carbon capturing and storage technology might shift the debate on consuming less fossil fuel, since the problem seems technically solved. Third and last, changes in ideas and knowledge might influence the process. When the pesticide DDT was first presented in the nineteen forties, the Nobel prize was awarded to its discoverer Dr. Müller, but when the long term effects became known (thanks to Rachel Carson's book 'Silent Spring'), it was banned from almost every country in the world. This form of knowledge is usually public, and is therefore different from the knowledge in the resources dimension, which can be used strategically. These contextual characteristics return in section 2.4.3 and the latter two (national and domain specific

context) are especially important when elaborating the Alberta parks policy process. The next section will go deeper into interactive policy making in the policy arena.

2.4 Interactive Policy-Making and Participatory Processes

So if governments increasingly struggle to solve environmental problems and citizens demand more influence on the policy process, interactive policy-making might provide a solution. Interactive policy processes are defined in section 2.1 as:

“a method of policy-making in which governments, as early as possible, involve citizens, societal organizations, companies and/or other governments in the policy process, to cooperate transparently in the preparation, determination, implementation and/or evaluation of a certain policy.”

But before one can determine whether or not this is an option, one has to explain (1) *why it could be useful*, (2) *what experiences are known*, (3) *what we have learned from them on how to organize an interactive process* and (4) *what are the limitations thereof*? This section will elaborate these questions, in order to provide a set of criteria to evaluate an interactive policy process.

2.4.1 Why use an interactive policy process?

Interactive policy making is nothing revolutionary; in fact, it has been used in several forms for over fifty years (Day, 1997). According to Irvin and Stansbury (2004), the debate is even no longer about whether or not to use interactive policy making, but rather about the choice of instruments and forms. Nevertheless it deserves some explanation to why it has evolved and why it is used so widely nowadays. This elaboration can be outlined in two different steps: first a connection will be made between *complexity* and *participation*. This part explains why the current environmental issues provide room for interactive policy processes to solve them. Second, the connection between *democracy* and *participation* will be outlined. In a rapidly changing political and social context, participation might provide new paths.

Complexity of subject

From a macro-perspective, Beck (1992) forms a good starting point for explaining the increasing citizens involvement in environmental policy-making. Without going into too much detail about Beck's risk society thesis, his theory forms an important landmark in thinking about environmental problems. In short, Beck states that our contemporary society is increasingly complex, dependent on technology and driven by unstoppable (economic) progress. This creates complex, ambiguous and hard-to-grasp (environmental) problems (Irwin, 2001). Since the problems are caused by the way we live in the modern, western world, everybody is responsible and therefore nobody takes responsibility. Beck (1992, pp. 49) calls this 'organized irresponsibility'. To solve this state of organized irresponsibility, more people should be involved in policy-making, thus creating responsibility: the Sub-politics (Craye, 2001, pp. 13). Citizens, companies, movements, non-governmental organizations, etc. should actively participate in solving of these problems. Since these actors already have influence behind the scenes, they might as well be fully and directly involved, sharing decision-making power and thus responsibility, with traditional government.

Connected to the above, literature presents arguments which state that public involvement might increase knowledge around a complex issue. The more complex an issue, the more fruitful participation may be (Kickert et al., 1995; Pröpper & Steenbeek, 2001; Korsten, 1999). This has two distinctive reasons. First the involvement from different groups with different backgrounds brings specific expertise to the table, which would otherwise be absent (OECD, 2001). This might increase the problem-solving abilities with respect to content, as the variety of possible solutions is extended. Second, solutions might better fit the problem perceptions of the stakeholders involved and affected: a richer process might lead to richer outcomes. Uncertainty about the problem and solutions might be accepted more easily by actors which were involved in the process (Hage & Leroy, 2008).

Complexity of Context

The latter argument is closely related to the context of a certain environmental issue. Those who are affected should have some sort of influence on the proposed measures, but also responsibility to solve the problem (Pierre, 1998). This argument has been thoroughly elaborated by Etzioni (1993), who introduces the concept of '*subsidiarity*': "the responsibility for a problem belongs first to those who are closest to the problem". If the actor closest to the problem cannot solve it, responsibility goes up to a higher level. Nowadays this principle is used in for instance the European Union, which is not allowed to intervene with individual membership issues that do not affect other member states. The concept implicates that the legitimate control over local issues, should lie with local communities or citizens. However, the complexity of the current environmental problems creates a dilemma. On the one hand it justifies higher level control over the process, since the local level does not have the capacity. But on the other hand it does not legitimize the 'absolute' control over the process by higher level administrative bodies. Forms of interactive policy making might provide a balance, in which both aspects are taken care of. Edelenbos (2005) emphasizes the importance of the local context of issues as a reason for interactive policy making. So by bringing local people together and respecting the contextual issues, a well-designed interactive policy process might reduce alienation and contribute to community building (Bayley & French, 2008; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). After having dealt with arguments concerning the content of the problems suitable for consultation, I will continue with arguments concerning the process.

Democracy and Legitimacy

Over the past fifty years the practice of democracy has changed significantly in Western societies. Until around the 1960s citizens' participation was expressed solely through the traditional representative democracy. Citizens have the right to vote and the chosen representatives then make decisions on their behalf for a certain term (usually four years). During the nineteen sixties and seventies, however, citizens became more vocal and start to organize themselves in order to get their issues on the agenda (see 2.3) (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 2001, pp. 21). Administrations are increasingly confronted with a lack of trust in government, a gap between the elected and the electorate is forming. Connected to this gap, a demand for more direct democracy is increasing (Dorcey & McDaniels, 2001, pp. 256). This is translated into forms of more direct citizen influence on the policy process through interactive policy processes. The common reason to do so, is that policy will have greater legitimacy when citizens were involved citizens in the making (Bayley &

French, 2008; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Johnson, 2007; Cohen, 1997; Leroy & van Tatenhove, 2002). As Johnson (2007, pp. 81) states:

“Agreements reached in this dialogue more likely uphold the fundamental values and interests of all those who could be affected and are thus more likely to be just. Such agreements better express the reasoned acceptability of all those who could be affected and are thus more likely to be legitimate”.

Connected to increasing legitimacy, the re-involving of citizens in the political process in order to bridge the increasing gap between political elite and the electorate is another important argument (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, pp. 55). The value of democracy is directly influenced by the involvement of citizens in politics. Little involvement might imply little legitimacy, which is negative for democratic values. Bridging the gap improves the democratic process.

Advantages of Citizen Participation in Decision Making Processes		
	Advantages to participating citizens	Advantages to government
Decision process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education (learn from and inform government representatives) Persuade and enlighten government Gain skills for activist citizenship Build community ties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education (learn from and inform citizens) Enrich options for solutions Persuade citizens (build trust and allay anxiety or hostility) Build strategic alliances Gain legitimacy of decisions (improving democratic value)
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break gridlock: achieve outcomes Gain some control over policy process Better policy and implementation decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break gridlock: achieve outcomes Avoid litigation and enforcement costs Better policy and implementation decisions

Table 3: Arguments for citizen participation
(based on: Irvin and Stansbury, 2004, pp. 56; Dorcy & McDaniels, 2001, pp. 253)

By bridging the gap and thus increasing the legitimacy of policy decisions, governments can cut down litigation and implementation costs (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, pp. 57; Ostrom, 1990). Measures that are perceived legitimate will in general cause little or at least less resistance in the implementation phase. This in turn will keep down costs in enforcement of certain rules (Mitchell, 2005). For example the ban on hunting of grizzly bears for a certain time in order to protect them from extinction, will probably be far easier to enforce when the decision is made in cooperation with hunters and trappers, than when it is done without them. When explained to them, and even more so when decided upon with them, they might better understand the reason behind the measure. Social cohesion and control will provide free enforcement, since the hunting community is less likely to tolerate members who ignore the ban, as they risk losing their good relationship with the administration. The prerequisite, off course, is that the administration listens to their concerns

and takes them into account. The above reasons for initiating an interactive policy process are summarized in table 3.

2.4.2 Experiences with interactive policy making in nature conservation issues

While there are plenty studies after interactive processes in nature conservation in third world countries (see for instance: Bajracharya et al., 2006; IUCN, 1996), examples from western countries seem somewhat less represented. Notable exceptions are Kleemann & O'Riordan (2002) who studied a participatory process around the conservation of biodiversity in Western Germany and South Africa, Goodwin (1998) who concentrates on local participation in nature conservation in England and a recent book by Keulartz and Leistra (2008), who elaborate the interactive policy forms in European Union nature conservation. From a Canadian perspective, a closely related example is found in Parkins (2006) study after participatory approaches in the forestry sector in Alberta. The reason for the relatively small amount of research in Western countries in this field, can be found in the mode of governance present in nature conservation until the early nineties. Nature conservation policy was, to a large extend, dominated by ecologists and experts, creating science based, technocratic, policy from a top-down perspective. In other policy fields the shift towards a more deliberative mode of governance had already taken place, but nature conservation remained a stronghold of biologists and experts. Eventually, the critique that these forms of policy making were too insensitive to local interests and too elitists for modern societies, also resonated in this field. Wide spread interactive processes started to penetrate the conservation policy making on a wider scale from the early nineties onwards (Keulartz & Leistra, 2008, pp. 5). A good example can be found in the European Union's Bird and Habitat Directive and Natura 2000, which marked an important transition towards a more deliberative style in European nature conservation policy (Van Tatenhove, 2008, pp. 104).

From a broader, environmental perspective, the body of literature on interactive policy processes is extensive (see for instance: Dorcey & McDaniels, 2001; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Mitchell, 2005). In most studies a similar image comes forward: the processes are usually consultative in nature, taking place after the policy has been initiated and the influence of actors on the outcomes is somewhat limited. After a promising start of interactive policy making in the environmental sphere in the nineteen-seventies, the concept suffered according to Dorcey & McDaniels (2001, pp 261):

"...Enthusiasm across Canada for the new citizen involvement initiatives waned in the mid-nineties as governments at all levels became doubtful about their worth and as concerns about the economic issues came to dominate their agendas."

Nevertheless, interactive processes are increasingly used in Canadian environmental policy making and also seem to move further up Arnsteins ladder (which will be elaborated extensively on page 30) (Dorcey & McDaniels, 2001, pp. 262). According to these authors (2001, pp. 264):

"There has been a general shift at least in principle, by governments from Beierle's managerialist perspective [the lower rungs of the ladder, ed.] to a greater emphasize on the pluralist perspective [middle rungs of the ladder, ed.], and citizens have increasingly become interested in the popular perspective [upper

rungs of the ladder]. Such a shift could imply that a potential transformation in environmental governance is under way, but only time and research will tell whether the change is significant."

The success of the processes varies and it is unclear whether nature conservation benefits from these approaches. Irrespective of the substantive success, the process legitimacy increased. In recent studies, some positive results are known (Johnson, 2007; Kleemann & O'Riordan, 2002), but negative examples, in which the actual conservation targets suffered from an interactive process, are listed as well (Goodwin, 1998; Castro & Nielsen, 2001). Since most participants and administrations usually invest a considerable amount of time and resources they feel easily disappointed if the process does not give them what they expected (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). In 2003, Graham et al; presented a working document for Parks Canada on participation and governance in which they stated that a well-designed process is key. Therefore it is necessary to (1) determine whether or not the current policy issue is suitable for an interactive policy process and (2) design an interactive policy process in such a way that it suits the needs of the policy issue.

2.4.3 Criteria for an interactive policy process

Before starting an interactive policy process, it is necessary to determine whether or not the issue is suitable for such a process. Pröpper & Steenbeek (2001, pp. 43) give five criteria listed in table 4. First, time is an important factor, when a problem is imminent and quick action is required, an interactive process might not be suitable as a decision making tool. Examples can be found in shock events like the outbreak of the bird flu virus, which required immediate, specialists action. Second issues must carry sufficient interest from the public. When only a handful of individual (groups) is concerned with the issue, or the problem is simply something not recognized by the majority of the public, it might not be worth the extra effort of interactive policy making. Third, the issue must be manageable. This means that the people who try to solve a certain problem are capable of doing so and know and understand what the problem is. For a local community, for example, it is useless to try and solve the climate change problem, since the scale, scope and complexity are much bigger than their community can cope with. This point also refers to the fact that the participants can freely negotiate, deliberate and have a meaningful role to fulfill. When the issue is a highly important political point, it might not work, since other forces determine the outcomes. Fourth, it is important that there is still room for consideration. The issue is not yet clear. Although the third point states that it is important to know what the problem is, it is not yet determined what the exact causes are and what the best solutions are. The last point states that issues can be publicly discussed. Certain policy issues, for instance around military defense, are subject to secrecy and thus not suitable for interactive policy making.

When a problem or issue fits these criteria, an interactive policy process might be considered. The advantages of interactive policy making, outlined in section 2.4.1, are arguments in favor. But how to design the process? What form should it take and what instruments are sufficient in what situation? The work of Arnstein (1969) makes a good starting point, since she designed the now famous participation ladder. This ladder clearly shows the levels of influence participants have in different forms of interactive policy making (figure 10). Arnstein distinguishes eight rungs on the

ladder, in three different categories: nonparticipation, tokenism and citizen power. The lower two rungs of the ladder refer to processes in which governments or power holders solely ‘educate’ or ‘cure’ participants, to be able to pursue and realize certain policies.

<u>Issues suitable for an interactive policy process</u>	
1. <i>The issues leaves sufficient time for negotiations, before a decision has to be made</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The issue is not very urgent, there is time for decision-making
2. <i>The issue is important and has sufficient (public) interest</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The issue is sufficiently important for the administration to justify the additional resources, cost and time ▪ The participants are interested in the issue, it is important for them and it connects to their visions and time-frame
3. <i>The issue is manageable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The administration is sufficiently competent to handle the issue (in both scale and complexity) ▪ The issue can be clearly distinguished from other issues ▪ The issue can be clearly distinguished in time ▪ The issue is not too technically complex for participants to understand ▪ The issue is open to participation: it is not a highly political problem
4. <i>The issue is not yet fully clear</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The issue has not yet been fully analyzed; a common perception has not yet been reached ▪ The (ideal) solutions have not yet been determined
5. <i>The issue is public</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is not necessary to solve the problem behind closed doors; no parts of it are secret

Table 4: Criteria for a policy issue (adapted from: Pröpper & Steenbeek, 2001, pp. 43)

According to Arnstein this is by no means genuine participation. The second category of ‘tokenism’ is somewhat ambiguous. Rungs three to five could work, on the condition that power holders actually listen to what is said in the process. The ambiguity lies in the fact that participants lack the power to insure that their views and interests are taken into account. Arnstein (1969, pp. 217) states: “When participation is restricted to these levels, there is [often] no follow-through, no ‘muscle’, hence no assurance of changing the status quo”. When further climbing the ladder, the role of the participant changes. The influence and decision making power of the participant increases. The partnership rung (6), enables participants to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with the power holders. The seventh and eight rungs turn around the roles at the table. Citizens have the majority of the decision making power, but also have responsibility for the issue. To overcome the deadlock or status quo position in which traditional power holders make decisions, only the upper rungs of the ladder are really useful, according to Arnstein. Although this ladder was of great inspiration of many theorists around interactive policy making, it is somewhat over-simplified and it

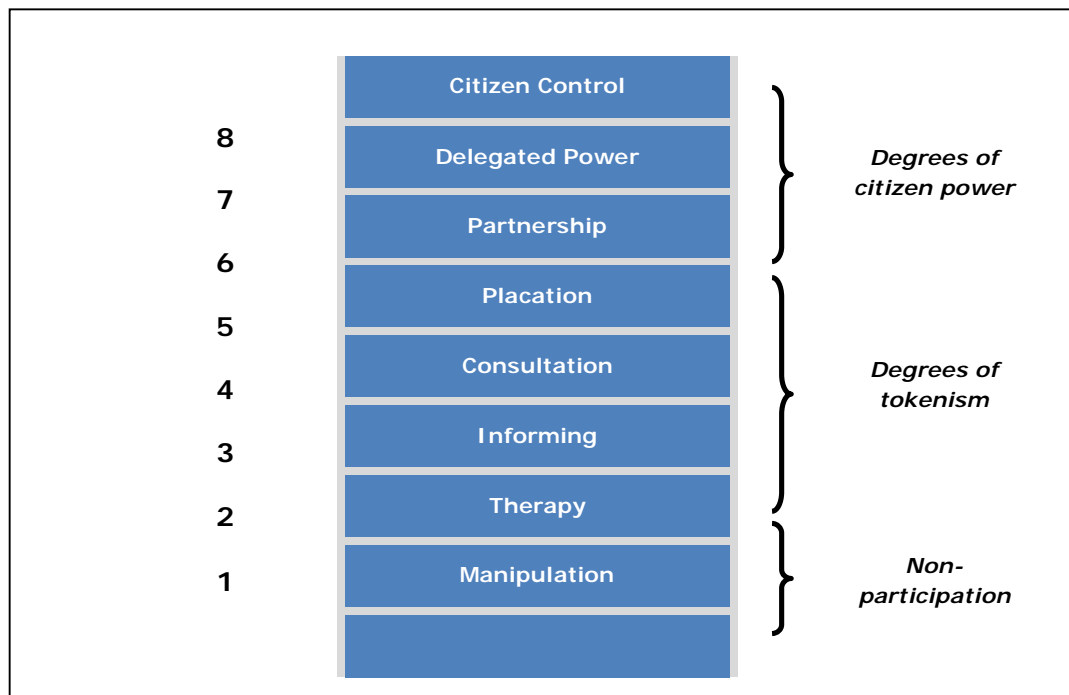


Figure 10: Participation Ladder (Arnstein, 1969, pp. 217)

dismisses the value of some of the lower rungs too easily (points partially acknowledged by Arnstein, though). Key point is however that the ladder provides a distinction between forms of interactive policy making and clearly shows that *participation* (in the highest rungs of the ladder) is significantly different from *consultation* or *information* (lower rungs of the ladder).

Almost forty years have passed since Arnsteins article was published, and experience learned us a lot about interactive policy making. Many authors (OECD, 2001; Irvin & Stansbury, 2004; Dorsey & McDaniels, 2001; Bayley & French, 2008; Mitchell, 2005; Pröpper & Steenbeek, 2001) have further elaborated the framework and all come forward with a more or less similar set of criteria for designing an interactive policy processes (table 5). The first deals with objectives of the process. Governments initiating an interactive policy process must be clear about the objectives they want to reach through the process. In this way, the participants know beforehand what is expected from them, and what they can expect from the government. As outlined by Arnstein, a consultation process is very different from a partnership process. In other words, the *status* of the process should be clear. The second criterion states that all relevant information regarding the issue should be provided to all participants. People can only form a well-considered opinion and come up with creative solutions after having studied all the relevant information. An open debate is strenuous or even impossible when parties argue about different sources of information, not known to all involved actors (OECD, 2001). Third, all parties should be treated equal in the process. This is of vital importance, since parties who feel treated unequally or who are simply uninvited, will be inclined to use their influence to block or frustrate the process (Johnson, 2007, pp. 88). Not inviting certain actors or privilege some over others, might create more resistance to outcomes and measures than there would have been without an interactive process (Dorsey & McDaniels, 2001, pp. 254). The fourth criterion deals with adequate time allocation. An interactive process is time consuming and needs sufficient time to be fruitful. Actors need time to study all the relevant

Criteria for interactive policy processes
1. <i>Clear objectives for the process (clarity about the role of the participants and the status of the contribution)</i>
2. <i>Complete, objective, reliable and accessible information about the issue</i>
3. <i>Equality: all parties with a significant interest are included and have equal opportunities to participate throughout the process</i>
4. <i>Adequate time allocation</i>
5. <i>Openness and transparency of the process</i>
6. <i>Sufficient commitment (the outcomes of the process are reflected in the policy, regardless of what the outcomes are)</i>

Table 5: Criteria for an interactive policy process

information and debate over possible solutions. Creative and win-win solutions only arise when there is sufficient time to think and negotiate about them (Edelenbos et al; 2001, pp. 17). Fifth, the process should be open and transparent. The agenda is preferably set in cooperation with the participants and the process is open for public review and comments. Clear (in- and outside) communication is essential. Secrecy and ‘closed doors’ might only arouse suspicion from the outside and negatively influence the outcomes (Mitchell, 2005, pp. 139). Sixth, higher levels within government should commit to the process, which means they will respect and take into account the outcomes of the process (Dorcey & McDaniels, 2001, pp. 257). When a government department organizes an interactive policy process, but the outcomes are simply ignored or rejected by the political leaders, the process is useless and risks to only increase the ‘gap’ between citizens and politics and to negatively affect the legitimacy of the proposed measures.

The criteria mentioned in the table might apply in every interactive policy process, regardless of the level and participation ladder rung on which they take place. For example a well designed consultation can be a valuable instrument, provided it is clear from the start that it is a consultative process. When the intention is created that it might be a participatory project (in which the actors have decision making powers) and this turns out not to be the case, actors will almost always feel disappointed and perceive the process as window-dressing. The next section discusses the most important dilemmas around interactive policy making.

2.4.4 Dilemmas in interactive policy processes

Apart from advantages, interactive planning has several disadvantages and dilemmas as well. I will point out four crucial questions that are inextricably linked to interactive policy making and pose

dilemma's for initiators of these processes. Hage and Leroy (2008) present them under the categories of *involvement*, *equality*, *flexibility* and *timing*. They are summarized in table 6.

<i>Dilemmas in interactive policy processes</i>	
1.	<i><u>Involvement</u></i> : inviting a large number of people to participate increases capacity and representation, but significantly slows down the process.
2.	<i><u>Equality</u></i> : Every actor is supposed to be treated equal, but power is unevenly distributed in the real world. Is it the initiators task to redistribute the resources?
3.	<i><u>Flexibility</u></i> : An interactive process should be open and undetermined, but on the other hand initiators have certain problems to solve and ambitions to realize.
4.	<i><u>Timing</u></i> : Should the process start early and thus very vague or should the initiators wait until later, making contributions of stakeholders less valuable?

Table 6: Dilemmas in interactive policy processes (adapted from: Hage & Leroy, 2008, pp. 20-21)

Involvement: who is on the table representing who?

When starting an interactive policy process one of the first questions that need answering is 'who should be on the table?'. It has already been outlined that all relevant actors that have a specific interest in the issue, should be there. Although this might seem clear it is far from. Inviting a broad array of people increases legitimacy and capacity, but on the other hand will significantly slow down the already complex process. Also, initiators often want an equal input from all different angles, but not all parties have equal resources to participate (Hage & Leroy, 2008, pp. 33). Is it legitimate to selectively invite parties from the perspective of the equality argument? The first dilemma deals with legitimacy. Since not everybody can be on the table for practical reasons, interest groups have to be distinguished (Dorcey & McDaniels, 2001, pp. 276). But what are the criteria for creating these groups and who will represent them? The role of nature itself here is ambiguous, since nature is both subject and participant. And what is at stake in these processes also influences future generations. So following the criteria for a well-designed process, both these interests (nature and future generations) should be at the table. This poses a dilemma, according to O'Neill (2001): The representation of nature is supposed to be taken up by governmental bodies, but at the same time they cannot, or do not want to, fulfill this role, because they have different priorities or objectives (see section 1.3). Nature conservation organizations have gradually taken up this role and now usually sit at the table 'representing nature'. But is their claim of defending nature and the next generations legitimate? O'Neill (2001) points out, that it is problematic to represent someone or something of which the representative is not a part. A human being representing an animal implies that the human knows and can defend the specific interests of the animal.

Connected to this point, though less philosophical, is the point about conflicting interests both in substance and in level. The former refers to the problem that a human representing the non-human world, is on the table wearing two hats. One of them is his human, worldly, economic and other interests and the other are the interests of nature. Usually these go side by side for many conservationists, but there are situations in which they might conflict. O'neil (2001, pp. 494) points out the example of an environmental activist whose father owns a farm that is subject to strict regulations or even closure under new policy. Can the activist sit on the table, representing nature in this case? The 'level' argument is connected to Etzioni's subsidiarity concept: local (environmental) groups might have other interests and objectives than national conservationist groups. Solutions that solve the local problems might not necessarily be in the interest of the higher level. For instance the building of a dam in a river to prevent floods in a certain community, might negatively affect the downstream fish populations on which part of the provincial economy relies. Thus although it is legitimate to give authority and responsibility for solving a local problem to the local communities, it might not always be desired from a broader perspective.

Inequality: the imbalance of power

Next to representation another important issue has been pointed out by many authors (see for example: Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Smith & McDonough, 2001): the unequal distribution of power. One of the important criteria for interactive policy processes states that all parties are equal and should have equal chances. This is however an utopist statement, since power is never equally distributed. Certain actors or parties simply have more resources and influence 'behind the scenes' than others. Actors that possess these resources will almost always try to use them to influence the policy outcomes in a direction which is favorable to them. In some cases 'the decision has already been made before the process starts' (Smith & McDonough, 2001). Castro & Nielsen (2001) give an example of the partnership between natural resource companies and the government in managing oil in Northern Canada. In this process, local communities and First Nations participate, but lack the power to actually influence the process. The industry possesses far larger resources to steer the process to favorable outcomes. The dilemma here is whether or not the initiator of the process is allowed to intervene in this power imbalance by selecting actors or redistributing resources.

Flexibility: ambition vs. legitimacy?

When done properly, an open, interactive policy process will generate outcomes favorable to most participants. But these outcomes might not necessarily be very ambitious or even solve the problem at hand (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004). The latter is often advocated by those who fear the outcomes are unfavorable to them. However, this does not make them untrue, on the contrary. A major problem related to multi-stakeholder and interactive processes is the risk of an outcome or agreement which lacks ambition and is based on the lowest common denominator (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, pp. 60). This problem arises from the principle of compromise that is often used in interactive stakeholder processes. A decision can only be made, when the majority of the participants agree on the matter. The result often turns out to be an agreement based on the lowest common denominator. Translated to environmental or nature conservation policy, this means the lack of progressive and ambitious measures for protection, since they have to be

'balanced' with economic factors. The local employment often cannot be harmed by environmental interests (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 2001, pp. 150). Examples are plentiful on each administrative level. Far and foremost known is the Kyoto protocol in which the United Nations tried to reach an agreement on how to tackle the climate change issue. The protocol was subject to so much discussion and deliberation, that it has turned out to be rather weak and insufficient to tackle the problem (Wijen & Zoeteman, 2004). Translated to the national level, Bramley (2002) draws similar conclusions: voluntary incentives, based on compromises between several stakeholders, will not be sufficient to tackle climate change in Canada.

