Université de Montréal

Navigating Different Natures: The Governance of National Parks in Canada

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Magdalena García Pérez de Arce

Département de géographie

Faculté des arts et des sciences

Thèse présentée en vue de l'obtention du grade de doctorat (Ph.D.) en géographie

Août, 2023

Université de Montréal

Département de géographie, Faculté des arts et des sciences

Cette thèse intitulée

Navigating Different Natures: The Governance of National Parks in Canada

Présenté par

Magdalena García Pérez de Arce

A été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes

Kathryn Furlong
Présidente

Patricia Martin
Directrice de recherche

Kathryn Furlong
Membre du jury

Kevin Gould
Membre du jury

Rosemary-Claire Collard

Résumé
Les parcs nationaux jouent un rôle central à la fois dans la politique de conservation de la biodiversité et dans l'accès du public à la nature. Donc, la gestion de ces espaces est loin d'être simple. Représentant le premier service de parcs au monde avec l'un des budgets les plus substantiels pour la gestion des parcs à l'échelle mondiale, le système de parcs nationaux du Canada constitue un cas emblématique à explorer. Cette dissertation examine comment Parcs Canada gouverne les parcs nationaux, les raisonnements qui sous-tendent les processus décisionnels, les acteurs impliqués dans le processus de gouvernance, ainsi que les sujets qui sont régis. J'examine les points de vue des représentants de Parcs Canada, des organisations et des municipalités à différentes échelles, au niveau fédéral ainsi que dans deux études de cas spécifiques : le parc national Jasper en Alberta et le parc national de La Mauricie au Québec.

À travers une série de stratégies de recherche qualitative déployées entre 2020 et 2023, mon étude adopte une analyse à plusieurs échelles pour explorer comment l'État négocie les tensions qui surgissent entre les différentes dimensions scientifiques, économiques et sociales qui sous-tendent la gouvernance des parcs. En m'appuyant sur 54 entretiens semi-structurés, une analyse d'archives et de documents ainsi que des supports visuels, ma thèse rassemble un cadre conceptuel ancré dans la construction sociale de la nature, la gouvernance de la conservation, le tourisme, la citoyenneté, l'espace public et l'inclusion. J'utilise une analyse de discours pour examiner les fondements des raisonnements qui sous-tendent la manière dont les scientifiques, les décideurs politiques, les planificateurs, les représentants municipaux et les chambres de tourisme comprennent et encadrent la gouvernance des parcs.

Cette thèse aborde trois questions de recherche distinctes pour comprendre comment les parcs nationaux sont gouvernés. La première cherche à comprendre comment les différentes conceptualisations scientifiques de la Nature ont façonné la gouvernance des parcs nationaux. L'analyse interroge l'émergence du concept d'intégrité écologique en tant qu'élément central de la gestion scientifique contemporaine et des efforts de restauration d'écosystèmes particuliers. À travers les exemples de la gestion des arbres et des poissons, le chapitre illustre comment les scientifiques et les gestionnaires tentent de restaurer l'intégrité écologique dans des écosystèmes qui ont été historiquement transformés à la fois pour l'extraction capitaliste et l'utilisation récréative. La reproduction de l'idée de la nature sauvage, ou d'une nature vierge non habitée par les humains, sous-tend l'idée d'intégrité. En tant que tel, je soutiens que l'intégrité écologique

ne reconnaît pas l'agence des humains dans les écologies passées et dans la restauration en tant que pratique scientifique.

Ma deuxième question de recherche examine les motivations économiques qui influent sur la gouvernance des parcs, ainsi que la mesure dans laquelle le Canada a adopté des orientations néolibérales. Mes conclusions indiquent que, malgré les efforts récents pour augmenter les revenus basés sur la visite, Parcs Canada n'a pas pleinement adopté une logique de gouvernance néolibérale. À la place, d'autres rationales se sont développées, privilégiant l'accès gratuit à des groupes sociaux spécifiques, notamment les jeunes, les enfants, les nouveaux citoyens et les résidents permanents, afin de maintenir l'importance politique des parcs parmi les Canadiens. Bien que la pression pour étendre le rôle de l'industrie touristique persiste, je soutiens que Parcs Canada résiste à une plus grande marchandisation et privatisation.

La troisième question de recherche examine comment les parcs nationaux sont conceptualisés en tant qu'espaces publics et pour qui ils sont gouvernés. Mon enquête révèle des asymétries de pouvoir dans la production des expériences de plein air, où l'accès est disponible pour certaines personnes tandis qu'il est limité pour d'autres. J'examine différentes dimensions de l'inclusion au sein des politiques des parcs nationaux, ainsi que leur mise en œuvre dans les deux études de cas. Mon argument affirme que la gestion des parcs doit encore pleinement intégrer une compréhension des besoins spatiaux et récréatifs des citoyens et des utilisateurs culturellement diversifiés. Par conséquent, les immigrants et d'autres groupes socioculturels ressentent un sentiment d'exclusion dans ces espaces publics. Les parcs nationaux sont de plus en plus considérés comme un espace clé dans la lutte pour un droit social à la nature.

Mes conclusions montrent que les parcs nationaux sont des territoires où les efforts de l'État pour faire face à la perte de biodiversité ainsi que la demande collective croissante d'accès aux espaces verts publics convergent. En tant que tels, deviennent des sites d'expérimentation dirigés par l'État dans les approches envers la nature et la citoyenneté. Cette étude met en lumière les tensions et les complexités inhérentes à la gestion de ces sites, tout en explorant le processus imaginatif de création de relations alternatives entre les humains et la nature.

Mots clés : Gouvernance, Parcs nationaux, Écologie politique, Visiteurs, Conservation de la nature, Loisirs, Tourisme axé sur la nature, Droit à la nature, Espaces Publics, Accès aux aires protégées, Canada.

Abstract

National parks are central to both the politics of biodiversity conservation and public access to nature. In light of this, managing these spaces is far from simple. Representing the world's first park service with one of the most substantial budgets for park management at the global scale, Canada's national park system is an iconic case to explore. This dissertation examines how Parks Canada governs national parks, the rationales that underpin decision-making processes, the actors who are involved in the governance process, as well as the subjects who are governed. I examine the perspectives of Parks Canada representatives, organizations and municipalities at different scales, including at the federal level as well as two specific case studies: Jasper National Park in Alberta and La Mauricie National Park in Quebec.

Through a range of qualitative research strategies deployed between 2020 and 2023, my study adopts a multi-scaled and multi-site analysis to explore how the state negotiates the tensions that arise between the different scientific, economic, and social imperatives that underpin park governance. Drawing on 54 semi-structured interviews, archival and document analysis as well as visual materials, my dissertation brings together a conceptual framework grounded in the social construction of nature, conservation governance, tourism, citizenship, public space, and inclusion. I use discourse analysis to examine the rationales that underpin the way diverse actors, scientists, policy makers, planners, municipal representatives, and tourism chambers understand and frame how parks are governed.

This dissertation addresses three distinct research questions to understand how national parks are governed. The first seeks to understand how different scientific conceptualizations of Nature have shaped the governance of national parks. The analysis interrogates the emergence of the concept of ecological integrity as central to contemporary scientific management and efforts to restore particular ecosystems. Through the examples of tree and fish management, chapter 5 illustrates the ways scientists and managers attempt to restore ecological integrity in ecosystems that have been transformed historically for both capitalist extraction and recreational use. The reproduction of the idea of wilderness, or a pristine nature uninhabited by humans, underpins the idea of integrity. As such, I argue that ecological integrity fails to acknowledge the agency of humans in past ecologies and in restoration as a scientific practice.

My second research question examines the degree to which neoliberalism has influenced financial governance of national parks in Canada. My findings indicate that, from their inception, Canadian national parks have been deeply rooted in capitalist structures. However, despite recent efforts to increase revenue based on visitation, Parks Canada has not fully embraced a neoliberal governance logic. Instead, other rationales have evolved which prioritize free access to specific social groups including youth, children, new citizens, and permanent residents as a means for sustaining the political importance of parks among Canadians. While pressure to expand the role of the tourist industry persists, I argue that Parks Canada is resisting further commodification and privatization.

The third research question asks how national parks are conceptualized as public spaces and for whom they are governed. My investigation reveals asymmetries of power in the production of Canadian outdoor experiences, where access is available to some people while limited to others. I examine different dimensions of inclusion within national parks policies, as well as their implementation in the two case studies, Jasper and La Mauricie. My argument asserts that the management of parks has yet to fully embrace an understanding of the spatial and recreational needs of culturally diverse citizens and users. Consequently, immigrants and other sociocultural groups experience a sense of exclusion in these public spaces. National parks are increasingly viewed as a key space in the struggle for a social right to nature.

My findings show that national parks are territories where state efforts to address both biodiversity loss as well as where an expanding collective demand for access to green public spaces converge. As such, national parks become sites of state-led experimentation in approaches towards nature and citizenship. This study illuminates the tensions and complexities inherent in managing these sites, while also delving into the imaginative process of generating alternative relationships between humans and nature.

Key words: Governance, National parks, Political ecology, Visitation, Conservation, Recreation, Nature-based tourism, Right to Nature, Public Spaces, Access to protected areas, Canada.

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Acronyms

CBD: Convention of Biological Diversity

COP: Conference of the Parties

CPAWS: Canadian Parks and Wildlife Society

CPR: Canadian Pacific Railway Company

CAP: Cultural Access Pass

CWS: Canadian Wildlife Service

EI: Ecological Integrity

FTE: Full-time equivalents.

GBF: Global Biodiversity Framework

GEF: Global Environmental Facility

ICC: Institute for Canadian Citizenship

IES: International Ecotourism Society

IGO: International Governmental Organizations

IUCN: International Union for Conservation of Nature

JNP: Jasper National Park

LAC: Library and Archives Canada

NFB: National Film Board

OECM: Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures

PA: Protected Area

SARA: Species at Risk Act

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNEP: UN Environment Programme

WCPA: World Commission on Protected Areas

UNWTO: United Nations World Tourism Organization

To Ismael and Julian for showing me different worlds and natures we live in and navigate through.

Acknowledgments

Since I started working with Patricia, I've come to realize that I'm fortunate to be on this journey with someone as incredibly generous as her. Thank you for taking me to new places and helping me navigate throughout this trip. Patricia is a phenomenal supervisor who not only accompanies my thoughts but also consistently challenges and pushes me to reach new heights. She has opened up a multitude of boundless opportunities. Undoubtedly, this academic journey has been a privilege because of her. Patricia has played a crucial role as both a mentor and a friend, inspiring me along the way. In her, I have seen the scholar I aspire to become one day.

Thanks to my committee Kevin and Kathryn that led me through inspiring conversations about scholarly but also political debates and ideas, over coffee and meetings.

Ismael and Julian, the two loves of my life who have accompanied me on a journey that has been a learning process of adaptation to different times and forms of lives. My immense gratitude to my parents, Carlos and Marisabel, for their unwavering encouragement and support in every imaginable way throughout this journey, demonstrating that life is an ongoing learning process.

Thanks to my friends and colleagues in the department, Jeimy, Nia, Estefanía, and Alejandra, for always being there for coffee, pisco sour or to participate with me in all kinds of crazy and great adventures as well as for providing me all kind of support. A special thanks to Alejandra, dedicating her time to producing the beautiful maps of this dissertation.

To Danielle for being an important part of my life in Montreal, especially during my academic writing in the pandemic, our shared cooking sessions, book exchanges, and skiing adventures. I am particularly grateful for your continuous support in enhancing my writing skills and for reviewing this dissertation.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Fabi for reading various pieces of my academic journey and supporting me in three languages. Adrienne and Elizabeth, thank you for introducing me to the outdoor world in Quebec. Lastly, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to Michel and Christiane, who have become like family to us and play a central role in our lives.

To the people of the SBL, both staff and fellow doctoral candidates, along with the engaging dialogues that took place in between writing sessions. This place offered me an inspiring environment during the last phase of my writing process.

A heartfelt and special thanks go to Amber, Grant, Kyle, and Max in Jasper. Their inspiring, insightful, and caring conversations became a central and unforgettable aspect of my research. I consider myself fortunate to have spent such an incredible time with them. Their generosity, time, and the offer of their home, including Max's room, hosted me in the most fantastic and warm manner imaginable, accompanied by the most engaging discussions. Without their kind support and their daily willingness to listen about my findings and observations, this research would not have been possible. In Jasper, special thanks to Karen at the Jasper-Yellowhead Museum who provided me with an office to collect archives and assisted me in gathering the most exciting materials I could have imagined.

I also thank all those who generously gave of their time to be interviewed in the course of my research. To the many people who have helped me along the way, particularly the staff from La Mauricie and Jasper, the municipalities of Jasper, St. Mathew du Parc, and Grand Piles, and the Jasper Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Jasper. I will not mention your names in order to maintain your anonymity, but your generosity and time was of great importance for this research. Likewise, thanks for the community organization representatives that showed me that other ways of enjoying nature in urban sites and accessing outdoor public spaces are possible.

In Parks Canada, to Brenda Jones, my focal point who provided me with data and information essential for the analysis in this thesis. Special thanks to François for your friendship and helping me navigate Parks Canada, sharing documents, ideas, and engaging in conversations, answering my countless questions and walking with me. To Ed, thank you for facilitating my immersion in the Canadian system and providing me with permanent support along this process.

To the NFB, thank you for sharing valuable archival films with me during the pandemic, allowing me to explore my research subject early on. Thanks to Kristine from Library and Archives Canada, whose virtual assistance and support in finding documents when travel was not possible proved to be crucial.

I acknowledge the financial support from *Becas Chile*, the *Fonds de recherche du Québec – Société et culture* and the *études supérieures et posdoctorales* (ESP) of the University of Montreal for my studies and research. Additionally, the generous support of Parks Canada made the fieldwork component of this research possible.

Finally, to Raul, my beloved partner, *mi compañero de ruta*, without whose love, unconditional belief, and support, this journey might never have been possible, and certainly not as enjoyable.

Chapter 1. Introduction: Navigating Through Different Natures

1.1 First words

During my first days of fieldwork in Jasper national park, the presence of bears in town was the main topic of conversation. Jasper is the second most visited park in Canada, attracting 2.46 million visitors annually. It is also home to black and grizzly bears, among other species. I became intrigued about this relationship between humans (wardens, visitors, and residents) and bears, in a place that receives significant traffic of domestic and international visitors. Managing an international destination within the habitat of a species as big as a grizzly bear demands significant attention from managers and wardens. During the night of my arrival there were fourteen wardens assigned to manage and persuade bears to leave the town. The park's social media accounts were announcing bears in town and requesting residents to cut down fruit trees. As I continued my fieldwork, it became clear that bears were a constant topic of discussion among visitors and locals. It seemed that everywhere I went, there were reminders that I was in bear country. Even at the gas station and coffee shops there were signs advertising bear spray for sale to protect visitors from bears. The Friends of Jasper library had a whole section dedicated to these enormous creatures, and even the local grocery store had a big bear statue greeting shoppers at the entrance. I personally experienced the bear-visitor relationship myself on the way to Maligne Lake, where several cars were stopped to observe a bear with its cub walking along the road (as observed in image 1). Amidst these reflections, my journey extended to Banff National Park, where my stay at the Lake Louise campground illuminated the complexities of coexistence between visitors and bears. The campground is enclosed with electric fences, separating humans from wildlife. In this case, the visitors were fenced in and the bears were fenced out, inverting the relationship in a zoo, and the bears were monitored so they didn't approach visitor areas. This control over one space separating humans from bears was still billed as the essence of experiencing the wild. While I was camping, furthermore, I also noticed the constant sound of trains throughout the night, along with the continuous flow of vehicles along the

highway just a few meters away. Parks managers were constantly reminded to encourage visitors' awareness of safety measures, part of the overall effort to “give bears the space they need to make a living[1].”

Image 1. Bears in Maligne road, Jasper national park. Photo by the author, September 2021.

This dissertation aims to explore the different complexities of governing national parks. Through the lens of scientific approaches, historical narratives, and contemporary management efforts, this study brings to light the real tensions inherent in state governance. I explored these tensions within three distinct dimensions. First, I examine the scientific rationales of conservation through the analysis of ecological integrity and practices of restoration. Second, I examine the complexities embedded in the economic logics related to financing conservation and visitation. Finally, this dissertation examines forms of exclusion in managing visitors, as well as policies designed to incorporate novel forms of inclusions.

Navigating nature seeks to underscore the logics that shape the governance of Canada’s national park system. I put in dialogue scientific ideas of biodiversity conservation as well as the way the state facilitates outdoor experiences to foster the enjoyment of nature by the Canadian population, a key notion that frames this study. As such, I aim to show the

[1] Jasper national park website.

myriad dimensions of nature within Canada's national parks. I highlight the extent to which scientific, economic, and social dimensions are governed, revealing the parallel yet contentious dimensions at play. As such, I argue that the park system are sites that reproduce privileges and exclusions. Because of managerial reasons, scientists prioritize certain forms of life over others, and policies and management practices have prioritized some social subjects over others. In line with these tensions, parks are also increasingly viewed as a key space in the struggles for a social right to nature.

1.2 Ideas that shape National Park Governance: from extinction to human's wellbeing

Within the global agenda of conservation and in particular of protected areas, two central ideas remain at the center of mainstream debates. Firstly, international organizations, scientists, and experts are increasingly urging an expansion of conservation territories, both marine and terrestrial, to safeguard one-third of the planet by 2030 amidst the ongoing biodiversity crises. Secondly, health professionals, civil society organizations, scientific communities, and international bodies advocate for expanding outdoor spaces and recreation opportunities to enhance mental and physical well-being, highlighting the importance of conserving non-human natures for human survival. As such, protected areas including national parks are the core focus of these debates.

Despite the ongoing acceleration of extinction rates, international agreements such as the United Nations Aichi Biodiversity Targets for 2020 have time and again failed, falling short of their goals. Scientists have also warned that, as of 2019, over three-quarters of known threatened species and more than half of all ecosystems on land and sea lack adequate protection required for their survival (Maxwell et al., 2020). Once again during the fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP) on the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) held in Montreal in December 2022, which I attended, the accelerating biodiversity and extinction crisis and its consequences were placed at the center of the political agenda. The need to massively expand conservation territories of both terrestrial and marine ecosystems was a central element of the negotiation. The "Kunming-Montreal

Global Biodiversity Framework" (GBF), the final document that resulted from the conference, established the target to protect one-third of the planet by 2030 to halt or reverse biodiversity loss (CBD, 2022). These areas now take center stage as critical measures to combat biodiversity crises, with national parks and a wide range of protected areas as key strategies for conservation.

The COP 15 agreement should embrace a diversity of ways where life can flourish beyond the focus of colonial enclosures that have represented the concept of a national park for more than a century. Thus, to tackle the biodiversity crises, Indigenous groups, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local organizations are trying to find ways to formally recognise and expand the diversity of efforts beyond colonial forms of conservation, including Indigenous sovereignty.

Additionally, under the ecological crises in which we are living, there has been a growing demand for access to public spaces to walk or practice other outdoor activities. In a world of expanding urbanization and increasing privatization of land, local organizations are increasingly trying boost and diversify access to these spaces. To this end, a growing body of literature calls for strengthening access to public spaces to improve mental health and to increase physical activity levels (Dallat et al., 2014; Frumkin et al., 2017; Shanahan et al., 2016; Triguero-Mas et al., 2015). Aligned with this agenda, scientists, international organizations, and governments promote national parks and protected areas as spaces for recreation to enhance human well-being (Maxwell et al., 2020).

Therefore, conservation governance is broadening and diversifying its approaches on the global agenda. Nevertheless, contemporary governance approaches present different tensions as they strive to achieve economic rationality, even profitability, while embracing the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, as well as facilitating human use and access.

National parks form part of the range of strategies in conservation governance, but they represent a singular approach as their governance is often state-led. In national parks,

state agencies exercise control over territories, decision-making processes, scientific management methodologies, market regulations, and access to these public spaces.

1.3 Research objectives

As I show in this dissertation, Parks Canada is a large organization with one of the most robust budgets for park management globally. In line with this, taking Canada as a case, the present doctoral thesis focuses on how national parks are governed, the rationales that underpin decision-making processes, the actors involved, and the subjects that are governed. I examine the perspectives of Parks Canada representatives at different scales, as well as certain community organizations and NGOs that are trying to expand the diverse range of approaches to natures within the management of Canada's national parks.

Although national parks are very popular as territories that offer recreational opportunities, they present complex challenges and tensions. First, parks embody histories of violence and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, as they were envisioned as socially exclusive places under a colonial idea of pristine nature, with Indigenous peoples being disconnected and displaced from their traditional territories. Second, parks are meant to provide both public spaces for conservation and for recreation. Thus, ideally national parks should be places of abundance and diversity of natural forms of life, while also promoting diverse forms of human enjoyment. Thirdly, they must remain relevant to the public and be financially efficient in order to maintaining funding while also expanding conservation territories. These complexities represent multiple perspectives on territorial management that unfold over time and space. Thus, managing these spaces is far from simple, as these landscapes have been transformed and managed according to scientific measures for conservation and to accommodate visitors for outdoor recreation. As a result, the intertwining aspects of enjoyment and scientific management for ecological integrity become crucial elements of governance.

Rather than undermining the decades of scientific work conducted within these territories to foster the life of a diversity of species and ecosystems, my aim is to offer an alternative perspective. This research project centers on the different dimensions of governing these public spaces amidst ecological crises and the growing demand for access to public areas. While I emphasize the importance of scientific approaches for biodiversity conservation to ensure a multispecies future, my broader objective is to expand the discourse to encompass and intersect with the intricate scientific, political, social, and economic dimensions of nature conservation. Thus, the question that motivates this thesis is: how do national parks govern at the same time and in the same space biodiversity conservation and human enjoyment of nature? More specifically, how have different scientific conceptualizations of Nature shaped the governance of national parks?; to what degree has neoliberalism influenced the financial governance of national parks in Canada?; how have national parks been conceptualized as public spaces and for whom are they governed?

1.4 Governing subjects: managing human and non-human species in national parks

While governance and governing are related, these terms encompass different meanings. Governance generally refers to the idea of involving multiple actors, such as the state, the market, and civil society, vying for influence and power in decision-making in conservation (Corson et al., 2019). Governance is a complex interplay of power relations and rationalities that intertwine to steer the trajectory of decision-making. Governing is thus primarily a state function, often including controlling and managing national parks. The state's rationalities and decision-making apparatus assume a central position in shaping the management and operation of these parks. Still, other actors influence the state's regulatory mechanisms. Consequently, despite the interplay of various influences, the governance of national parks remains fundamentally anchored in the mechanisms of state power.

The organized practices, rationalities, and techniques through which subjects are governed is what Foucault introduced as the concept of governmentality (Foucault, 2007). Governmentality semantically connects the ideas of governing (*gouverne*) and its rationality (*mentalité*) (Foucault, 1991). According to Foucault, government involves a broader context he termed "the conduct of conduct" (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002), influencing the behaviors of bodies, institutions, and communities (Burchell et al., 1991). Foucault shed light on the rationality of governing and the "art of government," drawing attention to the productiveness of power within the nature of governing.

Drawing from these ideas, scholars have used governmentality theory to understand neoliberalism as an environmental governance project (Agrawal, 2005; Bakker, 2005), examining how power not only regulates but also actively produces subjects and objects, including non-human natures and humans as ecotourists (e.g., Fletcher, 2010). Building upon this theory, I seek to examine the rationalities that are rooted in the idea of governing non-human lives in general, and trees and fish in particular, as well as visitors as subjects of political and economic concern. This perspective views them not only as manageable entities but also as subjects of control to garner political support. As such, I delve into the intricate dynamics of conservation governance within national parks in Canada, highlighting the complexities of governing subjects from scientific, economic and social management approaches. In a country like Canada, decision-making, as I show through this dissertation, relies on scientific monitoring and the pursuit of citizen access and enjoyment to garner political and financial support. As such it is an enclosed system organized and governed for a dual logic: to maintain diverse ecologies, while promoting the enjoyment of its citizens as an intrinsic component of a privileged society.

1.5 South-North approach

This dissertation emerges from a South-North perspective and aims to show the way parks in Canada embody a particular political project. While immersing myself in the history, management, and governance of Canadian national parks, I have consistently connected observations and experiences between the park system and conservation

governance approaches with my previous research, work, and personal experiences in Chile. This south-north perspective plays a significant role in shaping my research interests and reframing my exploration of national park governance in Canada. Many of my important life experiences have been connected to national parks both professionally and personally. As a child with my family, I visited and walked in national parks. Then, as a geographer, my first job was to design an interpretative trail in Chile's oldest national park*, Reserva Nacional Malleco*. Issues of access became an important topic in my career trajectory. Over a span of fifteen years, I worked in different governmental positions, from the local to the national level on policies and regulations regarding protected areas, national parks, access, and tourism. These tasks and responsibilities involved different scales, such as coordinating the Chilean Trail Program within the Ministry of Environment, building the trail in the Bio Bío region as well as facilitating access for school kids. Then, at the national level, as the Head of Sustainability within the Ministry of Tourism, I led the design and implemented a strategy to boost public access and tourism in national parks and other protected areas in Chile. Working for the government and engaging in strategic planning for visitors and tourists further exposed me to the diverse narratives, policies, and practices that shape these landscapes. Despite being state-controlled territories, the level of state presence varied across regions. During my last job as a government official, I faced the challenging realities of inadequate funding and the ongoing pressures of privatization. As such, I was permanently facing conflicting interests. While conservationists aimed for limited park visitation, the tourism industry sought expanded privatization and increased tourism concessions in these areas. Furthermore, the social complexities and Indigenous people's displacement present important governance challenges, including land devolution. The increasing commodification of nature through tourism further complicates management approaches. Confronting these challenges, I initiated a collaborative program with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and partnered closely with International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) to look at the diverse approaches at the international level, while at the same time developing a strategy addressing Chilean identity and needs. Through this process, I

established alliance with some other park services including Parks Canada. These experiences were the foundations of my motivations to investigate the way Parks Canada, one of the most well-funded park services globally, approaches conservation, or as it is known in Canada, the management of ecological integrity and visitor experiences.

As an international student, I embraced a dual role: both being a visitor and a researcher. Since arriving in Canada to begin my doctoral studies, I have regularly visited various provincial and federal parks during weekends and vacations. Alongside my trajectory as a PhD student, my family and I engaged also in several outdoor activities in Montreal. We joined a "Learn to camp" program, which provided us a very interesting camping experience at the Canal Lachine historical site in Montreal's downtown. While we had several experiences camping before, staying at the Canal Lachine, cooking and canoeing in the canal with other groups was an immersive and fun introduction to the way Parks Canada socialize outdoor recreation. These experiences were further enriched when I got involved as a volunteer with Plein Air Interculturel, a Montreal non-profit community organization. With Plein Air, I co-led walking groups at the Parc du Mont-Royal every Thursday and introduced the activities offered by the organization at the *Salon de l'Immigration***.** While these engagements were because of personal motivations, they also contributed to contextualize the diverse perspectives and approaches to nature in the Canadian context. These experiences have been expanded in the most diverse ways. For example, a social worker prescribed me more recently a PaRx access, encouraging me to spend two hours a week walking in Quebec’s provincial parks. All these experiences, programs, and connections in my personal life have been a vital component of my research journey. They have allowed me to learn, collaborate, and walk together with different people while discussing crucial topics about nature such as conservation, park accessibility, and outdoor recreation.

What follows is an exploration into scientific efforts to restore ecosystems and enable a richer biodiversity, economic rationales to finance conservation, and what it entails to enjoy a public space like national parks in Canada, in what I term " parks of privilege" or parks in the minority world. I hope that in telling the tensions and complexities, I can

contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges inherent in governing diverse natures, even within a privileged society and a well-funded park system like that of Canada. And maybe to provide insights on how we can move on from here.

1.6 Dissertation roadmap

Throughout my thesis, my aim is to delve into the political ecology of national parks governance within a well-funded park system. It specifically explores the diverse perspectives of nature represented in the governance of national parks, namely scientific natures, material natures, and social natures. Scientific natures encompass the approach of scientists and managers toward non-human species, particularly focusing on ecological integrity. Material nature represents the perspective that deals with the economic implications of financing conservation or maintaining ecological integrity, while also facilitating visitor access. On the other hand, social nature pertains to nature being viewed as a subject of interest for access to recreation, emphasizing the promotion of nature to visitors for their enjoyment to sustain the political capital of the national park system. Further details outlining this research are found in the subsequent paragraphs.

Chapter Two introduces the theoretical debates underpinning this dissertation, which center on the governance of Canadian national parks. I organize the conceptual framework into four distinct bodies of literature, allowing a comprehensive analysis of the scientific, economic, political, and citizenship-related approaches to nature in Canada, along with their reproduction and contestation. I began this theoretical framework by addressing the structural ideas of park formation, delving into the conceptualizations of nature entwined with the construction and perpetuation of settler colonial parks narratives. Next, I move onto the political definitions of governance, opening the debate on conservation governance and the growing trend towards market-based and neoliberal conservation. I examine the extent to which tourism plays a role in justifying the expansion of parks and the commodification of nature. In this context, I delve into more technical concepts of visitors and tourists, which may seem superfluous, but they are standard components of the conception of these public spaces. “Tourist” access to national parks

is mediated by both the market and the state, inherently implying commodification. In contrast, “visitors” concern the state--visitors access public spaces with a sense that these spaces also belong to them. This distinction underscores that the notion of a visitor is rooted in a non-commodified state-relation with the space. Accordingly, I provide an overview of ideas concerning visitors as citizens, engaging with ideas of inclusion or exclusion in the access to public spaces. More specifically, I engage with more recent debates in political ecology regarding the right to nature. These debates serve to understand that access to national parks is deeply intertwined with the intersections of race and colonialism. As a result, this conceptual framework not only facilitates an exploration of the historical and contemporary dimensions of governing these spaces but also serves as a foundation for examining the key ideas formed and perpetuated in national parks.

In Chapter Three I explain my methodological approach alongside the specific research methods that I employed. Using a range of qualitative methods undertaken between 2020 and 2023, I draw on a multiscaled analysis and diverse literatures to explore how the state negotiates the tensions arising among the different scientific, economic, and social management approaches to governing national parks. Specifically, I use discourse analysis to examine the rationales that underpin the governance of these parks. I focus on different management ideas and logics and on how diverse actors, scientists, policy makers, planners, municipal representatives, and tourism chambers understand and frame the diverse approaches to park governance. I also discuss the broader issues of subjectivity, reflexivity, and power relations that are woven throughout my methodological considerations as well as the fieldwork itself.

In Chapter Four, I contextualize this study by introducing the concept of national parks both historically and geographically. I explore how discourses from international organizations permeate different regions, revealing the varying rationalities behind park formation and the diverse meanings associated with the concept of national parks in different contexts. One key argument I present is the contrast between approaches of park access in the Global South and the Global North. In the South, access is often

restricted or promoted primarily for international tourists as part of economic development strategies and the commodification of nature. On the other hand, in the Global North, park access is promoted for citizens' enjoyment of nature, with parks serving as public spaces for conservation and recreation. I then conduct a historical examination of park formation, exploring three foundational ideas of Canada’s national parks: parks as state building strategy, intertwining conservation with tourism and colonization; nature as an asset to control, exploit, and protect; and parks as spaces fostering an idea of citizenship and public enjoyment. These priorities and scales of political and scientific intervention are reflected differently in two cases; Jasper and La Mauricie. Jasper has played a strategic role in shaping Canada's wilderness imagery, while La Mauricie has served as a recreational hub for the local population and an iconic representation of evolving conservation strategies.

Chapter Five is the first empirical chapter. Here I address my first research question: How do different scientific conceptualizations of Nature shape the governance of national parks? To explore this issue, I examine various scientific perspectives and management practices within Canada's park system, with a particular emphasis on the concept of ecological integrity, a key scientific approach in Canada. By framing this chapter around scientific rationales, I explore how these evolving ideas of intervening in nature are being reimagined and transformed under the paradigm of ecological integrity. A main contradiction of the ecological integrity paradigm is that it seeks to restore or maintain a certain idea of nature, while it excludes the recognition of human agency within these interventions. Ecosystems have been transformed not only by Indigenous peoples, but significantly by capitalist exploitation as well as by parks managers and scientists who have in the past adapted landscapes for recreation. To illustrate these processes of intervention, I concentrate on the evolving management practices related to trees and fish in Jasper and La Mauricie. What I identify in this chapter is the more recent phase of scientific work to build new natures, or to restore natures after capitalist interventions or scientific management, which I refer to as "fourth natures." Despite decades of scientific restoration of fourth natures, these transformations are visible only to scientists and park

managers. Landscapes for visitors continue to be imagined, represented, and reproduced as wilderness.

In Chapter Six, I address my second research question: To what degree has neoliberalism influenced the financial governance of national parks in Canada? The chapter explores the growing prominence of economic rationality and business-like management in national parks' discourse and practices. As such, this chapter explores the complexities of managing public spaces in a neoliberal era and the efforts to enhance their societal value. Challenging prevailing literature on neoliberal conservation, my argument contests the assumption that the introduction of market-based rationales in Canada leads to the neoliberalization of conservation governance. Despite increasing efforts to obtain private funding from visitors or tourism revenues, I assert that the public nature of the park system in Canada remains a powerful state project that has resisted further commodification and privatization. Moreover, it is maintained as such in order to secure the permanent support from the Canadian public. As a result, the commodification of tourism experiences within the parks remains limited, and the expansion of commodification or private property rights face significant opposition. Therefore, expanding commodification has been an unsuccessful state effort. Instead, rationales have shifted towards increasing state funding and offering more subsidies for free access. This is primarily due to the significant social, political, and economic relevance of keeping park access open to a wider Canadian public. A final argument I make in this chapter is that while there is commodification of broader experiences, the park system cannot be considered fully neoliberalized.

In Chapter Seven, I explore my third research question: How have national parks been conceptualized as public spaces, and what limitations exist for the evolving strategies and contested efforts to increase equitable access? The focus is on examining the social dimension of national park governance in Canada, particularly in relation to its conceptualization of citizenship and inclusion. This chapter delves into the evolution of these concepts within contemporary park governance and their potential to foster new socio-spatial formations for more socially diverse futures. As such, I pay attention to the

asymmetries of power in the production of Canadian outdoor experiences, where access is available to some people while limited to others. I navigate through different approaches of inclusion in national parks at the federal level and the way these approaches are implemented in the two case studies. I also incorporate the perspectives of representatives from community organizations and NGOs regarding inclusion and exclusion in relationship to parks access. My argument posits that the management of parks has not encompassed an understanding of the spatial and recreational requirements of culturally diverse citizens and users. Despite programs aiming to promote greater equity in access, the prevailing concept of recreation continues to perpetuate an idealized image of wilderness that has historically discriminated against marginalized sociocultural groups from accessing these recreational landscapes.

In conclusion, in Chapter Eight, I review the key results from this study and integrate the interpretations provided in the three previous chapters. In the first section, I present an overall analytical reflection on governing different natures and what it means to govern public spaces as national parks in Canada. Drawing on these findings I outline implications for both policy and further research. The chapter finishes by offering some reflections regarding ecological futures that embrace a multispecies future and encompass a diversity of notions of nature beyond neoliberal natures and colonial conservation approaches.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework: Natures, Visitors, Citizens, and Public Spaces.

2.1 Introduction

In the introduction, I briefly introduced parks as politically strategic sites that are influenced by diverse rationalities, ideas, and approaches to nature. I also presented the notion of national parks as a settler colonial project of land control. I began constructing my argument about parks as sites of privileges and exclusions. National parks in Canada are presented as places protected for nature protection and to foster enjoyment by Canadians. However, as I show through my research, they are territories that embody permanent tensions and contradictions. For example, they are managed under scientific criteria to protect non-human natures while not fully recognizing human agency in these processes. Additionally, despite the portrayal of parks as wilderness landscapes, they are landscapes that are created through a scientific practice and a range of infrastructure. Moreover, because parks represent public spaces for both conservation and enjoyment, this generates constant tensions for funding and maintenance. Lastly, while park governance seeks to connect the state and society for legitimacy and public support, and while there are increasing approaches for inclusion, management practices remain exclusionary.

In this chapter, I will provide a theoretical background for these arguments. I bring together four key bodies of literature into a conceptual framework that underpins the present research, which is to understand the different dimensions of governance in Canadian national parks. The framework draws on conceptualizations of nature embedded in the construction and reproduction of settler colonial parks narrative as a central element of park governance (Section 2.2). Then I move to more economic governance approaches, in which I open the debate of conservation governance and debates about neoliberal conservation in the Global North (Section 2.3). Within these discussions, I introduce the growing space of nature-based tourism (and other forms of

tourism) as a central component within the literature of park management. As such, I devolve into technical categorizations of nature tourism, ecotourism, and visitor recreation in the park context. (2.4). Lastly, I provide an overview of ideas around citizenship and access to public spaces, and I articulate these ideas with more recent debates concerning the right to nature (Section 2.5). Taken together, these key components form a comprehensive approach aimed at facilitating a more complete understanding of the critical geography of nature and society relations.

2.2 Scientific approaches, socio-natures, and the construction of a settler park narrative

In this section, I explore key concepts drawn from the literature on socio-natures. These literatures, with their longstanding discussion in geography and political ecology, lay the foundation for linking notions of state building, park expansion, and the reconstruction of nature within the contemporary understanding of scientific conservation as encapsulated in the concept of ecological integrity. In line with this, this section delves into different conceptualizations of nature, and specifically discusses the idea of wilderness as a dominant settler idea that has been central to national park management.

Nature continues to be a blurry and contested concept with multiple interpretations. In national parks, these different conceptualizations of nature are often manifested in contradictory ways and have varied implications for conservationists, managers, local residents, and visitors. On one hand, the idea of wilderness as an unspoiled haven remains prominent in conservationist discourses[2] and in the imagery of the tourism sector. On the other hand, ideas of post-nature and the ecological crises, including the climate crisis, raises questions about how to coexist with Nature, humans, and a multispecies world (e.g. Collard et al., 2015).

[2] In Spanish, there is no proper translation for wilderness.

These conceptualizations respond to different productions and reproductions of natures as subjects for diverse actors. For conservationists, scientists, and planners, nature is a space to be managed and controlled in order to maintain ecological integrity or avoid biodiversity loss. Therefore, nature is managed under scientific and technical terms to conserve biodiversity in bounded territories such as national parks (e.g. UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2021), to reduce environmental degradation, and to protect the habitat of key species (Watson et al., 2014). As Chapter Five illustrates, it is a process involving important levels of human intervention. Under scientific terms, humans must intervene in nature to achieve ecological integrity (Bridgewater et al., 2015) which is a process that some ecologists call rewilding or the restoration of lost ecosystem processes (Perino et al., 2019). This is contradictory process, because as I show in this chapter according to scientists' perspectives humans are not an integral part of ecological integrity.

Scientific approaches to Nature through managerial and technical perspectives for conservation often neglect, however, the social and economic dimensions of the very same nature that scientists seek to manage. As a result, some critics argue that environmental management is overly narrow and simplistic (Neumann, 2004; Robbins, 2004; Smith, 2005). While I posit that scientific approaches for biodiversity conservation are needed to foster a multispecies future, I aim to broaden the debate to include and engage with the scientific, political, social, and economic complexities of nature conservation. My exploration seeks to open up debates about evolving discourses, social demands, and economic projects related to Nature, so that we may consider possibilities beyond bounded notions of nature.

As I stated earlier, scholars have demonstrated for over the past three decades that there are no natural Natures. The concept of nature is a social construct, as established by a large body of scholarship (Castree & Braun, 2001; Demeritt, 2002; Escobar, 1996; Mawani, 2007). Nature is produced (Smith, 2005), it is also a significant political achievement (Bluwstein, 2021; DeLuca & Demo, 2001; Robbins, 2004) that remains a powerful idea reproduced by scientists, intellectuals, creative writers, painters, and other artists (Braun & Castree, 2005; Brockington et al., 2008a; Brosius et al., 2005; Wulf,

2016). Thus, understanding the various meanings attributed to nature provides one way to break down the "artificial" division between nature and society. As Cronon (1996), Neumann (2002), and many others have shown, the removal of Indigenous peoples to create "uninhabited wilderness" is a clear expression of how constructed wilderness has been. Wilderness, as Jocelyn Thorpe (2011: 4) points out,

> is a social category that works alongside other social categories such as race and gender, gaining legitimacy through its appearance as self-evident, or natural. The naturalizing force of wilderness, race, and gender disguises the exclusionary practices through which places and subjects are created.

Accordingly, ideas of wilderness are products of history, transformation, and state and scientific power, rather than natural processes. However, the idea of wilderness is still deeply embedded in the way nature is managed in national parks, and the way national parks are promoted to tourists or visitors. In this vein, extensive research has revealed that the formation of national parks has been rooted in racialized dispossession and settler state expansion, which perpetuated powerful settler-colonial imaginary of nature as pristine and untouched (Mawani, 2007; Mollett & Kepe, 2018; Ybarra, 2018; Youdelis, 2016). As Megan Ybarra (2018) argues, settler logics of elimination were foundational in creating political-economic structures, resulting in the forced eviction or coercion of Indigenous groups. This process has been found in Canada, especially in the expansion of Canadian parks (eg. Loo, 2001; Valadares, 2018). For Youdelis and others (2020: 2)

> [t]he Canadian settler-colonial approach to conservation, then, has historically involved a spatial separation of human civilization and “wild” spaces, with only specific ways of knowing and living in nature allowed within park boundaries, and nearly unbridled development and extractivism deemed acceptable without.

The expansion of the park system, therefore, not only serves as a colonial territorialization project designed for the leisure of settlers or as tourism destinations for the wealthy, it

also embodies a broader hegemonic social relation, which scholars have criticized as patriarchal, masculine, racist, and elitist (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009, 2011; Sandlos, 2011; Valadares, 2018; Youdelis et al., 2020). Parks have traditionally been promoted as playgrounds for the white upper-middle class (Sandlos, 2011) and able-bodied visitors (Lemieux et al., 2022). Furthermore, as political ecologists have extensively demonstrated, maintaining the wilderness imaginary, and portraying areas free of people but open to settler visitors and tourists, implies violence towards both nature and Indigenous peoples who have lived in and transformed these same ecosystems for centuries (e.g. Brockington & Igoe, 2006; Lunstrum & Ybarra, 2018; Neumann, 2002). In this vein, Megan Youdelis and others (2020) argue that national park management reproduces coloniality by maintaining a settler approach to nature and excluding Indigenous ontologies that consider humans an inclusive part of nature. The structural factors that these authors have identified offer a broad canvas for understanding the complex and powerful scientific, political, social, and economic approaches for managing national parks in Canada that I present in the following sections.

2.3 From market-based natures to neoliberal conservation

In the following, I introduce critical economic approaches to the management and valuation of Nature in financial terms. The marketization of nature is the main idea that opens the discussion for neoliberal conservation as a second body of literature and the place of tourism in these debates. I explore key concepts from the literature on the governance of nature. Specifically, these sources concern national parks and other protected areas and the more recent transformation of governance, referred to as neoliberal conservation. I then address the role of tourism, including nature-based tourism and ecotourism, in these debates. Lastly, I offer a critique of the literature on the Global North or first world contexts.

A central topic in geography and political ecology examines the conditions and effects in which nature has increasingly become a site of commodity production and consumption (Castree, 2003; Dempsey, 2016; Holmes & Cavanagh, 2016; Neumann, 2017). As such,

a wide body of literature discusses the processes of privatization, commodification, and monetary valuation where the commodification of nature has become a key topic of analysis (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Castree, 2003; Dempsey, 2016; Neumann, 2017; Smessaert et al., 2020). A robust body of literature on market environmentalism and market-based conservation emerged in the 2000s and scholars have shown the way the market has become increasingly legitimized and is now presented as the solution for environmental problems (Bakker, 2005; Castree, 2003; Holmes, 2015). For instance, Holmes (2015) illustrates that conservationists work with wealthy people to convert their properties or acquire new ones for conservation. In return, property owners can capitalize on land value appreciation, through a combination of ecotourism, conservation, real estate projects, and carbon credits. Critics argue, however, that these market-based approaches often fail to address the underlying causes of environmental degradation and moreover exacerbate social and environmental inequalities (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Castree, 2003; Smessaert et al., 2020). Land grabbing for protected areas or other conservation initiatives have led to intensified processes of dispossession and impoverishment of marginalized communities (e.g. Benjaminsen & Bryceson, 2012; Bluwstein & Lund, 2016; Duffy, 2016; Loperena, 2016).

Yet, despite decades of scientific discourses, practices, and policy efforts to legitimize biodiversity as an economic agent through instruments like ecosystem services, carbon credits, and other commodity forms for market eligibility (Bigger et al., 2018; Fletcher et al., 2014), biodiversity loss continues to increase. Moreover, according to Dempsey (2016: 3) “conservation is trying to make itself more relevant to market and state governance through economization, but all these efforts fail to become effective in a way that can let diverse ecologies live.” Furthermore, the author asserts that the marketization of nature remains on the periphery of political-economic life, as such it has largely been an unsuccessful financial project. Following this line of thought, Adrienne Buller (2022) contends that the adoption of market mechanisms to address the environmental crisis is an example of "green capitalism," a new avenue for profit accumulation. It is an illusion with the goal of preserving economic profit while minimizing disruptions to our existing

economic systems and lifestyles, ultimately failing to effectively address the crises of biodiversity loss (*ibid*).

More particularly in relation to protected areas, an influential body of research has shown how nature can serve as an accumulation strategy for capitalist expansion, with conservation measures like national parks representing a form of primitive accumulation (Kelly, 2011). In this case, nature has become an investment in the future (for example Katz, 2005; Neumann, 2017). Scholars such as Kelly (2011) and Neumann (2002) argue that national parks are a form of enclosure that enable new ways of accumulation of capital. As defined by David Harvey (2003), enclosure represents the historical process wherein common resources and spaces, such as land, are privatized and transformed into private property. This process, referred to by Harvey as "accumulation by dispossession," involves the commodification of previously shared resources, facilitating capitalist accumulation and resulting in the disruption of traditional ways of life, the loss of access to resources, and the emergence of new social inequalities.

In national parks or other conservation territories, enclosure takes on a distinct process. As noted by Alice Kelly (2011), the act of enclosing land to establish protected areas creates public instead of private property. In these areas, extraction is limited as most forms of production are banned or heavily prohibited, which restricts and controls market expansion (*ibid*). This point has also been addressed by Tania Li, who argues that for many advocates of conservation, "the wildness of pristine natures of national parks entails an intrinsic value of a global heritage, a priceless treasure, and for them, a park is the ultimately non-commodity" (2008: 124). Although conserved territories, such as national parks, may not be commodified at the moment of enclosure, scholars show that they are often set aside for future exploitation as capital seeks to expand its frontiers. For example, as Kelly (2011) notes, ecotourism is a practice that links publicly owned and protected lands with privately controlled forms of property rights like the rights to operate within those lands. For Kelly (2011: 690), “ecotourism in protected areas transforms these formerly non-capitalist spaces into commodities to be consumed in the global market.” Thus, land taken from agricultural production and converted to state ownership provides

new sources of revenue, including opportunities for domestic and international tourism industries (Kelly, 2011; Neumann, 2017; Youdelis, 2016). In this context, a way of commodifying nature in national parks is through nature-based tourism. Tour operators function as private agents and they play a role in offering services to visitors that are based on exploiting nature for recreation purposes. This commodification is further exacerbated by the privatization of land rights and services, despite the fact that these activities take place in public spaces (eg. Bluwstein, 2017).

The way marketization, commodification, and privatization of nature takes place on conservation territories is increasingly examined within the conservation governance literature. Geographers conceptualize contemporary conservation governance as a set of networked power relations in which the State, the market, and civil society are involved as stakeholders (Agrawal et al., 2022; Corson et al., 2019; Holmes, 2011). For the past twenty years, scholars from a wide range of disciplines have pointed to the shift in governance approaches from the state to "beyond-the-state" (Swyngedouw, 2005). This shift involves new institutional forms that seek a greater involvement of actors from both the economy and civil society. In other words, markets and the influential role of big non-governmental organizations have become part of a broader process of neoliberalization of conservation governance, playing an increasing role in conservation decision-making (Bigger et al., 2018; Brockington & Duffy, 2010; Dempsey, 2016). Scholars highlight that shifting institutional boundaries have enabled market and civil society actors (led by NGOs, environmental philanthropists, and media) to reconfigure conservation governance arrangements across different contexts (Corson et al., 2019; Dempsey & Suarez, 2016). In this vein, political ecology scholarship has denounced that the governance of protected areas such as national parks is increasingly prioritizing private funding and involving non-state actors and private interests in decision-making processes (Corson, 2017). These actions have significantly restricted public access to information and land (Sullivan, 2013). As a result, these processes further exacerbate unequal power relations and hierarchies, and often exclude low-income and marginalized communities, while perpetuating inequalities based on class, gender, ethnicity, and race in both urban

and rural environments (Apostolopoulou & Adams, 2019). However, most case studies on neoliberal conservation are focused on the Global South (Brockington & Duffy, 2010; Büscher, 2010; Corson, 2017; Smessaert et al., 2020). Indeed, less attention has been paid to understanding these processes in the Global North (some exceptions include Adams et al., 2014; Youdelis, 2018). This suggests that market-based conservation has received less scrutiny, particularly within first-world political ecology (McCarthy, 2005; Robbins, 2002).