Time and Timing

A well-designed interactive policy processes is both expensive and time consuming. At least when compared to a regular policy process, without the input of stakeholders. A group of people working on a decision almost always require more time to make the decision than a single administrator, trained to do so. And not only does he consumes less time, the monetary costs are lower as well, since he is the only one that needs to be paid. In an interactive process, costs like the hiring of an external facilitator, a facility, the distributing of information and the process preparation, easily rise above the salary of the individual administrator (Irvin & Stansbury, 2004, pp. 58). Second, the time consuming processes might delay decisions and measures to situations in dire need of a solution (Pröpper & Steenbeek, 2001, pp. 154). Timing is crucial in an interactive process as well. Initiating participation early in the process might be risky, since everything is still open and vague and the issue might not yet be on the stakeholders agenda. Later in the process stakeholders become more interested and might be more inclined to invest time and resources in participation. But at the same time, later in the process it might be too late to make a meaningful contribution, since the outcomes might have (partially) been determined already (Hage & Leroy, 2008, pp. 20).

3 Canada's Parks Policy History

3.1 Introduction

The case study in this research concentrates on the Provincial parks policy and policy making in Alberta. According to the network theory, context are important and so to be able to understand developments on the Provincial level, one has to take the broader context of the National parks system into account. Especially since the parks and Alberta have a long and complicated history. The case study will be elaborated in four chapters: An introduction into the National parks (ch. 3), A zoom into the Provincial level (ch. 4), An analysis of the substance of the newly proposed provincial policy (ch. 5) and an analysis of the process around this policy (ch. 6). This chapter outlines the history and development of the National parks system and the most important trends in policy therein. The social and political context throughout the decades plays a sometimes vital role in this decision-making. Also it helps to explain the relationship between the Federal and the Provincial level. The chapter starts with a historic overview of the developments in the Canadian Parks system. With the expansion of the system, the way of policy making has changed significantly, which is elaborated in 3.3. The last paragraph 3.4., points out the sometimes difficult relationship between Federal level and the Province of Alberta, bridging the gap to the following chapters on Alberta's policies.

3.2 History of the Canadian National Parks System

In 1885 three employees of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) discovered a hot spring in what is now Banff and the Federal government together with the CPR saw the huge touristic potential of this attraction. In the same year the Rocky Mountain Park (later renamed Banff National Park) was born. During the following decade the Federal government passed the Rocky Mountain Parks act (1887), the legislative basis for the park(s), and installed three more National parks: Yoho, Glacier and Waterton Lakes, in what is now the Province of Alberta. This all happened before and shortly after the actual province was established in 1905 (McNamee, 2008; Mitchell & Pachal, 1995). The parks system would further evolve over the course of the century and by 2007, 42 national parks and reserves had been established, comprising 2,8 % of Canada's land base (figure 11) (McNamee, 2008). The expansion and development of the system can be divided in four era's, based on the distinction by McNamee (2008): (1) the birth of the parks system, (2) the recreation era, (3) the environmental awareness era and (4) parks as a political issue. The first timeframe has already been elaborated above, so the following section concentrates on stages, 2, 3 and 4.

3.2.1 The Recreation Era

The 'recreation era' concentrated on the economic value of parks and tried to bring parks to the people, starting with the creation of the Parks Branch in 1911 and lasting to the late 1950's. Tourism became a more important sector during these days and companies like the famous Brewster Tourism Corporation expanded their activities in mainly the Rocky Mountain parks (Brewster, 2008). More people visited parks as more money became available for leisure activities. Because of the tourism value, politicians were willing to defend the expenditures on parks (McNamee, 2008). Back in the early days the protection part of parks was limited to preventing

resource development, especially forestry, inside protected areas. Tourism was not seen as part of that and developments to benefit this sector were encouraged (McNamee, 2008; Dearden & Rollins, 1993).



Figure 11: Canada's National Parks System (Natural Resources Canada, 2006)

However, the erstwhile commissioner of the Parks Branch, B. Harkin, had a more sophisticated view of the role of parks. He also was in favor of bringing parks to the people, but he realized industrial development could compromise the very reason people came to visit. When the control over crown lands was transferred to the Alberta government in 1930, Harkin made efforts to keep the National parks under federal jurisdiction because, rightly, he was afraid Alberta had different plans for the land. Harkin won his battle to keep parks under federal control, but large pieces of land were removed from the Rocky Mountain parks, as, among others, they had potential for hydro energy development (McNamee, 2008; Gainor, 2005).

In the meanwhile tourism grew further and the parks system expanded into eastern Canada. The expansion of the parks followed very different procedures than the ones used today. The parks branch would simply choose land to set aside as protected area and would remove all inhabitants and their rights. The landowners had no means or rights to oppose this and left the land; consultation wasn't considered as a policy making tool yet. This resulted in a long term negative

image of parks in Canada and would leave a legacy for the next decades. As Alison Woodley, National Parks policy analyst for CPAWS states:

"Somebody would draw lines on a map and people would be expelled within the boundaries. That led to an enormous amount of resentment and negative backlash about parks and it was recognized that you couldn't do conservation this way. The negative outcomes were enormous... The legacy is still there in many parts, and you still bump into negative perceptions of national parks driven by that kind of approach. Even generations later, because people, when they lost their homes, they had their homes removed from them. Their negative experiences, their negatives feelings are even passed down generations".

3.2.2 Changing society: changing parks policy

Despite these negative policies, parks were popular in general. Tourism and family outdoor recreation had taken a boom during the nineteen fifties and were the driving force behind the developments of the parks. Increasing prosperity paved the way for the environmental awareness wave that would hit the Western society including Canada, during the nineteen sixties and seventies (Parson, 2000). Among others, Rachel Carson's book 'Silent Spring' in 1962 and the pictures of 'spaceship earth', taken by the Apollo 10 mission from the moon in 1968, dramatically increased the lay public awareness that our planet was a vulnerable place (Barry, 1999; Jamison, 2001). The focus of parks shifted towards the protection side of the spectrum: the '*environmental awareness*' era. The upcoming environmental organizations, together with the broader public, increased attention and pressure, thereby putting the issue on both the public and political agenda. In 1964 the first comprehensive National Parks policy was implemented, but this still left some room for discussion about the parks mandate and goals. The National Parks Branch wanted a more solid policy that provided guidance and guaranteed continuity, even over multiple administrative terms. They wanted to be more independent from the political mood of the day (McNamee, 2008; Dearden & Rollins, 1993). It would take until 1979, before this debate was finally settled, when ecological integrity was accepted as the prerequisite for other activities and uses. Though positive from an environmental perspective, the technocracy and domination of experts was still growing, leaving the lay public along the side lines.

In the meanwhile, Minister Chrétien took up the national parks portfolio in 1968, and he recognized various new parks were needed to complete the parks system in Canada. The costs for new parks were increasing and potential locations were compromised fast, so quick action was necessary. Chrétien proceeded and added 10 new parks to the system by 1973 and made great progress in ecological terms, but did so without taking local input into consideration and thus continued the negative sphere around new national parks (McNamee, 1995).

3.2.3 Parks as a Political Issue

As described above, the resentment against parks grew and changes in procedures were needed: parks policy definitively became a 'political issue'. With the arrival of the 1980's, interactive policy making became an increasingly important tool for the Parks Branch. In the Canada National Parks Act of 1979, the expropriation of people from their land in order to create or expand parks was no

longer allowed. However, on the other hand, strict guidelines for management plans and developments were in place and could not be part of the consultation discussion. An example are the strict limits set for further developments of the towns of Jasper and Banff and the ski areas inside these parks, to ensure ecological values (Orr, 2004). In the future, parks could only be established, changed or enlarged with local and First Nation consultation. This worked two ways, since it protects the locals from being ignored or overruled, but also made it harder for other parties to change park boundaries for industrial development or other economic gain, thus protecting the park (Boyd, 2002).

When McMillan became the minister of the Environment (and responsible for parks) in 1985, he took his job seriously and was determined to continue the work of Chrétien, by adding new parks to the system. Also, he made perhaps the most important change to national parks policy by amending the National Parks Act, article 5.1.2. After the significant, but still vague change in 1979, the 1988 amendment passed Parliament and the National Parks Act now clearly states that:

"Maintenance of Ecological Integrity through the protection of natural resources shall be the first priority when considering park zoning and visitor use in a management plan" (Government of Canada, 1988)

The amendment forced the government to take action on threats to parks. At the same time, the world also started to learn more about the effects of human development on the planet. The famous landmark report 'Our Common Future' by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), chaired by G.H. Brundtland, was published in 1987. Simply referred to as 'the Brundtland report' it was important for three reasons. First, it linked the environment to economic development and social wellbeing, by introducing 'sustainable development': a holistic view of society in which the three mentioned spheres are interconnected and have to be balanced in order to guarantee long term prosperity. By doing so, it basically challenged the discourse of maximum exploitation of all natural resources, present in various parts of Canada (Dorcey & McDaniels, 2001). Second, the report paved the way for the Earth Summit convention in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, which addressed important issues of biodiversity loss and resulted in signing of the UN treaty on biodiversity by 167 nations, including Canada (Bernstein, 1993). Third, Brundtland explicitly mentions the importance of nature conservation by stating that protected areas should be: *"...managed explicitly to conserve species and ecosystems."* (WCED, 1987, pp. 149) In this context, the World Wildlife Fund and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society started their campaign "Endangered Spaces" in 1989.

The Federal government was the first to sign on to the goals of the campaign: the completion of the Canadian parks network through representation of all natural regions. This was confirmed by the federal cabinet's Green Plan (1990) that set ambitious targets for new protected areas. By the year 2000, 13 new parks should have been established and an extra 40 million dollars were allocated to do so (Gale, 1997). That goal was not quite reached, but by the year 2000, five new national parks comprising 66.700 km², had been installed. During the early years of the new millennium the trend continued when Chrétien, this time as Prime-Minister, announced that the federal government would work to add ten new terrestrial and five new marine parks, within five

years (McNamee, 2008). Learning from its past mistakes, Parks Canada proceeded with a cooperative approach. Thanks to this approach, after 37 years of moratorium, the First Nations of the Lutsel K'e community near Great Slave Lake, agreed on a study after the potential for a new national park comprising 33,000 km² in their region (Parks Canada, 2004a; BSI, 2006). This agreement is considered a landmark, since it shows that parks can be established through cooperation and that people are generally in favor of protected areas, as long as their rights are honoured. Parks are increasingly regarded as part of Canada's proud heritage and gained important symbolic value in politics under McMillan and Chrétien. Woodley, policy analyst for CPAWS states:

"National Parks have really been strongly supported. There has been progress on National Parks under all types of government... there have been conservative governments that have done good things on national parks in the past and liberal governments that have done some good things, it doesn't seem to have a real tendency to be affiliated with one party or another..."

The last part is important, as on the federal level, parks are not considered the issue of a certain party – McMillan was a conservative, Chrétien a liberal – but depend on the personal interest of the minister in office (Boyd, 2002). The national parks system is still incomplete, but improvements are made on a yearly basis. From 2003-2008 more funds have been allocated to parks and more agreements with private land owners were made to expand existing parks, St. Lawrence Islands being the latest example (McNamee, 2008).

3.3 Trends in National Parks Policy

Over the 120 years of parks in Canada, several trends can be distinguished, that are important in understanding today's park system and policies. This section elaborates four important trends on the Federal level: (1) the shift from recreation to conservation, (2) the shift to a stricter scientific-technocratic basis, (3) the shift from a top-down to a bottom-up governance style and (4) the multi-level shift: parks as a national issue, to parks as an multi-level issue.

3.3.1 Trends explained

The first trend can be unraveled in three stages. The start of the parks system, when the main focus was on recreation and tourism, is the first and would roughly last from 1885-1960 (figure 12). The figure shows nature as types of 'green', distinguishing different levels of protection. The 'darker' the color, the stricter the protection regime in parks and protected areas. The first era is

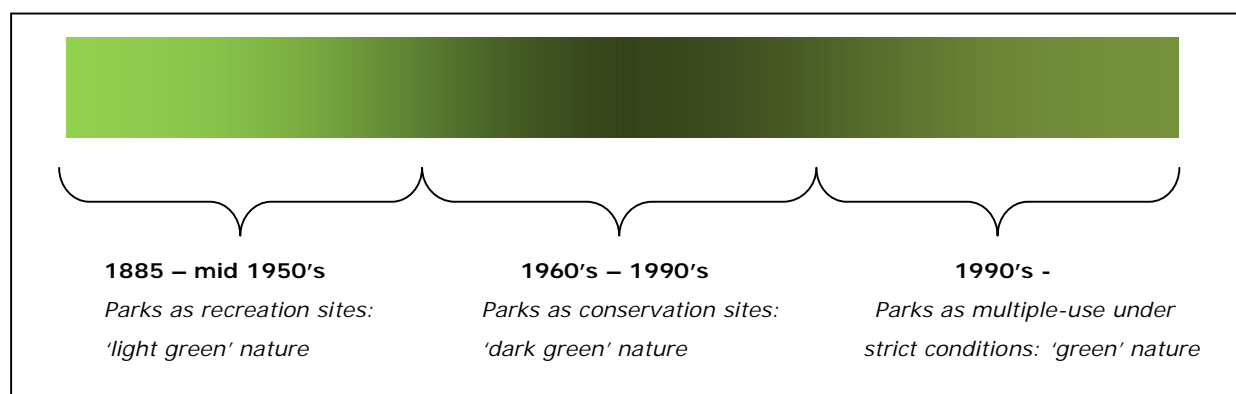


Figure 12: Nature conservation shifts over time

therefore light colored, since recreation had the highest priority and several forms of industrial development were still allowed inside national parks or would at least force parks to give up lands that had development potential. The trend changed during the environmental awareness period, to darker green nature conservation. Protection became the most important issue for parks and industrial development was largely banned. Recreation remains, but has to meet stricter criteria. With the arrival of the late 1990's the trend was slightly changed again. Strict rules for development remained in place, but a more cooperative approach towards local people was adopted and implemented. This phase is called 'green' nature conservation. Strict rules and conditions, but with room for sophisticated and locally adapted policies, based on compromise and cooperation (see also point 3).

The second trend concerns the shift from a rather ad-hoc approach to parks planning, towards a technocratic, framework planning approach. In the early years, decisions were made by the parks branch on a day to day, ad-hoc basis. Biological and ecological science and monitoring played a minor role, since neither the need, nor the resources were available or perceived necessary for management. This changed under the same environmental awareness trends in the 1960's and 1970's. Scientific research would form the basis under parks planning issues for the future. Important studies like the Parks Canada report on the state of the parks in 1987 and the Banff-Bow Valley study in 1994 are examples of this (McNamee, 2008; Parks Canada, 2004a). Today multiple monitoring programs are in place, many universities conduct independent research in parks that is used in management planning and a state of the parks report is issued by Parks Canada every five years (Parks Canada, 2004b).

A third trend can be found in the changes of operational procedures and approach of the Parks Canada branch. During most of the twentieth century the branch operated in a top-down governance style. Although this created and saved several important areas in the parks system, the approach left a negative legacy and mistrust among local people towards parks. During the 1970's the public became more vocal and the agency started to realize it could not continue these policies. Interactive policy making became part of the management toolbox and the local voices were incorporated (Boyd, 2002). Nowadays cooperation is an important pillar in the policies of the Parks Canada agency: a top-down approach shifted towards a bottom-up, cooperative management style. The results of this were twofold, both positive and negative. Positive because there was increasing support for parks by local and First Nation communities, throughout Canada (Dearden, 2008; McNamee, 2008). Negative because increased integrated management means more departments are involved in negotiations on the table when new parks are concerned, which might result in a more complicated process and compromised outcomes. According to Alison Woodley, National parks policy analyst for CPAWS:

"Parks Canada does the public feasibility studies, the process, the research/science, the public consultations, they come up with a recommended boundary and then it goes to the federal government where all the mineral interests are sitting at the table and somehow this has to be resolved... The fundamental system and perspective of the departments is entirely different. So at the end of the day the

recommendation is (a) either a huge compromise where any mineral areas, etc. are left out, or (b) a huge fight right at the cabinet table”.

The last trend distinguished here, is a shift in scope of the national parks system. In the early years the parks system primarily had a national focus, in two ways. First, it aimed at wealthy Canadian (and eventually some American) tourists to come visit the parks. Especially the Rocky Mountain parks with their luxurious hotels and hot springs aimed for this crowd (McNamee, 2008). Second, international treaties on ecological or biological issues weren't part of the spectrum yet.

Box 1: The International Context: Rocky Mountain World Heritage Site

Canada's largest world heritage site is the 'Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks' site. It comprises an area of 22,900 km² in four National Parks; Jasper, Banff, Yoho, Kootenay and British Columbia's Mount Assiniboine, Mount Robson and Humber Provincial Parks. Originally inscribed to the list in 1984 and expanded in 1990, the parks are: *“studded with mountain peaks, glaciers, lakes, waterfalls, canyons and limestone caves, form a striking mountain landscape”* (World Heritage Committee, 2006). The inscription on the list means that the protection of the site and its values must be guaranteed through legislation, according to UNESCO operational guidelines:

“Legislative and regulatory measures at national and local levels should assure the survival of the property and its protection against development and change that might negatively impact the outstanding universal value, or the integrity and/or authenticity of the property. States Parties should also assure the full and effective implementation of such measures” (UNESCO, 2008, pp. 25).

Also, increasing international attention for the site contributes to more third party reviews of the management practices and can lead to better standards and increased funding. However, designation as a world heritage site does not necessarily mean change. UNESCO itself has no legislative authority and cannot demand the implementation of specific measures. The specific effects of the designation are difficult to measure, especially since the Rocky Mountain Parks already enjoyed a well-known status worldwide.

Although inscription as a world heritage site (WHS) is considered honorable to most people and stakeholders (Parks Canada, 2006b), local communities do not always agree. An example can be found in the recent WHS expansion plans for the Rocky Mountain Parks, to include Willmore Wilderness Park. The park has been in place since 1959 under its own legislation, which, among others, allows for traditional hunting, fishing, trapping and horseback riding inside the park and prohibits any industrial development. Local communities, who partially rely on these activities as a source of income, fear that the designation to the world heritage site will result in prohibiting certain activities and increase visitor numbers (Wearmouth, 2007). In a 2007 input letter, the Willmore Wilderness Foundation (representing the local communities) states:

“The Willmore Wilderness Foundation is opposed to this application and is very disappointed that TPRC has contacted Parks Canada and BC Parks without any preliminary public consultation”.

On the other hand, increasing pressures from the resource industry to develop precious natural resources inside the park form a threat at the same time. The designation as part of the world heritage site could create more international attention and might prevent the development from taking over. In other words: protecting the traditional values and activities. The problem at hand is that the local community and Parks Canada have a different scope and view of the problem at hand, which causes misunderstandings both ways. Parks Canada perceives the designation as an opportunity to protect the park, while the local community fears changes to their rights and traditional uses. The result is mistrust between the two actors, while they seem so close to wanting the same thing: protecting wilderness.

This gradually changed when the Canadian Parks gained increasing international attention as a prime tourist destination. Nowadays over five million people visit Banff and Jasper every year, 60% of whom are foreigners and these parks became Canada's postcard picture destinations (Parks Canada, 2004c; ATPR, 2008e). Also, several international treaties, directly affecting parks policy, were signed by the Canadian government. Among others, the 1993 International Treaty on Biodiversity and the Ramsar International Convention on Wetlands in 1971 committed the Canadian government to adopt international standards for parks, creating a multi-level governance structure. The Parks Canada agency even went one step further, by taking a leadership role in the 2003 World Parks Congress in South Africa, showing their commitment to high standards for protected areas management (Graham et al., 2003). Furthermore, the Rocky Mountain Parks of Jasper, Banff, Kootenay and Yoho are selected as a World Heritage Site under the UNESCO World Heritage List. This emphasizes their exceptional ecological and cultural value and strengthens international attention, making it harder to pursue activities that negatively affect the area, though it does not change the legal status whatsoever. At the same time, this is somewhat controversial among local people (see box 1).

3.3.2 Effects of trends

The effects of the described trends and shifts in parks management are threefold: (1) better policies, (2) increased legitimacy and (3) improvements in ecological integrity in parks (see table 7). The first effect can be seen in the improvements made in policies from a management perspective. Policies are more integrated and are no longer made on an ad-hoc basis. This benefits the long term goals of parks, by providing consistency and stability (McNamee, 2008). However, at the same time, they might significantly slow down parks initiatives, because multi-sector and multi-actor interests are not necessarily aligned. Second, the change to a more cooperative approach resulted in increased legitimacy for management plans and policies. Public consultation, openness and transparency of procedures have contributed to a better understanding of, and a greater appreciation for parks (Lowry, 1999). Last, there have been significant improvements in

<i>Trends</i>	<i>Effects of changes</i>
1. Recreation to conservation	Adds to securing long term ecological integrity by legislating and implementing conservation as the primary goal for Canada's National Parks.
2. Stricter scientific basis for policies	Policy making is no longer ad-hoc, but long term, well informed and science based. This results in more stability for parks and better protection and guarantees for ecological integrity, thus better policy.
3. Top-down to bottom-up approach	Increasing understanding and support for parks and increased legitimacy, due to cooperative approach, but can slow down process of creating new parks for reasons of conflicting interests.
4. National to international issue	Commitments to international treaties force government to take protected area issues seriously. International attention contributes to economic value of park for local community.

Table 7: policy trends and effects in National Parks

ensuring ecological integrity in National Parks (Parks Canada, 2004d): Stricter rules regarding industrial and resource developments inside parks and a clear focus on conservation result in

increasing ecological value of the protected areas (McNamee, 2008; Boyd, 2002). The connections and relations between national level and the provincial level is elaborated in the next section.

3.4 Linking levels: Alberta and the Federal Government

Alberta and the National parks have always been intensively connected, since the first parks were installed in what would later become Alberta's territory. This section elaborates the connection between the federal level and the provincial level in terms of social and political context.

Alienation of the West

The province and the federal government have a historically embedded, complicated relation. It all started with the first national park, Banff, in Alberta, but the relations between the federal and the provincial level soon hardened and a first climax was reached with the devolution of control over natural resources in 1930. As outlined in sections 3.2, Parks Canada kept control over the National Parks, an issue Alberta did not agree with, but was forced to accept (McNamee, 2008; Gainor 2005). A second and very influential initiative was the National Energy Program (NEP), which was launched by Liberal Prime Minister Trudeau in 1980. The policy aimed to ensure energy supplies, primarily oil, for Canadians, largely at the expense of oil-rich Alberta (Scarf, 1980). It was perceived to benefit eastern Canada, at the expense of the west: Albertans were furious. In fact it was so unpopular, that it caused the Alberta Liberals to almost totally disappear from the Legislative Assembly in Alberta, never to return (see box 2). Third, in the Special Places 2000 program, the anti-federal stance was highlighted again, with the introduction of the term: "made in Alberta" policy. By framing their initiatives this way, the province dissociates itself further from the federal government. These events highlight the deeper biases in the Province of Alberta. Ever since the founding of Canada, the eastern part of the country was a frontier, a wild and undeveloped place, where inhabitants relied on their own knowledge, skills and friendships to survive. This left a legacy of autonomy and far-reaching liberalism; a feeling that administrations should only interfere with people's lives to a minimum extent. The fact that the power base of Canada was and is still located in the eastern provinces fueled these feelings (Lawson, 2005). Even though the current federal Prime Minister, conservative Steven Harper, has Calgary roots, does not seem to change long standing grievances. Many authors (among others: Caldarola, 1979; Gibbins & Berdahl, 2003; Henry, 2000; Lawson, 2005) point out this problem and term it "the alienation of the west".

Second, there is a constitutional situation in which the federal level has little influence on provincial politics. The provinces have a high level of autonomy, compared to other nations with similar structures, like the U.S., since almost all public land falls under provincial jurisdiction (Gibbins and Berdahl, 2003; Lowry, 1999). Nevertheless Alberta contributes the second largest percentage of land base to the National parks system, after the Northwest Territories. Of all the National park land base in Canada, over 17.5 % is located within Alberta's boundaries (Parks Canada, 2006a). Considering the fact that the Northwest Territories consist mainly of uninhabited wilderness with a population density of 0.03 inhabitants per square kilometer, Alberta's contribution has a significantly larger impact on the province (Statistics Canada, 2006a). Within the aforementioned context, many Albertans perceive this as land taken away from them by the 'Feds'.

On the broader scale of politics in Canada, the federal level only has ultimate authority over certain aspects like military defense, education and justice. Most other policy issues are largely left to the provinces, which have separate Legislative Assemblies and elections. In daily live issues, the provincial government has a far larger impact on residents, than the federal government. Although the federal level can set guidelines for these issues, they have little or no tools to demand implementation by the provinces. This research further concentrates on the Alberta policy level, but at the same time regularly refers back to the problematic relation between these two policy levels.

3.5 Conclusions

Over the past century the protected areas network has grown exponentially and a whole new body of policy has been developed. Within these developments, several shifts have taken place. Important here is the paradigm shift around the perceptions of parks. These have changed from a recreation focus, to a conservation focus explained by the changing social engagement in environmental issues. This increasing engagement has also changed the process of policy making. Citizen involvement in interactive processes has become a popular tool for policy making around protected areas and parks. Whether or not these trends are similar on the Provincial level will be elaborated in the next chapters. Fact is that the Provinces in Canada, especially in the west, have a difficult relationship with the Federal level. This might have a significant influence on the policies on the lower level and also reduce the influence of the multi-level dimension (see chapter 5).

4 Alberta: History of the Provincial Parks System

4.1 Introduction

After describing the National context in chapter 3, this chapter zooms in on the case study level: the Province of Alberta and its protected areas policy. The chapter consists of four parts, starting with an overview of the provincial *social and economic* context. Next, the history and development of the Provincial parks system is elaborated leading to an in dept analysis of the last twenty years of parks policy making. In these two decades several developments have taken place that have greatly influenced and even shaped the current *policy domain specific* context. They consist of the Special Places program and the aftermath and run up to the newly presented parks planning framework, elaborated in chapters 5 and 6.

4.2 Alberta, Province of extremes: the socio-economic context

Alberta is one of the ten provinces and four territories, ranking the fourth largest province of Canada and occupying a land area of 661,848 square kilometers; about sixteen times the size of the Netherlands. In the east, the Rocky Mountain range marks the border with British Columbia. North it is bounded by the vast lands of the Northwest Territories, the prairie province of Saskatchewan in the west and the international border with the U.S.A. in the south (figure 13). The province has a large variation in geology, ranging from mountains in the west, to flatland prairie grassland in the east and boreal forest in the North (ATPR, 2008a). A fast growing number of 3.2 million inhabitants in 2006, especially the corridor between Calgary-Edmonton, make it one of the most densely populated regions in the country (Statistics Canada, 2006a).