This leads us to another crucial thread within the literature, examining how neoliberalism operates not only within political-economic and environmental governance but also actively shaping both subjects and objects. In this vein, an influential body of scholarly work draws insights from Foucauldian governmentality theory to interpret neoliberalism as a foundational framework for environmental governance (Agrawal, 2005; Bakker, 2005). From this angle, neoliberalism is examined beyond regulation (privatization, commodification and marketization). Instead, it draws attention to the ways in which power is productive and creates subjects and objects, including environmental subjects such as non-humans natures or ecotourists (see for example, Fletcher, 2010). More specifically, studies in governmentality examine how power not only regulates, but is also productive, as it stimulates and promotes particular knowledge systems, techniques for regulation, and subject positions under a governing authority (e.g. Rose-Redwood, 2006; Rutherford, 2017). In this vein, I focus on the different rationalities that are rooted in the idea of governing natures to make them not only manageable but also subjects of control to get political support. The question that remains is the extent to which market-based approaches in conservation such as nature-based tourism or recreation have become an important structure of national parks governance in the Global North and how these systems are organized through forms of power and regulations. I address this question in chapter six where I focus on the increasing dominant economic rationality, or business-like management in parks' discourse and practices, to make different subjects legible to society and the state apparatus.

To further examine the conceptualizations and processes which are central to neoliberal conservation, and the extent to which they are transforming Canada's park system, we must first define neoliberalism. The concept of neoliberalism has been used (and overused) extensively, and it is blurred and contested. As David Harvey (2005) explains, it runs under a political-economic organization that seeks to increase the market's role with minimum state intervention under the idea that the market will act more efficiently. What makes it complex is that it is not a homogeneous project but rather a continuous and dynamic process that adapts and renews itself in the face of political shifts and economic crises (Peck, 2013). As Thomas Perreault and Patricia Martin (2005) elucidate, under a neoliberal project the state assumes an active role in generating new market opportunities through privatizing goods and services. Accordingly, neoliberalism "does not involve a necessary decrease in the state's functions or size but rather its reconfiguration and reinstitutionalization" (*ibid*:193). This suggests that new forms of neoliberal governance rely increasingly on private agents interwoven with state regulations (Bigger et al., 2018; Dempsey, 2016).

Political ecologists link fluid conservation governance strategies to neoliberalism with the "triple win discourse," which argues that as an increasing number of actors contribute to the protection of the environment, it enables profit and generates benefits for local communities (Sullivan, 2013). As Igoe and Brockington (2007:435) put it, neoliberal conservation goes beyond the win-win solutions approach to:

> a world of win-win-win-win-win-win-win (or win^7 if you like) solutions that benefit: corporate investors, national economies, biodiversity, local people, western consumers, development agencies, and the conservation organizations that receive funding from those agencies to undertake large conservation interventions.

A critical element in this analysis is the emergence of private actors in state policies and decision-making in conservation. These include the increasing justification of private profits as a way to make conservation legible.

McAfee's (1999:133) early work "Selling Nature to Save It," first describes the main paradox that underpins the neoliberal conservation paradigm: neoliberalism has helped to answer biodiversity conservation's own contradictions (Duffy, 2015); it opens up new possibilities for capital expansion through financing the conservation of biodiversity (Neumann, 2017). Concrete examples in the literature include mechanisms to increase nature-tourism to pay for conservation (Bluwstein, 2017; Hall *et al.*, 2014) and payment for ecosystem services, both of which make biodiversity more legible for capitalism (Dempsey, 2016).

As previously noted, one of the inherent characteristics of neoliberalism is its ability to adapt and reinvent itself. For example, after the 2008 financial crisis, park systems introduced new neoliberal approaches in conservation policies, reducing their public budget and expanding tourist venues, among other market-based approaches (Bigger et al., 2018). These measures were justified under austerity politics, cutting of state budgets and as such opening opportunities for private interests (Youdelis, 2018). Youdelis (2018) argues that in Canada, austerity-driven politics and budget cuts from 2012 to 2016 led to pressures to increase park visitation and revenues. Therefore, park managers sought new arrangements with private agents to finance conservation practices, thus transforming the possibilities for conservation governance.

Taken together, this robust body of literature argues that neoliberal conservation creates new spaces for capitalist governance and accumulation through processes of enclosure, privatization, commodification and land or green grabbing, deepening existing inequalities or creating novel ones (Bigger et al., 2018; Castree, 2003; Cortes-Vazquez & Apostolopoulou, 2019; Fletcher, 2017).

A significant aspect of analysis that arises from the literature is the way knowledge production in political ecology and particularly in neoliberal conservation remain rooted in colonial-based approaches, where the center of knowledge (and economic) power is located mostly in anglophone universities from the Global North examining the Global South. For example, as Apostolopoulou et al. (2021) highlight, one common element that

stands out in the literature on neoliberal conservation is the clear focus on researching the rural areas of the Global South. In their review, they showed that more than 76.7% of the published articles are written by scholars affiliated with institutions located in the Global North researching case studies located in the Global South (*ibid*). In other words, most authors that work on neoliberal conservation are located in richer countries, with a particular concentration of co-authorship found in the UK, the US, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and Germany (*ibid*). This suggests that there is a geopolitics of knowledge production in neoliberal conservation, which reproduces north-south relations of power.

While the neoliberal conservation literature builds on a theoretically informed, empirically rich research and interdisciplinary basis (mostly in geography, anthropology, and environmental studies), its focus on the Global South remains unquestioned. Moreover, the production of knowledge and its relations of power in the North, which remains at the center of political ecological knowledge, remains opaque (Robbins, 2002). The degree to which forms of neoliberal conservation operate in richer societies and well-funded parks services remains a gap in the literature, particularly because development discourses do not drive conservation in first-world states as they do in the majority of the world. I address these questions in chapter six.

2.4 The growing space of park visitation

The place of visitors in national parks is a central consideration in this dissertation. The concept of visitors embodies different relations with the state and the market and, as such, the forms of consumption patterns and the way access is moderated. I recognize that the concept of visitor is ambiguous. Thus, I begin this section with a technical discussion on the definitions of visitation, recreation, nature tourism, and ecotourism. Mobilizing these terms with precision is key to this research. I then review the most recent work on nature-based tourism and critiques as part of its expanding role in the economy and the massification of nature tourism experiences.

In technical terms, according to the IUCN, a visitor is a person that goes to a protected area primarily for recreational but also for educational or cultural purposes (Leung et al., 2018). Here is where it gets blurry, because technically, as stated by the World Tourism Organization (WTTO), “visitor (domestic, inbound or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay, or as a same-day visitor (or excursionist) otherwise” (WTTC, 2022). In the terminology of national parks and other protected areas, managers and policymakers use the term "visitors" to account for all individuals who explore a protected area, regardless of their duration of stay (whether it's a day visit or an overnight stay), their origin (whether they are domestic or international visitors), or in the case of overnight stays (whether they choose state-operated campgrounds or accommodations provided by the tourism industry, such as hotels or cabins) (e.g. Balmford et al., 2015; Buckley et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2018; Needham et al., 2016; Souza et al., 2021). In addition, recreation is often frequently described in the literature as leisure outdoor activities carried out in public spaces such as national parks (eg. Aguilar-Carrasco et al., 2022; McKercher, 1996; Thomas et al., 2022).

The main component that distinguishes tourists from visitors, I posit, is the consumption of services and commodities from tourism-aligned industries. As Chris Gibson (2009: 529) explains in his article published in *Progress of Human Geography*, tourism is an amalgam of industries and experiences and

> relies on embodied consumption of ‘experiences’ and ‘encounters’, gatekeepers such as travel writers and booking agents, transport infrastructures, ‘natural’ attractions such as national parks, as well as material production such as souvenirs, luggage, hiking boots, guidebooks, airplanes and hotel beds.

Nonetheless, in public spaces such as national parks, these relationships are organized differently, these places often lack organized private sector involvement, and services are primarily provided by the state. In these cases, the main difference between visitors and tourists is that typically visitors use services offered by the public system and engage in

outdoor recreation activities organized in parks such as hiking, cycling, paddling, or fishing, while tourists additionally consume services and products managed by the market, more specifically, the tourism industry, including tour operators and accommodations.

Accordingly, there is no single definition for who is a nature-based tourist. Certain scholars argue that outdoor recreationists and nature-based tourists are categorized differently in the literature (Fredman & Tyrväinen, 2010). Generally speaking, nature-based tourism is defined as a type of tourism that capitalizes nature as its primary attraction and outdoor recreation as the main activity (Fletcher, 2014; Mandić & McCool, 2022). In this context, the definition of nature-based tourism overlooks a crucial aspect of the tourism industry: the provision of services that are produced and offered as commodities for tourists to consume, including accommodations, transportation, attractions managed by private operators, food services, or tourism guides. Accordingly, what distinguishes a nature-based tourist from a visitor in a national park is that the former's experience is mediated by both the state, which regulates the space, and the market, which serves as a purveyor of private tourism services. In contrast, for the latter, only the state is involved as the provider of services.

In terms of the experience, nature-based tourism is generally envisioned and promoted as a solitary and romantic experience (e.g. Urry, 2002b). The imaginary of being in solitude in a natural landscape is a powerful one that is constantly produced through photographs and marketing strategies, and reproduced through users in social media such as Instagram posts. However, in reality nature tourism is expanding and managed in the form of mass tourism. Emblematic tourist sites, including certain locations within national parks, attract massive numbers of visitors that exceed the parking capacity for buses and cars, as well as the capacity of trails and viewpoints. These sites have garnered political attention in Canada, as the media has discussed in the case of Moraine Lake in Banff National Park (Pruden, 2023).

Within nature-based tourism, ecotourism is a type of experience that encompasses broader concerns regarding conservation. According to the International Ecotourism Society (IES), ecotourism implies “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education” (TIES, 2015, par 2.). The definition embraces a responsible relationship with the social and ecological environment. Accordingly, ecotourism is often viewed as an alternative to capitalist exploitation of resources (Brockington et al., 2008b), and is often promoted as a win-win approach for conservation and local communities. Ecotourism is a type of tourism, I state, where the service is provided by a private organization; therefore, the state does not provide an ecotourism offering but could facilitate through concessions and licences the private offering as new opportunities for capitalist expansion. In line with this, as pointed out by Duffy (2008: 147), “paradoxically (eco)tourism also opens up new areas for tourists to visit while simultaneously excluding other communities.” Moreover, it is typically consumed by white, upper-middle-class travelers from the Global North, who visit the Global South or peripheral regions (Fletcher, 2014). As a result, scholars are increasingly pointing out that ecotourism can represent another form of exclusion and displacement (Bluwstein, 2017; Fletcher & Neves, 2012; Ojeda, 2012), leading to marginalization and restricted access to traditional lands and resources. Additionally, the general categorization of ecotourists tends to focus on the Global South and therefore needs further scrutiny, particularly regarding who is considered an ecotourist in the Global North.

Over the past decade, international financing agencies have increasingly presented nature-based tourism, including ecotourism, as a form of economic development (e.g. World Bank, 2020) or by international organizations that seek to find new ways to finance conservation (Brockington et al., 2008). This conservation-as-development approach, initially identified by Page West (2006), represents a redefinition of conservation in contrast to previous discourses that restricted development. In this approach, conservation sites are now recognized as platforms for economic development, primarily

focused on the production of experiences targeting high-spending tourists rather than local residents.

In this context, geographers have explored the growing role of nature-based tourism as a discourse and policy for development in conservation projects (Holmes & Cavanagh, 2016). According to Bluwstein (2017), the expanding space of tourism also serves as a territorialization project that involves the participation of new actors and businesses. Geographers and tourism scholars also analyze the rising concentration of corporate power within tourism services (Mostafanezhad et al., 2016).

Still, discourses regarding nature tourism in protected areas are shifting. A decade ago, scholarly work was focused on the ethical consumption and responsibilities of the tourism industry in natural areas, as well as the unequal relationships between tourism and local residents (Gibson, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2010; Ojeda, 2012). Presently, however, tourism scholars are approaching the industry and its continual effort to seek reinvention. For instance, in the current era of planetary crises, scholars are showing the contradictions in the idea of sustainable tourism and excessive consumption that are characteristic of the Anthropocene. For example, Higgins-Desbiolles (2021) emphasizes that tourism growth has emitted more carbon emissions than other sectors of the economy, making the overall sustainability of long-distance travel inherently contradictory.

As pointed out by Chris Gibson, a scholar who studies the evolving geographies of tourism, the industry is totally embedded and implicated in the spatio-temporal dynamics of contemporary capitalism. In this vein, during the last decade, tourism has been disrupted and transformed by e-commerce such as Airbnb, and social networks such as Instagram, Trip Advisor, platforms that control and dominate e-commerce, and big data services (Gibson, 2021).

Tourism scholars also examine the continuous growth of tourism and overtourism, and its limits. For instance, Fletcher (2011), debates the role of (eco)tourism in sustaining

capitalism by providing an "environmental fix" for overproduction between continual growth and finite natural resources. Moreover, Higgins-Desbiolles (2018:159) argues that "the growth fetish is resulting in tourism killing tourism." In this vein, scholars in tourism have long noted that an excessive number of visitors in a single destination not only diminishes the quality of the experience, but also the environment they seek to protect (eg. Hall, 2019).

In addition, scholars in the fields of tourism and nature-based tourism investigate various forms of domination, exclusion, and their contestation and transformation (Gardner, 2016). Likewise, recent work explores the colonial, race-based, and capitalist power dynamics that underlie current nature-based tourism approaches (Bluwstein, 2021). Accordingly, in chapter seven, I delve further into the ways in which civil society organizations navigate at the limits of commodification and capitalist relations in accessing public spaces such as national parks.

Lastly, it is important to recognize that all forms of tourism represent a certain type of privilege linked to class position and race (Urry, 1996). The way that nature-based tourism and ecotourism have been diffused as a market-based activity is rooted in narratives that addresses "typically white upper-middle-class, politically liberal/leftists' members of post-industrial societies" as Fletcher (2014: 3) puts it. However, in the Canadian context, non-governmental and community organizations are progressively contesting the categorization of this stereotyped consumer and racialized image of ideal tourists and promoting a more diverse access to an outdoor recreation in public spaces as non-commodified experiences. In this vein, access to public spaces such as national parks can also be understood as a citizenship right, promoted by state agencies and increasingly demanded by local organizations; I address and discuss these dynamics in chapter seven. Thus, in the next section I introduce the theoretical construct for the right to nature as an emergent notion in the political ecology literature. I will connect thinking on citizenship, inclusion, and exclusion to public spaces in order to open a dialogue of the right to access and the right to nature.

2.5 Exploring dimensions of citizenship: Access and exclusions in public spaces and the right to nature.

In the previous section, I introduced visitation for outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism as the only human activities allowed in national parks, besides scientific management and work. In so doing, I assert that access to national parks is mediated by both the market and the state. The market can play a role in managing tourism experiences through private services that own private rights within national parks. In contrast, state-offering services imply a certain level of citizen access and participation in public spaces, thereby grounding the understanding of parks as political arenas where social privilege, inclusions, and exclusions are constructed and reproduced. I will further discuss these ideas in chapter seven.

When defining ideas of citizenship and access or inclusion to public spaces such as national parks, we must first examine the theoretical constructions of these two articulated notions. Within liberal democratic states, citizenship is not solely understood as a legal status that determines rights and responsibilities within a community (e.g., Isin, 2008) but also as an identity and membership in a political and social community (Staeheli & Thompson, 1997). Accordingly, Anand (2007: 8) suggests that “citizenship is a flexible and contingent form of political subjectification that emerges through iterative (and constitutive) performances between the state and its subjects.” I take a broader understanding of citizenship that considers it as an ongoing process that involves learning, negotiation, and active engagement with various power structures and spatial contexts (eg. Anand, 2017; Chouinard, 2013). This perspective acknowledges that some values and beliefs hold dominance, leading to the exclusion and marginalization of certain groups from meaningful participation in society's political and social aspects. Therefore, minorities and other marginalized groups often have to fight for their rights, recognition, and a sense of belonging (Flint & Taylor, 2018; Gabrielson & Parady, 2010; Isin, 2008). Thus, the conceptualization of citizenship involves rights and obligations within both private (Valentine, 2008) and public space (Staeheli & Thompson, 1997). As such

citizenship is not necessarily a preordained status; it involves a process of continuous negotiation and becomes a permanent learning process through practices of daily life (Brown, 2014; Sultana, 2020), as well as through the navigation of formal institutional structures (Mitchell, 2003; Staeheli et al., 2012). In this context, Farhana Sultana (2020: 1409) argues,

> [b]ecoming citizens is a continual process, fraught with difficulties and tensions, and not a fixed end state. Local practices affect citizenship rights and can help form new kinds of solidarities as well as exclusions. Citizenship is thus also about claiming and belonging, rather than a status.

In addition to the notions of citizenship and its associated legal rights for redistribution and access within nation-states, ideas of inclusion are commonly referred to as a way of incorporating broader citizenship access into public life, with public spaces as key catalysts toward democratization (Dryzek, 1996) and social justice (Sainsbury, 2012). Inclusion policies often target historically excluded groups based on factors such as gender, physical abilities, background, race, age, and class; furthermore, for some scholars, inclusion is mainly related to the welfare rights of immigrants (Sainsbury, 2012; Ye, 2019).

Beyond the previously discussed provision of public services, an important element of analysis within the citizenship literature is the reclaiming of rights and recognition of the collective within public spaces (e.g. Isin, 2008). In this vein, Desforges (2005: 440) argues that “space” is an important term for the understanding of citizenship, particularly “the formation of spatially differentiated rights, responsibilities and senses of belonging.” The ways in which rights and responsibilities differ spatially have opened debates on citizens’ access and barriers to public spaces[3], as well as the ideas behind the production of

[3] Political ecologists have shown for decades that national parks are a settler-colonial strategy which has displaced Indigenous peoples from their land and continues to exclude them from decision-making (Hackett, 2015; Hardenberg et al., 2017; Mollett & Kepe, 2018; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2011; Neumann, 2002; Valadares, 2018). Recognizing that

environmental citizens and as environmental subjectivities. However, very few works could be found on this topic (Brodie, 2008; Latta, 2008; Nagel & Staeheli, 2016). One example of this is the work of Caroline Nagel and Lynn Staeheli (2016) which explores articulations of citizenship, public space, and access to nature in Lebanon.

Definitions of public space embody various geographically and political contexts. Although notions of public spaces are more defined in urban than rural spaces (e.g. Harvey, 2013), the main differentiators of public from private spaces are access, regulation, and property. For Neil Smith and Setha Low (2013: 3-4):

> public space is traditionally differentiated from the private space in terms of the rules of access, the source and nature of control over entry to a space, individual and collective behaviour sanctioned in specific spaces and rules of use. Whereas private space is demarcated and protected by state-regulated rules of private property use, public space, while far from free regulation, is generally conceived as open to greater or lesser public participation.

As Staeheli and Thompson (1997) and Springer (2011) state, despite its different forms of exclusion (from the land or access to it), the idea of public space remains important and plays a central role in democratizing a society for national cohesion. Even though identifying national parks as public spaces is not new (e.g. Low & Smith, 2013), it remains scarcely addressed in the literature.

The concept of public space offers a fertile ground for expanding an emerging literature on political ecology which advocates for the right to nature (Cortes-Vazquez & Apostolopoulou, 2019). Evangelia Apostolopoulou and William Adams (2019: 224) define the right to nature as “the right to influence and command the processes by which nature-society relationships are made, transformed, and disrupted by urbanization (and economic development).” They go on to argue that this concept “is increasingly becoming

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these are spaces of exclusion and that they are contested by Indigenous peoples in Canada and elsewhere, I refer to public spaces as (settler) nation-states territories managed for conservation and recreation.

a key element of struggles against capitalist urbanization." As the authors highlight, it responds to extensive deregulations and market-friendly re-regulations of environmental and planning legislation, as well as the privatization of public spaces and natural resources in both urban and rural areas. In short, this involves an expansion in terms of scale and volume of the commodification of nature, along with related fiscal austerity measures such as major cuts in public spending (Apostolopoulou & Cortes-Vazquez, 2018). The authors advocate for the articulation of environmental movements and the state to seek redistribution and recognition of rights. The right to nature offers then a way to imagine and co-understand alternatives to controversial market-based and neoliberalized policies in conservation, particularly in public spaces, including national parks.

A key question that remains is how to build alternatives which allow for diverse access to public spaces. The articulation between the literatures on citizenship, public space, and the right to nature offers a lens of analysis that I explore in chapter seven. The chapter aims to illustrate citizens' political actions to foster collective use and control of public spaces against, and beyond, privatization, marketization, and commodification.

2.6. Chapter conclusions

While the conceptual framework I have developed here comprises four main literatures, there is significant and deliberate crossover among these conceptual bodies. In this way, I am able to explore these different dimensions from several perspectives. For example, neoliberal conservation is examined as both part and parcel of the governance of national parks, as well as a significant factor in producing a novel approach to citizenship and the right to nature.

At the core of the aforementioned concepts is the idea that perspectives on nature and the governance of nature are context dependent. While existing research has primarily concentrated on the Global South, my south to north perspective examines the scientific, economic, political, and citizenship-related approaches of nature, as well as how these

meanings are both reproduced and/or contested in a context like Canada. As I will show in this research, in Canada governance is hierarchical and state-led. It seeks to maintain control and power over the market and society, preserving political consensus, legitimacy, and public support.

My conceptual framework also serves as an approach to exploring both the historical and contemporary dimensions of ideas of governing these spaces. This includes approaches that goes from enclosures to market-based governance, or from inclusion and citizenship to the right to Nature. Ultimately, this conceptual framework informs my methodological approach, as well as the analysis and discussion of the research findings.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

My research focuses on the governance of national parks. Rather than paying attention to processes and agents in decision making, which have already been addressed by other studies on park governance, this dissertation instead examines the main ideas and logics that underpin the governance of these areas. Using a range of qualitative methods and literatures, I explore how the state negotiates the tensions between different scientific, economic, and social management approaches to governing national parks. Therefore, I analyze the work of scientists, experts, and bureaucrats in making national park conservation and enjoyment through recreation governable, financeable, and manageable. I also look at the way these ideas are perceived, experienced, and contested by local governments and community organizations. In doing so, I focus on scientific approaches that shape and transform non-human natures, efforts to make profitable visitation, and question the idea of visitor subjectivities that are rooted at the core of the national park system.

Following a political ecology approach, this dissertation addresses three key questions: 1) How do different scientific conceptualizations of Nature shape the governance of national parks?; 2) To what degree has neoliberalism influenced the financial governance of national parks in Canada?; 3) How have public spaces been conceptualized as national parks and for whom are they governed? To answer these questions, I draw on a multi-scaled analysis, particularly highlighting decision-making at Parks Canada's national office and in two national parks. Specifically, I focus on Jasper, in the province of Alberta, which is one of Canada’s national parks with the most significant amount of visitors and revenue, and on La Mauricie, in Quebec, a smaller park with more local visitation. The follow table offers some summary data for each park:

Table 1. Case studies selection criteria

National Park	Province	Year of establishment	Surface (km2)	Number of Visits (2018-2019) pre-COVID	Number of Visits (2020-201) (COVID)	PC NP Category	Composition of the total budget
Jasper	Alberta	1907	10878	2,425,878	1,691,042	List 4*	80% of revenues and fees and 20% federal budget.
La Mauricie	Québec	1970	536	219,824	194,398	List 3 **	20% of revenues and fees and 80% federal budget

* List 4: Large national parks with significant visitor use, offering multi-day visitor experiences with year-round road networks and visitor activities as well as extensive visitor services, heritage presentation, and backcountry opportunities.
** List 3: National parks with significant visitor use, year-round vehicle access and comprehensive seasonal visitor services and heritage presentation opportunities.

To provide an overview of the methodology used in this study, this chapter is divided into five sections, each corresponding to a phase of data collection and analysis. Although I present them one after the other, data collection was often undertaken simultaneously. The first phase involved examining archival documents and gathering secondary data (section 3.2); the second phase consisted in conducting semi-structured interviews with park officials and managers from the national office and two case studies, as well as other key participants (section 3.3); finally, the third phase involved interpreting qualitative data under an iterative process of analysis (section 3.4). In section 3.5, I reflect on my positionality and reflectivity practice in this research. In doing so, I discuss the challenges and settings of my research involving a state agency, negotiations of access, which includes addressing relational aspects such as class, language, and educational background.

Before delving into the different techniques and methods employed in this study, I provide a brief overview of how the methodology was reshaped due to the impact of COVID-19. In terms of methodological approach, my fieldwork was postponed for eighteen months, prompting me to reconsider data collection methods that did not require travel. In

response, I found a number of virtual strategies. The exploration of the collection of archival films from Parks Canada and the NFB was an important start, as they provided a fascinating source that opened up several questions for my research. Then, I communicated with a librarian from the Library and Archives of Canada, who provided me great assistance with finding archival documents online that offered significant amount of data, as I explain in the following section. Parks Canada officials were also very supportive, offering to share with me the variety of technical documents that they had available on their computers. Additionally, I started interviewing representatives from the national office using online platforms, as I explain in section 3.3. I also organized my fieldwork virtually when contacting interviewees and conducting first interviews by Zoom. Those strategies offered me the possibility of continuing with my research. Adapting to the circumstances, fieldwork also underwent modifications. I conducted most interviews online, including those with national office and park representatives. This adjustment was necessary due to both University of Montreal and Parks Canada policies, as well as the fact that many employees in both parks were working remotely. Consequently, even when I was physically present at their workplace, several of them were working from home. As such, I conducted several interviews by phone or virtually from my fieldwork locations. I further explain these processes and the terms of the way I collected my data in the following sections.

3.2 Exploring the archives and documents

To understand the different concepts, ideas, and priorities for managing nature and visitors in national parks, I examined policies, reports, and guidelines across different historical and geographical contexts. I analyzed archives, including images, films, planning documents, and maps from Parks Canada, the Yellowhead Museum at Jasper, the Library and Archives Canada (LAC), and the National Film Board (NFB) (see table 2).

Archives, including both documents and images, laid an historical groundwork for specific rationales and decision-making processes. This source not only facilitated discussions but also enriched conversations by providing elements that many interviewees did not

have at hand. Additionally, during my fieldwork in Jasper and La Mauricie, my findings with the archives offered opportunities to open new dialogues with research participants.

Table 2. Documents and visual material consulted

Archive location	Data	Type of source
National Library and Archives Canada	• National Parks Annual Reports (1912-1951 with many discontinuities over time) • Annual Plans (1999- 2004) • Department Performance Report/Results Report (2000-2022) • Reports on Plans and Priorities (2000-2022)	Documents and online databases
Parks Canada archives	• National parks policies, guidelines, public consultation reports and management documents • Historical annual visitor records • Infrastructure planning strategies	Documents reports Images

Case Studies (archives)	• Public budget directed to tourism and visitation purposes, including those coming from revenues and entry fees
	• Planning documents and public consultation
	  ◦ Jasper 1967 Master Plan, 1985 Public Consultation, 1988 Management Plan, 1994, Planning 4 Mountain Parks
	  ◦ La Mauricie Managemtn Plan 1979
	  ◦ La Mauricie, archives creation of the park
		Reports
		Documents and maps
		Reports

Jasper-Yellowstone Museum	• Collection of photographs: selection of Parks Canada and donors • Planning documents and public consultation reports.	Photographs Reports
National Film Board	• Selection of 10 films of Canadian national parks (1940-1967)	Films

The collection of documents was completed in two ways. First, Parks Canada officials and the Social Science specialist shared documents with me, including visitation records, policies, technical guidelines, and management tools, such as visitor safety and trail management. A second phase involved examining documents from the LAC, such as historical annual reports, Department Results and Priorities, and financial information for Jasper and La Mauricie.

As explained earlier, due to pandemic-related health restrictions, my interaction with the national library has been entirely virtual. Exploring the archives at LAC presented challenges, partly due to the historical dependence of Parks Canada on thirteen different agencies and offices within the Canadian Government. Each of these institutions had unique codes within the Library's Aurora catalogue. Furthermore, the presence of numerous report discontinuities, where publications appear for certain years and then cease, added complexity. Additionally, my access was limited to documents with comprehensive references, including title, author, publication date, and library online catalog number. Consequently, navigating and locating complete references for documents was frequently a challenge.

During my visit to Jasper, I stayed for four days at the Jasper-Yellowstone Museum, where the archivist offered me an office space and had already organized a variety of planning documents for my research as well as two collections of photographs: the Parks Canada collection and the donors' collection. These collections were rich in place-based information, and they provided insights into evolving ideas for recreational activities and the construction of various kinds of infrastructures for visitation, such as campgrounds, in different periods. Archival pictures were a very insightful source to see scientific management techniques in practice and what fostering enjoyment meant in the past. For example, photographs of rodeos, horse races, outdoor theatres, and carnivals including beauty pageants are part of these visual records. Likewise, in La Mauricie, managers shared with me a collection of old planning documents, maps, and images. Municipalities

and tourism chambers also offered me some documents regarding costs and strategic planning documents.

The National Film Board (NFB) archival collection of films was an insightful exploratory tool, particularly given the constraints of conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic. The NFB granted me permission to examine and work with a fraction of the overall collection of films. In particular, I worked with the following productions:

- *A day in Forillon* (1968). 7 minutes. (Bouchard, M.) Produced by the NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch
- *Ski Holiday* (1947). 11 minutes. (MacDonald, B.) Produced by the NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch
- *The Royal Parks* (1940). 10 minutes. Produced by the NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch
- *Fundy Holiday* (1951). 11 minutes. Produced by the NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch
- *Mountain Playgrounds* (1961). 7.32 minutes. Produced by the NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch
- *The Enduring Wilderness* (1963). 23 minutes. Produced by the NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch
- *Jasper* (1946). 20 minutes. (Parry, L.M.) Produced by the NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch
- *Away from it all* (1961). 13.53 minutes. (Roy, J.) Produced by NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch
- *Ticket to Jasper* (1947). 22 minutes. (Scythes, E.W) Produced by the NFB in collaboration with the National Parks Branch

Following Gillian Rose's (2007) visual methodologies, I analyzed how the films constructed and represented the notion of nature to the audience and the implications of these representations. During COVID lockdowns, the films were a great initial source for exploring the construction of the state's discourses, tensions, and ideas about visitors' recreation and nature-tourism development.

I categorized the different archival sources according to my research objectives. Each category was linked to approaches for nature, ideas about recreation and visitation, and economic perspectives related to visitation management.

Working with archives also posed various methodological challenges. Firstly, due to the vast amount of historical and planning documents, it has taken a significant amount of time to review, select, and categorize them. Siener and Varsanyi (2022: 550), in their review of the methodological challenges of archival research in geography, refer to this challenge as "archival abundance." Despite the volume and amount of information collected, the archives have plenty of discontinuities in the records about political or financial decisions. This is particularly evident with the State of Parks Reports, which faced intermittent gaps spanning several decades. Secondly, as Martin and García (2022: 580) point out, "archives represent a complex technology of state power." While they can shed light on changes in a state's ideas and rationalities, as they represent mostly the state's narrative, they obscure other histories. This was the case for example with documents collected from the Library and Archives Canada (LAC). By delving into the local archives of Jasper and La Mauricie, I gained access to a more diverse range of perspectives. For instance, my exploration of Jasper's Public Consultation documents on the Mountain Parks process yielded insightful, locally grounded information about the viewpoints and demands of different actors. A challenge that I faced is that I was navigating through random documents that organizations such as the Yellowhead Museum had collected through donations over time. As such, these documents often depicted a glimpse of specific planning processes. Accordingly, planning documents were available, but obtaining budgets or financial decisions were more difficult to get. Although information about the budget for Parks Canada and each of its departments is now available on the government website, the annual budget for each park is not. This contradiction in archival work means that the archives are abundant yet limited.

Engaging with archives involves grasping the limitations of accessible sources and the abundance of public information simultaneously. Institutions like Parks Canada produce a substantial amount of information. Thus, one of the primary challenges for qualitative researchers when dealing with archives is defining the scope of documents we will engage with and those we will leave aside.

Lastly, concentrating on a subset of these sources provided significant insights and diverse viewpoints into the evolving motivations for conservation and visitation across the years. Undoubtedly, archival research presents a multitude of other possibilities that I am eager to explore in the future.

3.3. Semi-structured interviewing

A second significant method implemented in this study was the mobilization of semi-structured interviews with key participants, primarily Parks Canada officials and managers at the national office and in the two case study areas. These were complemented with perspectives from local government representatives and civil society organizations. The purpose of these interviews was to explore how scientific and technical experts construct events, practices, experiences, and knowledge (Dunn, 2010; Secor, 2010). Thus, I examined the opinions, perspectives, and experiences of government and non-governmental representatives in order to understand the discourses underpinning the park's policies and practices. Specifically, I paid attention to the way that different actors mobilize rationalities regarding parks as sites for conservation and as spaces available for visitors' recreation or for tourism development. The interviews were structured around a list of themes and predetermined questions, serving as an overall guide (Longhurst, 2016). Although there were common topics, I tailored specific questions to each interviewee, depending on their role within the organization they represented. In general, the interviews were divided into five main themes which included: their role in the organization, ideas about nature, governance of visitation, economic management of conservation and tourism, and challenges and ideas about the future. The first theme, related to their role in the organization, served as an "icebreaker" to help the interviewees feel more comfortable and to provide me with insight into their perspective on the topic. The second set of questions contributed to the understanding of different ideas of nature and management from recreation to scientific approaches of ecological integrity. The third theme helped to address social approaches for the management visitation including ideas of who is the visitor, the tourist, and the citizen in the park context. The fourth group of

questions focused on the economic and political role of recreation and nature-tourism and the motivations behind those rationales. The final group of questions focused on ideas to project a future that proposes governance approaches to face the climate crisis and, beyond that, considers the ongoing challenges for diversifying accessibility to national parks.

Throughout this process, I remained attentive to the phrasing of my questions and language use, recognizing that my involvement may influence the discourse within our dialogue. In any case, during the interview, I tried to follow the language and concepts used by the interviewee. Depending on their position, some interviewees used different concepts. For example, some used the term "visitor economy," while others, in a similar context, used "visitor experiences." In old documents, "mass tourism" was referred to as "overflowing." Likewise, the terms “ecological integrity” and “ecosystem management” were often used interchangeably.

To select participants, I used the criteria of experience or position (Dunn, 2010; Longhurst, 2016). These participants included professionals and directors from the Visitor Experience Directorate, Resource Conservation, Finances, and Assets Management. They also helped me identify other contacts for the different positions I was interested in interviewing. For municipalities, tourism chambers, and non-governmental organizations, I contacted participants through their organizations’ website. Participants also recommended others' names, in what is commonly referred to as a snowball sample (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2005). The result were fifty-four semi-structured interviews conducted between November 2020 and February 2023 in English with federal representatives and Japer's participants and in French for La Mauricie and its surroundings (see table 3).

Table 3. List of designations of interview participants

	National	Jasper National Park	La Mauricie National Park
National Office	8		
Parks managers, experts		24	8
Tourism chambers		2	1
Local governments.		2	2
Civil society organizations	6	1	
Total	14	29	11

To ensure privacy and confidentiality, after I introduced myself, we discussed issues about confidentiality of research, anonymity, and the authorization to record the interview with participants. Only one person requested not to be recorded or to use the material of our conversation in the research. Even so, understanding that person's position was meaningful and helped me to immerse myself in the tensions and conflicts that underpin the park's governance. To maintain confidentiality, I have opted not to include the names of my interviewees. Instead, I identify them with a letter, which served as a code for me.

After conducting each interview, I transcribed the audio file; for interviews in English I used Trint, an audio transcription software. After the automatic transcription process, a manual review and adjustment process followed. This was a strategic moment to organize ideas, take notes, and, most significantly, to start identifying the first thematic codes.

With regards to the interview location, I had initially intended to conduct walking-interviews (Palmgren, 2018) as a means of generating more in-depth, context-specific conversations with research participants, and to establish a collaborative knowledge-building approach. This method would also have provided a safer alternative to indoor interviews in light of COVID health measures, as all interviews were conducted during a period of imposed public health regulations. However, only three individuals agreed to participate in walking interviews, with the majority preferring traditional sit-down interviews in their offices, on a bench, or in meeting rooms. Consequently, I adapted my approach

to primarily conduct face-to-face interviews, while also using online platforms such as Zoom or Google, as well as conducting some interviews over the phone.

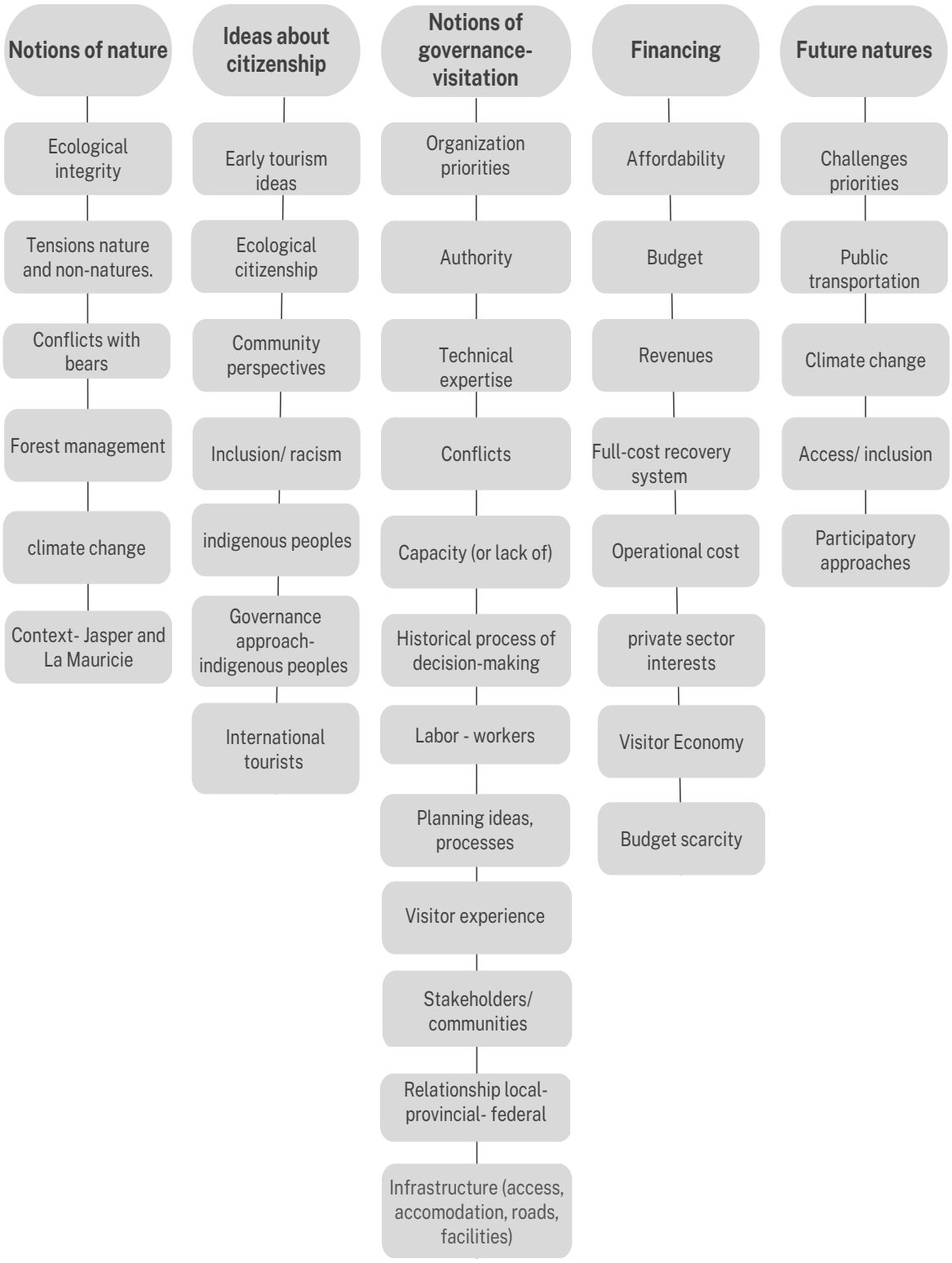
The extent to which I should disclose my own identities and positionality was not clear to me during the first encounters, but I learned to negotiate this process during the research process with participants. I found that introducing myself beforehand and explaining my project and my Chilean identity with past experience working with parks made participants more comfortable and open to sharing their ideas. Being transparent about my research and positionality also led to more fluid dialogue with participants. However, the biggest challenge was that participants expected to understand directly how they could benefit from my research, not just in terms of economic benefit but also from my research contributions. They usually asked me when I would share my results with them or how I was going to put all this together. A policy contribution will come after the thesis.

3.4 Analysis and interpretation of qualitative data: Interviews, documents, and visual material

The process of analysis involved transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews and coding them or organizing them into categories, which I first completed manually in printed documents and then used the software Nvivo for qualitative data analysis. This process involved an iterative abstraction process. I began with theme coding while reading and re-listening to transcriptions of interviews, documents, policies, guidelines, and archives. I used a set of a priori categories (Cope & Kurtz, 2016) related to ideas about nature, governance, financing, citizenship, and future natures for the initial coding. After the first round of coding, I used open coding to organize, compare, conceptualize, abstract, and categorize the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), bringing together themes and categories that emerged from conversations, fieldwork notes, and re-reading of interview transcriptions. Reports, planning documents, statistics, films, and photographs provided context and validation of the material collected through interviews. Throughout the process, I created memos of my reflections or comments about the analysis, which were essential for the writing process. The resulting 386 codes were reduced to 41 primary

codes and 32 secondary codes, as illustrated in Figure 1. Additionally, for interviews conducted in French in Quebec, I have translated them into English and included the original version in footnotes.

Figure 1. Coding process



The result of this process were five categories that guided my research questions through axial coding: notions of nature (Chapter 5), governance and financing (Chapter 6), ideas about citizenship, and future natures (Chapter 7). This structure helped me organize ideas and concepts from the large number of documents, transcriptions, and images, and then I began my writing process with the organized materials.

To analyze the data, I used a discourse analysis approach, which is concerned with the way in which language is organized into culturally-specific discourses that depend on social, historical, and cultural contexts (Willig, 2014). In relation to this idea, Willig (2014: 5) suggests that "one way of generating a discursive reading is to approach the data with a set of questions in mind, and to interrogate each line of text as well as the text as a whole with the help of these questions." The questions that I addressed in my analysis were the following: to what extent do the different ideas, plans, and projects illustrate (a) the planning of conservation, recreation, and tourism; (b) the state approaches toward the market and visitors, or citizenship in particular; (c) what are the logics underpinning the different strategies; and (d) how is it defined, produced and reproduced at different scales? What kind of discursive resources are used to construct the meaning of nature, citizenship and governance?

3.5. Situating myself in the research

One element that permeates my methodological design and analysis is that I have taken an inverted path to the traditional forms of knowledge production in geography and political ecology. I came from the South to do my research in the North or Minority World. Given this contra positional condition, I pay attention not only to questions of reflexivity, but also positionality, as well as power relations in the field. As an international student (and visitor) exploring a different socio-political and economic context of parks, I immersed myself in various activities and dialogues to approach the social, political, and economic perspectives from different angles which embodied different relations of power, historical relations and geographies.

Here, I would like to address reflections on the politics of fieldwork in the knowledge production in geography as other critical and feminist geographers have done in the past (e.g. Sundberg, 2003). It is often assumed that doing research in the Global South, for researchers from the North, is a way to produce universal knowledge. As Sundberg points out, for example, “this is evidenced by the silence about the position of the observer in the practice of producing knowledge and, just as important, the very conditions that enable researchers to produce knowledge about Latin America” (*Ibid*: 182). However, when the process unfolds in the inverse, we are constantly reminded that we are not from here. While researchers travelling to the south face issues of equity and power relations (Giwa, 2015), I experienced those barriers and was also confronted with issues of identity and access. During the different phases of this research, I had to constantly justify why I was doing my research here in Canada and not in Chile. It was important to continuously put into question where I stand, not only as a methodological approach, but also as a means of addressing ethical considerations while working with state officials and representatives from different organizations. Drawing from my own experience conducting this study, and insights from feminist scholarship, I state that positionality is not enough to negotiate spaces and dialogues in powerful contexts such as working with the Canadian state. Although I come with great privilege already with professional connections with some Parks Canada officials as part of my past professional work, doing research in the North is a permanent dialogue and negotiation of identity with others, such as university colleagues and research groups as well as research participants.

As an international student with a professional background in parks systems, I often found myself in a problematic position where I was simultaneously an insider and outsider, or neither of these. In constructing my arguments, I draw on my position as a researcher, a Latin American woman, and my past work in Chilean governmental agencies with the parks systems. As a "technical expert" or insider on the subject, I attempt to connect discourses and unravel practices in Canada while trying to see similarities and differences from the processes experienced in Chile. However, as an international student coming from the South, with language barriers, facing a bilingual study, and unfamiliar with

Canadian history, I was simultaneously an outsider. Thus, conducting fieldwork in Canada may invoke a sense of geopolitics of research, given that I did not go "down there" in the Global South but stayed "here" as a Chilean woman studying in a Canadian university doing my research in a Northern context. Under this unusual position, I experienced a permanent negotiation with my own subjectivities, ambivalences, and tensions, which became important elements to reflect upon and work through in my research. When I introduce my research focus on Canadian parks, people were often surprised and sometimes uncomfortable. They commonly respond with comments such as, "But Canadian parks don't have any problems!" or "Why are you working with parks here instead of focusing on those in Chile?" These reactions reveal the powerful influence of parks in the Canadian imagination, as untouched places resulting in a sense of discomfort when someone from the South arrives and studies them.

Another aspect that permeates my analysis is the way I navigate diverse bodies of literature to comprehend contested topics concerning the governance of nature in national parks. My research focuses on political ecology, drawing inspiration from various perspectives, including neoliberal conservation and feminist scholarship. These approaches have played a crucial role in understanding the broader structural dynamics governing public lands. Additionally, I include mainstream academic literature to examine scientific and political management approaches. This also responds to my dual position. As a researcher coming from the south and also from a governmental position, I find it important to incorporate technical literature into a broader reflection within the social sciences. Therefore, for example in chapter four, I introduce parks management literature to contextualize this dissertation, while in chapter five, I integrate into my analysis the literature on ecological integrity. In chapter seven, I explore ideas about inclusion to delve into policies regarding access to these sites. By doing this, my aim is to bridge different academic worlds in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of technical, scientific, economic approaches, and power dynamics within state rationales of national parks governance.

Lastly, although my research focuses on the scientific, economic, and social aspects of the governance of national parks, I did not focus on the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples regarding the settler colonial history of park expansion in Canada. Both historically and in the present, national parks continue to be sites of exclusion of Indigenous peoples caused by the "fine-and-fence" or "fortress-conservation" governance approaches (Brockington et al., 2006), including denial of rights or access to traditional land and resources, which are critical aspects of the current governance approaches. I explored displacement of Indigenous peoples in protected areas in Chile during my MSc research (García, 2011). Here in Canada, working on disputed lands has been a constant dilemma in my research. While I fully support the work of Indigenous scholars and different organizations (Housty et al., 2014; Polfus et al., 2016; Powys Whyte, 2018; Yellowhead institute, n.d.), as a Latin American woman, I recognize that my position is not the best fit to contribute to the calls for environmental justice and efforts to decolonize conservation (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Buscher & Fletcher, 2020). I fully support the idea that decolonization must be led by and for Indigenous peoples (M'sit No'kmaq et al., 2021), while research and work like mine can support and facilitate their efforts. Nonetheless, I look forward to continuing to share my research and create a dialogue with the results of this study while remaining in solidarity with Indigenous peoples' land claims.

3.6. Conclusion

My project examines the governance of national parks in Canada, with a focus on understanding the rationales and ideas of public officials at both the federal level and in specific case study areas. Undertaking qualitative research with a government organization presented a range of challenges, complexities, and dilemmas that required careful negotiation and reflection.

Working with state bureaucracies is time-consuming, and requires persistence and the ability to negotiate within the formalities of the organization. For instance, obtaining a research permit to facilitate access to participants required formal procedures and compliance with the organizational structure for researching with the Canadian state.