Figure 13: Alberta (Mapquest, 2008)

The large population growth over the past two decades can be explained by major growth in the oil and gas development sectors (see below). Especially during the past two decades this growth caused massive immigration from other provinces to Alberta. And this doesn't seem to be over yet, since the government projects 5 million inhabitants in 2026 (Government of Alberta, 2008a).

Economic context

The economy is fueled by resource development, which makes Alberta by far the richest province of Canada. The per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 2006 was C\$ 66,275 compared to an average of C\$ 33,553 for Canada (Cross and Bowlby, 2006). The primary contributors to this are oil, gas and timber exploitation (Timoney & Lee, 2001). This hasn't always been the case, on the contrary. At the start of the twentieth century Alberta was a vast wilderness, with little development except for some minor logging. The oil sands and conventional oil and gas were discovered in the province around the same time, however, they would not take off for another seventy years. Development costs were very high and with abundance of oil elsewhere, it was simply not worth investing in the oil sands. In fact, Alberta was a struggling province and Ottawa even had supportive measures in place to help out. People were encouraged to move west and free land was given away, to make this happen (Marsden, 2007).

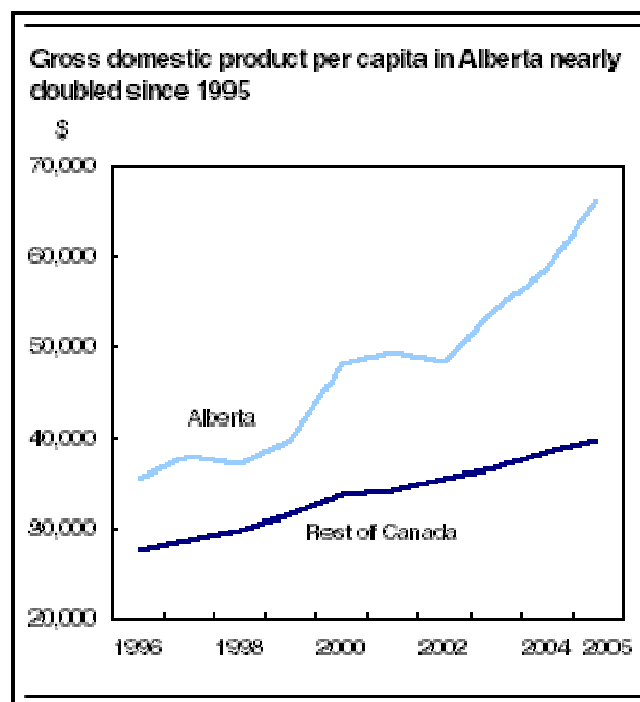


Figure 14: Alberta's GDP 1995-2005 (Statistics Canada, 2006b)

But when the oil crisis hit the world in 1973, Alberta woke up and started to invest more in the oil sands. Another fifteen years passed and by the end of the nineteen eighties Alberta would enter the world of major energy producing 'nations'. The economic developments the rest of the world had witnessed in the 1950-60's, finally hit this Province too. This attracted many people in search of their part of the oil wealth and the cities of Calgary and Edmonton exploded. Income rose during some years of the nineteen seventies with 20-30 % per year! Then, after a little slowdown in the early eighties (see next section), it was on the rise again and not about to stop. By the early years

of the current millennium, Alberta's GDP grew exponentially, together with the oil prices on the world markets (OBM, 2006). This even caused a second economic boom in the early years of the new millennium (figure 14). Between 2002-2005, Alberta's GDP rose with as much as 43%, a number comparable to China's economic growth during that period. The oil and gas industry is by far the largest contributor to this figure (Cross & Bowlby, 2006; Harris & Khare, 2002). Since demand for energy by upcoming nations like China and India, but also the U.S., is unlikely to drop over the next years, Alberta's economic golden age is unlikely to be over soon. However, the consequences of this economic focus for the environment, and nature conservation in particular, are plentiful and analyzed in this chapter.

Box 2: Consequences of economic booms

The economic boom in Alberta is fully based on a resource economy, which means its prosperity comes from non-renewable resources. Although the temporary prosperity is attractive today, it also creates several negative effects, known as the Dutch Disease. After finding natural gas in the Netherlands in the nineteen sixties, the country's inflation rates rose and export stagnated, threatening its economy in the long run (Corden, 1984; World Bank, 2008). Alberta is seeing some similar effects. Its inflation rate was the highest in Canada, at 4,1 % in 2006 and 4,9 % in 2007, with consumer price increases in one single month reaching 1,3 percent between January and February 2006 (Alberta Finance, 2007; Statistics Canada, 2007). Another effect is the increase in house prices, since constructing companies concentrate on large scale, highly lucrative, industrial (mainly oil and gas) projects instead of primary housing (see figure 15). Except from increasing house prices this development also causes problems for the government to find constructors for their projects. In a 2007 highway overpass project, the lowest offer by a constructing company was twice the amount allocated for the project (CBC, 2007).

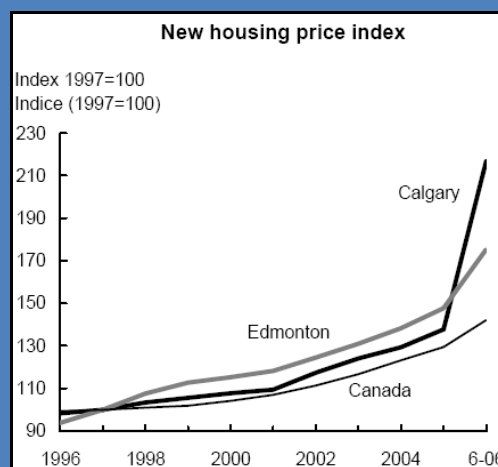


Figure 15: House Price Index (Cross & Bowlby, 2006)

Except for these economic consequences, there are several social consequences. Alberta's labor market is alarmingly tight and starts to disrupt for two reasons: First, there is an overall shortage of personnel in almost any sector and wages have gone sky-high, since oil companies are paying outrageous salaries for unschooled labor in oil sands and pipelining projects (Marsden, 2007; Cross & Bowlby, 2006). Second, this causes more high school students to choose for a career in the oil sands, without following any post-secondary education. The overall education level might drop as a result, leaving no back-up for times when the natural resources run out.

Finally, there are several environmental consequences related to economic booms based on resource industries which are widely elaborated in this thesis (for specific impacts of oil sands see also: Pembina Institute, 2005). In particular in times of economic prosperity, it becomes harder to impose measures to protect the environment, since this might compromise the development that contributes to the boom and keeps the economy thriving: the trap of the vicious circle (see also box 3 on Alberta politics).

Box 3: Political Context: elections, influence and access

Similar to other Canadian jurisdictions, Alberta has a plurality electoral system based on ridings and a winner-takes-it-all philosophy. However, the outcome of this system in Alberta is different from other jurisdictions in Canada and even the western world. Over the past thirty-five years, the Conservative Party ruled in the legislative assembly and controls the political system. They hold the (vast) majority of seats in the house, since 1971 (figure 16). This is explainable from an economic perspective. People are accustomed to the wealth generating resource industry (section 3.1), and are unlikely to give this up. Political parties vowing to impose stricter rules on the environment for instance – usually found on the left side of the political spectrum – are therefore very unpopular in Alberta. Second, rural Alberta has a strong frontier, laissez-faire tradition, in which government opposed rules are unpopular and people take care of their own business. And precisely these two sectors, rural Alberta and resource industry, represent the electoral power base in this province.

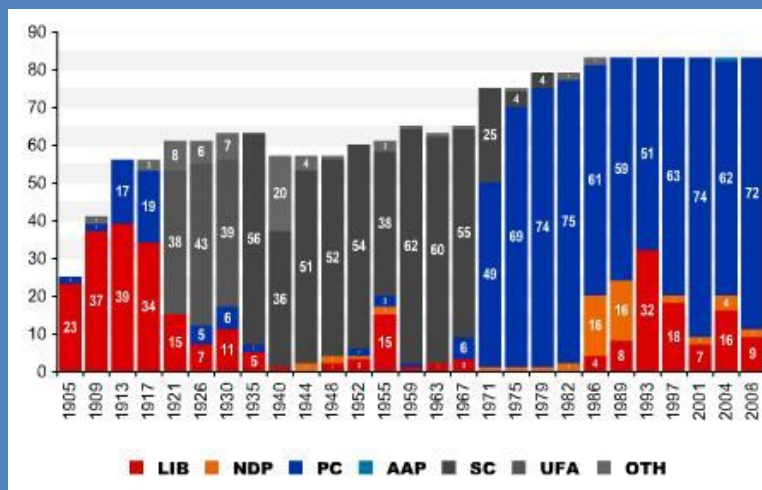


Figure 16: Election results since 1905 (Nodice, 2008)

The consequences are that government in 2008 is formed by the Conservatives, holding 72 out of 83 seats in the legislative assembly: an opposition is basically non-existent. The two existing opposition parties receive minimal funding and are both practically broke, limiting their options to protest through media coverage. This blocks off access to policy decision making for counter movements and NGO's, since they normally would have access through the opposition parties (Laird, 1993). Conservative government can basically pass any regulation or legislation it pleases, since they hold a ¾ majority. Also, the role of watchdog, usually occupied by the opposition, is unfulfilled (Schmitz, 1988). This results in a style of governance, almost an etatist style, not often seen in Western democracies. Genuine debate and interactive policy making have proven to be difficult under these circumstances.

4.3 History of Alberta's Protected Areas: the policy domain context

As outlined in chapter 3, Alberta is home to the first ever established protected area in Canada: Banff National Park. The connection between Parks and the Province is historically embedded and the two seem to have a hate-love affair. With the transfer of authority over all public land and resources in 1930, the Province became truly sovereign. From that point on, Alberta basically gained control over all Crown lands in the province, which cover the vast majority of the land area (Swinnerton, 1991). This transfer, however, also intensified the hate-love affair between Alberta and the Parks, since in the meanwhile, the Federal government had established a total of five national parks, comprising 8 percent of Alberta's territory, all of which would remain under federal legislation after the transfer of power. Later, this would turn out to be an important deal for nature conservation (see chapter 3). At the time, because these parks were places meant for tourism and recreation, the natural beauty of them had to remain intact, as it was the reason for visitors to

come see them. Nevertheless parks were places inspired by profit motivations and development to cater tourists was one of the primary goals of the early park management (Swinerton, 1991; Malcolm, 2008).

With the devolution of control over crown land to the provincial government, also came changes. Alberta was now responsible for management of natural resources of which protected areas are a part. Eventually, the Province took its job serious and immediately passed a provincial parks act in 1930 and created eight provincial parks by 1932. Similar to the National Parks, the provincial parks were established with recreation in mind. Most of them were small areas, meant to be used for camping, swimming, fishing and the like. Conservation was not on the agenda, yet. However, by the time, several action groups representing interests of hunters and adventurers had already been established, some well before 1930. The Alpine Club of Canada (founded in 1906 and based out of Canmore, Alberta) and the Alberta Fish and Game Association (founded in 1908) were among the early advocates of parks in the province (Government of Alberta, 1992). They lobbied to get more protected areas established and by doing so, although with a different motive in mind, helped protecting wilderness in Alberta. The interference of these new actors, by lobbying and pressuring the government to include their interests, would make nature conservation a 'multi-actor' issue '*avant la lettre*'. The government wasn't the sole player in the game anymore and had to include to voice of the public in its decisions. Nevertheless it would take another fifty years before they would be involved in the actual policy process.

During the next decades the Alberta parks system gradually expanded and by 1960 there were 34 provincial parks and a handful of wilderness areas. The wilderness areas, especially Willmore Wilderness Park, had been established in the late 1950s and were the first to have protection and conservation as a main priority (Swinerton, 1991). In hindsight, one could mark this as a forewarning of the environmental awareness wave that would hit the Western society including Canada, during the nineteen sixties and seventies (see 3.2) (Parson, 2000). Protection and conservation of nature were to become more important issues for the department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Their reports and policies became more science based and a gradual discursive shift took place, expressed in the replacing of the old vision of recreation for conservation as the top priority for protected areas (McNamee, 2008; Government of Alberta, 1992; Phillips, 2003).

These changes were formalized and implemented in 1973 with the passing of a new provincial parks policy in the legislative assembly. A more integrated vision, including conservation of ecosystems, was officially the new goal for protected areas. However, this was to become a serious challenge, since by the end of the 1970's the oil sands and natural gas developments had really taken off (Marsden, 2007). Together with long established logging they became the major contributor to the Alberta economy (Woynillowicz et al., 2005). The government invested heavily in the oil and gas sector and, by doing so, increased the pressure on the environment and the available land for protected areas. Internally the tensions between the departments increased. The once vast land area of Alberta became scarcer and departments started struggling with their mandates, since they basically managed the same piece of land, but from a different perspective (Swinerton, 1991). Essentially, this was a classical dispute over land use and control and as it

effected different departments, it became a multi-sector governance issue. Parks were no longer just pieces of land managed by the Alberta Parks Division. As Swinnerton (1991, pp. 15) puts it: *"...a number of reports prepared during the late 1970's, pointed to the complex relationship between the mandates of the different agencies involved..."* And this complex relationship would only become more complex over the next decades.

The nineteen eighties brought more changes to the parks policy and management affecting Alberta's parks. The provincial economy witnessed a serious downturn during the early years of the 1980s, following the recession in the U.S. in 1981 (Wackernagel et al., 2002). This had two major consequences for government policy in general. First, departments had to cut corners to keep expenditures within their tighter budgets. Cost effectiveness was a high priority and since parks were not perceived as revenue creating, the department put them on a hold. Second, and more important, all departments were requested to contribute as much as they could, to help improving the economy. The result was a more permissive, deregulative approach, towards the resource industry to stimulate the economy. As the Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife Department states in a 1987 report: *"...to achieve social and economic benefits by providing for the optimal use of all available resources..."*. The consequences for nature conservation efforts were disastrous, for two reasons: first, potential new areas for protection were declining fast, since rapid development compromised their ecological value, thereby making them unsuitable as parks. Second, pressures to reduce limitations on (resource) developments inside or adjacent to already established areas could compromise their goals of providing a healthy ecosystem (Swinnerton, 1991; Timoney and Lee, 2001; Reeves & Walsh, 2007). To turn the tide, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) started their campaign "Endangered Spaces" in 1989. The next section elaborates the effects of this campaign for Alberta's nature conservation.

4.4 Endangered Spaces campaign 1989

The endangered spaces campaign was set up in 1989 and was strongly connected to the 1987 Brundtland report and its call for sustainability. A book called "Endangered Spaces, the future for Canada's Wilderness", written by WWF and CPAWS staff, marked the start of the campaign, became a bestseller in Canada and an important foundation for the campaign in the years after (WWF, 2000). It basically contained two messages: the first was the important connection of Canadians with their land and the Wilderness, the national psyche, and their duty to foster this. In other words, framing wilderness as heritage. The second, connected to the former, was the outlining of the rapid decline of this wilderness to benefit industrial development and the need to protect the remaining parts of it: the endangered spaces. This had to be done through creating an interconnected network of protected areas, representing the different natural areas throughout the province. By framing the problem this way, everybody became responsible for protecting what they had inherited from previous generations. The overall goal was to protect twelve percent of Canada's (and Alberta's) land base by the year 2000. A strong emphasize of heritage conservation and the responsibility for the next generations, found also in the Brundtland report, was expressed (Hummel, 1989). In terms of the policy cycle, the ideology formation and agenda setting phase had started.

The campaign seemed to have an impact on Canadian and Albertan society and politicians involved in nature conservation and parks and led to various initiatives for nature conservation. It made both the public and shortly after, also the political agenda. In Alberta the campaign led to the preparation of a new parks policy "Special Places 2000", which is further elaborated in section 4.6. The preparation for this, in the early nineties, consisted of many reports by different government departments about the future of the parks network in the province. They carried out a similar message: nature conservation and biodiversity are important issues. Furthermore extensive polling was done to retrieve the public opinion on parks. The polling also indicated that sustainable development, parks protection and more and larger protected areas had to become top priority (Government of Alberta, 1992; Swinnerton, 1991). The 1992 Alberta Environment council report 'Saving the Strands of Life – Alberta's Biodiversity' concludes that: *"...protection of adequate parcels of natural habitat is the most effective strategy for preserving Alberta's biological diversity. These parcels must be large enough and diverse enough to maintain viable populations of all the species in the ecosystem"* (AEN, 1992, pp. 47).

The fight over agenda setting had truly taken off and was leaning towards environmentally friendly priorities; a temporary coalition on behalf of nature conservation was born. It seemed as if a broad representation of society, even departments and companies concerned with resource development, was convinced of the importance of the matter: a major change compared to just five years earlier. In terms of Zahariadis (2007), the 'public mood' was environmental friendly and demanded action. The campaign was successful to the extent that it had framed the problem to reach the public attention. The growing pressure from various angles eventually got the theme on the Provincial political agenda (Francis, 1997). Its success can partially be explained by the fact that it was launched in a fertile time spirit. Alberta's economy was growing and income was on the rise every year (Cross & Bowlby, 2006). This paved the way for more post-materialistic agendas among the public and, to a lesser extent, politics. In terms of Kingdon (1995), a *policy window* appeared. Within this window, the Alberta government officially launched the initiative of the "Special Places 2000" program, in 1992, opening the next phase in the policy cycle; policy formation.

4.5 Special Places 2000: a decade of changes, shaping the future?

Special Places 2000 was officially launched by the Alberta Government in November 1992, with the presentation of the draft version called: "Special Places 2000: Alberta's Natural Heritage, completing Alberta's endangered spaces network". This was the result of Provincial commitments to the endangered spaces campaign, by officially signing a pledge to sufficiently protect Alberta's Wilderness by the year 2000. The reasons for endorsing the campaign were threefold. First, the resource industries feared their bad environmental reputations abroad, would backfire on them with potentially disastrous consequences, among others the boycotting of Alberta oil and gas. The important advisory council called the round table on Environment and Economy, formed by high level business and environmental group representatives, confirmed that the resource industry's reputation could use a positive impulse. Second, by having an official policy program in place, the rules were clear and the industry knew what it was up to. Ray Rasmussen, former member of this round table, said that industry perceived it important to endorse the program:

"we [the environmental groups, red.] were offering them industrial-environmental group peace. And back then the environmental groups had a lot more clout. It was very damaging for a corporation to be either hauled in for environmental wrongdoing or even accused of it. And so it was damaging to their internal and external reputations..."

Third, as described in the previous section and connected to the former point, the public opinion was very much pro-conservation and it could be a political mistake not to listen, especially with the provincial election coming up early in 1993. As Archie Landals, director of the resource management coordination branch of the Alberta Parks Division, stated:

"...it was getting to the point where the public was saying that they wanted more stuff protected, they were seeing Alberta disappearing in a hurry and natural landscapes were important to Albertans to leave them for their children, a legacy... The time was just right then..."

The policy formation phase was complicated and a constant change of agendas made the process strenuous. The presented draft would go through various changes and amendments and the program would take almost a decade to 'complete'. The formation of the policy can be divided in three stages. In the first, the original draft document is presented, which was followed by a second phase of extensive public consultation. In the third phase the final version would be presented and approved by the Legislative Assembly in 1995 and implementation could start. The project would remain in place for six years until it was finally abandoned in 2001. This process, the changes and the consequences for Alberta's protected areas planning are outlined below.

4.5.1 Draft version of 1992

The first version, was a comprehensive "foundation" document, written by the Parks Division and presented by Cabinet, which dealt with all aspects of the parks and protected areas in detail. It was very science based, to include the latest knowledge on ecosystem management and biodiversity. Under three main topics, (1) the vision, (2) the framework and (3) the strategy, a guiding policy was developed that looked promising for Alberta's Wilderness.

The Vision

In the first part, the urgency of the matter is expressed. *"Our continued prosperity – even our survival – is dependent upon striking a balance between the economy and the environment. Management of commercial activities, such as forestry, oil and gas and tourist resorts must include conservation and sustainable development as a basic philosophy"* (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp 1). Clear problem presenting, emphasizing the need to take care of the precious environment and resulting in the overall vision of the proposed policy: *"The vision of Special Places 2000 is to complete a protected areas system that achieves goals of protection, outdoor recreation, heritage appreciation and tourism"* (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp. 1). By 'naming' protection as the first priority, the intentions of the document are firmly established. Further, a need for quick action is acknowledged, since potential new protected areas might be lost to rapid developments of mainly oil, gas and logging. To justify the 'loss of resource development options', an emphasize on the

advantages and benefits of protected areas is expressed. Among others protected areas generate economic revenue through ecotourism, recreation and more important preserving future potential of biodiversity in developing new products or medicines.

Also, the first part further emphasizes the importance of the new policy, by making a connection with other jurisdictions: *"These calls to action are not unique to Alberta. The Federal governments 'green plan'... the WWF 'Endangered Spaces campaign' and the Brundtland commission's 'Our common future' all express similar needs"* (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp. 3). In accordance to many international documents on the topic, the shift towards a primary goal of protection and conservation is also embraced by the Alberta government: *"The protection of natural heritage values must be a fundamental reason for the site's establishment..."* (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp. 4). All together, no less than five pages are used to describe why there is a need for the new policy. A seemingly insignificant number, but on a total of fifteen pages, it marks the importance and is exemplary for the dominant discourse and agenda back then.

The Framework

The second part outlines the framework, or the technical details, starting with determining what a protected area actually is: *"...protected areas are explicitly managed to conserve species and ecosystems [...] and protect Alberta's natural heritage"* (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp. 6). The government also admits that *"many recreation areas [...] play an almost negligible role in protecting species and ecosystems"* (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp. 8). This definition of protected areas is clear and leaves no doubt to what qualifications a new site should have, to become part of the network. There is a detailed distinction between protection and recreation, and although they are interconnected, they don't necessarily share the same goals. To be able to develop an adequate network of representative sites throughout the province, a new classification system distinguished different sites in six natural regions. These natural regions are distinguished by ecological and geological features and form the following six regions: grassland, parkland, foothills, Rocky Mountains, boreal forest and Canadian Shield. This hierarchy had been developed during the seventies, but was updated in the new document to adept to the changing vision. The goal of the classification is to make it easier to recognize areas where the need for protection is highest and to evaluate whether all areas are equally and sufficiently represented within the 'twelve percent' goal, identified in the Endangered Spaces campaign (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp. 10-13) (figure 17).

The Strategy

The third part of the document outlines the strategy for the upcoming years and concentrates on the issue of site selection and timelines. The former emphasizes that the site selection should be done with care, to honor existing leases, but at the same time to search for appropriate areas in terms of ecological value, *"...to ensure that the best lands are included in the protected areas network"* (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp. 15). The process was supposed to start as soon as possible to make sure the most suitable lands were selected. All of this had to be finished before the turn of the millennium. However, before the policy could pass the Legislative Assembly, a public consultation process was initiated. This process would take up the following two years and impose multiple changes to the 1992 draft document.

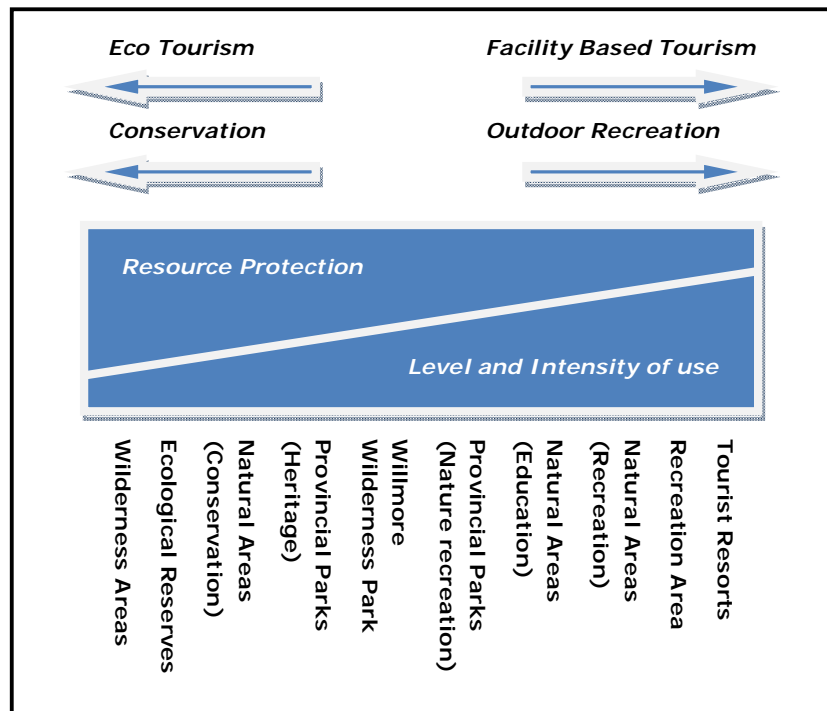


Figure 17: Spectrum of sites classification (Government of Alberta, 1992, pp. 9)

4.5.2 Consultation process and the final 1995 policy

Stakeholder involvement had become an important issue over the last decade and the government was eager to use it again in the Special Places 2000 policy process (Government of Alberta, 1995). Over a period of almost two years various input sessions were held with numerous stakeholders. These inputs were bundled and summarized by the Public Advisory Committee and presented to government in 1993. The committee represented mainstream middle class Alberta in order to balance interests and prevent favoring environmental concerns (Nikiforuk, 1998). Its main conclusions were twofold: (1) Albertans want more and larger protected areas throughout the province, as a wise investment for the future and (2) the government should proceed rapidly, before potential protected areas are compromised by development (Government of Alberta, 1993). The conclusions fitted seamlessly with the conclusions drawn by the Parks Division in the draft document of 1992. However, there were some problems with the consultation process around special places, that would cause trouble in the future. Two of the criteria for designing an interactive process were not honored. First, not all stakeholders were evenly represented. Motorized-recreation group interests (like hunters and OHV users) seemed underrepresented in the process, since only a handful of people from this camp were involved, compared to dozens of environmental groups. This created the feeling among some of the motorized recreationists that the outcomes were biased. The second problem lies in the fact that the mandate and the status of the process was unclear. In other words, clear objectives about what would happen with the outcomes were missing, making the participants role indistinct. The lack of commitments would backfire by the time the final policy was released. Many parties had the feeling the consultation had been useless, since they could not determine whether or not their input had been used.

4.5.3 Political Pressure: reframing the policy

In the meanwhile, other government departments, especially the coalition of Energy and Forestry (the latter is currently part of the ministry of Sustainable Resource Development), had noted the 1992 document and were starting to worry that it might compromise their goals. These ministries derive almost all their institutional power from selling multi-million dollar leases to resource industry (Kennett & Schneider, 2008). Especially when compared to the ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation (ATPR), the amount of financial resources involved is characteristic. On average the ministry of Energy brings several billions of dollars into the treasury, while ATPR usually has a net loss when the fiscal year closes (ATPR, 2008c; Alberta Energy, 2008). It was essential for the resource departments to change the course of the Special Places document, since the potential installation of new protected areas would prevent the selling of new leases on these lands and thus undermine their power basis. As Archie Landals, director of the resource management coordination branch of the Alberta Parks Division, puts it:

"The biggest opposition to parks has always been internally rather than externally, from the other government departments. When we're doing something as a protected area, the forestry guys don't like it: we're taking something out of their empire. The people responsible for public lands and agriculture don't like it: we are taking something out of their empire..."

Growing anti-special places rhetoric started to reframe the policy by introducing the term 'sterilizing of the landscape' as a result of parks. Even newly appointed Environment Minister Ty Lund, part of the conservative administration, used the term and emphasized that it could never be appropriate to set aside large tracts of land that can only be accessed on foot. The reframing anti-campaign got worse, as both the Ministries of Energy and Forestry started to purposefully spread disinformation about the goals of the Special Places program. The anti-campaign had to be carried out secretly, since it could cause political problems and potentially make the departments very unpopular. Among others they spread the rumors that it would cost Albertans billions of dollars in missed revenues, that it would prohibit access to lands by the public and that it would prohibit hunting. The latter two tried to mobilize Alberta's extensive network of hunters and Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) users to protest against the new policy. Since these groups had the feeling they were largely ignored in the consultation process, this strategy succeeded and even the Alberta Fish and Game Association, formerly very pro-parks, started to oppose to the plan (Nikiforuk, 1998; Malcolm, 2008). This was further backed up by the cattle ranchers of rural Alberta, the environment minister being one of them, who were afraid of losing their grazing leases on public lands. The framing of parks as 'positive additives to the Albertan society and quality of life' had been radically changed into a 'parks as a threat to freedom of land use'. The former, dominant but fragile coalition between the resource industry and the environmental NGO's had fallen apart and was replaced by an anti-parks dominant discourse. The result was the complete rewriting of the Special Places 2000 program before official presentation to the legislative assembly in 1995.

4.5.4 1995: Special Places 2000 final version

In March 1995, the rewritten document was presented and it passed cabinet, becoming official government policy. There were numerous changes, obviously caused by the extensive lobbying and reframing outlined above. The most important ones were: (1) the disappearing of the primary focus on nature conservation, (2) a change of used language, (3) an emphasize on stakeholders and their interests and (4) a change of procedures. These all had consequences for the further implementation and, eventually, led to the failure of the program.

The first point was an important one for the environmental organizations. The document no longer emphasized on conservation as the primary goal, but instead spoke of “balancing preservation” and “multiple-use” strategies. *“These preservation/conservation oriented sites, which contribute to the four goals of Special Places, allow for a considerable range of uses: livestock grazing, oil and gas development, recreation and tourism development, and cultural and heritage appreciation”* (Government of Alberta, 1995, pp. 2). This gives a good example of the dilemmas of compromise: ambitious policy seems replaced by the lowest common denominator. Especially the oil and gas developments seem to be added in a later stage and are certainly not compatible with conservation goals. Timoney & Lee (2001) and Nikiforuk (1998) note that the very basic description of a protected area is that there is no industrial development taking place. Also the government seems to be much less critical of its own policies than in the previous version. In 1992 it recognized the somewhat ambiguous role of certain recreation areas to the goals of conservation, by stating that they were negligible in their conservation values. In the new document, every hectare of land in the province that falls under some sort of protection regime, seems to add value to the network. A proper explanation for this change of view is lacking (Government of Alberta, 1995, pp. 2).

The second switch is found in the overall change in the used language. It seems as if deliberate vagueness and statements interpretable from different points of view, set the tone. With this, the risk of ending in lowest common denominator policy increases, as according to the document: *“The Government is committed to balanced and fair representation from all interests...”* (Government of Alberta, 1995, pp. 7). Also the scientific basis of the previous draft version seems to be almost completely abandoned. There is no mention of the value of biodiversity, nor is there anything about ecological values, appropriate size or location of the new sites. These were all important points addressed in the previous version. Last, references, that were present in 1992, are simply abandoned, further compromising validity and reliability, of a document that states it has a “scientific basis” (Government of Alberta, 1995, pp. 6).

Third, a new element enters the discussion: the importance of ‘stakeholder interests’ and ‘cooperation’ is highly emphasized. Although this seems a noble goal, one could ask what added value this has in the current stage of the policy process. A consultation process had already taken place and, although imperfect, stakeholders had given extensive input from 1992-1994. There was no indication that there was a need for another round of public consultation, which would obviously be time consuming and likely have the same limitations as the previous one. The ‘cooperation’ component was twofold and meant in the first place that every Albertan could now recommend sites for designation under the Special Places program. The other side of the cooperation was that each site had to be approved by local stakeholders. Following Etzioni’s subsidiarity concept, this is

legitimate, however it did create the classical dilemma of conflicting interests on different levels. Ray Rasmussen, former member of the round table on economy and the environment, states that:

"...when Lund [Minister, red.] moved the decision making authority to the regions [local level, red.], in other words the people in the area of Grande Prairie would make decisions on what is and what isn't, then immediately there was going to be no big areas. [...] if anything got conserved it would be stuff that would be considered wasteland, rather than anything that had a possible developmental thing. Because the local people of course are development conscious."

But Etzioni also poses a second dilemma of representation. Is the local level the appropriate level for interactive decision making, since most users of the (potential) protected areas are from outside the local area, e.g. the city? The document stated *"all interest should be taken into account"*, but this hardly seemed to bring any clarification (Government of Alberta, 1995, pp. 7). The emphasize on cooperation and stakeholders seemed therefore only to enlarge the vagueness of the document.

The last point, in hindsight, may be one of the most important changes: the complicated procedures of selecting new sites. First of all there was a new 'Integrated Resource Planning' policy initiated by the government, which will be the most important *"mechanism of land use planning for Alberta and will be the foundation under which these initiatives... [Special Places 2000, red.]... will be implemented"* (Government of Alberta, 1995, pp. 8). This means all new protected areas have to be in line with the goals of resource development, while there seems to be a fundamental difference in approach and goals between the two policies.

Second, the procedures for designating a new site under the Special Places program consist of six steps (figure 18): (1) the nomination of a site through officially applying by any Albertan, (2) reviewing of the nomination by Provincial Coordinating Committee, (3) Reviewing by a local committee, (4) another review by the provincial committee, (5) review and approval by cabinet and (6) designation. Between stages 2, 3, 4 and 5 the government can decide to discontinue the process, without the document giving guidelines for legitimate reasons to do so. The interdepartmental committee, which reviews the sites and controls the process, consists of mostly members of the departments of Energy and Forestry (Nikiforuk, 1998). Furthermore, as mentioned in the previous section, local stakeholders can oppose to projects. New areas that conflict with either the interests of the resource industry or the local economy, are therefore unlikely to be accepted. This means the designation of new protected areas is a one-sided and complicated process, especially compared to other processes of designating uses of public lands. For instance, in 1995 the Forestry department sold leases for logging an area of boreal forest in Northern Alberta, which were larger than any protected area in the province. It did so, without any interactive policy process whatsoever (Nikiforuk, 1998). Similar examples are known in the oil sands and gas development lease sales (Marsden, 2007).



Figure 18: Special Places nomination process (Government of Alberta, 1995, pp. 9)

4.5.5 Complicated policy: Special Places failure?

The combined result of these changes was a hollow and ambiguous policy that, according to many environmental organizations, wasn't going to reach the targets that were set in the early 1990's. The improvement of Alberta's image, one of the initial drivers of the Special Places program had clearly failed, since most environmental groups withdrew from the process and no longer supported Special Places. During the three year period, no less than 400 sites had been nominated and reviewed by the Public Advisory Committee. The vast majority was dismissed by either the local committees or the intergovernmental committee, for reasons of conflicting interests with the economy (Nikiforuk, 1998).

The legacy is that stakeholder consultation on parks planning has become a very laden subject. The rewriting and consistently dismissing public input has caused deeply rooted mistrust between the government and NGO's from various corners of the arena (Timoney & Lee, 2001). The environmental organizations had withdrawn because (1) they didn't want to endorse a campaign that was not going to help Alberta's wilderness protection or complete the network of protected areas and (2) because resources can only be allocated once and there were other environmental battles that had more winning potential. The recreation organizations were against the policy, because they felt the Parks Division didn't include their concerns on access and traditional uses in

parks. The oil and gas industry turned their back to the policy, since they (1) were afraid it would close down development and (2) the internal fighting and struggling about special places wasn't helping to improve their reputation anyway. On top of that, the only meaningful and influential cooperation organ between industry and environment at the time, the round table on environment and economy, was dissolved by the conservative government. This took away a powerful forum to bring environmental and resource economy concerns together.

After six years of struggling, the Special Places 2000 program was finally abandoned in 2001, a year after the set end date. The government still claimed success, by pointing at the various new parks that had been created the process. As Archie Landals, Alberta Parks Division, puts it:

"I think you've got people in some of the other government agencies, some of the industry people are still shaking their head, wondering how we got as much protected as we did... given the circumstances we made the most of it..."

Given the political situation it is indeed an accomplishment to get this number of new protected areas. The problem is that the sites that had been established were mostly very insignificant, because they were either very small and scattered, or compromised by existing industrial development (Nikiforuk, 1998; Malcolm, 2008). There was much more potential in the initial program, had there be more cooperation and political will. The policy window closed as fast as it appeared and would remain closed for a long time. Already in 1998 the public opinion judged that: *"The government can't be trusted to defend the public interest anymore..."*, notes Nikiforuk (pp. 28). A conclusion most actors felt, albeit from their different perspectives (Kennett, 1995).

In the meanwhile, other jurisdictions like the Federal Parks Canada department or the province of British Columbia, which had also committed to the Endangered Spaces campaign in the early 1990's by implementing new initiatives for nature conservation, had done a much better job than Alberta. Among others, they enlarged their protected areas network and improved their mandates to firmly state protection as the primary goal (McNamee, 1995; Wareham & Careless, 1995). In 2001 the development of protected areas in Alberta would come to an abrupt halt and a moratorium on new protected areas came in place, causing a policy gap that would last for several years.

4.6 Policy Gap 2001-2006

With the closing of the Special Places project, the departments of Forestry and Energy silently demanded that there would be no new park initiatives for over 7 years. The conservative government agreed with this and so, an era of opportunistic parks policymaking and management arrived. Since the Special Places policy was officially abandoned, while no new document was created to replace it, the department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation had to work with what they had left: the law in the form of the Provincial Parks Act, the Willmore Wilderness Act and the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act. This would pose an almost impossible challenge on the department, since David Boyd (2002), who studied the parks legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions including the Federal level, concluded Alberta had the poorest legislation of all.

The reasons for this are found in the outdated legislation, in some cases more than thirty years old and not including new information on environmental issues. Second, the inadequate funding of parks departments on the provincial level causes major implementation problems (Boyd, 2002; Malcolm, 2008). The funding of Alberta's parks has dramatically decreased during the special places era. Between 1992-2002 the operational budget has decreased with as much as 40% (see figure 19) (Reeves & Walsh, 2007).

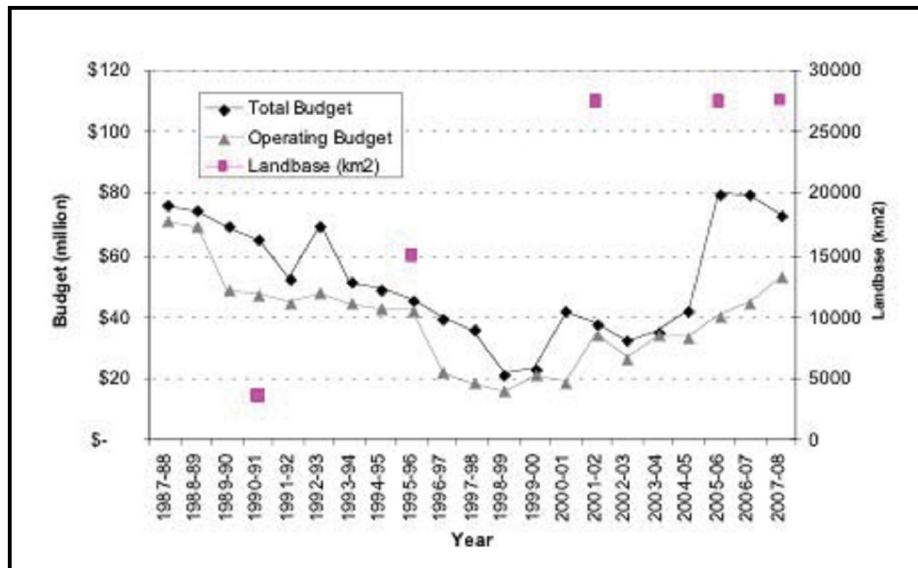


Figure 19: Budget of the Alberta Parks Division over the past two decades, adjusted for inflation (Reeves & Walsh, 2007, pp. 50)

Also, during the same period, the number of Parks Division staff (in full-time equivalent) has decreased from 731 in 1992 to 334 in 2002. This is remarkable, since the special places program and certain legislative reforms (transferring responsibility for the 5000 km² Willmore Wilderness park to the Alberta Parks Division) added land base to the parks system, requiring more management capacity. Although the number of staff and funding has increased again in the period after 'special places' ended, this budget is mainly used to catch up with the backlog maintenance of infrastructure in parks, says Archie Landals, director of the resource coordination branch of the Alberta Parks Division:

"...post Special Places finally the government got around to giving us money for capital reinvestments, so we spent a lot of time focused on rebuilding the old campgrounds that were being worn out, particularly sewer and water systems..."

So while the department was underfunded and institutionally poorly equipped, it had to manage the existing parks and hope for minor chances to further improve the parks system. Opportunistic policy making was the result. First off all, the department tried whatever possible to restore the damaging legacy of the previous decade. A new vision and mission were developed, published on the departments website and used in various local park management plans:

"Vision for Parks: Parks and protected areas are valued as natural landscapes that preserve the environmental diversity of the province and inspire society to enjoy and rediscover our connection with the natural world" (ATPR, 2007a).

But matters got complicated, since this was not official government policy but only an 'in house' department statement, institutionally based on their legal mandate and written mainly to get staff in line. It was slightly ambiguous to use it in official policy plans, concerning parks, since it hadn't passed the legislative assembly and had therefore a limited legal status. Second, the department tried to use every opportunity it was given to expand existing parks. But to do so, they had to rely on the willingness of local landowners and the 'political will' to contribute to the system, since adding public lands on a systematic basis, was out of the question under the moratorium of Energy and SRD (former Forestry). Third, the Parks Division tried to improve the state of existing parks through local management plans, which it was mandated to make under existing legislation. In several of these management plans, the vision stated above is incorporated, showing a priority for protection (ATPR, 2006; 2008b). It is difficult to examine, let alone to assess, the environmental effect of these measures, since the recent priorities of the parks division and most of its resources have been allocated to upgrading recreational infrastructure.

Land Use Framework and Plan for Parks

In 2004 the government announced change. Not directly to parks policy, but to land use planning in general. After thirty years of service, the old framework was outdated and had to be replaced, since more and more conflicts over land-use arose, that could not be solved within the old framework (Government of Alberta, 2008a). Especially cumulative impacts on the land became more important and the old method of a review on a project by project basis seemed insufficient. The policymaking process had to be open and transparent with opportunities for all Albertans to participate in this important piece of legislation. In 2006 and 2007 broad input was gathered among a wide range of stakeholders and in May 2007, public sessions were held. Two important outcomes of this consultation, stated in the most recent draft Land Use Framework (LUF) document are: (1) Albertans want the government to take an *"active leadership role that provides clear directions"* and (2) they want *"enhanced conservation and stewardship on both private and public lands to promote ecological integrity"*. Basically this was another reconfirmation of the public consultation process and polling outcomes of the past fifteen years: The public demands action and doesn't want the current pace of developments to continue. In other words it seems as if citizens preferred a more post-liberal style of governance.

However the government sees it differently and states in the same draft document that: *"...Alberta rejects the simplistic view that to save the environment, we must stop development..."*. The land use framework is about *"smart growth, ensuring a future with plentiful opportunities and a healthy environment"* (Government of Alberta, 2008, pp. 3). The government calls this *"sustainable prosperity"*. Framing the policy like this could imply two things: either to adapt prosperity to the goals of sustainable development, or to make sure there is enough development to sustain the way of life Albertans are accustomed to. Since the document explains the term as: *"We must ensure our natural resources continue to provide economic benefits to Albertans over time"* and

keeping in mind their rejection towards slowing down development, it is more likely that the latter explanation is aimed for. So what are the consequences for Alberta's parks and protected areas?

The LUF announced that a new 'plan for parks' had to be developed as a part of the process and instructed the department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation (TPR) to prepare a framework document by early 2007. This basically means that nature policy is taken over by land-use policy. In other words, multi-sector goes back to single-sector again, only this time the controlling sector has changed. The danger in this is that the parks policy becomes just a small piece of the very large long term plan, in which its interests could easily be pushed to the background. But since there is no meaningful opposition, the parks division had no choice but to work with what was provided and a first draft of the plan for parks was internally presented in January 2007, named: 'Defining our Nature: A Strategic Plan for the Parks and Protected Areas Program'. It was a comprehensive, science-based document, with clear vision and goals for nature conservation for the next decade. It used the same vision and mission statements that were already developed and noted above. The report stated that they consulted almost all of their own staff on this and *"87% of the staff indicated that they agreed with the direction and framework being proposed"*. Furthermore, the document emphasizes the value of parks in an ever more rapidly developing world, especially the economic *"value of clean air and water"* (Government of Alberta, 2007, pp. 3-4).

Also, it recognizes the need to establish management plans based on solid science, rather than local sentiment. This was initiated after problems with local, conflicting interests in previous consultations. What happened was that consultation sessions were held about strategic guiding policy on the provincial level, in which local groups would constantly address local issues, irrelevant in the provincial process. It resulted in local parties feeling ignored, therefore blocking the process. This in turn would frustrate other parties on the table and basically block a decent interactive process overall (ATPR, 2007b). This is not to say local input and knowledge are useless, on the contrary. The challenge is to search for a balance between provincial and local interests. The new document stated: *"Openness to new ideas and communication with experts [local and academic, red.]..."*, are key issues in solid leadership (Government of Alberta, 2007, pp. 8-13). Above all else, the environment comes first in parks, not economic or recreational use. With these statements, it seems the Alberta parks division has finally found a way to set ambitious priorities, deal with the issues around its dual mandate of both conservation and recreation in the parks system and incorporate interactive policy making in the process.

Although the parks division agreed internally about priorities, the other departments and organizations heavily contested the document. The government 'Agenda and Priorities Committee', a guard to keep policies in line with provincial economic interests and staffed by the premier plus the most influential departments (Energy, SRD, Agriculture and Treasury), dismissed the document even before it could be released to the public. It disappeared as quickly as it arrived, but is still used as an 'in house' document. In this role the division still uses it as a basis for the parks planning framework, says Archie Landals, head of the Alberta Parks Division:

"...at some point, some of this will be reflected in the plan for parks [parks planning framework, red.], which would make it policy and maybe once the plan is out, we might release various other documents that do become public policy".

Despite the promising start, the assignment of writing a new plan for parks was given directly to the minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation, who was given clear instructions about what the document had to cover and prepared a new draft. This has been released in August 2008 and is currently on the table for stakeholder input. The next chapters elaborate the latest document and the ongoing policy process more thoroughly.

4.7 A century of changes: conclusions

Over the past century Alberta has seen many changes in the paradigm around its parks and protected areas system. From housing the first park in Canada and the expansion of the parks system in the early years, to the influence of the resource development industry on the environment and the struggle for parks integrity over the past decades. The process shows a remarkable pattern, different from many other first world countries around the globe: The care and protection of nature, albeit for different reasons, was better arranged in the early parts of the twentieth century, than it is today. Where environmental awareness and will to act has grown over the past twenty years in other western countries, Alberta seems to head in the opposite direction. Political will is down to a minimum level.

A constant pressure from the resource based economy on the land and the decision-making processes, has caused a major discrepancy between political and the public agenda. The 'agenda' held by the Alberta parks division and the public, is that the parks are heavily degrading and in need of a decent, strong mandated and well funded guiding policy, as many researchers, action groups and public polling have pointed out over the past decade. However, the 'political agenda' is set by an administration that is constantly pressured by the resource industry to 'keep the options open'. The strong connection between the conservative party and the resource industry and the lack of any meaningful political opposition, causes a deadlock for policy change and windows remain closed. Interactive policy processes have therefore proven to be of limited value, since a small group of actors controlled the arena. A legacy of mistrust between government and the public and a feeling of powerlessness among advocacy groups, is what the past two decades of parks planning and consultation have left behind. Against this backdrop the new 'Parks Planning Framework' was presented and a new interactive process announced.

5 Change in Alberta: The Parks Planning Framework

5.1 Introduction

The newly presented draft parks planning framework, released in August 2008, is the latest attempt of the Alberta government to come up with a new policy for parks. This chapter analyses the draft parks planning framework on substance, while the next chapter deals with the process of deliberation on it. It first outlines the proposed policy and an analysis of its substance, followed by a comparison with the current conservation policy standards on the Federal level. By doing so, the position of the Alberta document can be better understood and explained in a multi-level perspective.

5.2 Draft Parks Planning Framework Outline

The draft parks planning framework, presented in August 2008, is divided in three parts: (1) an introduction including an explanation on why a framework is needed, (2) the decision-making context and (3) the actual plan and priorities (ATPR, 2008a). The first part elaborates the problems Alberta's parks and protected areas are facing. Population growth causes more pressure on the existing parks and facilities for recreation. So does the tourism industry, with the difference that the latter generates jobs and brings *"tourism dollars to the province"* (ATPR, 2008a, pp. 4). These factors, combined with the need for a new long term parks policy to accompany the LUF, form the starting point and put the issue on the political agenda. After outlining these challenges, the connection to the Land-Use-Framework (LUF) is explained by stating that: *"to ensure that the management of parks aligns with the government of Alberta's strategic direction, the Parks Planning Framework adopts key components of the LUF"* (ATPR, 2008a, pp. 4). Since the protected areas network is not finished, meaning not all different landscape types are sufficiently represented, new protected areas are needed to complete it. The parks planning framework is supposed to guide future decisions on protected areas management for the next 10 years. Regional plans are derived from this framework and after extensive consultation with (local) stakeholders, these regional plans give the guidelines for the actual area plans on the ground.

The decision making context consists of an outline of the current Alberta parks system. There are currently 504 protected areas in Alberta, comprising an area of approximately 27,525 km², or just over four percent of the province's total land base (see figure 19). The majority of the sites are small, each occupying less than 10 km². The term parks 'network' as stated on the map is remarkable, since the map shows scattered 'dots on a map', indicating a high degree of separation of protected areas. Parks serve several purposes, according to the document, which can and should be compatible. Also they *"do not operate in isolation to other public lands"*, and decision making has to be done in correspondence with other departments, like Energy and Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) and other jurisdictions (ATPR, 2008a, pp. 6). Visitor needs seem to play an important role in this, as reflected in the phrase: *"Albertans tell us they need campgrounds that accommodate larger trailers, accessible facilities and designated trails..."* (ATPR, 2008a, pp. 7). The parks planning is supposedly adapted to these needs, whether or not these compromise the ecological values of a protected area, is not discussed. Clear goals on surface, completing the

network and quality norms are absent. The key word seems 'cooperation' with all stakeholders involved.