Although knowing some of the participants in advance made access for interviews and fieldwork much easier, my position as an outsider sometimes created tensions or limitations with research participants, who questioned my decision to conduct research in Canada instead of my home country. As I further explain in this study, Canadian parks are a popular and powerful institution within Canadian society. They embody a settler colonial legacy deeply ingrained in white Canadians. Parks represent a certain privileged enjoyment; they are designed and operated so as to maintain this privilege offered by the state. Thus, Canadian parks for some are the “jewels” of the settler society. This prompts reflections on the extent to which parks epitomize privilege, specifically the privilege of enjoyment. This concept is absent to a large extent with Chilean parks. Hence, my role as an international scholar studying the governance logics of parks was certainly unforeseen. These reflections were an important part of my overall reflexivity process during the different phases of my research.

Chapter 4. Contextualizing Concepts of Nature, Parks, and Visitation.

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I situate the concept of a national park historically, geographically, and institutionally. Through an examination of national parks at various scales and geographies, my goal is to position the Canadian national park system within international discourses and forms of institutional organization. This positioning enables an exploration of the underlying rationales that have shaped the country's governance history including themes such as scientific and managerial conceptions of nature, economic approaches and tourism development, issues of access and citizenship—central themes addressed within this dissertation. To do this, I draw on primary and secondary data, including historical documents from international organizations, articles, and books, as well as written and visual archives.

International organizations, the scientific community and policymakers have long held that national parks, among other protected areas, are the cornerstone strategy for biodiversity conservation (Maxwell et al., 2020). Yet, at the international level, parks represent different ideas and logics in different geographical locations. Parks also represent different political priorities and play a role in shaping opportunities for market expansion. International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), including the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and various United Nations agencies, seek to recommend national level governance arrangements, regulations and guidelines, such as finding common ground to organize, categorize, and standardize national parks governance internationally, nationally, and locally. National parks governance approaches often depend on the nation-state level political structures and are managed by standards that are applied by government representatives at the local level.

In this chapter, I trace the evolution of the idea of national parks and how this idea is reproduced differently in different regions of the world. A central argument of this chapter is to highlight the ways in which parks have been created in the Global North and expanded for visitor enjoyment, with a focus on providing state-led services to citizens, as in the case of Canada. In contrast, in the Global South, park formation has been aimed primarily at protecting and restricting resource extraction by local users, while also serving as sites for the expansion of private tourism services for international visitors.

I begin by tracing the logics that underpin the idea of visitation and conservation inherent to national parks. Subsequently, I introduce the ideas of landscapes, leisure, and nature's protection as the foundations of early park rationales. These aesthetic notions marked the definition of national parks and protected areas, symbolizing class distinction within the British Empire. Such ideas were transmitted and implemented in British colonies, and then expanded worldwide (Mawani, 2007). However, as I argue in this chapter, the global implementation of this project was far from homogeneous. The creation of parks was driven by different rationales underlying territorial enclosures. I then provide an historical overview of the governance of parks, drawing on international organizations and institutions for parks, in order to highlight how ideas of territorial control and power for park management permeate across different scales. The third section of this chapter focuses specifically on Canada, as I present the shifting rationales for national parks governance, which developed from parks as state building to fostering an idea of collective access for enjoyment for the Canadian public. This historical overview of the Canadian system is important to comprehend the rationales of park policies and management practices within the two case studies of this research: Jasper and La Mauricie national parks. Accordingly, the last Section of this chapter, introduces the two case studies of this research.

4.2 Searching for a Path of Access: Conservation and visitation approaches in North-South Contexts

The idea of national parks as we know them today follows a widespread model of conservation and recreation that was first implemented almost 150 years ago with the creation of Yellowstone, the first national park in the United States, in 1872. The US Congress proclaimed the area as a "public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" and placed it under the exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior (Nash, 2014). From that moment on, the creation of national parks expanded worldwide, primarily in settler colonial states (Mar & Edmonds, 2010), such as Australia, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, and Chile. After World War II, international non-governmental organizations worked to convince newly independent countries to make national parks and other forms of protected areas a primary institution for environmental protection (Dudley, 2008).

Today, national parks are present on every continent. In general, the contemporary model of park governance rests on three main conditions: first, national parks' territory should be governed and controlled by governments; second, biodiversity conservation is the main rationale for national parks; third, they are organized to receive visitors and, in some cases, tourists. The national park concept provides a model of strict separation of nature from humans, as it was first articulated in the Yellowstone model and its subsequent expansion worldwide. This model seeks to preserve nature and allow recreational access but displaces Indigenous communities from their territories and prohibits cultural or productive activities. However, the global project and discourses of nature conservation through protected areas are not homogenous, coherent, or simple. As Anna Tsing (2004:3) notes, "universal claims do not actually make everything everywhere the same." One question that arises is to what extent the political, social, and spatial project of national parks is different throughout time and space.

In this chapter, I begin with the technical definition of protected areas and national parks. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines a protected area as “a

clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated, and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature" (Dudley, 2008:8). The IUCN offers a more specific definition of national parks, as the most commonly known category of protected area. They are

> large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities (Dudley, 2008:i).

Drawing on this definition, in the following section I take the multi-scalar national parks governance structure as a starting point to examine the diverse forms that these protected areas take in different locations. I begin my argument by highlighting the colonial ideas of nature that are embedded in early rationales for parks expansion. Then, I trace the early global rise of national parks as a political strategy for biodiversity conservation, capital accumulation, and other national interests, both in the northern and southern contexts. I delve into different historical and geographical contexts and trajectories in order to illuminate how International Governmental Organizations (IGO) have shifted their discourses particularly in the diverse contextualizations of visitors, markets, and nature within national parks and other protected areas.

4.2.1 Landscapes, leisure, and the idea of nature's protection.

The concept of landscape and its role in shaping the cultural construction of nature is crucial to understanding the emergence of the national park idea. As noted by Roderick Neumann (2002) and Rebecca Solnit (2001), among others, in England the cultural values associated with nature appreciation played a critical role in defining class distinctions by the late nineteenth century. Reflecting these values, early parks were primarily used as hunting grounds for the upper-class, and their preservation was considered essential for the conservation of wildlife.

These aesthetic ideals served as the basis for the creation of national parks in the United States and Canada, albeit with different meanings than the values that were attached to the English landscape. The creation of parks as landscapes of consumption for leisure and profit was rooted in these ideals (Neumann, 2002).

The idea that nation-states should protect natural territories emerged in several other countries around the same time as the creation of Yellowstone national park. In 1866, the British colony of Australia created the Blue Mountains National Park and, in 1879, the Royal National Park was established south of Sydney. In 1885, Canada granted protection to the Rocky Mountains, and part of the area became Banff National Park. At the end of the 19th century, several forest reserves were created in South Africa, and in 1887, the Tongariro National Park was established in New Zealand (Ravenel & Redford, 2005). All these cases illustrate the link between the creation of national parks and the significant influence of the British empire on these projects within colonized territories.

National parks and other protected areas were also created in Latin America around the same time yet they were not always projects of conservation; instead, state rationales responded to a range of motivations and imperatives to control land and resource access and expand state and institutional power (Hardenberg et al., 2017). Only four years after the creation of Yellowstone National Park in the United States, Latin America established the first two national parks, Bananal Island and Seven Falls in Brazil in 1876 (Wakild, 2018). The same year (1876), Mexico established the Reserva Forestal Desierto de Los Leones. This was followed by the Reserva Perito Moreno in Argentina (1903), and the Reserva Forestal Malleco in Chile (1907) (García & Mulrennan, 2020). Since then, the number of national parks and other protected areas has increased significantly in Latin America, with a boom between the 1930s and 1960s throughout the region (Leal, 2017; Wakild, 2017).

Despite this general trend, the realities of parks are varied. Several parks in Latin America were not created as enforced wild territories; rather, parks creation embodied a complex range of goals and purposes, as I explain in the following paragraphs. As Leal (2017)

highlights, the formation of state institutions for the protection and conservation of these territories was not easy. There was no generalized intention to set aside areas for nature conservation and protection, nor was it envisaged as a strategic economic policy.

Throughout Latin America, park designation was initially motivated to protect resources against depletion caused by the expansion of colonization through expansive fires. Since state representatives tried to establish control over border areas and remote territories, conservation territories were not always envisioned as free of human inhabitants and sometimes Indigenous communities remain within their limits, as demonstrated through my previous research (García & Mulrennan, 2020). Moreover, commercial exploitation of forests was allowed which resulted in hundreds of loggers who settled within park territories (*ibid*). In Brazil, the state's ideas of park expansion included the incorporation of distant territories and peoples, such as some portions of Amazonia and Indigenous groups, into its nation (Garfield, 2004). According to Emily Wakild (2014), in Mexico, park creation also served to advance a rural model of social justice, and they were designed for people.

In the case of Africa, there is conflicting evidence of land and the construction of white identity. As with elsewhere, national parks were rooted in colonial conservation ideals. Parks were established on agricultural land to create nature, which today are subjected to political debate because of their symbolic importance in constructing a national identity that privileged settlers' identities over local populations (Neumann, 2005). As Lustrum and Ybarra (2018: 58) state, the origin of many national parks in white settler states such as South Africa and Zimbabwe, “rested in European settlers creating Edenic landscapes in which to nurture a European sense of belonging, a move itself enabled by Indigenous dispossession." For instance, the creation in 1926 of South Africa's Krueger National Park represented a manifestation of white national identity as part of a political installation of the republic (Ramutsindela & Shabangu, 2018). In the same year, the creation of Matopos National Park in Zimbabwe involved the transformation of a ranch site into a cultural and natural landscape for settlers, producing different symbolic and material meanings that resulted in greater conflict between Blacks and Whites (Moore, 1998).

While parks remain important destinations for the tourism industry and recreational spaces for local residents, geographically the place of humans varies greatly. National parks are not without controversy, given the different conceptualizations of non-human natures that are tied to the environmental, social, economic, and political dimensions of parks. Therefore, the policies and ideas behind access and promotion for tourism and recreation varied greatly in the Global North and the Global South. National parks embody diverse realities across regions and within countries, since they are projects for national identity and sovereignty, and experiments that blend local, national, and international interests.

As these patterns suggest, the creation of parks and other protected areas presents significant contradictions. First, as post-structuralist scholars have pointed out, nature is created, conquered (Neumann, 2004), and domesticated (Smith, 2008) through a process rooted in racialized dispossession as part of a settler-colonial project (Baldwin et al., 2011; Mollett & Kepe, 2018; Ybarra, 2018). This process involved the forced removal of Indigenous and other peoples from their land. The creation of parks according to settlers' wilderness imagery allowed certain activities and uses while barring others, limiting in many cases local peoples' access to land and resources. These racialized notions of nature in which communities were expelled to create national parks continue to be a site of struggle for Indigenous peoples in the United States (e.g. Spence, 1999), Canada (Lothian, 1976; Valadares, 2018; Youdelis et al., 2020), and elsewhere (Agrawal & Redford, 2009; Dear & McCool, 2010; Krueger, 2009; Lunstrum, 2016; Lunstrum & Ybarra, 2018; Ojeda, 2012). The formation of parks succeeded in erasing the historical landscapes of Indigenous territorial occupation. Romantic approaches to nature conceive parks and other natural areas for the enjoyment of some but based on the exclusion of others.

As stated by Ybarra (2018: 9), "rather than a historical momentum of Indigenous elimination for settler life, settler logics of elimination are at the foundation of political-economic structures" that continue to operate. Therefore, the creation of parks is still highly contested and politicized. One growing example of continued contestation and

negotiation is the Land Back movement (Gamblin, 2021), through which Indigenous advocates strive to reclaim land, including national parks, through various strategies. Overall, it responds to the urgent demand of Indigenous peoples to reconnect with their land in meaningful ways, including comprehensive land claims and self-governing agreements. Furthermore, efforts to decolonize conservation seek a radical shift in terms of conservation approaches. It involves the acknowledgment of the myriad forms of engaging with and knowing the world around us that have been developed by a multiplicity of peoples around the globe. These knowledges and practices are ones that Western-centric models of conservation have too often overlooked (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021). Many advocate for the recognition of Indigenous land rights and support greater involvement of Indigenous communities in decision-making processes.

4.2.2 Ideas and institutions for parks

International influence on conservation regulation and institutions has had different periods of momentum. The first international definitions of protected area categories were established in 1933 as part of the International Conference for the Protection of Fauna and Flora in London. At this time, four categories were created: national park; strict nature reserve; flora and fauna reserve; and reserve with prohibition for hunting and collecting (Phillips, 2004). However, the most decisive international milestone occurred in 1942 during the Convention on Nature Protection and Wildlife Preservation in the Western Hemisphere (also known as the Washington Convention). During this convention, 21 Latin American states and the United States agreed on categories of protected areas. Although it was not a smooth process, half of the countries on the American continent (both south and north) initially ratified or accepted the convention text (Wakild, 2018).

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) was founded in 1948 after WWII. The organization identifies itself as the world's largest global environmental network with more than 1,400 government and NGO member organizations and almost 18,000 volunteer scientists in more than 160 countries. Given that the IUCN is composed partially of government representation, it is not an NGO, but is considered the world

authority for biodiversity conservation. The stated goal of the IUCN is to influence, encourage, and assist countries worldwide in the conservation of “ecosystem integrity,” an idea that I explain further in chapter five. The IUCN General Assembly in 1969, held in New Delhi, defined "national park" as: "a relatively large area where one or several ecosystems are not materially altered by human exploitation and occupation." The assembly called on countries "not to describe as national parks" those areas that did not meet this definition (Phillips, 2004: 6). Other formal definitions were made public with the publication of the IUCN discussion paper in 1978. In this paper, members agreed that even though the national park was the most common category, there were other categories of protected areas that provide government bureaucrats, land managers, and decision-makers a set of legal and managerial options for conservation with a range of possibilities of conservation and land use. The publication of the 1994 Guidelines addressed the conflicting application of these categories and provided certain rules for its interpretation (Phillips, 2004).

Since the 1990s, international organizations have gained momentum by justifying conservation areas as opportunities for sustainable development. In 1994, the World Bank and the IUCN came together for the first time to create a report on economics and policy on Protected Areas (Munasinghe & McNeely, 1994), introducing notions of local economic development, Indigenous rights, and conservation financing. The same report recognizes that protected areas are expensive to establish and operate. However, the authors state that it "is less costly to protect their ecological integrity (…) than it is to replace them once their biodiversity and other environmental values are lost" (*ibid:* 4). As stated by Mohan Munasinghe and Jeffrey McNelly (1994: 3) in their economic analysis of protected areas, "[i]n affluent countries, the focus on environmental protection has been for recreational or aesthetic reasons. In poorer countries, the immediate concern is the disappearance of the resource base on which the survival of millions of people depends." At the time, documents from international organizations such as guidelines and reports referred to recreation and tourism as "significant economic use of PAs" and promoted these activities as a strategy for development. However, the universality of these terms is

geographically unequal. While in the Global North, visitation is encouraged for local and national citizens (Shultis & More, 2011), in the Global South it is promoted as a source of development by attracting international travellers and foreign currency (Leung et al., 2018; Naidoo et al., 2019; Sulle & Banka, 2017; World Bank, 2020).

Until recently, international conservation organizations were optimistic about the contribution tourism could offer to biodiversity conservation (CBD, 2004; COP 14, n.d.; IUCN et al., 2012). Tourism was considered a means for supporting biodiversity conservation within the IUCN documents and the CBD. For example, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) guidelines for biodiversity and tourism development affirm that effective tourism planning and actions could contribute to achieving at least 12 of the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Denman & Denman, 2015). These targets were agreed upon in 2010 at the UN Biodiversity convention in Japan to slow biodiversity loss, but as mentioned earlier, none have been met.

Within the context of the pandemic, furthermore, policy makers, international organizations, and NGOS raised concerns about the role of tourism in supporting biodiversity conservation. They argue that in many countries tourism is the major source of revenue to finance conservation (IUCN World Conference, 2021). Indeed, many national parks and protected areas are economically dependent on international visitors. The economic impacts of border closures, lack of budget to maintain staff, and increased poaching were some of the problems many park systems faced in the Global South during the pandemic (Cherkaoui et al., 2020; Lindsey et al., 2020; Souza et al., 2021; Spenceley, 2021). As a result, tourism organizations made a renewed effort to reposition tourism as a strategic force in biodiversity conservation. These initiatives garnered endorsement from economic organizations, including the World Bank (World Bank, 2020).

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), nature-based tourism produces over $340BN USD each year and support more than 21 million jobs (UNWTO, 2022b). However, despite lobbying by the tourism industry and other sectors at the COP on

Biological Diversity, the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) agreed upon in Montreal in December 2022 does not recognize or mention tourism as a significant industry for conservation. Contrary to this, during COP 15 the UNWTO advocated for a private sector alliance as a solution to diminish tourism's impact on biodiversity. This involved implementing measures to reduce emissions, minimize pollution, and safeguard and restore nature and wildlife (UNWTO, 2022a). The alliance apparently did not reach far, surprisingly, when I inquired with members of the Tourism and Protected Working Group from the IUCN-WCPA, of which I am a member, none of them appeared to be aware of this alliance. There is an apparent shift of discourse, transitioning from viewing tourism as environmentally friendly to an emerging acknowledgment of the tourism industry's impact on biodiversity and the climate crises.

Examining the historical aspects of park creation and its diverse implementation in different global spaces, together with the motivations and discourses of international institutions and their agendas, provide a good framework for contextualizing the Canadian park system. Accordingly, the following section presents a historical overview of Canada's park system, highlighting three key ideas that have shaped the process of park expansion. This will be followed by an introduction to the two case studies of this dissertation, Jasper and La Mauricie national parks, where I delve into the local-level policies and practices of these two specific cases.

4.3 Canada’s governance approach: from colonization to fostering citizenship

Parks Canada is a government agency whose background is rooted in a long history of ideas that intertwine conservation and recreation. Established in 1911 as the world's first park service, it was created under the Department of the Interior and designated as the Dominion Parks Branch (Lothian, 1976). Since that time, its name has undergone changes, and it has operated within thirteen different governmental structures, as can be observed in table 4.

Table 4. Historical Evolution of the Institutional Location of Parks Canada within the Canadian Government

Organization	**Period**
Department of Interior	1911-1936
Department of Mines and Resources	1936-1948
Department of Resources and Development	1949-1953
Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources	1953-1966
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development	1966 - 1970
Department of Mines and Resources	1936-1948
Department of Resources and Development	1949-1953
Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources	1953-1966
Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development	1967 - 1970
Department of Indian and Northern Affairs	1970 - 1977
Department of Environment	1979 - 1994
Department of Canadian Heritage	1994 -1998
Parks Canada Agency/ Dept. of Environment/Heritage	1998-

Table 4 depicts the agency's evolution, starting in the early stages at the Ministry of the Interior, experiencing shifts across resources and Indian and Northern Affairs, and ultimately settling at the Department of the Environment in 1970. These transitions highlight the territorial and colonial legacy of the Canadian park service, which has played a substantial role in the state-building project.

Following these shifts, in this section, I argue that the development of national parks in Canada is part of a series of changing articulations between nature, shifting state interests, scientific ideas, and the promotion of citizenship. To support this argument, I identify three central ideas that underpin the history and development of the Canadian park system: (1) as a state building project; (2) a shifting perspective on nature as both an asset to exploit and preserve; and (3) the promotion of ideas of access to and enjoyment of aesthetic nature for the Canadian population. These central ideas serve as the historical framework for the current discourses and ideas that I further explore in chapters 5, 6 and 7. In examining these core ideas of governance, I navigate through critical and mainstream literatures regarding the historical process of park expansion in Canada.

4.3.1 Parks as a state building project

The history of Canada's national parks system involves unique ideas of conservation that are intertwined with tourism, recreation, and colonization. As Hart (2010) and Sandlos (2011) have argued, the process of nation-building was connected with tourism and the economic value of Canada's national parks. This resulted in the creation of the four parks in the Rocky Mountains at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. The early ideas that motivated the parks' creation were a project of state formation and thus a relevant strategy for its settler colonization as a profitable territorial project. The first parks in Canada were created as part of a settler-occupation strategy, coinciding with the westward advancement of the railroad (e.g. Hart, 2000). In Canada the articulation of the railroad expansion and the creation of parks was a central element for parks creation.

This was reflected, in one example, by for William Lothian, a Parks Canada employee for 64 years, who wrote a four volume of the history of the national parks, from the early days to the mid-1970s. He wrote in 1972 (p. 12) that the year 1885 "was a momentous one for Canadians. Its annals recorded the fulfilment of a long-cherished national dream - the linking of eastern Canada with the Pacific coast by a transcontinental railway" (1976: 12). The same year, the Rocky Mountains Park (what is today Banff) was created as the first national park in Canada. What is noteworthy is that Canada's first park responded to the state's interest in preserving and administering non-human natures and scenic landscapes as a "public rather than a private enterprise" (*ibid*). In one instance, according to Lothian, the hot springs in Banff were discovered by railway workers in 1883 and were later claimed by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company (CPR). But ownership conflicts brought these remarkable springs to the attention of the government, and members of Parliament strongly recommending reserving them as part of a public park. This idea may have drawn inspiration from early British tourism development, which involved the development of hot springs in beach areas as described by John Urry (1996). Additionally, the recent control of hot springs in Arkansas by the US government served as another relevant example (Lothian, 1976). In Canada, considering the process of the settler state expansion toward the west, the Minister of the Interior "decided instead to retain the

springs and surrounding lands as a national possession, in order that they might have the greatest possible use and enjoyment at minimum cost by Canadians and their guests" (Lothian, 1976: 12).

Sid Marty, a writer and park warden, authored an early history of Banff for its centennial, and offers a different perspective on the origin of the Canadian Park system. According to the author, "the motive was far from altruistic, the Rockies was seen by federal officials as another Switzerland, a source of general profit especially for the CPR which would carry tourism profit" (Marty, 1984: 32). The appropriation of land by the state for developing parks was motivated by the preservation of aesthetic resources as a natural asset. The aesthetic value of landscapes became intertwined with both political and economic motives. The Ministry of Interior designated and managed landscapes to facilitate the economic growth of the settler state. The inception of park projects originated from the concept of transforming landscapes into investment resources. As Neil Smith (2008) argues, the development of the material landscape emerged as a process of the production of nature. The idea that nature could be profitable was installed and promoted within the state.

In 1887, when the bill to establish Banff National Park was introduced in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister contributed to the debate by extolling the beauties of the territory. For the director of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), William Cornelius Van Horne, the territory was clearly a potential source of profit. He declared, at the moment of the park creation in 1885, "since we can't export the scenery we'll have to import the tourists" (cited in Campbell, 2011: 3). Van Horne envisioned tourism revenue as a way to offset the astronomical costs of the transcontinental construction railroad project. This point was also highlighted by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald when he addressed the House of Commons, stating that a park at the Banff hot springs would not only provide a place for patients to recuperate but also generate income to support the Treasury (Campbell, 2011). As told by Lothian (1976: 25), the government envisaged that the Park would become an international tourist destination so they would recover the expenditure on the new infrastructures built as a result of the expansion of the colonization toward the

west. These ideas were also complemented by the superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Park; the 1912 Annual Report stated the following:

> There is another way in which national parks prove advantageous to the people of Canada. They attract an enormous tourist traffic and tourist traffic is one of the largest and most satisfactory means of revenue a nation can have. The tourist leaves large sums of money in the country he visits but takes away with him in return for it nothing that makes the nation poorer. He goes away with probably improved health, certainly with a recollection of enjoyment of unequalled wonders of mountain, forest, stream and sky, of vitalizing ozone and stimulating companionship with nature but of the natural wealth of the country he takes nothing (Department of Interior, 1913:5).

In its early years, as the 1912 Annual Reports states, Banff National Park received more visitors than Yellowstone Park in the United States. Originally established as a “public park and pleasure ground for the benefit, advantage, and enjoyment of the people of Canada” (Lothian, 1976: 45), the park was expanded several times “to accommodate visitors who wished to explore wilderness areas and enjoy natural attractions not accessible by carriage roads" (*ibid*). Early development efforts were geared toward creating a resort area, with an emphasis on the hot springs. During the 1890s, recreation in Banff was advertised by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for visitors coming by train from other parts of Canada and the United States. Large concentrations of visitors, especially on weekends, grew each year. In 1891, the park already received as many as 7,250 visits, but in the following years, it stabilized at around 5,000 (Marty, 1984). Ideas of state and nature were embodied early on as the Prime Minister envisioned controlling the park's territory and its resources by the government rather than the CPR. As a 1920 report illustrates, “throughout the year the work in connection with the parks service has been planned and carried out primarily with a view to bringing into Canada a revenue of millions of dollars from foreign tourist traffic” (Department of Interior, 1920: 22). Furthermore, during the early decades of the 20th century, the management of parks was also envisioned with other extractives industries besides tourism; for example, coal

mining and lumbering were still permitted in Banff and Jasper (Marty, 1984). Hence, according to the historian John Sandlos (2011), although the government created several parks with the explicit objective of wildlife protection in response to the preservationist sentiment within the park's bureaucracy, the prevailing emphasis during the 1920s and 1930s was on making the parks financially profitable. From Sandlos' (2011: 72) perspective,

> The public demanded that national parks be developed as playgrounds to attract tourists on an expanding highway network, bringing not only the roads themselves but also campgrounds, golf courses, hotels and townsites – all conveniently at the expense of the federal purse or private investors looking to profit from the influx of visitors. (…) government officials and civil society in the 1910s and 1920s were much more focused on parks' commercial potential.