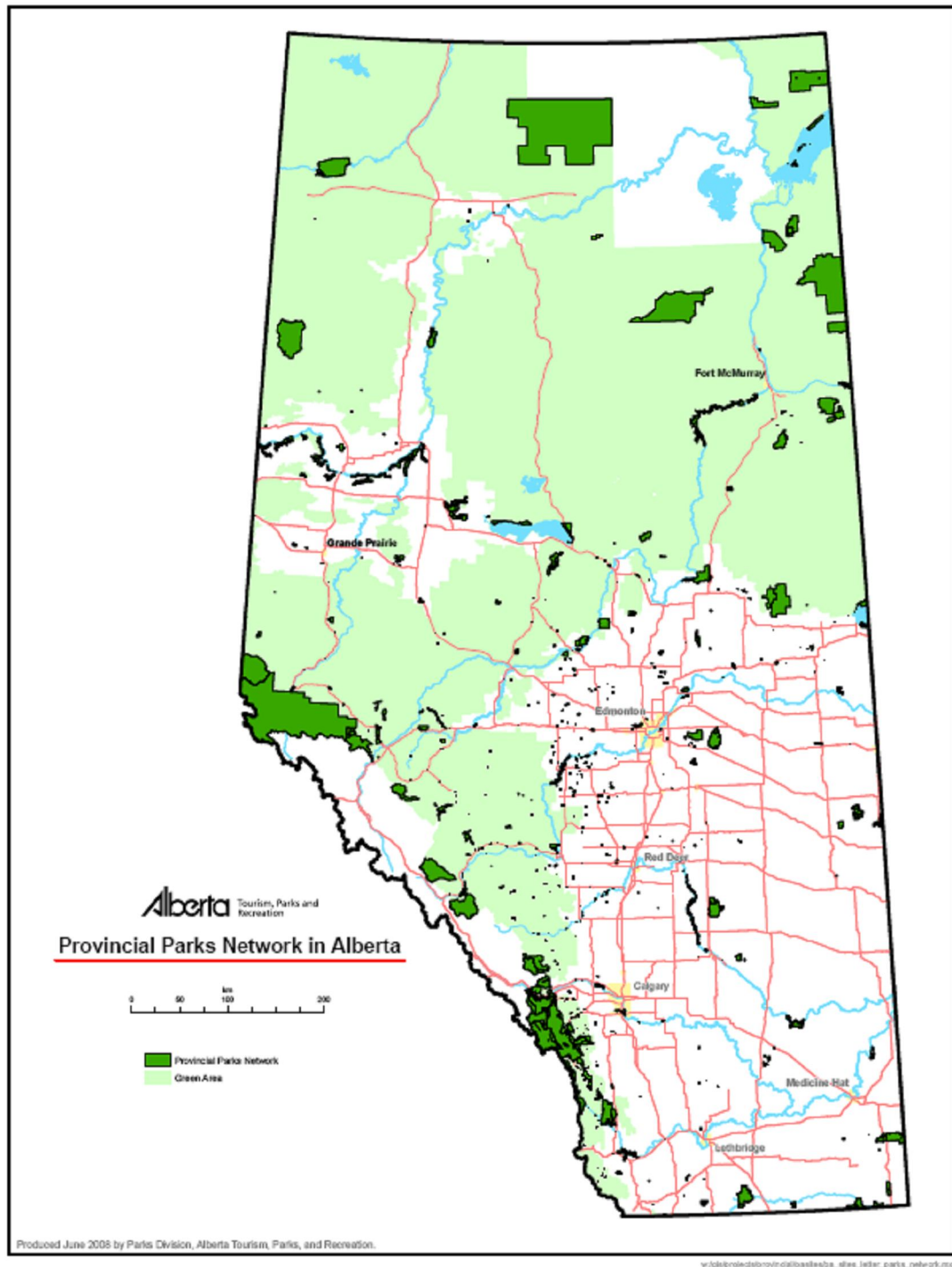


Figure 19: Alberta's parks and protected areas (ATPR, 2008a, pp.6)

The third part of the document, the actual framework, is the most extensive and continues with the trend of recreation as the primary focus. Exception to this is the part where the authors seem to recognize the relevance of conservation by stating that: *"...conservation is also an important goal. This is not unique to Alberta; there is growing global awareness of the need to better manage the world's natural resources"* (ATPR, 2008a, pp. 8). What 'better management of resources' entails

exactly, or how it is reflected in the document, is left to the readers' interpretation. Since the LUF gives a very market oriented explanation (in which companies are responsible via benchmarks), it is unlikely this document aims for a different interpretation. The interrelatedness of recreation and conservation is further elaborated by noting access will create awareness and better understanding of Alberta's parks. These developments lead to the new vision and mission statement for parks:

"Vision: Albertans work together to create a world-class parks system that welcomes visitors and encourages them to experience the beauty of nature through recreation, education and environmental management"

"Mission: Parks promote healthy, active lifestyles and conserve Alberta's natural heritage" (ATPR, 2008a, pp. 8)

Interpreting the framework

Interpreting these, both seem to emphasize the role of parks as areas for enjoyment and recreation and are almost similar to the vision and mission of the LUF (Government of Alberta, 2008a). The role of protection and conservation is not addressed here. The document then continues with the implementation strategy and the guidelines for decision making. Most of these are copied straight from the LUF document, without adaptation to the special needs of protected areas planning (Government of Alberta, 2008a, pp. 9). When analyzing the overall guiding

Guiding Principle	Subject	Group
Accountable	<i>Performance measures are established and Albertans receive timely information about progress in achieving parks management goals</i>	STAKEHOLDER ISSUES
Citizen Engagement	<i>Albertans have opportunities for meaningful input into decisions about parks; the decision-making process is inclusive and transparent</i>	
Collaborative	<i>Through greater collaboration with the private sector, local communities, communities of interest and other government departments, we create increased value for visitors and achieve common goals</i>	
Respectful and responsive	<i>We respect and respond to the diverse needs of parks visitors, stakeholders and communities throughout the province</i>	
Continues improvement and innovation	<i>We continuously work towards further improvement and innovation in parks management by proactively monitoring, evaluating and building upon our strengths</i>	MANAGEMENT ISSUES
Knowledge based decision making	<i>Decision-making is informed by natural and social science, evidence and experience, which includes traditional knowledge of Aboriginal peoples</i>	
Integrated Management	<i>Parks management decisions consider the combined impacts of Environmental, economic and social factors</i>	
Environmental leadership	<i>Alberta's park facilities demonstrate environmental leadership and showcase best practices in energy efficiency, environmental design and operations</i>	ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Table 8: Parks Planning Framework guiding principles groups (adapted from: ATPR, 2008, pp. 9-10)

principles, also copied from the LUF, they can be positioned in three groups that emphasize different issues: stakeholder issues, environmental issues and management issues. The first refer to guidelines around dealing with stakeholders, the second to environmental guidelines and the third deals with guidelines around management and planning. Table 8 clearly shows there seems to be a focus on the process, keeping participants satisfied, neglecting content issues. In other words, these guidelines represent the liberal-laissez faire governance discourse, in which the leadership role of government on environmental standards seems absent. This is reflected in that there is only one distinctive environmental guideline, which concentrates on 'on the ground' implementation level, not on the more fundamental level of guidelines, used in the other two issues. Important words in the 2007 in-house document (see section 4.6), like ecosystem health or biodiversity are not mentioned in the 2008 draft. Furthermore, the 'sustainable' guideline, outlined as the first principle in the LUF and referring to the criteria for sustainable development, does not return in the Parks Planning Framework (Government of Alberta, 2008a).

The last section of the framework outlines the priorities set for parks planning. The priorities are given scores on the three overall goals of the framework (these are the creation of 'recreation opportunities', 'healthy ecosystems' and 'prosperity supported by land '). Again, the focus seems to be on recreational needs, with five out of eight priorities oriented towards these needs. According to the scores, this will also benefit a healthy ecosystem but how and why it does, is not explained (see appendix 3 for the Parks Planning Framework document). In the framework's appendix, an overview of the planning model is given, stating that a separate recreational framework will also be developed. This raises the question why both the parks planning framework and the recreation framework (which is assumed to be on recreational needs) concentrate on visitor recreational needs. The result is that the distinction between protection and recreation, as identified in chapter 3, seems to fade and conflate into a single issue (ATPR, 2008a, pp 15). The complicated decision-making process around the new policy also seems to contribute to this trend (see chapter 6).

New protected areas

One missing feature is especially characteristic for the new parks planning framework: the establishment of new protected areas and the complicated rules around this. This is reflected in the diversion in protection regimes for parks. After the 'Special Places 2000' program had ended, there was no official policy, law or mandate in place to create new protected areas (Reeves & Walsh, 2007). Neither the Alberta Parks Division, nor NGOs had tools to nominate new protected areas for designation. This is surprising, since according to the website of the Alberta parks division, the protected areas network has not been completed yet. Under the current legislation, a new park could be established only when all parties agree, thus automatically being a compromise. The result was that new parks would often be situated on small plots of wasteland (see section 4.5). Management and designation criteria for new and existing protected areas are absent or at best vague and ambiguous, since there has been no official policy in place since 2001. As a result, the protection regimes for parks in Alberta are a compromise and very diverse and complex. There are no less than 8 different protection regimes for parks (ATPR, 2008d). Figure 21 shows the number of parks in each protection regime, where ecological reserves have the most advanced protection regime and provincial recreation areas the lowest degree of protection.

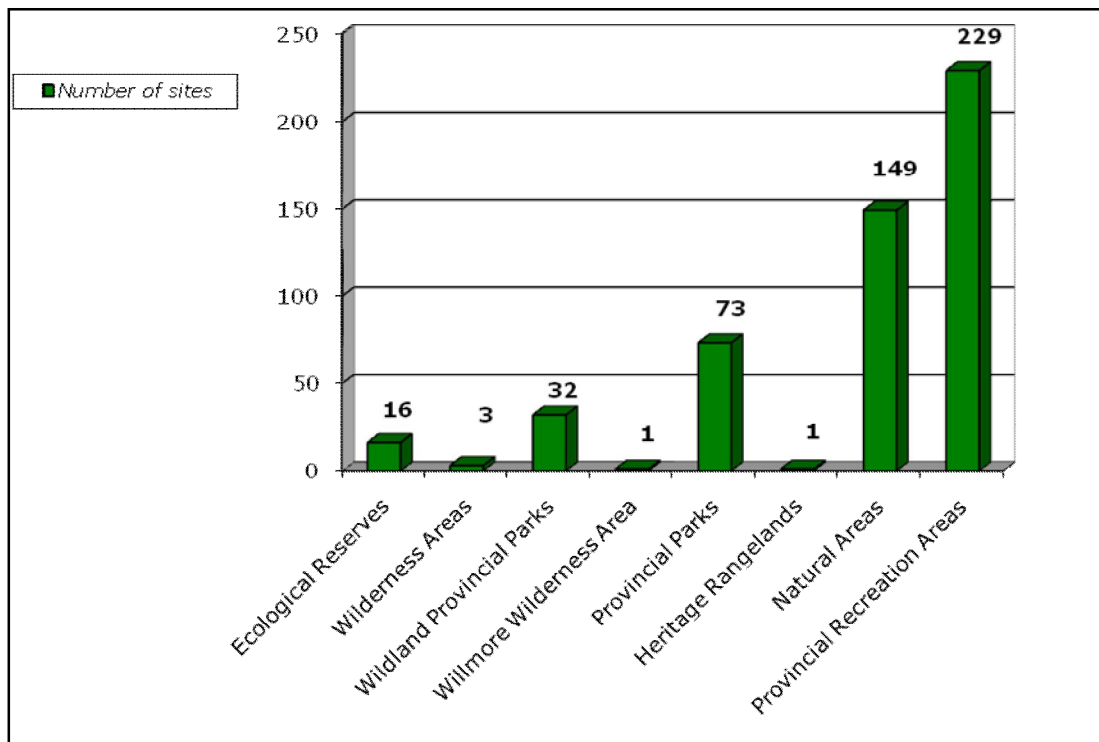


Figure 21: number of different protected area types (ATPR, 2008d; Reeves & Walsh, 2007)

The overall emphasize seems to be on light protection regimes, allowing multiple uses in the vast majority of the areas (Reeves & Walsh, 2007). The Alberta Parks division partially recognizes this problem, says Senior Management Planner Scott Jones:

"We don't necessarily want every class to provide everything. It is a problem in this province that people don't understand our classification system, don't understand what they can and can't do..."

Although the new Parks Planning Framework briefly addresses the problem, it does not seem sufficient to solve it. Protection regimes are unlikely to change given the overall emphasize on multiple use in the new policy document.

5.3 Comparing Policy: Alberta and the Federal level

The content of the proposed Framework for Alberta can only be properly evaluated, when put into perspective. The National park policy provides a reasonable standard and the parks planning framework will be compared to it on four main issues, coming forward in both level, policy documents: (1) vision and mission, (2) management principles, (3) framing and language and (4) governance standards (table 9).

The first issue is the vision and mission for parks. Parks Canada uses the following vision and mission for their mandate:

Vision: "Parks Canada's leadership in the management of protected heritage areas aims at promoting sound principles of stewardship and citizen awareness, and ecological and commemorative integrity"

Mission: "Building our future together - strengthening a shared sense of Canadian identity which respects the diversity of the land and the people" (Parks Canada, 2006b, pp 2-3)

When this is compared to the current vision and mission of the Alberta Parks Division, stated in the Parks Planning Framework, several differences come forward. The first and most important one, is the focus on recreation in the Alberta vision and mission. The federal level frames its statements in a more environmentally focused way, by using ecological integrity as a principle. The vision and mission statements clearly illustrate the diverging priorities of both levels of governance.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Provincial level policy</i>	<i>Federal level policy</i>
Vision and Mission	Both vision and mission carry the undertone of recreation and visitor experience as the most important goal. Environmental concerns play a minor role.	Vision and mission try to find a balance between the mandates for conservation and visitor experience and cultural heritage. Environmental issues are the primary concern.
Management principles	Clear focus on recreation side of the mandate. Environmental standards for visitor activities are absent and demand can be sufficient justification for providing services.	Strict rules for visitor activities, whereby demand alone, can never be a sufficient justification. Environmental and ecological standards may not be compromised by visitor needs.
Framing and Language	Parks are framed as areas for recreation, whereby the negative consequences of resource development opportunities are not allowed. 'Sterilizing the landscape' cannot be appropriate.	Parks are framed as places of rich Canadian heritage and part of the pride of the nation. Protected areas make sure this will last for generations to come.
Governance standards	Governance style is fairly closed, with low level participation. International standards are not mentioned and the overall priority is unclear, reflected both in terms of political will, as in funding.	Governance style is more open and transparent, but still low level participation. International standards are important and the overall priority in parks is clear, as is the higher level of funding.

Table 9: Provincial and Federal park policies compared

Second, the management principles used in both documents can further clarify priorities and goals of both levels. At the federal level, ten guiding principles are used in making management plans:

"Ensuring commemorative integrity and protecting ecological integrity are always Parks Canada's paramount values in applying these principles as well as the more detailed activity policies" (Parks Canada, 2006b, pp. 6)

The guiding principles are listed in order of importance, whereby ecological integrity is the number one principle, followed by leadership on number two and the creation of new protected areas in third place. Visitor activities take 7th place and the principle states that:

"Opportunities will be provided which are appropriate to the purpose of each park... Public demand alone is not sufficient justification for provision of facilities and services in support of appropriate activities" (Parks Canada, 2006, pp. 9).

Compare both statements to the provincial principles and a rather large discrepancy comes forward. On the provincial level, demand is considered a legitimate and sufficient justification for granting access and the provision of certain facilities (ATPR, 2008a, pp. 7). Clear environmental or ecological standards around visitor activities seem absent in the provincial framework. Furthermore, the installment of new protected areas is absent in the provincial framework, while they take third place in the list of management principles and priorities at the national level.

Third, there is the framing of parks and overall use of language at both governmental levels. The national policy document is very comprehensive and clear about goals and priorities. Among others, the issue around natural resource development is dealt with in a clear and non-ambiguous way under section II, National Park Policies:

"1.4.4: The Crown in Right of Canada will own the land and subsurface rights [authors underscore] within the legislated boundaries of national parks"

"1.4.5: Commercial exploration, extraction or development of natural resources will be terminated before national parks are formally established" (Parks Canada, 2006b, pp. 15)

In the provincial document, resource development issues are not explicitly prohibited in parks, nor are they mentioned in any other way, creating possible backdoors for exploitation. The framing of resource development as a possible threat to protected areas (as seen on the Federal level), is clearly not the case on the Provincial level. Second, in both documents parks are framed as places citizens can be proud of, but when given a closer look, the federal level seems genuinely concerned with the protection of vulnerable ecosystems which ask for investments. The Alberta document, on the contrary, seems to frame parks as places for recreation and enjoyment, which are not supposed to interfere with other interests. The overall language used in the federal policy plan is clear and leaves no doubt to what priorities are set and what the goals of the agency are. The provincial document leaves many issues open or untouched, presumably for two reasons. First, a procedural reason; the land-use framework will deal with these issues and set conditions. Second a political reason; Alberta wants to keep options open, so that *"everyone's needs are considered"* (ATPR, 2008f, pp. 13).

The last issue considered here are governance standards. These include guidelines for interactive policy making, but also the scope and scale of the policy documents, levels of funding and support for parks at the different levels. At the federal level guidelines for public involvement in policy making are clearly stated under guideline number 8 and valued by the Parks Canada Agency:

"Public involvement is a cornerstone of policy, planning and management practices to help ensure sound decision-making, build public understanding, and provide opportunities for Canadians to contribute their knowledge, expertise and suggestions" (Parks Canada, 2006b, pp. 10).

Procedures and the documents produced by the federal agency are transparent, contain accurate references and are open to everyone who wishes to (re)view them. Furthermore, the international

scope is taken into account and in several occasions the national policy refers to international treaties and the international context, for example:

"Parks Canada contributes to an international heritage agenda through its leadership role in, participation in, or support for, international conventions, programs, agencies and agreements." (Parks Canada, 2006b, pp. 4)

Last, the priorities for the National Parks are clear and set out in the document. Also the political will to have parks on the agenda as an important issue, seems somewhat more present. Although far from appropriate, the funding of the National Parks is at a far higher level than the provincial level of funding, especially considered in staff hours and money allocated per individual park (see box 4).

Box 4: Resource situation compared, Parks Canada and Alberta Parks

When compared in terms of financial and human resources some remarkable differences between the two government levels come forward. Although both agencies are considered understaffed and underfunded (Boyd, 2002; Reeves & Walsh, 2007), Parks Canada seems to have a better position. But the best illustration the figures below give is that the Alberta parks network is very fragmented, failing to create a network of protected areas.

In the fiscal year of 2007-2008, Parks Canada had 1 Full-Time-Equivalent (FTE) staff per 53 km² of terrestrial park land, or 0,018 FTE/km², while Alberta Parks had 1 FTE per 63 km² of park land, or 0,015 FTE/km². In terms of budget, Parks Canada had \$ 2739/km², while Alberta had \$ 2644/km² (Parks Canada, 2007; 2008; Reeves & Walsh, 2007). These numbers may not be very convincing, but when considered in terms of FTE and dollars per site, this view changes. Per individual protected area, Alberta Parks had 0,9 FTE and \$ 144,841 to spend, while Parks Canada had 18,43 FTE and \$ 2,675,438 per individual park, including Marine Reserves and National Historic Sites (Parks Canada 2004a; Reeves & Walsh, 2007).

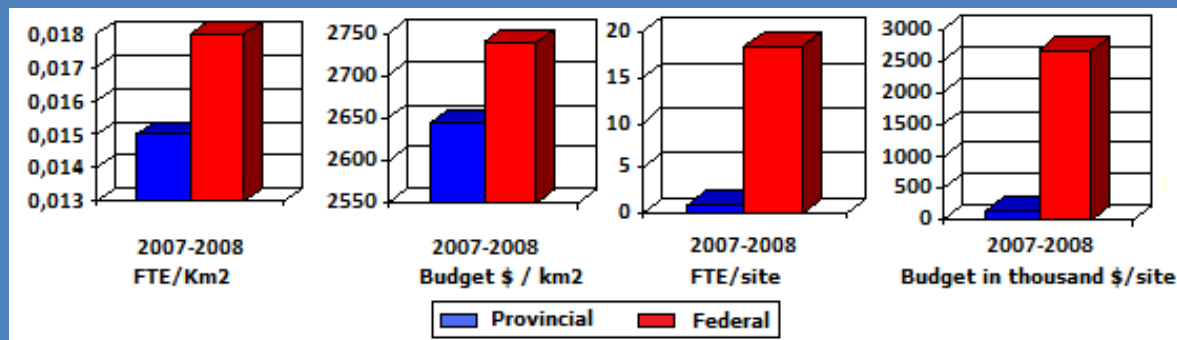


Figure 22: Budget in CAD and staff in FTE per km² and per site

When these 'governance standards' are compared to the provincial level, it becomes clear that the levels differ substantially. The provincial level does provide some opportunity for interactive policy making, although most of these are far from transparent and lack clear guidelines (see also chapter 6). The Parks Planning Framework document does not contain references and is therefore hard to examine or review for external institutions. Third, there is no mentioning of an international dimension other than international tourism in the provincial policy. International treaties or conventions do not seem to play a role in Alberta's protected areas policy regime. Last and most important, the priorities at the provincial level are unclear and seem to lean towards the recreation side of the spectrum. Political will and support for parks are almost completely absent (Timoney & Lee, 2001).

5.4 Conclusions

The new Alberta framework seems little ambitious, clearly reflecting a policy with different priorities than protecting nature. Especially when park policies on the federal level and provincial level are compared several interesting differences have come forward. These differences can be summarized under three topics: (1) framing, (2) priorities and (3) governance standards:

- *Parks are framed differently at different levels of governance*
- *Priorities and rules are developed very differently*
- *Different standards of government at different levels*

On the federal level, parks and protected areas are framed within a discourse of pride. Parks are a legacy for future generations and part of the Canadian national heritage. They are Canada's postcard icons and part of the national identity and should be protected to stay forever, no matter the costs. Contrary to this, on the provincial level, parks are framed as places for recreation, which cannot interfere with interests of the resource based economy. 'People-focused' and 'protection-focus' are the leading discourses on the two levels. Second, priorities in National parks are well developed and clearly given to protection. Although millions of visitors enjoy the National Parks, strict rules around user activities are set and resource development is strictly prohibited. Ecological integrity is legislated as the first priority for any decision on protected areas. On the provincial level legislation is weaker and guidelines are vague. Protection or ecological integrity does not have a priority status, nor are there many rules around natural resource developments in parks. Priorities seem with the economy and the users, not with protection of nature. Third, governance standards on the federal level are reasonable. International standards are taken into account and there are clear guidelines for interactive policy making on parks. Especially in terms of resource allocation, the federal level parks seem to gain more support, than their provincial equivalents. International standards or interactive process guidelines seem absent on provincial level. The next chapter goes into detail on the latter point, by using the current parks planning process as an example.

6 Interactive Policy Making: Plan for Parks Process

6.1 Introduction

The process of developing Alberta's parks policy framework substance, as described in the previous chapter, is accompanied by a consultation phase, to gather perceptions of different stakeholders in parks. This phase is a complicated one, but had to be completed within a short time-frame to align with the Land-Use-Framework, which was planned to be approved by the cabinet by the end of 2008. This chapter will elaborate the *content* of the policy process by using tools from the network approach. The process is outlined using three dimensions from the network approach; actors, discourses and power and resources. The fourth dimension (the context) has already been extensively elaborated in chapters three and four. After having outlined the parks policy arena and the relationships within it, the *design* of the interactive process will be evaluated. The current interactive parks policy process will be compared to general standards and guidelines for participatory processes derived from theory and previous research, to determine the quality of the process in Alberta.

6.2 Network Dimension I: Actors

As explained in previous chapters, parks planning is no longer just an issue of the Alberta Parks Division within the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. It has become a multi-actor and multi-sector issue. This section outlines the most important actor groups involved in the process. Because not everybody can be on the table individually and many different individual actors represent similar interests, they are here perceived as *actor groups* (figure 23). This does not necessarily mean they form an actor or advocacy coalition; government being one example. However, in daily practice, this is what often happens for reasons outlined in chapter 2. Altogether, seven actor groups can be distinguished in this process: (1) Alberta Parks Division, (2) Resource Departments, (3) High-impact Recreation, (4) Low-impact Recreation, (5) Conservation Organizations, (6) First Nations and (7) Involved Academics and Scientists.

The first actor group is formed by the Alberta Parks Division (a subdivision of the Department of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture), which was originally assigned to write the framework and is still mandated to manage Alberta's protected areas. Their work, however, is complicated, because other important government departments influence their movements. The most prominent ones are the departments concerned with natural resource developments, namely Sustainable Resource Development (SRD), Agriculture and Energy. They form the second actor group in the process. These seem to represent the interests of the resource industry although there are no signs indicating a direct involvement of individual corporations. The industry's influence behind the scenes is certainly present, but seems publicly represented by the government agencies.

The third important actor group in this process, the high-impact recreation users, is fairly new at the table. According to a long involved representative of the Alberta Off-Highway-Vehicle Association, Cal Rakach, their interest was represented differently in previous processes around parks: *"...the parks [division, red.] hate motorized guys. Anything mechanized... they just didn't*

want to deal with them". The most influential, though not all, high-impact recreation organizations have since united and form a clear actor coalition under the 'Alberta Outdoor Coalition' established in 2006. Due to the huge economic growth, the high-impact users have grown in numbers over the past two decades. The number of registered ATV's in Alberta has increased from 19.000 in 1995, to 67.000 in 2006 (Government of Alberta, 2008a). Sales figures in Alberta have risen exponentially to 23.438 new vehicles in 2006, or 26% of all ATV sales in Canada. In dollars this means over \$ 300 million in 2006 net sales in Alberta (Canadian OHV Distributors Council, 2008). Except from ATV drivers, they represent a broad array of users, focused on high-impact recreation activities, such as hunting, RV camping, snowmobiling and the like. Most of these activities are of high(er) impact on the land and require significant infrastructure, thereby distinguishing themselves from other recreational users (Stokowski & LaPointe, 2000).

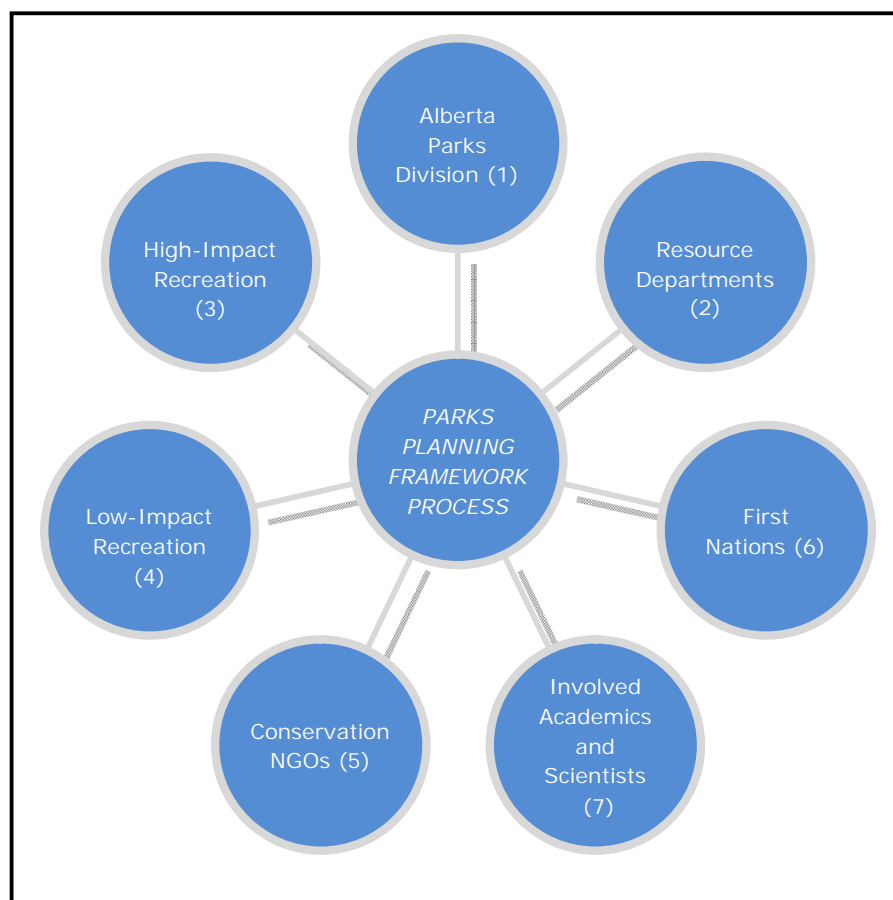


Figure 23: Actor groups involved in planning process

The fourth group consists of a wide array of recreation users on the low-key, low-impact side of the recreational spectrum. Among them are hikers, backcountry campers, canoeists, kayakers and mountaineers. Their activities are characterized by a 'leave-no-trace' mentality and a minor demand of facilities and infrastructure. According to David Wasserman, Grand MacEwan Mountain Club representative: *"...we want to hike in natural environments and any damage to those environments lowers the quality of the hiking experience"*. This actor group represents a numerically large amount of park users; however most of them seem neither involved, nor interested in advocacy for parks planning (The Praxis Group, 2008, pp. 14).

Fifth, there is a large actor group of conservation advocacy organizations involved. This group is, however, fairly complicated in terms of representation. Some organizations represent very local, often small scale interests of a specific park or area, like several subgroups of the Federation of Alberta Naturalists (FAN). Other groups operate mainly on a provincial or even national scale, like Sierra Club of Canada or the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS). The goals of both groups are focused on protection, but often from a different perspective on how to manage and implement measures to reach these goals. Also, some organizations focus specifically on protected areas issues, while others have a broader scope, also concerned with other environmental issues. Most organizations participating today have been involved in parks planning issues for several decades and know the wheeling and dealing around these politically laden, processes. Through extensive communication and some collective action, they also form an actor coalition, albeit less institutionalized than the Alberta Outdoor Coalition.

Sixth, there are the First Nations representatives of several First Nation communities. According to treaties 6, 7 and 8, the First Nations have to be involved in large land-use planning policies, which comprise their traditional lands in their constitutional rights (Government of Alberta, 2008b). Since the land is traditionally the primary source of living for first nation's people, it is in their interest to protect and conserve this source. Treaty 8, signed in 1899 states: *"...they shall have right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract..."*. This is however only possible, when the land is in a healthy condition and supports the flourishing of species.

The seventh actor group is formed by academics and scientists from knowledge institutions involved in parks and protected areas. The University of Alberta has a large department of Sustainable Resource Management, which is a longtime advisor to the Alberta government. Through several boards, including climate change panels and oil sands advisory councils, but also on personal title, professors of these departments are asked for input on government policies, according to Dr. Lee Foote, an associate professor in Wetland Ecology and Management. The parks planning framework is no exception to this academic involvement.

6.3 Network Dimension II: Discourses

Not all actor groups consist of an equal number of organizations or individuals. As outlined in chapter 2, the individual actors are linked and can form coalitions based on two factors or motives: discursive or strategic. The former refers to similarities in the way the natural world in general and the specific 'problem' and solutions (in this case parks planning) are perceived. The latter refers to coalitions that form for strategic reasons, in other words they favor similar outcomes for different reasons. In these coalitions, the perception of the natural world and even of the problem at hand may differ, but there is a common understanding and interest of how to proceed and handle strategically (see also 'resource coalitions' in section 6.4). In the parks planning framework policy process, three discourse coalitions can be distinguished: one dominant and two alternatives. The table below (table 10) gives an overview of the different actors, their belief system and the coalitions they form, based on their values and discourses. The discourses behind each belief system are outlined in more detail below.

<i>Actor group</i>	<i>Belief system</i>	<i>Discourse coalition</i>
Alberta Parks Division	<p><i>Core belief:</i> Nature is a valuable asset and should be protected by the government</p> <p><i>Policy core:</i> Sufficient legislation to keep nature for future generations, problem is serious</p> <p><i>Secondary beliefs:</i> all stakeholders can be involved, as long as the process keeps the goals of conservation in mind</p>	<p><u>PRAGMATIC COALITION:</u> Protection of nature for future generations is important, but political motives keep the department drifting between government and the environmental coalition</p>
Resource Departments	<p><i>Core belief:</i> Government plays an enabling role in economy. The land and its resources are accessible for maximization of revenues</p> <p><i>Policy core:</i> Minimizing restrictive legislation, problem is not serious</p> <p><i>Secondary beliefs:</i> public consultation as a legitimizing tool</p>	<p><u>ACCESS COALITION:</u> Access for everybody, only limited government policy is needed, strict protection is not a solution. Coalition glue is the 'access' item. Differences in opinions on the need for conservation exist.</p>
High-impact Recreation	<p><i>Core belief:</i> Every Albertan has equal access rights to the land, government hasn't got the right to exclude people</p> <p><i>Policy core:</i> problem is acknowledged. Nature needs to be conserved but not protected.</p> <p><i>Secondary beliefs:</i> Education and access will create awareness, measures should not exclude users</p>	
Low-impact Recreation	<p><i>Core belief:</i> The government plays an important role in caring for Alberta's natural heritage</p> <p><i>Policy core:</i> Sufficient legislation to keep nature for future generations, wild landscapes are best for recreation → problem is serious</p> <p><i>Secondary beliefs:</i> not all recreation can take place in the same areas, clear distinctions are needed</p>	
Concerned Academics / Scientists	<p><i>Core belief:</i> Nature is a very valuable asset and should be protected by the government</p> <p><i>Policy core:</i> Sufficient legislation to ensure biodiversity for future generations, without compromising today's options</p> <p><i>Secondary beliefs:</i> all stakeholders can be involved, as long as the process keeps the goals of conservation</p>	
Conservation NGO's	<p><i>Core belief:</i> Nature cannot speak up for itself and has intrinsic value, that should be protected</p> <p><i>Policy core:</i> Problem is highly serious, strong legislation needed to protect nature from all sorts of threats</p> <p><i>Secondary beliefs:</i> consultation ok, but set clear priorities first. Not all uses need to be honored</p>	<p><u>PROTECTION COALITION:</u> Nature needs protection through strict government intervention. Not all activities can take place within parks; parks are primarily places for protection. Value of nature for future generations is important aspect.</p>
First Nations	<p><i>Core belief:</i> Nature has intrinsic and spiritual value and should be protected by the government</p> <p><i>Policy core:</i> Problem serious. Legislation and protection ok, but with respect for traditional uses</p> <p><i>Secondary beliefs:</i> all stakeholders can be involved, but first nations have government to government rights</p>	<p><i>First Nations are part of the protection coalition on the basis of their core beliefs, but on the policy core and secondary belief levels there are several disagreements with the other groups in the coalition.</i></p>

Table 10: Discourses among the actor groups (based on interviews and written documents)

The dominant coalition is formed by the resource departments in government and the action-oriented recreation group: the *access coalition*. The discursive and cultural 'frontier mentality' and far-reaching liberalism explained earlier, stands at the basis of this coalition. In other words, government should only intervene if absolutely necessary for the well-being of its citizens. Problems will primarily be solved by citizens themselves. Translated into Parks policy this means they rely on self governance and education to get people and industry to act responsibly. Strict laws or exclusion are generally perceived as counterproductive and illegitimate. Their coalition is united by concerns about closing down areas for certain activities.

Being a 'coalition' does not imply they actually deliberate or coordinate their actions. They simply aim for the same goals. Their common reason and rhetoric is that every Albertan is partly owner and legitimate user of the public land and therefore cannot be excluded from using these lands for whatever purpose. Although, behind this paradigm hide two different discourses on public lands. The resource departments view nature as a harvestable resource that should be used to maximize economic revenues for Alberta. High-impact recreation, however, has a different perspective. They see public lands as places for recreation and enjoyment, where industrial development does not always fit in. The Alberta Fish and Game association states as their primary objective to: "*Promote conservation of our natural resources*" (AFGA, 2008). This means the dominant coalition is held together by strategic motives, not by discursive motives. They both share the position that they fear the alternative discourse coalition.

The competing discourse coalition, here named the *protection coalition*, is formed by environmental NGOs, low-impact recreation, the involved academics and First Nations. On an abstract level, this coalition has a great expectation of government as the actor to regulate activities and protect nature. The state's role is to protect and empower. Exclusion and strict rules are tools that can, and sometimes have to be, used in order to guarantee a healthy living world and sustainable ecosystems. Translated to parks policy, the heart of the coalition's paradigm is found in the shared concern about the state of the environment in- and outside Alberta's parks. In contradiction to the dominant discourse, behind this overarching shared paradigm, there are different visions on the 'policy core' and 'secondary belief' levels, but agreement on the core beliefs. The environmental NGOs, and to a lesser extent the scientists and academics, feel that there is a need for strict protection and the banning of several activities in protected areas, in order to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Humans are part of the natural world, but the interest of nature comes first in protected areas. However, First Nations and low-impact recreation hold different opinions on how to manage the protected areas. This means that on the level of policy core and secondary beliefs, they sometimes disagree. For instance, total exclusion of humans cannot be a management tool for most of these groups. Hunting and trapping are traditional activities for First Nations and should remain allowed, since they are a major source for survival. First Nations are especially suspicious of parks, since parks have often negatively affected their rights in the past; by expelling them from their traditional lands or by strictly regulating fishing and hunting (Morrison, 1995; McNamee, 2008). Also, low-key recreation still needs trails and some facilities in order to be able to recreate in a certain area. Both these values might sometimes compromise the goals of certain environmental NGOs. This coalition is held together by core beliefs and partially, strategic motives,

however the 'glue', as Sabatier & Weible (2007) call it, seems weaker than it is in the dominant discourse coalition.

The third and last discourse coalition is not actually a coalition in its true sense, since it consists of only one actor. The Alberta parks division seems to share concerns about the environment within parks with the protection coalition, as is clearly reflected in their in-house document in 2007. But since the division is part of the Alberta government, it is bound to the official guidelines and goals of the (conservative) administration, which sometimes prevent them from actively pursuing their goals of conservation and protection. In an answer from the department on why certain strategies are chosen while many stakeholders disagree with this course, they simply state: *"The plan for parks must be consistent with the goals and direction of the government of Alberta"* (ATPR, 2008g, pp. 7). This is complicated since the official provincial parks act, article 4 (2006, c27 s3), also states that: *"The minister has the overall responsibility, in accordance with this act for the management, protection, planning and control of parks and recreation areas..."*. Therefore the parks division is perceived as a separate discourse coalition, named the *pragmatic coalition*, which is generally in favor of the protection coalition, but bound by political considerations and a dual-mandate (see chapter 3).

6.4 Network Dimension III: Power and Resources

Every actor involved in the parks planning arena has certain resources to pursue its interests. These resources vary in nature and provide a certain amount of power to influence the process. Money is a primary one in many cases, but knowledge, personnel and legitimacy are other important resources, that will be addressed per actor (see chapter 2). Also, the rules of interaction can provide thresholds and opportunities for actors, increasing or limiting their influence in the arena. As with discourses, whereby actors form coalitions with like-minded others, resources can be a major driver to form coalitions. This section outlines the seven distinguished actors' independent resources, their coalition's power and the rules of interaction in the parks policy network.

Resources per actor group

The Alberta parks division holds the most obvious resources of all actors. These are twofold: they hold the mandate to manage Alberta's parks and protected areas through the Alberta Provincial Parks Act, the Willmore Wilderness Act and the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves, Natural Areas and Heritage Rangelands Act. This mandate gives the minister of the department the ultimate decision-making power, allocates funds and creates legitimacy for their actions (ATPR, 2008c). Second, the parks division houses a team of staff with a wealth of knowledge on protected areas through their own internal scientific research and monitoring programs. This knowledge is used as support for their parks planning proposals.

The resource departments have a different subdivision of their resources: their mandates, political power and extensive funding. The first is rather complicated, as it has been outlined that many different department mandates are conflicting. Still, it legitimizes the resource department's involvement in the process and it provides them with active tools to steer the process in the Legislative Assembly: the political power. The departments house significant personnel that enable

them to actively take part in the process (Alberta Energy, 2008; ASRD, 2008). The extensive funding of the conservative party is the fourth important power source. The resource industries contribute heavily to the Conservative party's campaign funds, but in return request the defending of their interest by the departments responsible for policies that affect the industry (Marsden, 2007). Furthermore the department of Energy is by far the largest contributor to the Alberta treasury, because of the selling of leases and collecting of royalties (see section 4.5). As one interviewed party stated: *"The government responds very well to these sorts of pleas for access to resources and the very developers of resources support the government very strong"*. An important power source which has no equal in the arena.

High-impact users also have a wide array of resources to their disposal. First of all they have extensive monetary funds provided by manufacturers of the tools, needed for recreational activities. Over the past decades these activities have turned from a hobbyist issue, to a multimillion dollar industry, which has large commercial interests. Examples are sponsorships by Honda and Suzuki, both manufacturers of ATV's, to the Alberta OHV Association or the sponsorship of arms dealers and manufacturers to hunting organizations. These funds can be and are actively used to pay lobbyists and personnel to influence government decisions on parks planning. Organizations like AFGA and the AOHVA have full-time staffed offices in Edmonton, producing reports and knowledge to be used in consultations. Furthermore these organizations represent a substantial, outspoken and well-organized group of users. Individual high-impact user organizations are united under the umbrella of the Alberta Outdoor Coalition; a united voice for their concerns. This gives them more clout to be involved as an actor and because of their outspoken grassroots members, the local MLA's have the tendency to be sensitive to their interests.

Low-impact recreation actors tend to be the opposite of the high-impact users. A lot of their organizations have been around for a long time, like the Alpine Club of Canada, but their members seem to feel a lesser need for advocacy work. They don't feel as affected by the policies as the action-users do. But they do represent by far the largest proportion of all park users. According to the Praxis survey on park uses and priorities in 2008, the third most practiced activity in parks is hiking, after picnicking and camping. This legitimizes low-impact recreation group involvement in the process and gives them a potentially powerful voice. The lack of organization seems to prevent this from happening so far. Financially these actors are poorly funded, since they lack sponsorships from manufacturers or industry. The 'tools' needed for their activities are usually less expensive and more widespread: buying a pair of hiking boots or a backpack is a lesser investment than buying a snowmobile or an ATV. This means paid lobbyists are usually not within their reach. They also don't usually have paid staff or an office in Edmonton, but are run by volunteers during evening hours. These factors make them weak on the personnel end.

The concerned academics resources can also be analyzed in the same four terms. The University of Alberta is actively involved in policy making in the role of advisor, which legitimizes their input. The knowledge gained through research, gives them the opportunity to influence policy making, by providing scientific guidelines (Parson, 2000). Traditionally, the University has a large staff and time allocated to publications and some advocacy. However, the extent of this power base is

limited as policymakers often ignore scientific reports, or simply produce their own counter knowledge (Jasanoff, 1990; Wynne, 1996). Also, the university is co-funded by the government, which could bring them into an ambiguous position. Fortunately, according to Dr. Lee Foote, in the department of Renewable Resources, the academic freedom and independence is guaranteed in the current policy process and the Academics are invited to give their opinions. At the same time however, the academics are divided in their opinions as professors of other departments might hold different, or completely opposite views. The power and influence of the conservation supporting academics is therefore very limited; they take a more advisory or watchdog position.

Environmental NGOs are the third large actor group, next to recreation and government. Their resources are fourfold: public opinion influence and law, knowledge, personnel and monetary. For almost every NGO, the influence of the public opinion is their largest source of power. Campaigns to raise awareness among the public and the public support they might receive in return, forms the legitimizing basis under their work. Also, environmental NGOs can use the law as a power tool. International treaties signed by government, but also existing provincial law can potentially be used to alter policies or to stop or delay developments, the latter being more common. In the specific case of Alberta, this resource is somewhat limited and underutilized, since the conservative majority administration can easily change laws that obstruct their plans. Second, many environmental NGO's produce and built their own knowledge on specific issues, by doing private research. This knowledge is a source of power and a countermeasure against other produced knowledge (Jasanoff, 1990). Third, most environmental NGOs have some paid staff working on producing this knowledge, but also doing advocacy work. Rules set for non-profit organizations in Canada, however, prevent them from having full-time lobbyists, since only 20% of their budget may be spent on advocacy work. Time consuming interactive policy processes, can be a problem for some organizations in terms of available staff time. The last resource is the financial support. Some organizations are fairly well-funded and can afford to hire advisors and staff, but they usually lack the steady funds from big industrial sponsors. In general environmental NGOs are well organized, knowledgeable and have a broad legitimacy basis. The problem for most NGOs is the decreasing political power. Polls consistently show the public agrees on the value and priorities of parks, but this does not translate in support for the nature-conservation organizations or electoral behavior (see box 2). This might undermine their legitimacy and power in the long run.

The last actor group is formed by the First Nations. Traditionally they had little resources to actually influence the parks policy process (Parsons & Prest, 2003). They have been involved for a long time but there are two problems: first, they do not speak up very often, since many of them feel powerless anyway; second, they lack the (process) knowledge and resources to be at the table. In other words, they usually aren't familiar with the procedures around politics and policy making and have less personnel and funds to enter the actual negotiations. Nevertheless, through Treaties 6, 7 and 8, the law provides them with a strong legitimate basis for involvement in decision-making. Connected to this, is the moral power basis. Many Canadians feel indebted towards the native peoples and issues around their rights are delicate (Denis, 1997). This could potentially be used to influence the policy process and their traditional or lay knowledge can

provide valuable input to the process. However, in reality their interests and knowledge are often ignored (Morrison, 1995; Malcolm, 2008). As Jim Webb, one of their representatives puts it:

"...they [the Alberta Government, red.] have defined the rights and interests of First Nation people very narrowly, saying that they have the right to hunt, trap and fish and they have the legitimate expectation that Alberta will respect traditional use sights that can be identified and mapped. And that other than that, Alberta is not constrained by the treaty. Alberta is not willing to consult."

Theoretically they could prepare a lawsuit against the Province, which happened several times, but this option is costly in time, personnel and money. Even when a lawsuit is won, this does not guarantee any change, as is seen in the recent Supreme Court verdict in the Mikisew case. The court stated that the government has to consult with First Nations on a government to government basis on issues in their area, but Alberta has yet to start doing this (Supreme Court of Canada, 2005) This doesn't take away that the law is still a potentially powerful but undersubscribed resource.

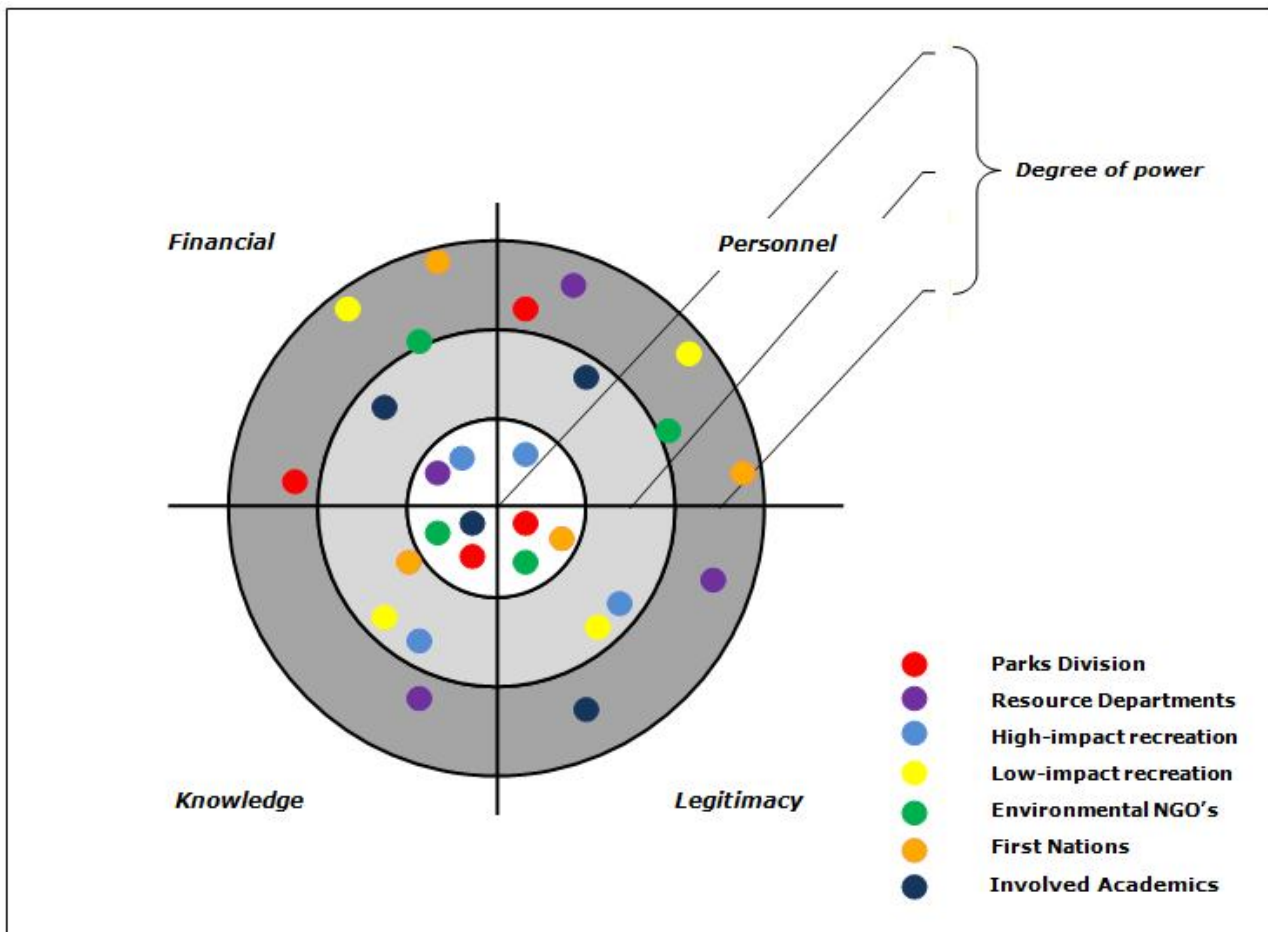


Figure 24: Concentration of power and resources per actor

The analysis shows there is a clear difference in available resources between the different groups. More important, the level of financial resources is not connected to legitimacy. The graphic of figure 24 shows the discrepancy between the legitimacy and knowledge, and financial and

personnel resources. The more resources, the closer an actor is plotted towards the center of the figure, the center simultaneously representing the highest degree of power to steer the process. The resource departments and the high-impact user groups only represent a small proportion of park user's interests, yet they possess by far the most important resources (financial and personnel) to influence the process. The Alberta Parks Division has potentially a strong power base (legitimacy) and a large body of knowledge, but lacks the funds and the personnel to adequately manage parks and make policy. As Lee Foote, an involved academic stated, the Alberta parks division is struggling because:

"They can't really comfortably go political to try to get higher level support, without having their personnel jerked or being defunded, it's the same thing that's been done to the regulatory component in government: if you cause troubles, then you are squashed..."

When figure 24 is translated in terms of coalitions, two coalitions can be distinguished based on resources: the dominant coalition between the resource departments and high-impact user

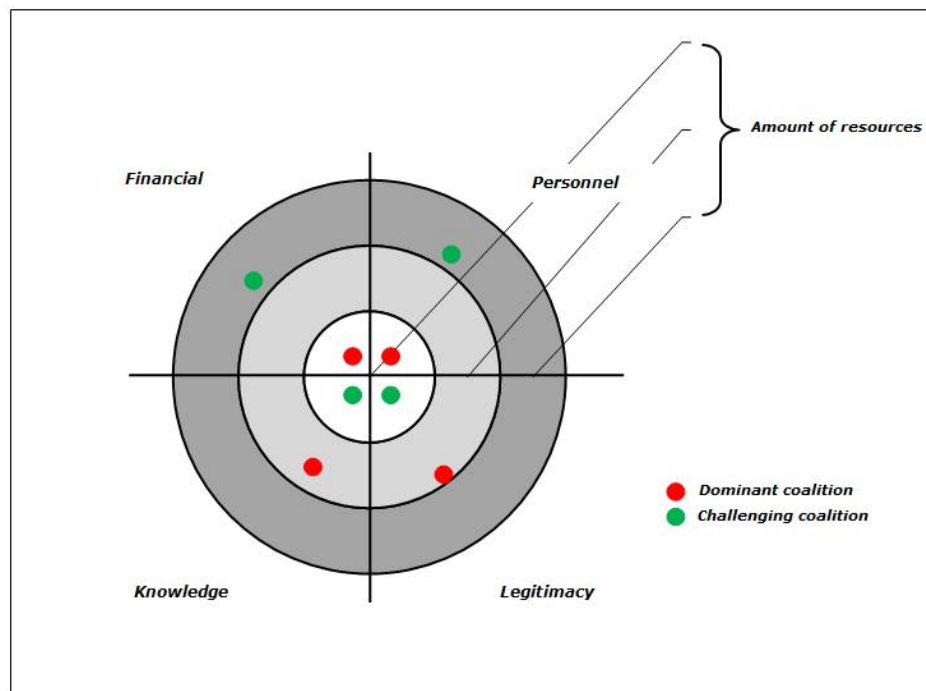


Figure 25: Concentration of power and resources per coalition

groups and the challenging coalition of the conservationists and the Alberta Parks Division, identified in paragraph 6.3 (see figure 25). The figure simplifies the previous one and clarifies the discrepancies. First, the dominant coalition enjoys less legitimacy, since they represent fewer users and lack to represent (as far as this is possible) the subject affected by the policy: the non-human world. Second, because of limited private research they have far less knowledge about the subject, than the other coalition. On the other side of the spectrum, the dominant coalitions possess most resources in financial and personnel terms; the resources that seem to matter most in this process. Thus the small, but powerful dominant coalition, comes forward first, in both their abilities to work together strategically (aiming for similar outcomes) and in terms of resources and power to influence the process.

Rules in the policy network

In the parks policy arena, certain rules for interaction are present. These determine voting issues, agenda setting, implementation rules, but also unwritten rules of interaction; in other words what is 'done' and 'not done'. By elaborating these rules and linking them to the discourse dimension, the mode of governance present in the policy arena can be discovered. Below the rules of interaction in the arena will be described first, followed by a connection to the discourse dimension and a characterization of the mode of governance present in the arena.

The first type within the rules are the *rules for interaction in the policy arena*. In parks planning these rules have changed over the past decade. The two most important changes are found in representation and in the design of the interactive policy process. In the Special Places 2000 program, representation at the table was very different from nowadays in that everybody, including the public, could provide input. Also the division of seats at the table was different in that high-impact recreation users had a weaker representation. Through extensive lobbying, but primarily through better organizing themselves in the Alberta Outdoor Coalition, they claimed a more prominent place at the table in the current parks planning process. Also, the design of the process changed from a long, extensive process, that took almost 2 years before Special Places even started, to a current two months in the parks planning framework (Government of Alberta, 1993; ATPR, 2008a). Furthermore, actors are now consulted in specific target groups, instead of large meetings where everybody is on the same table. However not all actors seemed very happy with these changes, since it also complicates the process. It is harder for different groups to figure out what position their rivals take, what amount of influence they have and what their strategies are, since matters are discussed in independent groups (see also section 6.4). Also, nowadays the public voice is represented by polling instead of actual public participation. The long term interaction between groups can nevertheless be described as one of deliberation. In comparison to the neighboring U.S., lawsuits are uncommon among actors or between stakeholders and government, although it does happen now and then (see for example: Harrison, 1995).