Intrinsic to the notion of enjoyable parks was the idea that these natures had to be accessible. Hence, parks were built along the railroad[4] and since 1912 with a system of roads. According to MacLaren (1999: 19), "the completion of railways across the country was understood to involve the provision of appropriate accommodation for travellers. Premier accommodation was deemed necessary because rich people rode trains in the late nineteenth century." The creation of Banff and Jasper resulted in the construction of the Banff Spring Hotel and Jasper Park Lodge, respectively.

In this vein, Sandlos (2011) argues, the development and expansion of the automobile industry and the related surge in automobile tourism led to local organizations advocating for the creation of national parks. The historian Bill Waiser notes that Harkin, Canada's first Commissioner of National Parks, envisioned these territories playing a pivotal role in

[4] Park reserves or "forest" parks had been established on the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway west of Banff at Lake Louise, Field and Glacier; at Waterton Lakes in the southwestern part of what is now Alberta, and at Jasper on the line of the projected Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (Lothian, 1976)

the emerging Canadian tourist industry, “particularly if they were conveniently reachable by automobile traffic” (Waiser, 1995: 3). To strengthen tourism in Canada, Harkin foresaw parks as furnished with a variety of transport infrastructures to accommodate international and domestic visitors.

The building infrastructure in Canadian parks was aligned with the state’s geopolitical interests. As Waiser (1995) points out, significant park’s infrastructure was built by prisoners of war. At the time of World War I, Harkin aligned his priorities with the prevailing political strategies. Austria-Hungarian men living in Canada were identified as enemy aliens, faced surveillance, and some sent to camps within four of Canada's national parks to work. This strategy was then replicated in different periods and parks. The Great Depression and later the Second World War saw the implementation of a similar strategy, first with unemployed men and then with Nazi prisoners of war who were sent to remote work camps. As Waiser writes, “in total thousands unskilled foreigners, jobless and homeless people, conscientious objectors, perceived enemies of the state, and prisoners of war were sent to work in some western Canada's national parks” (1995:4). Waisser also noted that in 1916, for instance, the camp population in Jasper consisted of 200 prisoners, all of whom were Austrians. When guards and personnel were included, the total count reached 268 individuals. The obvious paradox is that these infrastructures that today serve for enjoyment were built by forced labor work, as in the case of the Icefield Parkway that connects Banff with Jasper (*ibid*).

National parks attracted a growing numbers of cars from urban Canada and the United States, the occupants of which sought attractions along the expanding highway networks throughout North America. As such, according to Sandlos (2011), civil society played a significant role in promoting and expanding the national parks system during that time. This project was supported by chambers of commerce, the tourism industry, local governments, and groups that seek outdoor recreation more so than scientists and conservationists.

Nonetheless, the settler state projected parks creation as a state building project. State representatives evicted Indigenous peoples from their land to create and develop national parks. The production of these landscapes, “free of humans”, was made possible by the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their territories. As argued by Thorpe (2011), the construction of wilderness through a process of appropriation of Indigenous lands enables the creation of social categories such as whiteness and Canadianness. Indigenous peoples and other rural communities were not recognized as holding sovereign rights over their land. Many had been displaced shortly before the creation of the railway, but with the creation of Rocky Mountain Park, Jasper, and other mountain parks, access to their lands was increasingly controlled and limited (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009). Furthermore, for Harkin, the first commissioner, “wilderness was the ultimate expression of God’s handiwork,” and that rationale motivated the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples for the creation of parks along the country. In a similar vein, Thorpe's (2011) research on the deconstruction of wilderness in Canadian landscapes shows that it was intertwined with a broader nation-building effort. Through this method of exclusion or limited and conditional inclusion, the state shaped Canada into a predominantly white settler society.

Ideas of wilderness were foundational for commissioner Harkin to build parks as "public playgrounds" (Sandlos, 2011: 66) and "hubs of regional tourist activity" (Sandlos, 2011: 65), which led to the construction of roads and recreational equipment in all parks. Harkin's vision included an ambitious program of road construction, golf courses, motor camps, and private sector development, including hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and other facilities for tourists and visitors (*ibid*). As a commissioner, Harkin sought to make parks also "a source of pride and enjoyment" for Canadians (Hart, 2010). As a result of this emphasis on tourism, national parks became a primary tourist attraction, drawing hundreds of thousands of foreign visitors each year (Sandlos, 2011).

Contrary to this trend, in some cases different individuals from the civil society, or even occasionally members of the tourism industry, campaigned to protect the declining populations of elk, antelope, or bison. According to Sandlos, nonetheless “the Parks

Branch was only too happy to respond these local initiatives, simultaneously adopting preservationist and pro-development policies that seem so contradictory from a contemporary perspective" (Sandlos, 2011: 59).

From a territorial perspective, the expansion of national parks took place from Western Canada to Eastern Canada, and later moving into the northern territories. Thus, in the 1930's, the government's vision was to establish a park in each province, and Harkin led the establishment of 12 new parks. The idea at the time was to build a park system that "could embrace representation of national landforms of supreme quality across the country" (Hart, 2010: 359). Harkin intended "to protect the most outstanding areas from a scenic and recreational point of view" (Hart, 2010: 360). According to Mortimer-Sandilands (2009:168), "expropriation remained a common practice" until the 1970s, and as such, it led to displacement of the people who were actually living on those territories.

At the same time, Canada, as a member of the IUCN and with the most extensive system of parks globally, contributed to setting the international standards for new parks (Marty, 1984). According to the guidelines for future park creation both internationally and in Canada, one ought to exclude "inhabited and exploited areas from being designated as national parks" (*ibid*: 134). The experience of Jasper, Banff and other parks with townsites and highways within their borders, showed that managing them was challenging and costly. On the other hand, the idea of creating parks without people was reinforced in North America. This is also referred to as fortress conservation, a model that has been highly criticized for causing forced displacement, exclusion, and impoverishment by restricting access to Indigenous and local peoples' traditional lands and resources (eg. Adams et al., 2004; Brockington & Igoe, 2006). Overall, the idea of settler's enforced occupation to control land and protect non-human-natures as "playgrounds" for citizens' enjoyment is an idea that has persisted for more than a century. Ongoing state strategies for reconciliation and recognition of Indigenous rights and interests are slowly emerging in political and social agendas, particularly in recent plans, programs, and activities.

4.3.2 Nature as assets to exploit and protect

A second key theme in the history of Canadian national parks concerns the idea of nature as an asset to control, exploit, and protect. Harkin saw no contradiction between preservationist idealism and commodification for tourist dollars (Hart, 2010). Initial ideas for park creation responded to the perspective of nature as a commodity that could be adapted and transformed to improve tourism, a rationale that has overall remained in the mountain parks. Additionally, ideas of aesthetic protection of landscapes and animals were gaining increasing attention from government officials. The expansion of the railroad and the state's occupation of territories resulted in significant environmental damage in particular to animals. This prompted calls to preserve the nearly extinct game population. This concern played a crucial role in shaping the policies and practices of park management. Consequently, nature came to be perceived as something manageable and subject to scientific and technical tools. The separation of humans from nature was driven by various factors, including notions of beauty, profitability, game conservation, and eventually scientific and political management for ecological integrity. Accordingly, changes in policies and planning were articulated and promoted as a national territory.

By the end of the 19th Century, most of the large mammal population in Canada and the United States had declined significantly due to hunting activities, including species such as moose, elk, antelope, and bison (Marty, 1984). Although hunting was officially prohibited in 1890, poachers and hunters continued to hunt for some time on parks lands. During that period, scientists expressed concern about the extinction of game species. The disappearance of these species led to an abundance of carnivorous animals including wolves, coyotes, foxes, lynxes, skunks, and wildcats (*ibid*). Early scientific initiatives involved undertaking an animal census. Parks wardens began a system of surveillance of animals, and the prohibition of firearms in parks was enforced, with the exception of wardens who were equipped with rifles and ammunition. As one Jasper yearly report (1913:15) states, "any killing of game by Indians or tourists that might have prevailed in previous years, which was by no means a rare occurrence, especially in outlying portions, has been entirely eliminated." The same report states that "[a]ll game

wardens have been equipped with rifles and ammunition, as well as field glasses, so that now they are in a much better position to destroy any carnivorous animals they may come across, such as wolves, lynx, mountain lions and coyotes" (1913:16). Accordingly, recreational hunting was prohibited, but selective hunting of carnivorous (referred to at the time as carnivorous reduction, a strategy aimed at controlling the increasing numbers of these animals) by park wardens was a practice that lasted for decades.

Wardens were ordered to reduce the herd of carnivores such as coyotes by shooting as they were seen as a menace to the deer that were seen as a park attraction (Marty, 1984). In Jasper, wardens killed thirty to fifty coyotes every year until the 1930s (*ibid*). For example, as Harkin noted in 1912, "we make an effort to kill as many coyotes as possible each winter, and even then, there are always plenty of them left" (Marty, 1984:104). The wardens' goal was to both preserve wildlife from extinction, while simultaneously ensuring a sufficient number of wildlife that could be attractive for tourists (Hart, 2010). These techniques, which formed the basis of ecological management revealed their consequences decades later, leading to altered ecological equilibriums and the disappearance of certain species such as the caribou.

Around 1920, wildlife conservationists began voicing concerns that railway construction was leading to population declines in adjacent areas. Management strategies were often contradictory--while animals that were in decline were reintroduced, the killing of wolves with the intention of carnivore management persisted. This has led to imbalances and results that are observable to this day. For example, by 1937, the elk population had grown so substantially that other native deer were simultaneously facing starvation at the same time (Sandlos, 2011).

Alongside conservationists' voiced concerns, hunting clubs were also pressing for the continuation of chasing. Various ideas emerged to justify the persistence of hunting within the park. For instance, hunters proposed the establishment of a museum of natural history that would exhibit the remains of species facing disappearance. This approach would allow these species to be preserved in their dissected state for the benefit of future

generations. A museum created from this purpose still exists today in Banff and is managed by Parks Canada, representing the biggest taxidermy collection in the country. The idea of park protection, as this case illustrates, was not to preserve life itself, but rather to continue hunting and then preserve a diversity of magnificent-looking dead animals for future generations to see.

According to Mortimer-Sandilands (2009: 161) it was only in the 1960s that Parks Canada “began to realize that preservation and use of parks are not always compatible." Scientists and technical teams introduced new ideas including zoning, the division of park territories into different categories of visitor use and environmental protection. This led to a shift in discourses and approaches among scientists and park planners towards management that integrated biophysical organization systems and ecological terms (Campbell, 2011). The 1964 policy represented this shift from use to conservation, stating that national parks were to preserve, “for all times areas which contain significant geographical, geological, biological, or historic features as natural heritage for the benefit, education and enjoyment of the people of Canada" (as cited in Campbell, 2011: 7). The idea of preservation was introduced, and other human uses besides recreation were prohibited. In the 1970s, as part of the National Park System Plan, the country was divided into thirty-nine natural regions, with the goal of having one national park as representative of each. This plan push forward the federal government's aim of expanding its territory under the argument of environmental protection (Valadares, 2018). According to Desiree Valadares’s (2018:146-147) research on parks in the Atlantic provinces, ecological and scientific language was used to, “contest and refute community resistance, land appropriation, and competing kinds of use with the creation of new national parks.”

The tension between outdoor recreation and conservation has been a central topic of parks management. In the 1980s, Parks Canada was tasked with the protection of both cultural landscapes and ecological integrity. These tensions resurfaced by the end of the decade, prompting the federal government to establish the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada National Parks in 2000 (EI Panel, 2000a). The panel's reports revealed alarming results, with virtually all of Canada's national parks under serious threat

in ecological terms. One of the main critiques of the panel was that the decisions made by Parks Canada were not based on scientific evidence, and there was a lack of management and monitoring to maintain ecological integrity. The panel made different recommendations including a greater involvement of Indigenous peoples in park management and the establishment of limits against the marketization and impact of visitation. The report called for political and technical decisions to be made based on ecological integrity, rather than park revenues, leading to a significant shift in policy. Of all the management criteria, protecting ecological integrity became the most important priority for Parks Canada. This marked a shift in policy rationales for national parks from a state-territorial-tourism approach to an ecological one.

4.3.3 Parks as spaces for enjoyment of the Canadian public and to foster an idea of citizenship

A third core idea that runs through the history of Canadian park governance is tied to public access. The politics of park expansion were articulated alongside the reinforcement of a concept of citizenship. In this vein, parks were also envisioned as spaces for enjoyment and for fostering environmental citizenship.

With the creation of parks and the idea of having a parks service, state officials, such as Harkin, imagined and promoted a certain idea of citizenship that could provide Canadians the right to access, benefit, and enjoy leisure in the parks. According to Mortimer-Sandilands (2009: 169) “parks had a truly patriotic mission to perform: to instill in all Canadians a love of the country and pride in its natural beauty." This idea of citizenship is incorporated in the National Park Act of 1930. The mandate of parks was to embrace the “benefit, education and enjoyment of the people [of Canada] so as to leave them unimpaired for the future generations” (Hart, 2010). In Harkin’s words, “the national parks ensure that every Canadian, by right of citizenship will still have the free access to these areas in which the beauty of landscapes is protected from profanation (…) and the peace and solitude of primeval nature retained" (Marty, 1984:95). Consequently, the parks aim to offer access for citizens and foster national pride among Canadians.

Parks, according to Harkin, were spaces to cultivate a specific kind of Canadian identity or to contribute to "making Canadian people physically fit, mentally efficient, and morally elevated" (Harkin, 1915 in Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009:180). From the 1930s until the late 1960s, the Canadian government actively promoted the concept of citizenship through national parks by encouraging individuals to socialize and appreciate nature.

Aligned with this approach, the National Film Board collaborated with the National Park Branch to produce dozens of films promoting tourism and outdoor recreation in Canadian national parks. These films moved away from the masculinities outdoor imaginaries to foster a thriving tourism industry in parks, inviting Canadians, both men and women, to visit as managed “places not to be feared” but to enjoy (eg. NFB, 1961). As Elizabeth Campbell (2011) argues, at the time, the films had the goal of influencing and responding to attitudes about for whom or what the parks should be.

To strengthen the relationship between the state, nature, and citizenship, education has at times played a significant role within Parks Canada's mandate. It gained momentum in the 1960s when the Park Branch created the Interpretive Service to invite and educate citizens to support the parks project (Marty, 1984). The state sought citizens' support to maintain political relevance in Canadian society. For example, in 1960, Minister Alvin Hamilton, in charge of the Park Branch, called on citizens to support and love parks and to "save them from those who wished to exploit them" (Marty, 1984: 134). Parks Canada developed interpretative programs in every park that include interpretative trails and educational talks. Interpretative programs sought to shape citizens, especially children, into environmental subjects by integrating environmental concepts and processes into interpretative activities in the parks, as the image below illustrates. Image 2, for example, shows an interpretative activity in Whistler Campground led by a park warden as part of his duties. However, interpretative programs in Parks Canada have experienced a decline in influence. According to political scientist Paul Kopas (2007), in 1995 this program had a 24% budget cut. In 2012, budgets were further reduced (CPAWS, 2016). Although parks still maintain interpretative programs, their relevance has waned over time.

Image 2. Interpretative program in Jasper national park, 1982. Source: Jasper Yellowhead Museum &Archives, Courtesy of Parks Canada.

The federal government initially viewed the expansion of national parks as a project that would promote unity, nation-building, and foster a shared sense of citizenship. In 1964, the government aimed to establish a national project that would identify a new system of parks that represented "Canada's natural and human heritage, to preserve the parks for all time" (ibid: 135). As noted by Mortimer-Sandilands (2009:172), former prime minister Jean Chrétien emphasized the need to establish more “parks in the two central provinces—Québec and Ontario. Such additional parks would meet a great need, and their role in helping to forge a richer Canadian Union is of fundamental importance.” Accordingly, in Ontario the Pukaskwa National Park was established in 1971, in Quebec La Mauricie was created in 1970, and several additional parks were established in Eastern Canada in the 1970s.

However, from 1985 onwards, the federal government dramatically reduced its financing and environmental agenda. As Catrina Mortimer-Sandilands (2009) points out, the promise of parks as a source of economic growth was faltering. According to the author, the conservative government of Brian Mulroney did not support the idea of public spending as an aid to regional integration, or wilderness as an ideological value for national unity. Parks Canada underwent several re-organisations and transfers from one

department to the other (Panel on the Ecological Integrity, 2000). Rather than being viewed as a public good, parks were seen as businesses that should finance themselves through user and concession fees, with many services being outsourced to private companies (*ibid*). A funding shortfall resulted in limited resources for research, restoration, and public environmental education. The interpretation program was almost withdrawn (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2009; Panel on the Ecological Integrity, 2000) and park infrastructure began to deteriorate. Even if parks territory was set aside from commercial exploitation, other than tourism, infrastructure began to decay steadily, the conservation and interpretive budget shrank, and visitors were no longer as compelled to travel to parks, decreasing visitation numbers significantly. In addition, given the decline in visitation to national parks, the Park agency encountered the challenge of maintaining their political relevance and representing the interests of Canadians during the early 2000s (Jager et al., 2006).

Currently, national parks remain Canada's most significant tourist attractions (Needham et al., 2016). In the 2019-2020 period, national parks and historic sites managed by Parks Canada received 24.8 million visits (Parks Canada Agency, 2020). National parks alone received 16.1 million visits, contributing more than $3 billion to the gross domestic product (Parks Canada Agency, 2021b). In recent decades, Parks Canada has been focusing on diversifying park visitorship by encouraging new Canadians to integrate with nature, promoting a vital, economically productive, and multicultural Canadian public (Lunstrum, 2020). Various approaches to integrating and promoting active citizenship include programming such as a free annual entry pass for every new permanent resident or citizen and Learn to Camp, which seeks to introduce "first-time campers to the Canadian camping experience" (Parks Canada Agency & MEC, 2013) As I examine further in chapter 7, the political agenda is shifting towards approaches of inclusion and integration in Canadian national parks.

4.4 Introducing the study sites.

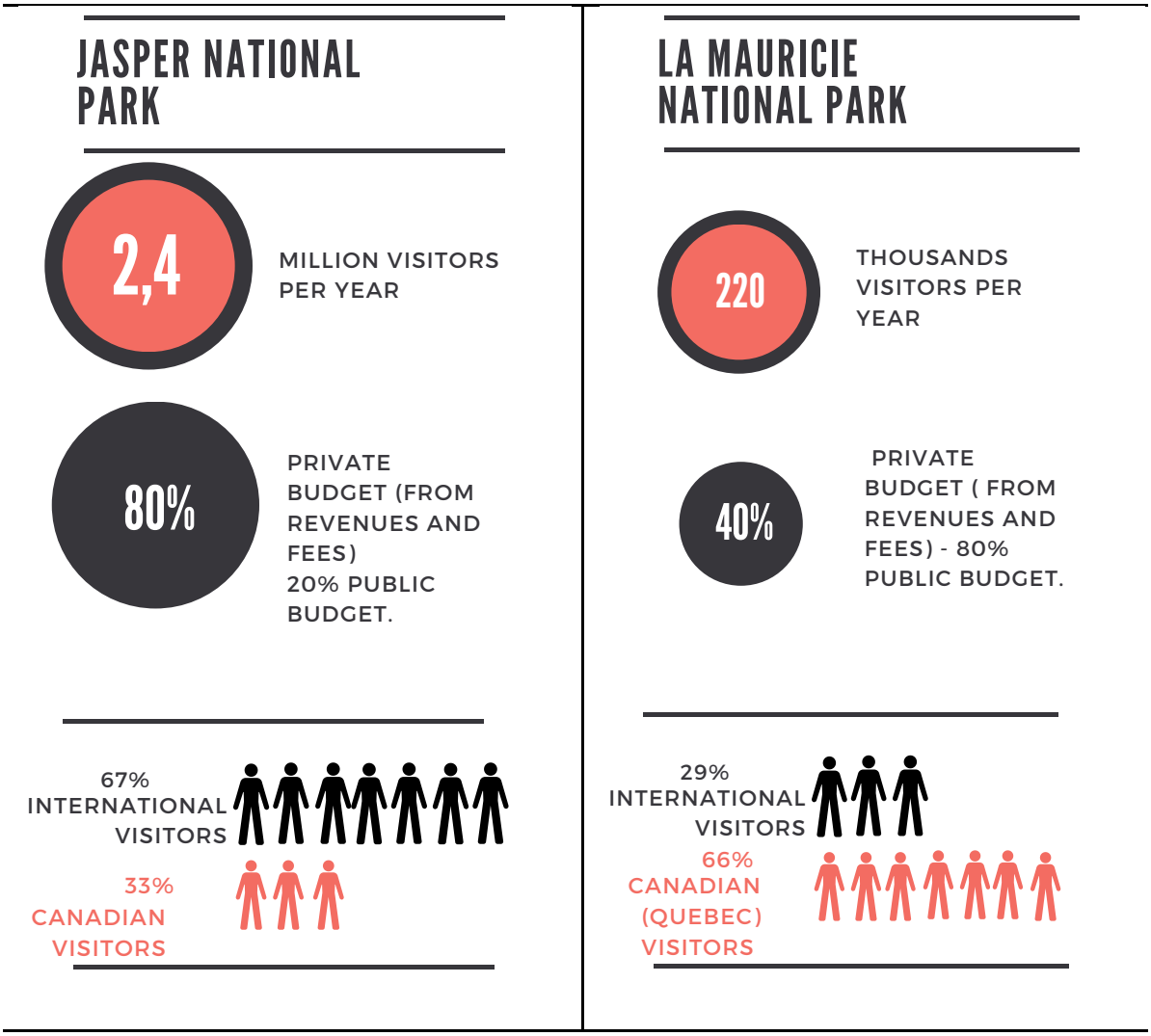
The evolving approaches of nation building, access, and science discussed above are reflected in different ways in the history of the different parks in Canada. Together, the agency manages (or in some cases co-manage with Indigenous peoples) 37 national parks, and 10 national park reserves, 1 national urban park, 171 historic sites, and 4 national marine conservation areas. This represents 450,000 km^2 of territory under Parks Canada control including 7,000 km of trails and more than 12,000 campsites with 850,000 occupied nights per year (Duclos, 2018). The 2023-24 Departmental Plan includes a budget of $1.2 million for the operation of these sites, involving the management of 25 million person-visits parks and historic sites per year (Parks Canada Agency, 2022d).

Canada's national parks attract more than 16 million visitors[5] annually, making them the primary tourist destination in the country. Within the system, some parks feature a greater presence of private tourism services, including hotels and ski centers. This is evident in places like Banff and Jasper, which also experience substantial visitation. While the majority of parks are managed by the state and visitors are mostly local residents, one fifth of overall visitors are international and half of them choose to visit only three parks: Banff (25%), Jasper (14%), and Pacific Rim (7%) (The Outspan Group, 2011). Although the original plan for the national park system included provisions for private investment for tourism development, over the years the parks have been predominantly managed by the state. In fact, the government funds 80% of visitors' experiences, and the management of services is largely under government control. This is significant because organizing and governing public spaces, including financing access, play a role in shaping how these spaces include or exclude people and activities.

[5] As mentioned in the previous paragraph, 25 million is the total number of visits for the overall organization, including historical monuments.

As a form of contextualizing the case studies of this research, namely Jasper and La Mauricie, I introduce the number of visits, origin stay, and composition of budget for both locations in the following figure:

Figure 2. Case studies: visitors access, profile and revenues



As I elaborate in the subsequent subsections, the case studies in this research encompasses two distinct cases. In the case of Jasper, it receives approximately 2.4 million visitors annually, with a majority of them being international visitors. Consequently,

due to the high demand, 80% of the park's revenue is derived from visitor expenditures such as entrance and camping fees. On the other hand, La Mauricie represents a typical case among many other parks in the Canadian system, where visitation primarily consists of local residents. Approximately 66% of the park's visitors come from the surrounding areas in the province, contributing to 20% of the overall management of visitation in the park. In what follows, I present a more detailed portrait of each park.

4.4.1 Jasper national park

As the second most visited park in Canada and a large tourist attraction, Jasper embodies a fascinating blend of ideas regarding conservation, visitation, and tourism. Jasper National Park, located in the province of Alberta, is the largest park in the Canadian Rocky Mountains spanning almost 11,000 km^2 (Parks Canada Agency, 2022e). For many, it is one of Canada's jewels (Taylor, 2009), a symbol of Canadian identity (eg MacLaren, 1999), and is the second most popular park after Banff. Jasper, established in 1907 after Banff, is the second oldest park in Canada and one of the few in which visitors are primarily international tourists. Jasper has the largest camping services in the overall parks system, and visitor experiences are funded mostly through revenues coming from entrance fees, concessions, licenses, and permits. Jasper is one of seven national parks with villages within its borders.

Much has been written about the Canadian Rockies, including Jasper and Banff national parks and how they came to be one the most well-known and most touristic destinations in Canada. Several novels have been written about Jasper (eg. Wharton, 1995), painters such as Paul Kane from the Group of Seven (Cronin, 2010) spent time there painting, and people like Mary Vaux, a botanist and climber, wrote and photographed Jasper extensively in the early 1900. Biologists, climbers, geologists, anthropologists, geographers, writers, painters, and photographers have registered their experiences in this valley and how it has been transformed since its creation (Cronin, 2010; MacLaren, 1999; Taylor, 2009).

Jasper is part of the Canadian Rocky Mountain Parks, recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site “because of its outstanding scenic natural features, landscapes and views for which they are renowned” (UNESCO, 2023, par. 4). This recognition does not acknowledge the historical process through which this landscape was produced by settlers. The park history is tied to the fur trade; beyond that, national transportation corridors and the early development of tourism were central to the formation of the national park. As such, the park is also a symbol of westward conquest and settler occupation.

As a result of its historical path and related tourism expansion, according to an operational manager, the park manages infrastructure and assets[6] worth 1 billion dollars. As stated in a report from Environment Canada (1986), most of the infrastructure was built in the 1960s and 1970s. As the same manager pointed out, this is the park with the most infrastructure in Canada including highways, railways, and roads, as well as the biggest campground in Canada’s Park system known as Whistler that hosts 860 sites (see figure 3). The entire park has 2500 campsites. For a Jasper manager, “Whistler is kind of a small city; on busy days, it can have probably three to five thousand people.” As another manager highlighted, “we have the TransCanada passing through, a pipeline, more than 2.5 million visitors coming to the Jasper, tons of visitors, businesses within the boundary of the park…”. However, as acknowledge by the Draft Management Plan, the high level of transit both on the roads and railways, coupled with the significant presence of built infrastructures and the rising number of visitors, continue to pose significant threats to wildlife including stress and mortality (Parks Canada Agency, 2021a).

[6] Assets, according to the government of Canada are properties, buildings, also including highways, cars, trucks, boats.

Figure 3. Jasper National Park

Source of data: ESRI online

Author: Alejandra Uribe.

When examining what draws people to Jasper, according to C it is the scenery; 78% of visitors come to drive along the road and maybe walk a short trail. They also visit the park to see wildlife and very few go further into the backcountry. However, one cannot separate the strong historical values of the park's formation process from its meaning for the Canadian settler society. According to C, Jasper is very symbolic for Canadians, an idea that was echoed in most of my interviewees. Within the park, there are five national historic sites and 37 federally listed heritage buildings. There are also the vestiges of the fur trade troops that crossed the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean.

Jasper is among the seven parks in Canada that has a town within its boundaries. This town is home to 4,600 residents and serves as the central hub for park visitors. The governance of Jasper's town is unusual; Parks Canada and the municipality have distinct functions, yet Parks Canada remains a central player in controlling and managing the town. The federal government holds ownership of the land, which is administered by Parks Canada, encompassing planning, building permits, development, and environmental issues. Additionally, the Municipality of Jasper, established in 2001, has fewer responsibilities compared to municipalities elsewhere. It provides community services such as utilities and social services, including the library and a swimming pool. Parks Canada also control who can live in Jasper, residents must have a "need to reside," which is granted only for people who have a job within the park, own a business within the park, or who are married to someone who does. The idea is to prevent wealthy people or secondary homeowners from having access to the limited urban land available. However, this approach creates tensions within the community, as having worked or lived there in the past does not guarantee the ability to continue residing there.

The town also offers a range of commercial activities, including a significant private tourism sector. According to Z, another manager, Parks Canada has issued 500 business licenses, with 300 of them located in the town of Jasper, including 140 Airbnb listings. For instance, Tourism Jasper, the destination marketing organization, has 70 businesses as members, ranging from tourist guides to Pursuit, the largest private operator in the area.

Pursuit currently manages eight hotels, five attractions, and the Fairmont Lodge within the park.

The park is located in Treaty 6 and Treaty 8 lands, as well as the traditional lands of the Anishinabe, Aseniwuche Winewak, Dene-zaa, Nêhiyawak, Secwépemc, Stoney Nakoda, Mountain Métis, and Métis. These peoples today are represented in 26 Indigenous groups which, as outlined in the park's Draft Management plan, continue to advocate for increased engagement in park management and operations. These groups assert that there is minimal integration of traditional knowledge in park monitoring and project impact assessments. Additionally, as stated in the same document, the utilization of Indigenous languages in park signs, interpretive panels, and publications remains limited. Alongside these concerns, Indigenous groups call for improved access to traditional lands, the integration of traditional knowledge and languages within the park, and the cultivation of economic opportunities and capacity-building for local Indigenous communities (Parks Canada Agency, 2021a)

4.4.2 La Mauricie National Park

La Mauricie national park is located in Quebec province, halfway between Quebec City and Montréal, 15 km northwest of Shawinigan, and 45 km north of Trois-Rivières, as shown in figure 4. It was established in 1970 and represents a distinct case. It is twenty times smaller than Jasper, and its visitation mainly involves visitors from local areas as well as Trois-Rivières, Montreal and Quebec.

Figure 4. La Mauricie geographical context

Source: Extracted from the Management Plan (2022:2)

According to an article published in *Le Nouvelliste* in 1970, a local newspaper, the creation of the park happened following intense negotiations by local organizations, particularly the Shawinigan committee, who saw the park's creation as a catalyst for economic revitalization (Brosseau, 1970). At the time, for local politicians and parks promoters, the idea of being in the close proximity of big cities was envisioned as the main factor that could attract visitors and as such La Mauricie was sought to become one of the most popular parks in Canada (*ibid*). The idea was to protect wildlife and to promote a tourism destination. As a member of the Quebec Parliament indicated, "the creation of this park will contribute to elevating tourism to the forefront of Quebec industries" (*ibid*: 3). Following the decline of the lumber industry in the La Mauricie region, a vision for a recreational park was conceived by the local residents of Shawinigan-Grand-Mère. This

vision was subsequently embraced by both federal and provincial governments as a means to stimulate economic activities (Brosseau, 1970). The same article reported that the liberal government's plan to transfer provincial land to the federal government for the park's creation garnered support from Quebec deputies, politicians, and local municipalities (*ibid*). This marked the second park established in Quebec, following Forillon National Park, established a few months earlier.

During this time, Jean Chrétien, a Shawinigan resident (and later Prime Minister) assumed responsibility for the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development in 1966, charged with expanding national parks and historical sites. Chrétien believed that creating a federal national park could strengthen the relationship between Quebec and the federal government while fostering economic development. In line with this, he stated at Mauricie,

> I don't need to convince you of the merits of conservation and the joys of outdoor recreation. The Mauricie region has just as many picturesque landscapes as the most beautiful national parks that I have visited. [There is] no need also to insist on the economic advantages that the whole Mauricie region would gain from the creation of a national park, as well as from its association with the system of Canadian National Parks.... As in the case of Kootenay, Kejimkujik, Yoho, Banff, Jasper and all the others, your national park will celebrate the beauty and grandeur of our country (as cited by Craig-Dupont, 2011: 180)

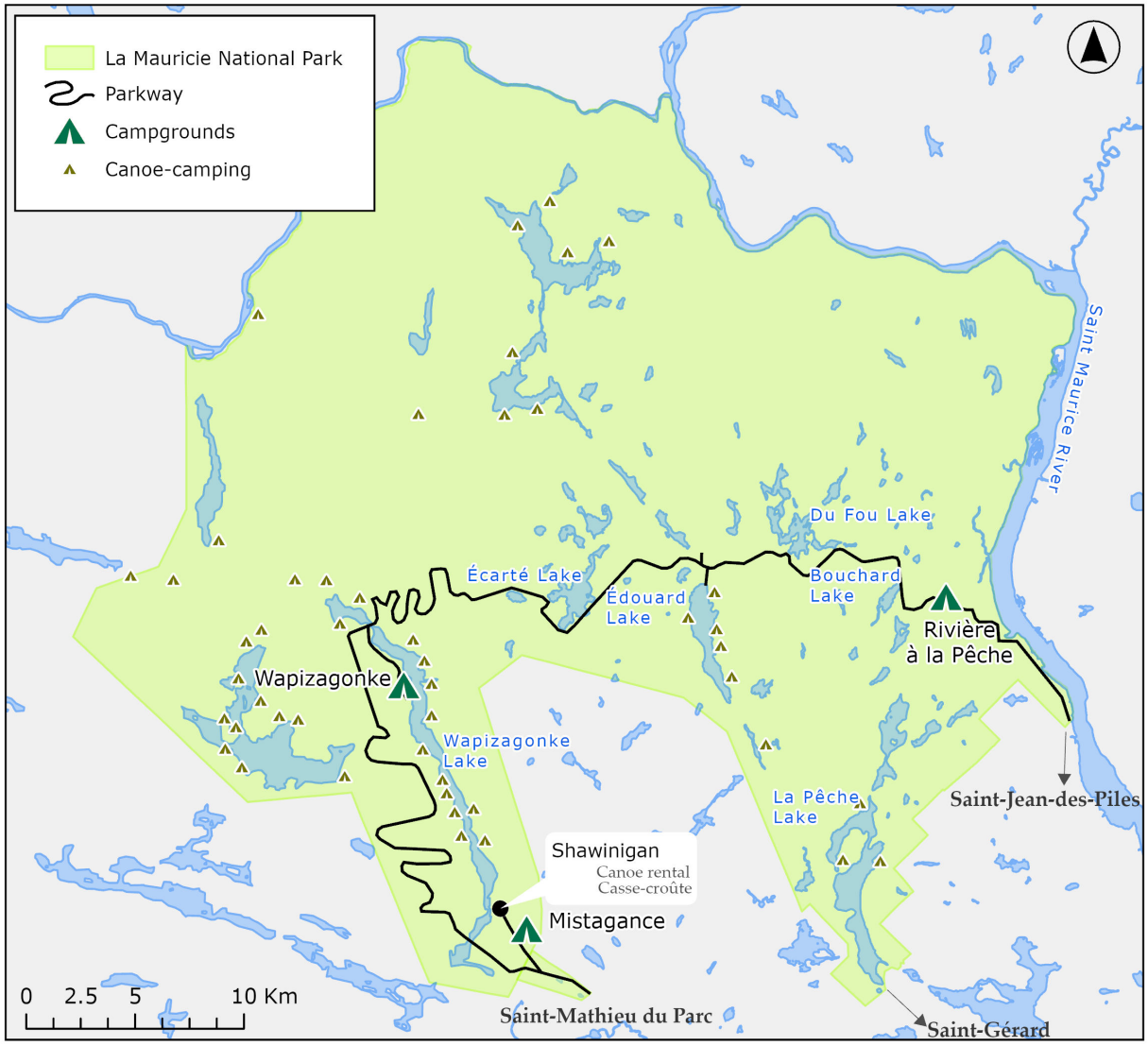
The intricate negotiation process didn't involve direct expropriation by the Canadian government but rather saw Quebec cede lands to the federal government to create the park. In turn, the federal government granted Quebec administrative control of federal lands in Cap Tourmente for a hydroelectric project managed by Hydro-Québec (Brosseau, 1970). The complex narrative layers of the territory and its political and economic histories now constitute a part of the cultural landscape of the park.

Prior to the establishment of the park, two significant stories unfolded within its territory: the logging industry and fishing and hunting clubs. For centuries, trees had been harvested for timber exploitation. I expand much more on this in chapter five. Through the constructing of roads, the forestry industry also facilitated access to the land for hunters and fishermen, who began exploiting its game and fish resources in the early 20th century.

Consequently, members of hunting and fishing clubs had cottages in what is today the park. Shawinigan was the first private club to be established in the area in 1883, after which several private hunting and fishing clubs took up extensive portions of the land. According to Craig-Dupont (2011), by the end of 1960s, 450 private clubs were present in the region and sixteen of them occupied lands that would become the park. Hunters and fishermen were active in the region at the moment of the creation of the park, and still maintain historical ties with the territory and recreational fishing. As stated by Craig-Dupont (2011), although experiencing a decline by the end of the 1950s due to a notable economic depression, industrial and recreational activities were still prevalent in the Mauricie landscape when the national park was established. These clubs, as I elaborate in chapter five, transformed lakes by introducing dozens of additional fish species. Consequently, both forest and lake ecosystems underwent significant modifications. This was evident at the moment of the park's creation, as the first master plan of La Mauricie National Park stated in 1971 that "visitors strolling through paths might have the impression that the forest is considerably disturbed, even dilapidated, for he will have access only to the areas more recently affected by logging” (as cited by Craid-Dupont, 2011: 185).

Today, La Mauricie is representative of a park that has developed a recreational offering for local residents, who visit the park for daily visits, camping, canoe-camping, and increasingly for motor road trips, as shown in figure 5.

Figure 5. La Mauricie National Park



Source of data: ESRI Online. Author: Alejandra Uribe.

Visitors remain mostly from Quebec, and often, as a manager highlighted, the connection between visitors and the park is often transmitted from one generation to the next. For some, there are still ties with the old hunting and fishing clubs that were in the territory prior to the creation of the park. Visitors come every year in increasing numbers, growing at an average of 1 or 2 percent per year.

When I asked managers about the significance of La Mauricie, their opinions and perspectives varied based on their positions. According to the resource conservation team, the park is crucial because it safeguards "the Canadian shield, the typical landscapes of the Canadian mountains." In contrast, the visitor experience manager emphasized its importance as an economic driver, an idea that has persisted since the park's establishment. Even if the idea of economic development is strong in La Mauricie, the privatization of park services remains limited as I explain further in chapter 6. Together with other actors, the park organizes several events, which serve as tourism-oriented activities to draw more visitors to the region. The two most important are a cycling race called "*Défi du parc*" in late summer and the " *Défis nordiques*" for winter sports. Accordingly, the emphasis on economic development remains strong in both operational practices and strategic planning. This planning approach received support and encouragement from local municipalities. The Mayor of Grand Piles, a village situated to the southeast of the park, and the municipal representatives of St. Mathieu du Parc, located to the south of the park, both asserted that the park should actively seek additional opportunities to attract visitors.

4.5 Chapter conclusions

In this chapter, I have traced the evolving political contexts of national parks, and how these socio-ecological projects have been implemented differently in different places. These ideas move from the international level to a national context with the two cases of Jasper and La Mauricie. Accordingly, I introduced the evolving approaches for park management in Canada and the two study cases of this research. In so doing, I have highlighted the shifting set of political, social, and economic logics in each context.

The global histories of parks, both north and south, the international institutions that have framed concepts and ideas, and the rationales behind the development of national parks in terms of nation building, ideas about nature, and citizenship are important stories to tell in order to understand contemporary articulations of the state, market, and citizenship in national parks. As I explore in Chapters 5 through 7, these historical geographies are

interwoven with the state’s scientific, economic, and social ideas associated with access in national parks.

Canada has played a strategic role internationally in the development of ideas about national parks. Throughout history, Canada has influenced international organizations' ideas regarding tourism, recreation, protected area categories, and also in relationship to ideas of ecological management such as the concept of ecological integrity. Placing Canada on the international stage opens a door to understanding why Canada is unique and an interesting case to explore. The study of Canada, as developed through this research, reveals a powerful case of park creation and expansion in the nation-building process. Strategically configured parks have shaped ideas of nature and citizenship. As argued in this thesis, Canada's case has also been one of privilege when examined at the international scale. Since the 1930s, Canada has envisioned parks as sources of enjoyment and leisure opportunities for its population. Moreover, it has been a state-funded project with shifting priorities throughout history. These priorities and the scale of political and scientific intervention are reflected differently in Jasper and La Mauricie. The former has been strategic in shaping Canada's nature imagery, while the latter has served as a recreational hub for the local population and an iconic representation of evolving conservation strategies. I disentangle these ideas more deeply in the three following chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter 5. Governing nature: Ecological integrity scientific transformation, and restoration

In the previous chapter, I provided an overview of the historical evolution of ideas of protected areas, particularly of national parks. I showed the extent to which the concept of national park implies different meanings in different contexts. I pointed out that in the Global North, the concept of park access is promoted for the enjoyment of its citizens, whereas in the South, access is restricted to or promoted for international tourists as part of economic development strategies. I introduced Canada's role internationally as well as the evolving notions of nature that have historically shaped the Canadian park system. These ideas form the foundation of current management approaches in national parks such as La Mauricie and Jasper. Accordingly, in this chapter, I explore the various scientific perspectives and management practices in Canada's park system. In so doing, I focus on the concept of ecological integrity and the evolving management practices of trees and fish in the two case studies. By framing this chapter around scientific approaches to conservation, I aim to show the evolving perspectives of nature that shape the scientific governance of the territories of national parks. Specifically, I investigate how those evolving ideas of intervening in nature are being reimagined and transformed today under the paradigm of ecological integrity.

Ecological integrity generally refers to the ability of an ecosystem to support and maintain its structure, function, and biodiversity over time (Bridgewater et al., 2015). It seeks to highlight an ecosystem's capacity to resist and recover from disturbances. For decades, the idea of ecological integrity has been a crucial aspect of biodiversity conservation practices, particularly in protected areas, and is currently the central concept guiding their scientific management. In Canada, maintaining ecological integrity has been a key priority in park management since the year 2000. Historically, however, the scientific ideas underpinning national park management have evolved in complex ways. Managers have shifted their approaches and practices with regards to ecological management, from using science to creating recreational landscapes, or "playgrounds" as they were once

called, for an upper-middle class audience to ecological restoration. In recent times, there has been a renewed focus on restoring ecological integrity following capitalist-driven transformations and extraction within parks territories.

To illustrate these shifting approaches, I trace the path of interventions and scientific management of trees and fish in Jasper and La Mauricie national parks. By highlighting interventions and the transformation of ecosystems in national parks, I aim to shed light on ongoing processes of nature restoration. These processes represent a challenge for park governance: restoring territories marked by both past exploitative practices and historic forms of scientific intervention requires decades of management and budgeting. Somewhat ironically, the outcomes of these ecological transformations are only really visible to managers and scientists; all these efforts remain opaque to visitors or residents.

In his book *Nature's Metropolis*, William Cronon (1992) mobilizes the concept of "first nature" to refer to ecological relations that encompass human beings and "second nature" to refer to capitalist transformations of the environment. Tsing (2015) takes these ideas a step further by introducing "third nature" to refer to what manages to live despite capitalism. I propose to extend this notion by introducing a "fourth nature," which describes the natural environments that have been transformed and extracted through capitalist extractions and then though scientific management restored to what scientists call ecological integrity.

This chapter has four sections. First, I examine how the concept of ecological integrity has become central to conservation management at the international scale. Second, I explore the institutionalization and broadening of ecological integrity as a mandate in Canada. Third, I illustrate shifting practices and politics in the management of trees and fish in Jasper and La Mauricie national parks. These narratives are based on semi-structured interviews with managers, scientists, and park officials, and also supported by archival films materials, secondary data, and field observations. Finally, I bring together these changing ecologies to argue that the current approach, which I refer to as "fourth

natures," involves the restoration of what remains after exploitation for commodity extraction or the transformation of landscapes for recreational purposes.

5.1 Rise of the idea of ecological integrity

The concept of ecological integrity arose in response to capitalist extractions leading to biodiversity loss, species extinction, and ecosystem degradation. It represents the evolution of scientific ideas that guide interventions for biodiversity conservation (Woodley, 2010). Furthermore, it is the mainstream scientific concept for conservation of protected areas' ecosystems. Aldo Leopold's work "Land Ethic" in which he writes "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (1949: 224-25) is often attributed as the origin of the term. According to Stephen Woodley, a senior advisor at the IUCN and former Parks Canada scientist, "the concept of ecological integrity was added to the lexicon of Parks Canada management in the 1980s, as a replacement to the idea of 'natural' (2010: 151). Woodley played a key role in adapting the term to the management of protected areas, developing an index of ecological integrity that could be measured and tracked over time. K, a former Parks Canada scientific chief, explained to me that "the term ecological integrity applies to managing ecosystems (…) it is some kind of conceptual framework to describe ecosystem health." Overall, the concept of "ecological integrity" should be considered as a combination of political, technical, scientific, and rational elements, with the goal of maintaining and/or restoring Nature.

Since the late 1990s, there has been a flourishing body of literature discussing the different implications of ecological integrity in policy and practice. James R. Karr, a professor from the University of Washington, who was pivotal to the conceptualization and application of this term to watersheds, defines it as "an unimpaired condition or the quality or state of being complete and undivided; it implies correspondence with some original condition" (1996:100-1). Many definitions of ecological integrity contain common features such as naturalness, wholeness, continuity, and unity through time (Rohwer & Marris, 2021). As such, it presents a permanent paradox; it seeks to reach a certain

condition of wholeness. Ecosystems, however, are constantly undergoing change. As Rohwer and Marris point out (2021: 3), “ecosystems are always changing, there is no obvious scientific reason why one moment in time has 'integrity' and another does not.” For the authors, ecosystems should not be valuable because they have integrity, “[t]hey are valuable because they are diverse, because they are complex, and because they are dynamic” (*ibid*: 11).

The idea of ecological integrity expanded rapidly from North American to the global scale and has been adopted in legislation and international agreements, including the landmark 1992 Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development. More recently, during the Biodiversity COP 15 in 2022, members agreed on the Global Biodiversity Framework in order to reduce the loss of areas of high biodiversity and ecological integrity and to substantially increase the area of natural ecosystems by 2050.

Despite its generalization, ecological integrity is fundamentally a contradictory term as it mobilizes an idea of nature without humans. According to Woodley (2010: 153), "ecosystems with integrity contain native biodiversity, by definition. Ecosystems with integrity also have resilience." This implies that achieving ecological integrity requires a particular form of human intervention and control of non-human species. However, the conceptualization of ecological integrity fails to acknowledge the past transformations of the environment caused by humans, as well as human scientific interventions or any other form of human agency.

For park scientists, maintaining ecological integrity means returning to an idealized version of the past. Thus, scientific practice and ideals continue to perpetuate the colonial myth of a pristine past. As Rohwer and Marris (2021) highlight within the ecological integrity idea, the ecological state of pre-European settlement is considered “natural” or “pristine.” Indigenous peoples' transformation of territories was considered minimal, partly due to lack of knowledge and partly due to racism. However, as the authors point out, Indigenous peoples have,

> altered the ranges of species, controlled populations of game animals by hunting, influenced the evolution of species through domestication and semi-domestication, directly propagated favored plants in key locations, and radically altered and controlled fire regimes in many places across the world, structuring entire ecosystems (*ibid*: 4).

The idea of ecological integrity also reinforces the binary division between humans and non-humans, proposing that nature should be protected and separated from people. For example, as K explained to me:

> If you're going to manage a protected area and we know that the definition of a protected area, the global one, that the IUCN says that these places are there for the protection of nature. That's the priority, they're not for people, they are for the protection of nature.

Furthermore, according to K, "under an ecological integrity approach human aren't required for ecological integrity but neither do they have to destroy ecological integrity." Nonetheless, in reality, the intervention of humans for restoration is a key component of ecological integrity.

My goal is to comprehend how the idea of ecological integrity influences the scientific management of national parks in Canada by recognizing these key ideas and their contradictions. I seek to highlight the ways in which park governance relies on a complex network of socio-ecological relationships in which humans exploit and transform landscapes, and subsequently strive to restore ecosystems in the face of ecological vulnerability.