Connecting these rules with the discourses described in the previous section, important ingredients (see table 2, pp. 23) for an 'etatist' governance style are present in Alberta: (1) the access to the decision making arena for oppositional groups is very limited (see box 2), (2) the control over major resources is in the hands of the government and (3) the latest policy document imposed a discursive point of view different from the (inter)national trend towards more sustainability. In other words, the dominant discourse coalition seems to subscribe to a laissez-faire, libertarian style of governance, heavily supported by powerful actors, which seem to benefit from the rules of interaction in the arena. The challenging discourse coalition on the contrary, appears to accept a more left-wing, progressive style of governance, but seems disadvantaged by the interaction rules and division of resources in the area. Overall, the dominant coalition sits firm and a real and functioning network situation is difficult. The current interactive policy process is highly dominated by one coalition. The design of the process and why it benefits the dominant coalition will be outlined in the next section.

6.5 Evaluating the design of the parks planning framework consultation process

This section outlines and evaluates the complex consultation process around the parks planning framework. First the methods of participation are discussed, followed by an analysis of the stakeholders opinions on the process. The third part elaborates and evaluates the design of the process and points at its problems and flaws. This section concludes by going into the contribution of this consultation process to the parks planning and into the general use of interactive policy making in Alberta. The process described here was launched with the presentation of the draft in August 2008 and was supposed to be finished before the end of 2008. Official input was planned in September and October 2008.

6.5.1 Methods of participation

The process was designed to be 'consultative' in nature, which means the government has already drafted a policy document, but wants input from stakeholders before finalizing and presenting the plan. The consultation consisted of three official ways for stakeholders to give input: (1) to speak to an external mediator, hired by the minister, (2) via technical briefing sessions for individual sectors and a discussion forum with all stakeholders and (3) through a written submission. The first was to take place over a two week period in early September 2008, directly after the draft was released and many groups used the opportunity. The day-long technical meetings in mid-September were facilitated by an external mediator and separated in four different sessions: one for the Alberta parks division staff, one for the other government departments dealing with land use, one for all 'pro-parks' and environmental groups and one for the recreation users. Then there was a final forum session which brought all these actors together, mainly to sum up the input of the previous sessions. Over 150 people attended the meetings and/or the minister's forum (ATPR, 2008g). The written submission could be given afterwards by each stakeholder or organization individually, until October 10, 2008. This opportunity was also used by approximately 100 participants (ATPR, 2008g).

By setting up the process in this way, the government hoped to give all parties an equal chance of giving input, without feeling intimidated by their 'rivals'. This had been decided after long debating about previous interactive policy sessions and their flaws, and the department seemed convinced this was the way to deal with the problems and the legacy of the previous sessions. Also, there was never to be any *public* consultation in the true sense of the word, it was only meant for stakeholders, invited by the department. The Minister stated that there is *"...no plan for public consultation (other than stakeholder consultation) prior to Minister seeking approval from her colleagues [cabinet, red.] for the parks framework"* (session notes, September 18, 2008). The stakeholder participation accounts for the 'public' involvement in the current process.

Compared to previous interactive policy processes, this one is significantly different and marks a break with the past. Previous processes were far better equipped in terms of time-allocation. During the 80s and 90s, extensive processes of up to two years were held to make sure participants had sufficient opportunities to give input. More important, there was sufficient time for the department to take the given input into consideration. Both sides at least had the feeling they were taken serious to a certain extent.

6.5.2 Actor groups opinions on the process: a participant evaluation

After interviewing representatives in each group of stakeholders, distinguished in section 6.2, the following opinions of the groups on the process come forward (see table 11). The Alberta parks division was generally very pleased with the sessions, however they noted that the voice of the conservation organizations was weak in comparison with the high-impact recreation users. The department recognizes that interactive processes come with dilemmas of inequality (see section 2.4.4), according to Archie Landals, director of the resource management coordination branch of the Alberta Parks Division:

"No, public involvement is never balanced... We do our best to look for forms to balance it, we try to balance it with professionally done public opinion surveys and on and on. But no, it is not balanced... Have we been forced to do things through the public we wouldn't do? Absolutely. We've built some campgrounds, based on public demand, that were absolutely stupid from an environmental point of view..."

The resource departments were also happy about the consultation process, for two reasons: (1) for the first time, the process was limited within a short time frame and (2) all organizations were involved. The former is positive for the resource industry, because they know what they're up to, without having to go through endless procedures, which sometimes take years. The latter is positive for them, since their 'coalition partners', high-impact recreation, are better represented on the table now, resulting in a stronger voice for 'access'. Although behind the scenes they seem to control the process, it is favorable to them to generate 'on stage' legitimacy via the high-impact recreation groups.

The latter were very pleased with the consultation process, since they finally felt that their voice was heard and reflected in the proposed policy. Both AFGA and the AOHVA, the two largest high-impact recreation organizations, are very much in favor of the draft parks planning framework. Cal Rakach, the AOHVA technical director, was even involved in the designing of the process and helped put it together:

"Bill Werry [the deputy minister, red.]... spent the whole day with us [high-impact recreation groups, red.] and we looked at some of the planning processes and said let's take the best out of all of this and look at us as focus groups, so talk to the environmentalists, talk to the outdoorsmen, talk to the municipalities, but bring us together..."

The previous does implicate that some parties influenced the design of the process from the inside, via official invitations, but without engaging the other stakeholders involved. This might have resulted in a focus group bias in the process. This point is further elaborated below.

The low-impact recreation users were sitting at the table, but mainly to listen and observe. This underscores their position in the process and their aversion of advocacy work, outlined earlier. Interactive policy making is nevertheless a valuable tool for this group, though its contribution and influence on the final policy is limited, according to David Wasserman, Grand McEwan Mountain club representative:

“There is always a danger that the government will consult and then go ahead and do whatever they wanted in the first place. That is the general belief of most NGO groups in whatever area, but a government policy in this province. Consultation has limited influence on the actual decisions”.

<i>Actor Group</i>	<i>Opinion on process</i>
<i>Alberta Parks Division</i>	Pleased with the consultation process itself, think it was better organized than previous sessions and feel that all actors had equal chances to give input. The input given will be taken into consideration and the process will contribute to a better parks planning framework.
<i>Resource departments</i>	Pleased with rapid procedures and ‘equal’ representation of all parties. Public consultation is not their favorite tool in general, because of time consuming character but can be useful for legitimizing projects.
<i>High-impact recreation</i>	Pleased with the consultation process and confident that their interests will be reflected in the final framework. They were actively involved in both the preparation and the actual process and feel this is the way consultation should be done.
<i>Low-impact recreation</i>	Hesitant what to think or expect of this consultation, but hope the minister will take input into account. Nevertheless, consultation is a useful tool and should always be used in planning issues of this size.
<i>Conservation groups</i>	Very disappointed in the actual process. They feel it was hasty and their input will not be taken seriously, since the government seems to have their own agenda. Consultation without commitments or solid priorities is useless.
<i>Involved Academics / Scientists</i>	Satisfied there was a consultation process, but doubts that there will be any significant changes to the current framework. The outcomes were determined before the process started. Consultation is a valuable tool in general, but should be used in the right way.
<i>First Nations</i>	Felt overwhelmed by the process and seemed ill prepared. Think the consultation is a good thing, but want to be treated as government to government and not as a simple stakeholder. In general they don’t rely on stakeholder processes, because of negative experiences in the past.

Table 11: Stakeholder group opinions on the consultation process

The conservation groups express similar reactions about the consultation process. Their main concerns are the short time frame of the process and the strong ties to the land-use framework. They feel the process is shadowed by other political agenda’s set in advance. The only reasons for them to take part is because they are even more powerless from the sideline and the government would be able to claim that they refused to be consulted and use this as a form of approval. Dianne Pachal, Sierra Club of Canada addresses the point of limited value of the current process by stating that:

"...In the end it is very much a political decision and we are dealing with a majority cabinet and an agenda and priorities committee that largely see protected areas as recreation sites".

This point indicates the different frame, a legacy from the nineteen nineties, still present and dominant in the political arena.

The involved academics and scientists are pleased with and in favor of interactive policy processes. It adds to better policies in general, however it only works when the legislators are seriously willing to listen and take the given advice into account. The academics fear that the process is a façade for hidden agenda's by the conservative government, in which genuine environmental concerns don't seem to have top priority, as Dr. Lee Foote, an associate professor at the University of Alberta, states:

"I got the impression that she [the minister, red.] is being responsive and I appreciate that... I don't think that the highest levels of government are giving their support to parks..."

Last, the First Nations representatives were very disappointed in the process for two reasons. First, they weren't informed about the goals and status of the consultation sessions and were not willing to take part under the set conditions. According to Jim Webb, representative for several First Nation communities on the table:

"The timeframe that they proposed for consulting on this document and for finalizing it is unrealistic. ...what will happen and what invariably happens, is people will either find a way to work around the document, to ignore it, or First Nations will end up challenging it on some basis in court."

Second, First Nations want to be consulted on a government to government basis, not simply as one of the other stakeholders. According to the Treaties 6, 7 and 8 they have the right to be treated as such by the Alberta government. The latter is not yet willing to do so, mainly for political reasons (see section 6.4).

6.5.3 Interactive policy making: concerns about PPF consultation process

These opinions on the parks planning framework policy process show divergences that are partially bound to the interests of the actors. When their interests are represented in the policy, actors tend to believe it was a fruitful process, and vice versa. The previous section described the issues from a participant perspective, but they can also be elaborated from a more distanced point of view. This section does so, while it draws a comparison with literature about deliberative democracy and designing interactive policy processes, providing an evaluation thereof simultaneously. The literature (see section 2.4) provides several criteria that have to be fulfilled in order to have meaningful public consultation; (1) the objectives for the consultation should be clear to all participating parties; (2) government should provide objective, complete and accessible information; (3) all parties should be treated equal in the process; (4) adequate time must be allocated and consultation should start as early in the process as possible; (5) the process should

be open and transparent for external review; (6) government must ensure that the consultation process is accompanied by strong political commitment at all levels. Of course these criteria are interrelated, as will become clear in the elaboration below. When these criteria are applied to the actual parks planning framework process, it becomes clear that this process fails to follow most, if not all, of the guidelines stated above (see table 12).

Criteria	Meets criterion?	Explanation
1. Clear objectives for the process	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No objectives or goals given in advance, role of participants unclear Limited communication to stakeholders about status
2. Complete and accessible information	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No background information on document given to stakeholders No list of who is participating
3. All parties are treated equal	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Back-door meetings with the Minister, during process High-impact recreation was part of <u>designing</u> the process
4. Adequate time allocation for process	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultations on parks started before PPF process, which influences point 1 Time is crucial for parties to gather information, learn from each other and come to a well-considered advise
5. Open and transparent process	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sessions held behind closed doors No official communication or publication of sessions Behind the scenes influence and hidden agendas of interest groups and other departments
6. High-level commitments to process	NO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No commitments given by higher level actors in the administration Agenda and Priorities seems to have veto

Table 12: Scores of Parks Planning Framework Process on criteria for meaningful consultation

First, the status and the use of the given input of the consultation should be clear. This was not the case for all parties involved in the process. During one of the sessions, the First Nation representatives demonstratively left the room because they felt cornered into a position they didn't want to take, since they were not informed about the purpose of the session. Also, no commitments by the minister were made, other than that the input would be taken into consideration. Second, the criteria for openness of information weren't done justice for two reasons. One is that the proposed policy document contained several figures and polling outcomes (ATPR, 2008a, pp 5), without giving the access to the actual data on which they are based, thus creating ambiguity. The second reason is that there was no list of participants and when this was requested, the request was denied, making it impossible for parties to know who was involved. This hinders an open discussion and is potentially harmful for the legitimacy of the outcomes and the process. Third, all parties should be treated equal in the process, but this also turned out not to be the case. Certain actors from the high-impact recreation group helped design the participation

process and could thus influence the used strategies for consultation. This might privilege this group over others, that weren't given this opportunity and could potentially create mistrust among other stakeholder groups. More important, it seems to have ensured that the wider public was kept out of the process, diminishing potential public resistance, that could have negatively affected the dominant coalition's position.

Fourth a complex process requires adequate time. The parks planning process did not always follow these conditions. Consultations did start early, even before the current document was on the table, in 2007. Certain forms of consultations have always been part of parks planning. Although this seems positive, the previous chapter already outlined that it can cause great harm, if done improperly. In this case, at least it created confusion about the status of the participation. By involving people early, before a document is presented or even made, one suggests a high(er) level of participation then is actually the case (see Arnstein's ladder). In hindsight parties might feel cheated, when it turns out the process stays on the lower rungs of the ladder.

The current document was released in August, 2008 and the entire participation process took less than two months, because it had to fit within the Land-use framework timeframes. The short notice (some actors only had a week to deliberate and prepare for consultation sessions) and the narrow timeframe causes inequality and harms capacity building and the quality of the process. Many stakeholder groups who work partially with volunteer staff (especially conservation groups and low-impact users), cannot react very quickly to developments. It is also acknowledged that in order to create trust to build understanding among stakeholders, a significant amount of time needs to be allocated. A period of less than two months is considered too short (OECD, 2001; Mitchell, 2005).

Fifth, the transparency of the process seems jeopardized by several factors. First and already outlined under point two, the openness of information was not honored which negatively influences transparency. Second, the first consultation sessions were held in separate focus groups, behind closed doors. Neither the public, nor the press was allowed to follow the process and results were not officially published through government channels. Reasons given for this were to improve the quality of the input given and to make groups feel comfortable to speak up for their interests, as stated afterwards by the Alberta Parks Division. The consequences are that none of the groups know who was present and what was said in the separate meetings and how this may or may not have influenced the outcomes. Third, and maybe the most typical example of lack of transparency, was the denial of my request to attend the meetings as an independent observer, by the Deputy Minister's office. Fourth, lobbying is constantly going on outside the official meetings. Environmental groups and high-impact recreation users directly lobby the minister and had individual meetings with government officials about the topic. Also, industry interests continue to influence the process behind the scenes, addressing hidden agendas and causing more suspicion among participants.

The sixth and last point is the commitment from government officials that is needed to have a meaningful process. As outlined in chapter three, the conservative administration is reluctant to give commitments to protected areas, thus undermining the value of interactive policy making on

Box 5: Redrafted Parks Planning Framework: what has changed?

On November 25, 2008 the redrafted version of the Parks Planning Framework was released under the name of 'Alberta's Plan for Parks'. This is remarkable, since the previous version was deliberately named 'framework' and not a 'plan', as has been emphasized by the Alberta Parks Division staff. The redrafted version took the consultation sessions into account and contains several changes that will be elaborated below, but since the overall structure and scope hasn't been significantly altered, a total review of the analysis is not necessary. The most important changes are fourfold: (1) a new vision, (2) different framing of environmental issues, (3) mentioning of new protected areas, and (4) more detailed strategies.

First, the plan contains a new vision for parks and the mission part - present in the previous version - has been abandoned. It is remarkable the vision changed again, since there is still no justification given for a need to change it from the old one. Nevertheless, the new vision for parks is:

"Alberta's parks inspire people to discover, value and enjoy the natural world and the benefits it provides for current and future generations" (ATPR, 2008f, pp. 2)

This vision still seems to lean towards an inclusive strategy of multiple-use. Although it names the value of the natural world and seems to refer to sustainability, it still lacks to mention conservation and seems still not coherent with the National Park policy.

Second, a reframing of environmental issues has happened, which means these issues come forward stronger in the redrafted version. More attention is given to conservation issues and the concept of ecological integrity is mentioned in several occasions. However, when given a closer examination, the actual text is still somewhat vague and does not set any priorities. The intertwined relation between conservation and (all forms of) recreation is still embraced and emphasized. In the section on recreation strategies the following is stated:

"Implement a province-wide inclusion strategy to increase opportunities for, and invite full participation of all Albertans" (ATPR, 2008f, pp. 18).

This is characteristic for the overall tone in the document: attention for political legitimacy, but when elaborated more thoroughly it still seems to result in a 'keep options open, everybody included' strategy, running the risk of lowest common denominator policy.

Third, new protected areas are mentioned in this version. This is a significant improvement compared to the last version, in which this was absent altogether. But when given a more thorough read, the document focuses on the donation of private lands to the parks system:

"Alberta's parks system continues to grow with land donations from private owners" (ATPR, 2008f, pp. 6)

This avoids difficult political problems with other departments over land-use rights, but also means no significantly large areas will be added, since these are all located on public lands. According to the document, a new process for adding land or parks to the system will be set up, but no specific reference to public lands is given, nor is it a top priority, since the document states this is a long-term (3-5 yrs) project. Nevertheless it is mentioned and on this part, the consultation seems fruitful.

Last, the plan outlines more detailed strategies for actual implementation over the next years. Each strategy comes with a time-frame and a short description of the details. However there are two problems here: First, each strategy refers to a number of 'desired outcomes', similar to the previous draft, but again fails to explain why it relates to these specific outcomes and how they will be reached. Second, almost all strategies are short term (1-3 yrs), while the plan is supposed to be long term (>10 years). Certain strategies, like the rewriting and refining of legislation, seem very ambitious for such a short time-frame.

The conclusion is that there is lots of tweaking, but not much actual change. Environmental priorities have not come forward and the second draft still lacks the ambition of improving and expanding the parks system on public lands. Since the LUF has been released in its final version and this document determines most of the context for this parks planning framework, it is unlikely that the current plan for parks draft will see significant altering before it is finalized. Considering the fact that the actual plan making on the ground will go to the regional committees who have local priorities and given the current worldwide economic downturn, there seems to be little hope the regional committees will come forward with ambitious policies for protected areas. History has learned us to be skeptical.

this topic. The potential risk is that if outcomes are not favorable, they will be shelved. This approach fails to contribute to meaningful capacity building and improving policy legitimacy. When summarized in table 10, especially points 1, 2 and 5 do not meet the conditions for meaningful consultation. Although, the above creates suspicion, the redrafting of the parks planning framework is ongoing and a final version will be presented in the near future. When it is released, it is possible to examine whether and how the process has contributed to the definitive plan and final conclusions on the process can be drawn.

6.7 Parks Planning Framework process: Conclusions

Describing the network of concerned actors in the first half of this chapter provided several interesting insights in the functioning of the parks policy arena. The present discourses perfectly fit the historical and political context described in chapters three and four. The largely etatist mode of governance is therefore little surprising, but the consequence is that the policy arena cannot be characterized as it features in the literature. It seems so highly dominated by the *access* coalition and the forces that support them, that the interdependency and deliberation is weak or even absent, while windows for change remain closed.

In the analysis of the new parks planning framework document and process these observations return and several crucial problems come forward. First, the current process shows many similarities with the Special Places 2000 process from the 1990s, elaborated in chapter 4. Both processes start with ambitious plans and intentions set by the Alberta Parks Division. However, both seem to end in compromises and multiple-use policies, which do not necessarily have the environment as a priority. Second, both processes were interactive to a certain extent, requesting input from citizens, but when given a closer look, both have similar flaws in their designs. The most important are the lack of clear objectives, goals and status. In the most recent attempt, openness of information and transparency are seriously compromised. Consultation can be a very valuable tool in legitimizing policies and community building, but has to be used rightly and with the right intentions in order to reach this. The Alberta context does not seem to create these so far. A large number of the stakeholders involved agree on this, although the ones favored by the current methods, seem less critical.

Most of the dilemmas around interactive policy making, outlined in the theory, seem present in Alberta's parks policy process. There is a clear inequality and imbalance of power; the balance between legitimacy and ambition seems to lean dangerously far towards the former (although one could argue how legitimate the process outcomes are); the time and timeframes seem ill-considered and representation on the table and modes for giving input are flawed. It seems, by having all the classical dilemma's present and inadequately dealt with, that this process is unlikely to be of much value. More worrying though, is that in twenty years of interactive policy making around parks, it seems that the current designer of the process has not learned from mistakes and failures in the past.

7 Conclusions and Reflection

7.1 Introduction

The extensive evaluation of the new Alberta parks policy and the partially interactive process accompanying its design, reveals interesting insights in provincial protected areas planning. This chapter provides conclusions on the empirical case study and links these to the theoretical framework. The empirical conclusions are given by answering the research questions, outlined in chapter one. The link to the theoretical framework is made in two steps; a review of the theoretic choices, after which some questions, suitable for further research are presented. In the last part of this chapter, I review the entire research process and reflect upon my experiences in Canada.

7.2 Empirical conclusions

To be able to answer the primary research question, several sub questions were formulated which need to be answered first. These sub questions can be divided in three parts: (1) changes and trends in historic, multi-level context and the recent developments in provincial parks planning, (2) analyzing the policy arena, and (3) evaluating the interactive policy process. In all three parts, the social and political context in Alberta plays a significant role. The primary research question and sub questions are:

How can the Alberta Parks Planning Policy and interactive policy process be explained in the context of multi-level, multi-sector and multi-actor governance?

- V. *What were the most important trends in Canadian parks planning over the past decades at both the Federal and Provincial level?*
 - o *Is there convergence or rather discrepancy between the Federal and the Provincial level?*
 - o *How can this be explained and what are the consequences?*
 - o *What is the influence of the international level on nature conservation in Canada?*
- VI. *What has changed between previous and the current parks planning policies in Alberta?*
- VII. *What stakeholders are involved and how are the interactions among actors shaped in the policy process?*
 - o *How do stakeholders experience and explain the changes in policy over time?*
 - o *Do they see their input reflected in the new Parks Planning Framework?*
- VIII. *How are the tools of interactive policy making used in Alberta parks planning policy and do they contribute to a better process and result?*
 - o *What are the opinions of the participating actors on the process?*
 - o *What are the results of the process?*

7.2.1 Contextual and content changes and trends in parks policy

The first part of the research in chapters 3 and 4, primarily deals with the history of parks policy making and the developments and trends therein, thus covering sub questions I and II. The changes in parks planning between the previous and the current policy can be summarized in three important trends that have occurred. First, there seems to be a trend in policy focus. At the provincial level, in the early days, parks were primarily designed for recreation. This gradually changed towards a nature conservation focus, with some room for recreation activities. The most recent course, however, seems to head back towards the recreation side of the spectrum, as seen in the priorities and guidelines set out in the latest policy document. This is underscored by the allocation of resources for the management and establishment of protected areas, which has significantly decreased over the past fifteen years. Another very significant indicator of the change in priority is the fact that there is no effective legislation in place anymore to select and establish new protected areas. In previous policies this point seemed to be one of the key issues, but it has disappeared altogether in the latest version. At the National level, the policies have an increasing ecological and conservation focus, improving litigation to preserve precious landscapes and habitats. Recreation does take place, but conservation has a clear priority and resources are allocated accordingly. Interesting here is that the Alberta and National parks policies were fairly similar until about two decades ago. Since then, however, the Alberta policy moved towards a more access oriented parks system with low levels of environmental protection, while the Federal policies increased protection and environmental priorities. Also long term thinking is clearly visible at the Federal level, while the Alberta plan, which was supposed to be a ten-year framework, mostly contains short term (1-3 years) guidance. At this point there is thus a clear discrepancy between the two levels.

Second, the overall priorities in Alberta do not seem to lie in the environmental sphere. The booming resource based economy players are the actors setting the political agenda. Because of the absence of any significant political opposition and the interconnectedness of the resource industry and the conservative administration, the status quo is strong. This takes place within the strong frontier tradition of laissez-faire in Western Canada, in which freedom, entrepreneurship and the self-supporting community are encouraged and in which the interference of governments in everyday life is limited to a minimum. Environmental issues, under which protected areas fall, are therefore only a window-dressing item, but not considered a serious political subject. These features are also recognized in the evaluation of the process, outlined in section 7.2.2. Connected is the apparent discrepancy between the public and the political agenda. Public polling consistently shows the environment is increasingly important and has priority with the majority of the people. These, however, are not translated in electoral behavior, or active support for environmental organizations in Alberta. The latter can partially be explained by the political system in Alberta that operates in electoral districts with local representatives. Locally chosen politicians tend to listen to local concerns, primarily on economic issues. Large scale nature conservation in parks can hardly be called a local issue or a local concern and thus gain little attention by members of the legislative assembly.

Third point in analyzing the parks policies at the different levels of governance is that important changes in governance standards took place. Throughout the chapters it became clear that the increasing importance of multi-level governance does not seem to play a significant role in parks planning policy making in Alberta. It does not for three reasons. First, the constitutional organization in Canada provides a far-reaching autonomy to the Provinces and Territories. The Federal level simply lacks the legitimacy or legislation to interfere with Provincial affairs, leaving room for Provinces to head in a different direction. Second, this is the exact reason why the Provinces seem unbound by international treaties. These are signed by the National government, which has to implement them on the lower levels. But since the former lacks effective legislation to force the latter to cooperate, the impact of these treaties on Alberta's policies is limited. Even if the Province did sign on to a national commitment, it is almost impossible to enforce implementation. Third, there is the above described laissez-faire, frontier tradition in the Western part of Canada in which interference of the Federal government is highly undesirable. Interference in the past that was received as negative for Alberta has contributed to an increasing anti-federal government attitude. The result is that when the Federal government sets an example and requests the provinces to follow, Alberta seems only more inclined to act otherwise.

7.2.2 Analyzing the policy arena

In the second part of this research, chapters 4 and 5, the analysis of the policy arena was the central theme. To be able to understand the policy outcomes, one has to understand the policy arena in which these were created. The third sub question deals with these issues. The answering of this question can be divided in two parts. First it becomes clear that there are many different actors involved, which can be distinguished as actor groups representing similar interests. It is difficult to say whether or not actor groups always form coalitions, since most groups have their own specific goals and mandate. Also, there seem to be several active and influential forces that operate behind the scenes, like the natural resource companies. Therefore, it remains difficult to determine where and how exactly these forces steer the process, since they endeavor to do this silently in the background.

Second, the interactions among actors were analyzed in two parts: the discursive and the resources side. Not surprisingly, it turns out that like-minded actors tend to work together, albeit for different reasons. Strategic motives of preferring a similar outcome for different reasons are a strong indicator. On the resources side it seems that the actors with the strongest strategic coalition also possess the largest resources and are thus capable of steering the interactions and outcomes in their favor. The environmental interest seems to lose the battle to the economical interests. Generally speaking the dominant coalition controls the arena in such a way that it is doubtful whether one can actually label it as a network. The basic premise thereof: actor interdependency, seems weak or even absent. The next section links these conclusions to the evaluation of the process design.

7.2.3 Evaluating the interactive policy process

The interactive phase of the current policy process was highly interesting and dynamic; however its value and quality can be questioned, as seen in chapter 6. Sub question IV deals with this from

both an external evaluative perspective and an internal stakeholder oriented perspective. In the external perspective the standards for interactive policy making are applied to the Alberta interactive policy process; the latter turned out to be ambiguous and ill-designed for four reasons: First, these processes are historically embedded in that the relationships between actors and the confidence in interactive processes are problematic due to experiences in the past. This was not sufficiently taken into account, since time allocation needed for trust building was far from adequate. Second, the guidelines for designing an interactive process were largely ignored. There were no clear objectives for the process, leaving the role of the participants unclear and transparency and openness of information was absent. Third, it becomes clear that the outcomes of the current process seem to be determined by other factors outside the interactive policy arena. Fourth and probably the biggest problem, was that the prerequisite of an open network seemed unfulfilled. As outlined in the previous section, in a proper network situation, actors are dependent on each other to make decisions and there is a certain equality of power. Having a handful of very influential actors on the table undermines the network. The question is thus whether the interactive process is legitimate and valuable.

Surprisingly, from an internal, stakeholder perspective, most participants in the process say interactive policymaking is a valuable tool, even when the actors are aware of the flaws. Nevertheless their comments seemed biased by whether or not the outcomes of the process were in favor of the actor concerned. For the ones that were not favored by the outcomes, not being on the table seemed a worse alternative, since other routes of influencing the policy (primarily through opposition parties) are closed. Overall the process did not fulfill the requirements for an open, valuable and legitimate interactive policy process.

7.2.4 Primary research question

The answers on the four sub questions can be summarized from two perspectives, the process and the content, which together answer the primary research question: First the recent changes in the policy content, towards a more recreation oriented focus can be explained from the three multi-issues. (1) From the multi-actor perspective, the recreation actor groups seem to have gained clout, while the environmental groups lost influence in a more individualized, short term focused and booming economy context. (2) The parks policies have increasingly become a multi-sector issue and might increasingly interfere with priorities of other departments. These departments and the interests they represent are very unhappy with this situation and try to influence the protected areas policy so the outcomes are favorable to them. The little environment ambitious and access oriented focus in the current document fits their needs and is thus supported. (3) The multi-level influence on the policy content seems to be negligible, since the Federal and Provincial policies have different priorities and set out a different course, and international treaties are easily ignored.

Second, the interactive process can also be explained from these three perspectives. (1) The process (design) seems to favor certain actors over others, which can be explained because the favored actors helped design it and put have the most power to put pressure behind the scenes. (2) Other government departments (sectors) influenced the policy process by setting clear guidelines for the content of the final document to pass cabinet and refused to give any form of genuine commitments to the outcomes of the interactive process. By doing so, they basically

jeopardized genuine interactive policy making. (3) The multi-level influence on the process is again absent, since the standards for, and the use of interactive policy making are far better on the Federal level. Positive results from interactive approaches on the Federal level prove its value and basically provide a blueprint for the provinces. These best practice examples on the Federal level, however, clearly are not copied by the Alberta government.

All together this means the current parks policy process was ill designed, in that it ignored the major power imbalances and the lack of trust among the stakeholders. The outcomes are therefore little surprising and the new policy seems to lack the ingredients to result in an ambitious twenty-first century protected areas policy, which takes the environmental challenges seriously. While world-wide governments seem to increasingly recognize the importance of nature conservation, Alberta seems to head the other way. The socio-economic and political context provides sufficient explanation for this shift and the result is little surprising, though not less worrying. Although the dual mandate of recreation and conservation in parks has always been difficult, the balance between the two seems to have shifted dangerously towards the former in the latest protected areas policy proposal.

7.3 Theoretical conclusions

After having answered the research questions a feedback towards the theory can be made. This section elaborates what can be learned from the case in terms of theory and whether the chosen theories were useful and sufficient in answering the research questions. The latter section also goes deeper into the remaining theoretic dilemmas around interactive policy making.

The theory that formed the primary framework under this thesis is divided in analytical concepts and explanatory concepts. The former are the tools to describe the policy arena; shifts in governance, policy cycle and agenda setting, while the latter also understand and evaluate what is happening in the arena; network approach and interactive policy theory. Linking these to the empirical conclusions from the previous sections, two topics come forward: (1) the preconditions for a functioning network are absent, and (2) the historic and political context creates a difficult situation for interactive policy making. The former points at the fact that there is no interdependency between the actors in the network, thus there is no actual network. The power imbalance is deeply rooted and, unless an interactive process is well-designed, creates a major obstacle and recipe for failure. Most of the power however, seems to be used outside the actual policy arena, behind the scenes. Although present, the influence of this power is hard to determine and prove, since it happens outside the arena and is not recorded by participants.

The second point refers to the difficult situation in which the process was supposed to take place. According to the literature, a top-down, single party controlled form of governance does not provide the preconditions for valuable interactive planning processes. Also the history of interactive policy in Alberta parks policy making has proven to be full of failures and has contributed to a large mistrust among the participants. If one nevertheless wants to initiate an interactive process, sufficient time allocation is crucial to build trust and capacity in order to have a better chance of success in the process this time. Also, certain short term projects for new protected areas with a high chance of successful cooperation, might help in providing bring the parties closer to each

other. The current situation however, is unlikely to lead to these initiatives. These points confirm most of the theoretic insights and preconditions about interactive policy making, therewith also reinforcing the statements made above.

Although the theory in general turned out fruitful, there are still some questions for further research. First, as outlined above it is expected that much of the influencing and actual decision making happens outside the policy arena. The extent to which this is true and who exactly is behind these actions is unclear and calls for further research. Analyzing the exact relations between industry and the party and also the relationships between actors in a coalition are interesting and might contribute to a better understanding of the case. Nevertheless this might be difficult since actors make large efforts to keep this kind of information secret. Second, the analyzed case in Alberta parks policy is just a single case. The question remains whether the governance style, that is seriously limiting the value of the interactive process in this case, has similar effects on other cases and in other policy fields and whether the influence of multi-level governance, which is very limited on Alberta parks policy making, is also limited in other Canadian provinces and in other policy fields. Analyzing and evaluating other interactive policy processes in Alberta and other provinces might give more insights and provide data for a comparative analysis.

The third and last point is connected to the common assumption that a wealthy society is more inclined to install ambitious standards for environmental policy (of which nature conservation is a part), than poor countries. The case of Alberta's nature conservation policy has shown that this assumption is not always correct. A very wealthy Province does not seem to be very enthusiastic about strict rules for nature conservation. The reasons for this were given in the conclusions, but again the question remains 'whether the Alberta case is a single exception or that there is a connection between wealth acquired by natural resource extraction and low standards for nature conservation?'. A comparative study between the policies of Alberta and those of other Western, natural resource rich countries could prove fruitful in answering this question.

7.4 Recommendations

The observation and conclusions in this research lead to some recommendations for the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society as an actor in the process. They can be divided in two separate issues: 'what was learned?' and 'what to do?'. Under the former, two important observations deserve attention. First, it is confirmed that knowledge about the subject, in this case nature and nature conservation, does not necessarily leads to an influential position in the process. Stakeholder knowledge is often ignored or simply replaced by other 'knowledge', countering the ecological evidence and other resources are more influential. The result is that the power base of environmental NGOs is weakening, since their legitimacy is often derived from being an expert in the field. Second, the political influence of nature conservation organizations seems to be weakening in Alberta. The economical focus of the current administration, but more important, the lack of access to the political arena, form a threshold for the environmental agenda. Also the specific environmental agenda seems dominated nowadays with other issues, like climate change and energy crisis, that seem to have priority.

Being on the table as a stakeholder in a consultation process is therefore not sufficient to reach the public or political agenda. One needs an alternative way to influence the process. Since the normal alternative through the political opposition is blocked, two more radical options could be considered: (1) large scale public action, and (2) going to court. Using the former, naming, framing and shaming are the key tools to do so. At the same time a well designed campaign can be a powerful tool at the consultation table. This campaign should, in my opinion, focus on one specific area or goal. Theories of agenda setting predict that simple and understandable issues that have a specific (maybe even local) goal, are easiest for people to associate with and thus stand the best chance of success. Reports like the 'State of Alberta's Parks' are very useful when cooperating with Parks division representatives, but fail to connect to the larger public and, as noted above, have decreasing value in the political arena. The powerbase lies with the grassroots, the local MLA's and that is where one might have the best chance of success. Working on both levels; the provincial government table and the grassroots level, might prove fruitful, although the context remains difficult to work with and the value of consultations therein is doubtful.

Because of this difficult context, using the second option might be worthwhile. In a situation that lacks the preconditions for open deliberation, using the law and courts might be a more powerful option, especially since it is still underutilized. Although trials are expensive and slow, a victory in court might be a powerful leverage in a participatory process. Working together with First Nation organizations on this option might provide a stronger case, since their rights are well-established in the law. The former also might lead to improved cooperation between the First Nation communities and the environmental NGOs.

7.5 Reflections

After finalizing the research and outlining the conclusions, the last section reflects upon the entire process and my experiences in Canada. I elaborate on the limitations of the research and on the limitations of myself as a researcher. This section concludes with my personal experiences of doing research in the Alberta context and the influence this has had on the final results.

7.5.1 Reflections on the process

In hindsight the research process has been very intensive and educational for me as a young inexperienced researcher. Throughout the process I have encountered some significant problems that requested thoughtful decisions, which would inevitably influence the final product. First, at the start of my internship in Canada, the original project (a newly established protected area, initiated by the local stakeholders instead of government) for my research, turned out to be impossible due to lack of cooperation of key actors. The decision was soon made to switch to the current subject: the Alberta Parks planning framework process. This proved to be very fruitful and although some procedural adjustments had to be made, (I would have to work anonymous and unrelated to CPAWS when conducting my research) everything worked out as planned.

Nevertheless the switch from the local project to the Provincial policy process had its limitations as well. The original project would be small and local, while the current case was at the Provincial level. Moreover, the process was ongoing, which meant my research was going to be a participatory, ex-ante evaluation. These two points created three methodological problems; (1) a

short time frame meant limited time for information gathering (interviews), (2) not all information would be available and (3) it would be difficult to draw conclusions on an unfinished project. The first point is common in many researches and is usually dealt with by selecting interview partners from different groups in order to gain insights from multiple angles. This turned out to work fairly well. The second point was somewhat harder to solve and might have influenced the final results. Since it was an ongoing process, information could be of strategic value to stakeholders, thus it could be in their interest not to make it public. Connected to this, because I was working in the office of an environmental organization, it was easier for me to acquire background information on this actor group, than it was for other actor groups. Although I had no personal interest in the research topic, apart from my personal concerns about the future of Alberta's parks, this inevitably has an influence on the research.

Third and last point is the problem of the ongoing process. While I was doing my analysis, the interactive process, but also the redrafting and rewriting of the policy document was ongoing. The drawback was that while I was working, my work could have been outdated already, because a new document would be presented. The advantage was that I could be in the middle of the action and witness the developments firsthand. The overall conclusion of the latter points is that from a process analysis perspective, this is a very privileged situation, adding to the strength of the results. From a substance point of view it is hard to draw any definitive conclusions on whether or not the policy provides the necessary conditions for decent nature conservation in Alberta. It remains to be seen after implementation what happens. Although, as outlined in chapter one, a little ambitious and weak policy document, is unlikely to lead to a strong implementation on the ground. Therefore the analysis on substance is limited to a comparison with the Federal policy to provide some guidance of what to expect. Throughout the process my skills improved, but I am still an inexperienced researcher. Decisions made during the process might have been different if I had to do it again; however I honestly believe I always made deliberate decisions. The result of this research is therefore my substantiated interpretation of the reality in Alberta and is of course open to discussion.

7.5.2 Reflections on my experiences

Working in Edmonton has been a very educational experience. Coming from a densely populated country, the size of one Canadian National park, I had a different perspective of nature conservation in several ways. Abundance of nature does not automatically mean protection is an easy and little debated topic. Neither was the political situation as I had expected. To be able to witness Canadian politics from close by, with National elections in October 2008, was an interesting experience. Also the way nature conservation organizations work in Canada was an interesting contrast with my own country. Nevertheless the best part of this internship was the living and working in a foreign country. My linguistic competence in English improved and the real world of environmental work is a different league from the university books. A small organization full of professionals with a dedication in their work I rarely witnessed. Although this setting might have influenced my thinking in some occasions, it was a real privilege to be given the chance to be there. I hope these experiences were mutual.

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Appendix I Interview Guides

Interview Guide (Alison Woodley):

National Policy History

- What were the most important policy changes on the federal level since the 1980's?
- Have these changes effected the National Parks negatively/positively?
- Are these changes related to the type of government (liberal, conservative, etc)?
- Are there other factors that explain these changes?
- On the provincial level, budget cuts have been ongoing, how is this on the national level?

- Do you think the policy for creating new parks, used until the 1980's (expropriating local landowners to create parks), has created a negative public attitude towards parks?
- Did this change?

- What explains the relative success on the national level of the endangered spaces campaign of the early 1990's?
- How did the National Green Plan work out?

Current policy

- The primary goal of the current federal policy seems to be on nature conservation, is that reflected in the parks ecological health?
- Is there a system of stakeholder consultation in place on the national level and how well does this work?
- How are parks and protected areas perceived by the current government? Are they in favor of completing the system?
- Will there be new national parks created?

Spill over

- How influential is the federal government on policies on the provincial level?
- Are there mechanisms for the federal government to force the provinces to cooperate?
- Do treaties like Biodiversity and Kyoto have any influence on the provinces? → Canada has signed them and is bound to this, how does this translate to the provinces?

Interview Guide (Archie Landals):

Personal Introduction:

- Who are you and what is your position within the Alberta Parks Division?
- For how long have you been involved in Parks Planning?

Special Places 2000:

- Why did the Special Places 2000 program made it up to the political agenda?
- The special places program was set up with ambitious goals and a decent draft policy, what happened to that in 1995 when the final policy was presented?
- Why did the program fail?
- Is it true that Energy/Forestry actively tried to kill the program by putting up a disinformation campaign?
- Why was it abandoned in 2001?
- Many people involved in today's parks planning consultation feel that special places has created a mistrust between government and stakeholders, do you agree?

After special places, plan for parks:

- What happened after special places? There was no official policy anymore?
- Then the 'Defining our Nature' document (2007) appeared, who wrote it what happened to it?
- What do you think of the parks planning framework, is it different from the previous draft?
- Who wrote the current framework? The Parks Division, or someone else? Why?
- What were the guidelines given to the writer for the new document?
- How much pressure/influence do the other departments have on the parks division?
- Can you fulfill your mandate, within this context?
- Do you think the process will end up creating a workable and ambitious framework to tackle the challenges (like climate change and biodiversity loss) in parks?

Consultation:

- What do you think of public consultation processes in parks planning?
- You've witnessed 15 years of consultation, did you see changes in positions of stakeholders? Did they manage to agree on more issues than 15 years ago?
- Does public consultation contribute to better parks policy?
- Do you think the current process is open and transparent?
- In reading through all the documents and talking to people, I see a trend from recreation as a focus for parks in the early years, to conservation in the nineties and back to recreation now. Do you recognize that?
- Of how much value are the scientific studies that show we have to act now, to save the wilderness? Does science play a (major) role in parks policy or is it politics that rule?

Interview Guide (Cal Rakach):

Personal introduction:

- Who are you, who do you represent?
- What is your position within the Alberta Off-Highway-Vehicle Association?
- Have you been involved in NGO advocacy before your work with AOHVA?
- What should be the primary goal of protected areas in Alberta?
- What is AOHVA's position on the creation of new protected areas / parks?

AOHVA Perspective on PPF:

- What does the AOHVA think of the new Parks Planning Framework in general? What was your first reaction to the draft?
- Is there a need for such a document in Alberta?
- What is positive / negative about the current draft document?
- Do you think all recreation has to take place within parks, or should there be a recreation framework for public lands?
- Is there a difference between motorized and non-motorized recreation according to AOHVA?
 - AOHVA stands for 'responsible use', what does that mean?
- What is the single most important issue AOHVA would like to change in the current version?
- Do you see your own input from consultation reflected in the document?
- What do you expect the outcomes will be (of both the process and the document)?

Stakeholder consultation:

- How often have you been 'officially' (government formally invited your organization for input) consulted on Parks Planning issues in the past 5 years?
- How often have you been 'unofficially' (informal inquiries by Alberta Parks staff) consulted on Parks Planning issues in the past 5 years?
- How valuable do you think stakeholder consultation is?
 - Do you think the recent stakeholder sessions influence the content of the final document?
- Does AOHVA use other sources to influence the policy process (lobbying local MLA's)?

Interview Guide (David Wasserman):

Personal introduction:

- Who are you, who do you represent?
- Hike Alberta is a new organization, why has it been established and what are its goals?
- What is your position within Hike Alberta?
- Have you been involved in NGO advocacy before?

Hike Alberta Perspective on PPF:

- What does Hike Alberta think of the new Parks Planning Framework in general?
- Is there a need for such a document in Alberta?
- What is positive / negative about the current draft document?
- The focus of the draft seems to be on 'recreation' and 'access', how do you interpret this?
- What is the single most important issue you would like to change in the current version?

- Do you see your own input from consultation reflected in the document?
- What do you expect the outcomes will be (of both the process and the document)?
 - Will it be helpful in developing the individual park management plans?
 - According to you, what is the appropriate planning level for parks (national, provincial, or local)?

Stakeholder consultation:

- How often have you been 'officially' (government formally invited your organization for input) consulted on Parks Planning issues in the past 5 years?
- How often have you been 'unofficially' (informal inquiries by Alberta Parks staff) consulted on Parks Planning issues in the past 5 years?
- How often do you think the government should officially consult the stakeholders?
- How valuable do you think stakeholder consultation is?
 - Do you think the recent stakeholder sessions influence the content of the final document?
- Does Hike Alberta use other sources to influence the policy process (lobbying local MLA's)?

Interview Guide (Dianne Pachal):

Personal introduction

- Who are you, who do you represent?
- What exactly does Sierra Club do?
- What is your position within Sierra Club?
- How long have you been involved in ENGO advocacy?

The Special Places 2000 Era

- Do you think the Endangered Spaces campaign was a success in that it helped start the special places program?
- Did the time-spirit around Brundtland and the Earth Summit of 1992 help to start the program?
- The first draft version looked very promising, why did they abandon that?
- In hindsight, what do you think about the program and its goals?
- What caused the failure of the program?
- What should they have done, to make the program successful?
- What legacy is left behind by special places? Does it influence the current parks planning framework process?

The policy gap 2001-2006

- What marked the end of special places 2000, why did it stop in 2001?
- What happened to parks planning afterwards?
- Are you familiar with the 'Defining our Nature' plan for parks, written by the department in 2007?
- Is the political situation in Alberta, having no real opposition, of major influence on environmental issues?

Parks Planning Framework

- Do you believe there will be a decent parks planning framework at the end of the process?
- What do you think about the consultation process?
- Do you believe in public consultation in general, does it make a difference, or have all the decisions already been made at a higher level?
- Do you see input from previous consultation reflected in the document?
- Why do you think the motorized recreation groups were so successful in addressing their concerns in the framework? What do the ENGO's don't have that they do?

Interview Guide (George Newton):

Personal introduction:

- Who are you, who do you represent?
- What is your position within CPAWS?
- Have you been involved in NGO advocacy before your work with CPAWS and for how long?
- How would you describe the environmental groups or coalition that is concerned with parks planning?
- In the Special Places 2000 period, Environmental NGO seemed to have a stronger position than they do today, can you explain that?
- What do you think the special places era has left Alberta with?

Perspective on PPF:

- What do you think of the new Parks Planning Framework in general? What was your first reaction to the draft?
- Is there a need for such a document in Alberta?
- What is positive / negative about the current draft document?
- How do you see recreation and conservation under the same mandate for parks, is that possible?
- What is the single most important issue you would like to change in the current version?
- Do you see your own input from consultation reflected in the document?
- What do you expect the outcomes will be (of both the process and the document)?

Stakeholder consultation:

- How often have you been 'officially' consulted on Parks Planning issues in the past 5 years?
- How often have you been 'unofficially' consulted on Parks Planning issues in the past 5 years?
- How valuable do you think stakeholder consultation is?
 - Do you think the recent stakeholder sessions influence the content of the final document?
 - Have there been changes in the consultation sessions and ways of consultations on parks planning issues over the past 15 years?
 - Considering all the circumstances, what is the meaning of consultation?

Interview Guide Jim Webb (First Nations spokesman):

Personal Introduction:

- Who are you and who exactly do you represent in the PPF process?
- Is this your job?
- For how long have you been the spokesman for the First Nation group?
- Do first Nations speak in a common voice or does every group have its own spokesman?

First Nations and Parks/Nature:

- The land and nature are important issues for First Nation communities, do they support protected areas?
- What is the general opinion of First Nations on parks and protected areas?
- In the past, were First Nations involved in parks planning issues?
- What are the results of this? Positive or Negative?

Perspective on PPF:

- What do you think of the new Parks Planning Framework in general?
- Is there a need for such a document in Alberta?
- What is positive / negative about the current draft document?
- What is the single most important issue you would like to change in the current version?
- Do you see your own input from previous consultation reflected in the document?
- What do you expect the outcomes will be (of both the process and the document)?

Consultation process:

- What do you think about the consultation process around parks planning, is it open and transparent, were the goals clear to First Nations people?
- On paper, First Nations have a different role in consultations (government – government), how does this work out in this process?
- The constitution provides several rights for first nations, how well are they able to use those rights to influence government decisions?
- Within the political context of Alberta, do you believe in the value of consultation?

Interview Guide (Lee Foote):

Personal introduction:

- Who are you and what is your field of expertise?
- How long have you been involved in Parks and Protected Areas (planning)?
- Were you involved (either personal or professional) in the Special Places 2000 program?
- What do you think of the Special Places 2000 program, was it successful or not?
- What happened after Special Places 2000 until the new framework was launched?

Parks Planning Framework:

- Are you familiar with the new Draft Parks Planning Framework?
- What do you think of the new framework, what are its strong and weak points?
- What impact (either positive or negative) do you expect this document will have on protected areas in Alberta?

Consultation and politics:

- Is the University officially consulted by the parks department when they write a new management plan?
- Is the academic advice (given at any moment) taken into consideration?
- I found some interesting information, that academic criticism is not appreciated by the conservative government in Alberta. Is it true that there have been attempts to threaten critic academics with job-loss or funding cuts because of their opinion?
- Do you think the current consultation process leads to a better parks planning framework?
- I assume you are familiar with the political situation in this province. Do you believe this undermines a fair and equal representation of interests?
- What are the consequences for the consultation process on parks planning, do you think?
- What will be the future of Alberta's natural heritage?

Interview Guide (Maurice Nadeau):

Personal introduction:

- Who are you, who do you represent?
- What is your position within the Alberta Fish and Game Association?
- Have you been involved in NGO advocacy before your presidency of Fish & Game?
- Alberta Fish and Game Association is a long established organization, have there been major changes in the perspectives of the club on Alberta parks?
- What should be the primary goal of protected areas in Alberta?
- What is AFGA's position on the creation of new protected areas / parks?

Hike Alberta Perspective on PPF:

- What does the Alberta Fish and Game Association think of the new Parks Planning Framework in general? What was your first reaction to the draft?
- Is there a need for such a document in Alberta?
- What is positive / negative about the current draft document?
- The focus of the draft seems to be on 'recreation' and 'access', how do you interpret this?
- Is there a difference between motorized and non-motorized recreation according to AFGA?
- Do you think motorized recreation (OHV use) is compatible with AFGA's and parks goals of nature conservation?
- What is the most important issue Fish & Game would like to change in the current version?
- Do you see your own input from consultation reflected in the document?
- What do you expect the outcomes will be (of both the process and the document)?
 - Will it be helpful in developing the individual park management plans?
 - According to you, what is the appropriate planning level for parks (national, provincial, or local)?

Stakeholder consultation:

- How often have you been 'officially' (government formally invited your organization for input) consulted on Parks Planning issues in the past 5 years?
- How often have you been 'unofficially' (informal inquiries by Alberta Parks staff) consulted on Parks Planning issues in the past 5 years?
 - AFGA's strategy states that you would like to speak to the ministers and MLA's concerned with Fish/Game at least 3 times a year, do you reach these goals?
- How valuable do you think stakeholder consultation is?
 - Do you think the recent stakeholder sessions influence the content of the final document?
- Does Fish & Game use other sources to influence the policy process (lobbying local MLA's)?

Interview Guide (Ray Rasmussen):

Personal Introduction:

- Who are you?
- What period of time were you involved in Special Places 2000?
- Why did the government pick you to sit in the committee?

Endangered Spaces:

- Do you agree that the campaign was successful in that it brought parks to the political agenda in the early 1990's?
- What factors actually made the special places program start?
- Had the time spirit around Brundtland and the Earth summit, got anything to do with the government commitments to the program?

Special Places 2000:

- What do you think about the program in hindsight?
- Why was there a sudden change in the political support for the program?
- Is it true that other government departments tried to kill the program by spreading false information about the special places goals?
- What factors made the program fail eventually?
- The procedures for designating new parks were tremendously complex? Was this the reason that so little parks actually made it?
- Do you think the Special Places 2000 program left a negative legacy for parks and parks planning?

Consultation:

- You were in the middle of the public consultation process, did it add to better policy?
- What do you think of public consultation in general?
- Within Alberta's political context, is there a point in having consultation?
- Is there any hope for Alberta's parks planning in the context we are in now?

Interview Guide (Scott Jones):

Personal Introduction:

- Who are you and what is your position within the Alberta Parks Division?
- For how long have you been involved in Parks Planning?

Plan for parks:

- Then there was the 'Defining our Nature' document in 2007, who wrote it and what happened to that?
- What do you think of the new parks planning framework, is it very different from the previous draft in your opinion?
- What are its strengths and weaknesses?
- Who wrote the current framework? The Parks Division, or someone else? Why?
- What were the guidelines given to the writer for the new document, (by whom)?
- How much pressure/influence do the other departments have on the parks division?
- Can you fulfill your mandate, within this context?
- Do you think the process will end up creating a workable and ambitious framework to tackle the challenges (like climate change and biodiversity loss) in parks?
- There is no section in the parks planning framework that explicitly deals with the creation of new protected areas, why? (since it was perceived as very important in Special Places)

Consultation:

- What do you think of public consultation processes in parks planning?
- Does public consultation contribute to better parks policy?
- Do you think the current process is open and transparent?
- Who decided what parties were invited, why these?
- Will there be broader public consultation on the parks planning framework, or only stakeholder focus group input?
- What has been done with all the input so far? Will there be changes?
- When will the new draft be released?
- In reading through all the documents and talking to people, I see a trend from recreation as a focus for parks in the early years, to conservation in the nineties and back to recreation now. Do you recognize that?
- Of how much value are the scientific studies that show we have to act now, to save the wilderness? Does science play a (major) role in parks policy or is it politics that rule?

Appendix II Alberta Protected Areas Map