5.2 Expansion of the notion of ecological integrity in Canada

Using the idea of ecological integrity, one can better understand, analyze, and critically interrogate the concept of Nature in Canada's National Parks. Ecological integrity first emerged in regulation in 1979 thorough the Parks Canada policy which brought together

the ideas of ecological and historical integrity. Thus, with its dual mandates for managing national parks and historic monuments, Parks Canada places the concept of “integrity” at the core of its management approaches for both ecosystems and cultural historical heritage sites. As highlighted on the Parks Canada website (2022a: par. 1):

> Ecological integrity is a cornerstone of Parks Canada's mandate to protect and promote significant examples of Canada's natural heritage. It is the first priority in the maintenance of Canada's National Parks. Where Parks Canada is responsible for significant examples of Canada's cultural heritage, the protection of commemorative integrity is also a key priority.

Integrity is used as a synonym for a preferred historical state of an ecosystem or of a monument that reflects the original features or the historical context in which they were created (Parks Canada Agency, 2022a). However, the way we see and interpret historical integrity also evolves with time. The following table illustrates the shifts in regulations over time, highlighting the growing emphasis placed on ecological integrity in the management of national parks.

Table 5. Ecological Integrity in Canada’s National Park’s regulations

Year	**Regulation**	***Text***
1979	Parks Canada Policy	*When Protecting Natural and Cultural Resources: Ecological and historical integrity are Parks Canada’s first considerations and must be regarded as prerequisites against use. Protection of heritage resources is fundamental to their use and enjoyment by present and future generations.*
1988	National Parks Act Amendments	*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.*
1994	Parks Canada, Guiding Principles and Operational Policies	*Protecting ecological integrity and ensuring commemorative integrity take precedence in acquiring, managing, and administering heritage places and programs. In every application of policy, this guiding principle is paramount. The integrity of natural and cultural heritage is maintained by striving to ensure that management decisions affecting these special*

		places are made on sound cultural resource management and ecosystem-based management practices.
1998	Parks Canada Agency Act	*Whereas it is in the national interest...to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of national parks ... to maintain ecological and commemorative integrity as a prerequisite to the use of national parks and national historic sites, and... to manage visitor use and tourism to ensure both the maintenance of ecological and commemorative integrity and a quality experience in such heritage and natural areas for this and future generations.*
2000	*Canada National Parks Act*	*Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering **all aspects** of the management of parks.*

Adapted from: Government of Canada (2000:1).

In 1994, the concept of commemorative integrity arose (see table 5) in Parks Canada regulations, meaning the "health and wholeness of a national historic site" (2022: par. 1). In other words, for the agency, a national historic site possesses commemorative integrity when its resources, representing its importance or reasons for designation, remain unimpaired and not under threat (*ibid*). Parks Canada's historic sites, with their emphasis on commemorative integrity, emphasize the persistent impact of colonial legacies in perpetuating settlers' histories, powers, and narratives.

After two decades of regulations in different documents (as illustrated in table 5), the concept gained legal status with the National Parks Act of 2000. The Canada National Parks Act (2023:1), defines ecological integrity within a national park as, "a condition that is determined to be characteristic of its natural region and likely to persist, including abiotic components and the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes." With the National Park Act, historical and commemorative integrity disappears from Parks Canada normative language but remains in some documents and website information (e.g. Parks Canada Agency, 2022).

Bringing the concept of ecological integrity to regulation and legislation responded to calls from scientists and environmental groups to increase measures to protect nature (eg. Woodley, 2010). Before the emergence of the notion of ecological integrity, Parks Canada managers and wardens had already implemented various approaches to maintain, intervene, and manipulate Nature. These perspectives included killing carnivorous, introducing stocked fish, domesticating bears, and suppressing fires. However, the motivation behind these management practices were based on different logics. For example, L, a scientist from the national office, referred to the 1960s and 1970s to explain that "we managed for tourism values before... we shot cougars and wolves in Banff and Jasper [national parks] so that there would be more animals for tourists to see."

Under an ecological integrity paradigm, scientists must try to reach “integrity.” As Woodley elucidates, "under an ecological integrity framework, having the top end of that trophic structure intact is fundamental to good management. It provides a reason to restore these trophic levels, and a reason to restore fire” (pers. communication). Thus, ecological integrity becomes the main grammar to implement a diversity of strategies to manage ecosystems and to seek to restore the trophic levels. In other words, initially the goal was to change the predator-prey relationship by reducing, for example, predators’ access to caribou habitat or reintroducing elk and bison. Practices emanating from an ecological integrity framework also called for the reintroduction of controlled fires in the landscapes.

In 2000, the Panel on the Ecological Integrity (from now on, the EI Panel) was put in place after multiple reports from the scientific community and NGOs expressed concerns that commercial development mainly for tourism and recreation was threatening the ecological integrity of national parks (EI Panel, 2000a; Kopas, 2007). The EI Panel was composed of seven members with scientific and resource management backgrounds, who concluded that 38 out of 39 of Canada's established national parks at the time were facing significant ecological disturbances, prompting a general alarm. Among the 127 recommendations, the EI Panel advised Parks Canada to take a science-based approach to ecological monitoring and prioritize ecological integrity in managing national parks. Additionally, they urged the government to commit to expanding Canada's protected

areas network, to improve relationships with Indigenous peoples, and to shift Parks Canada's language from a business focus to one that emphasized conservation and ecological integrity. These concerns were reflected in the Parks Canada Agency Act of 2000, which made ecological integrity a cornerstone principle for parks management.

Following the EI panel, Parks Canada implemented a scientific monitoring system that deploys metrics and reporting procedures to evaluate various ecological criteria, such as wildlife population size, estimates of plant productivity, water quality, and the degree of invasive species (Canada, 2022b). The data is collected from a variety of sources, including on-the-ground field sampling, satellite imagery, specialists' criteria from academic and government representatives, as well as Indigenous traditional knowledge (*ibid*).

The control and monitoring of Nature has growing political implications. Every two years, a report is submitted to Parliament to inform its members whether the ecological integrity of parks has been maintained, degraded, or improved. The latest report, for example, indicates 59% of park ecosystems are stable, 20% are improving, while 21% are declining (Canada, 2022b). In comparing 2021 with 2022, the numbers indicate that ecosystems in decline have increased from 18% to 21%, while the percentage of stable ecosystems has gone from 69% to 58%. For this study I couldn't find information on monitoring park ecosystems over a broader time scale.

Nonetheless, the number of species at risk continues to rise, despite different actions put in place after the enactment of the Species at Risk Act (SARA) in 2002 (Canada, 2019). In a recent report, scientists from federal, provincial, and territorial governments warned that over 2,000 species in Canada are at high risk of extinction (Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council, 2022). According to the SARA, Parks Canada is responsible for protecting species at risk on lands and waters managed by the agency, and for leading recovery efforts for those found within Parks Canada-administered areas. Furthermore, Parks Canada states that it "currently manages close to 265,000 square kilometres of land that is home to approximately half of the species at risk currently listed

in Canada!" (Parks Canada Agency, 2022e: par. 2). However, management of vulnerable ecosystems and species in Canadian parks has not been sufficient to minimize the risk of extinction for certain species. For example, T, a scientist from the National Office explains that the caribou population has disappeared in Banff and in Jasper the population is so small that they cannot recover on their own. Other example are grizzly bears that are struggling to survive in Jasper. T explains that wildlife management practices in the early 1900s disrupted elk and wolf populations, impacting caribou. After reintroducing elk in 1920 and culling wolves, the elk population thrived until wolf control ended in 1959. With wolves multiplying, caribou faced increased predation, leading to a substantial decline in their population, more significant than that of elk. To face these challenges, managers construct fences and other infrastructure to maintain ecosystem functionality including overpasses and underpasses so that animals can traverse the Trans-Canada highway. In other words, they are constructing this infrastructure to allow the transit of non-human species in territories that are bisected by roads, highways, and railways. However, the Auditor General of Canada recently concluded that Parks Canada, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada are not doing enough to prevent extinction and that conservation and recovery measures are needed to track and demonstrate progress in these areas (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2022).

Despite the overall importance accorded to ecological integrity, the monitoring and restoration of ecosystems has declined in Canada's national parks. This can be attributed to fluctuating budgets over the past decades, with severe cuts taking place during Jean Chrétien's liberal government in 1997 (Kopas, 2007) and then once again, significant budget cuts with Stephen Harper's conservative government in 2012 (Youdelis, 2018). According to a report from the non-governmental organization the Canadian Parks and Wildlife Society, during that period the Agency significantly reduced its scientific and technical capacity, as well as its interpretation and education programs (CPAWS, 2016).

The ecological restoration program, an initiative funded by the national office, currently allocates $15 million annually to support around 30 projects nationwide. However,

according to L, "[i]t may sound like a substantial amount, but it falls short in addressing ecological vulnerability." The program specifically targets the management of invasive species and the control of hyper-abundant species, as highlighted by L. This, according to L, refers to:

> mostly ungulates that are because of some disruption in the ecosystem lack of predators…have basically exceeded their normal range of population density or distribution, so we have way more white-tailed deer, moose, or other species in some parks, and they are impacting the ecological integrity or species at risk. Basically, they are eating everything...

Currently there is a renewed commitment towards conservation efforts, including the expansion of conservation territories as national parks as well as indigenous-led conservation projects. Canada's current goal is to protect 25% of land and sea by 2050, and 30% by 2030. This expansion is funded by the federal government through the Nature Legacy initiative, with $2.3 billion over five years, starting from the 2021 budget (Canada, 2021).

Despite actions to prevent extinction, to restore ecosystems and to control hyper-abundant species, the place of humans is still not considered as part of the evolving notions of ecological integrity, and furthermore often viewed as a problem. At the National Office of Parks Canada, conflicting positions exist on this issue. Some scientists, such as L, argue that it is time to reinterpret the understanding of ecological integrity and incorporate the perspectives and positions of not only Indigenous people but also neighboring communities, visitors, and managers. In contrast, T, another senior manager, argues that some parks should be reserved solely for conservation and research, while others could be accessible to Canadians, in order to create political and social value that can sustain the work that Parks Canada does.

These conflicting views illustrate the fundamental contradictions related to the place of humans with the natural environment. Ideas of wilderness and pristine nature as areas

free of humans remain powerful and strongly influences conservation discourse and management practices. However, there are now emerging perspectives where scientists, including biologists and ecologists, are beginning to think about socio-natures and to recognize past human involvement in ecosystems as well as ongoing efforts to restore and maintain ecological integrity. However, as I demonstrate in the following sections, reaching state of ideal integrity, or the “original” stage of an ecosystem remains a permanent goal in the efforts to restore ecological integrity at the local level. The goal of finding the original state is problematic, as these landscapes has been shaped by Indigenous peoples, by capitalist exploitation and now exist in ongoing states of change and uncertainty with climate breakdown. Accordingly, in section 5.3, I focus on two geographically distant locations: Jasper and La Mauricie National Parks and follow the management stories of fish and trees and their evolving shifts in scientific paradigms and practices. I share the stories by synthesizing different data, interviews, secondary data, and literatures.

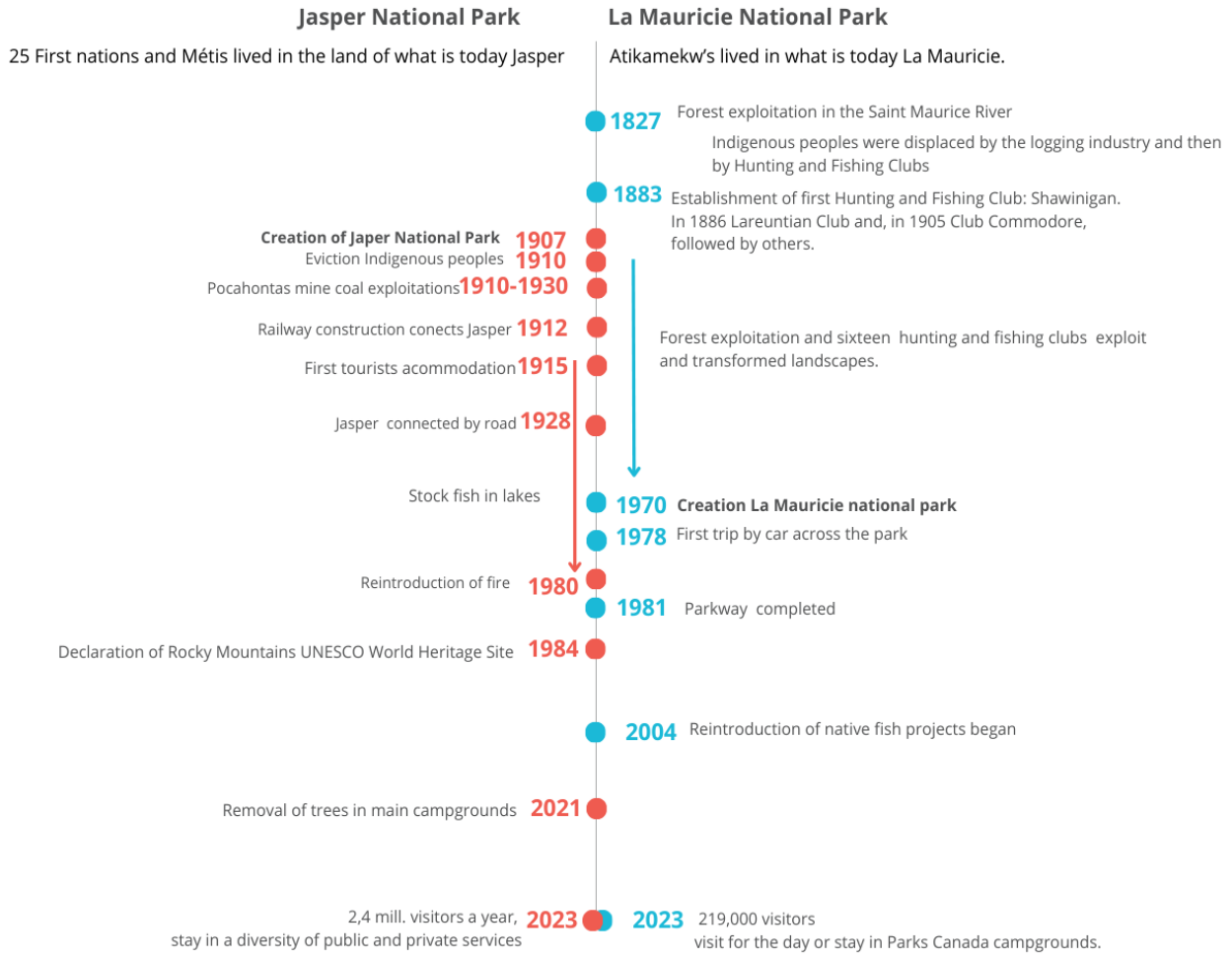
5.3 Evolving management practices of trees and fish

The histories of land use and management practices of fish and trees in Jasper and La Mauricie national parks differ in almost every aspect, except for one: both were transformed into territories for the enjoyment of visitors. This convergence is a fundamental aspect of Canada's parks history, characterized by the state-driven production of landscapes adapted for visitors’ recreation. In this section, I examine the changing approaches to scientific management and intervention through the management of trees and fish in both case studies in order to illustrate how nature has been transformed into landscapes for visitors’ enjoyment. I organize these transformations into three phases. First, the exploitation of the territories as commodities; second, the transformation and intervention of these areas as parks for recreation. Both processes led to a significant decline in species diversity. In a third phase, I describe efforts to restore what is left. In more recent times, scientists and conservation managers

are actively intervening in park territory in order to restore ecological vulnerability where extraction has left off.

A brief timeline that places these transformations in parallel in both cases can be observed in the following figure:

Figure 6. Jasper and La Mauricie histories of exploitation and production of landscapes for visitors.



Sources: Lothian, 1976; Taylor, 2009 and La Mauricie and Jasper official parks' websites.

5.3.1 Trees

Trees are a significant component of park management, through the conservation of forests, and its associated practice of “prescription of fires” or in other words intentional fires to “revitalize their ecological integrity” (Parks Canada Agency, 2021c). Fires have been suppressed and subsequently reintroduced in Canada’s national parks as summarized in figure 6. Thus, the following management stories bring together trees, fires, and beetle infestation in Jasper national park and trees and forest commercial exploitation in La Mauricie National Park. Taken together, I narrate the evolving management practices of trees in both parks, and then I focus on efforts of restoration after forest extractions and capitalist interventions.

Jasper national park. A tiny beetle tells a big story7.

The rocky mountain forests have a long-standing history of fire suppression, a management strategy implemented for the security of visitors and residents. After decades of suppression of fire, the adult trees covering the mountains supported the reproduction of another species, the pine beetle. Despite its diminutive size of 5 mm as adults, the pine beetle is capable of slowly killing thousands of hectares of trees, transforming entire forest ecosystems. As the website of Parks Canada highlights, “while mountain pine beetle are a natural part of the southern Rocky Mountain ecosystem, recent beetle outbreaks are larger than those of the past” (Parks Canada Agency, 2022e: par. 4). Eighty years of fire suppression have made the forests more susceptible to being attacked by these beetles. Accordingly, a large proportion of forest has turned red, an indication of trees that have died due to the beetle infestation. Ironically, in a reverse effect, the red forests now present significant risk of fire. Therefore, the story about the pine beetle illustrates the deep contradictions and the evolving approaches of scientific management that has moved from fire suppression to the reintroduction of fire.

[7] Subtitle borrowed from an interpretative panel in Jasper national park.

These beetles are Indigenous to the mountain area and prefer to live in mature pine trees, boring through the bark and mining the phloem - the layer between the bark and wood of the tree. Once they reach adulthood, they fly to another tree from the top and bring with them a fungus that helps to kill the tree by interrupting the flow of water and nutrients (Management Plan for the Mountain Pine Beetle for Jasper National Park, 2016:7). When driving or walking through Jasper National Park, large patches of dead trees caused by the mountain pine beetle are evident everywhere.

Image 3. Wapiti campground, Jasper national park. Photo by the author, sept. 2021.

At Wapiti campground, in the early fall of 2021, the scene was dominated by a multitude of tree stumps; almost no living trees remained to provide shade or privacy between the camping sites, as can be observed in image 3. Park managers had recently cleared out the majority of the trees as a response to the pine beetle infestation in the summer of 2021. A comparable scene played out in the Whistler campground, where a densely wooded area had undergone significant deforestation (image 4). The reason behind this was to minimize the risk that falling trees might pose to campers. A park warden explained that the removal of mature trees would also provide an opportunity for the forest to recover and regenerate since the pine beetle primarily targets fully grown trees. As the pine beetle infestation primarily targets aging trees, the park would benefit from several decades of

recovery, manager B explains to me. During this time, the forest would have the opportunity to rest and rejuvenate, allowing for the growth of new, healthier trees that could serve as habitats for various species.

As manager B explains,

> Over the last five years we've seen thousands of hectares of forest be killed by the pine beetle, just red dead trees by thousands everywhere. This is a significant concern... it very well may be exacerbated by climate change. We let them [visitors] know that this is because we instituted about 80 years of fire suppression. It is also changing the visual landscape. There used to be fire as a natural part of the landscape; we suppressed it. The issue may be more complex and nuanced, and we cannot solely blame mismanagement of the forest. The drier seasons exacerbate the problem by extending the already long and hot fire seasons, creating a vicious cycle.

Image 4. Whistler campground, Jasper national park. Photo by the author, sept 2021

While fire suppression is still used in populated areas such as Wapiti and Whistler campgrounds to protect the human population, it may make these areas more susceptible to beetle attacks. To manage mountain pine beetle populations, Parks Canada primarily uses prescribed fire (as shown in image 5), as it helps to manage both current and future outbreaks and mimics a natural ecosystem process. This approach helps to reduce the

amount of mountain habitat vulnerable to pine beetle infestation and promote forest diversity by encouraging the growth of tree species that the beetle does not target. Conserving forest ecosystems is about managing and intervening forests, including prescribed fires.

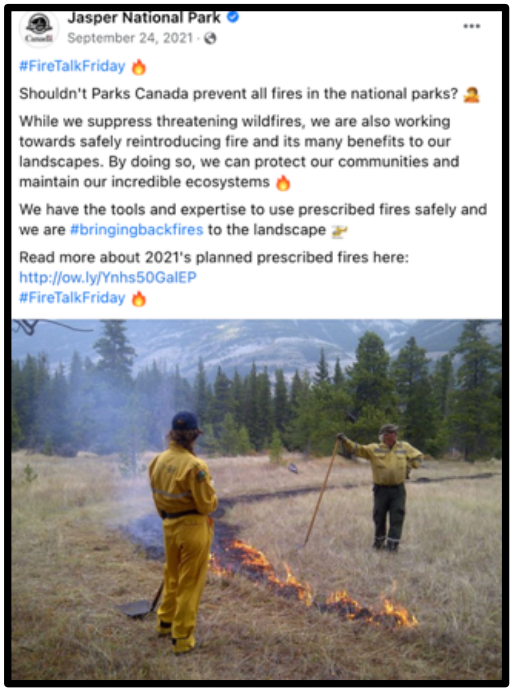


Image 5. Facebook information from Jasper national park, sept 24, 2021. Photo by the author.

The ecological integrity of forest ecosystems requires management and intervention. However, prescribed fires are not always possible due to proximity to human populations. This leaves certain areas vulnerable to beetle attack, which is exacerbated by the extended warm season caused by climate change. This cycle of fire, beetle infestation, and fire again is a significant challenge for forest management not only in Jasper but also elsewhere in the Rocky Mountains.

According to one warden, the fire is a risk for humans but not for animals. They told me that days after the fire they saw bears and elks around the burnt areas. The warden said that “the fire is part of their habitat and is not a risk.” Beyond that, the manager recounts that the grey landscape blanketed with ash was quickly covered with purple flowers.

Floating trees in La Mauricie National Park

In La Mauricie, the story of trees begins with significant commercial exploitation from an epoch before the park was created. The logging industry arrived in the area in the early 19th century and exploited the entire Mauricie territory; every tree within what constitutes the present-day park boundaries was harvested. Trees were logged, thrown into the river, and then floated downstream. The logs were then transported by trains to the British naval market and the lumber industry in the United States (Plante, 2014). Harvesting was selective, with the British market requiring white or red pine of large diameter, free of black knots (*ibid*). By the end of the 19th century, the demand shifted towards wood pulp for paper production, leading to an increase in log driving and floating systems (Foisy, 1981).

During my fieldwork in La Mauricie National Park in October 2021, my first stop was the Interpretation Center, where the exhibition “Drave-dédrave: ramener l’équilibre" (2021) told the story of the degradation and restoration of forest and aquatic ecosystems in the park. The exhibit covered the extraction and flotation system of trees through lakes and rivers, as well as the local disappearance and restoration of a local species of fish, the Eastern brook trout.

In 2004, the park’s scientists and managers began a project to restore degraded lakes by removing logs and structures used for transporting wood. During this process, archaeologists discovered the oldest dam in the park's territory, built around 1827 at Wapizagonke lake. J, a park conservation manager explained that there were around 60 dams that had significantly changed the float patterns and that there were "thousands and thousands of logs that were beached-dumped into the lakes," also changing ecosystem conditions. The landscape was transformed by exploitation, log floating systems, and thousands of logs that are still sunk at the bottom of lakes, changing the forest diversity (as observed in image 6). According to Y, a resource conservation manager, “often, people don't see the degradation of forest and aquatic ecosystems; it is not evident.”

Image 6. Floating logs. Photo: CIEQ, René-Hardy Collection, Fonds Groupe de recherche sur la Mauricie, N60-365 / Courtesy of éditions du Septentrion (extracted from : https://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelle/1730827/25-ans-fin-drave-metier-quebec-pates-papiers

J, an ecologist at the park explained to me that, despite the long human presence in the area, they are striving to restore an ideal of the original ecosystem that was found in the area before the arrival of settlers. I asked why that particular moment was so important if the territory has undergone centuries of human occupation. The area was habited by Algonquins, Iroquois, Abenakis, Hurons, and the Atikamekw before the settlers arrived and were displaced by the forestry industry. According to J,

> with different scientific methods, we are able to draw a rather clear picture of the forests before exploitation on an industrial scale versus the current landscape. Ideally, we would like to bring back the forest composition as close as possible to its original landscapes, but there is a climate change that prevents us returning to that original phase… we modified the forest landscape. We have favoured certain deciduous trees to the detriment of certain conifers. Before the forest exploitation the forest used to be dominated by white spruce, now they're gone from the landscape, the forests have much more deciduous trees, that bring beautiful range of orange-red

> colors in the fall. Undoubtedly, it is beautiful. But before the forest cuttings, [these trees] were much less present...[8]

Ecologies are in continuous change and transformation. Despite over a century of forest exploitation, the resulting landscape of colorful deciduous trees, however, is what gives the area its distinct character and attracts thousands of visitors each fall.

As J narrates, at the moment of the park's creation, there was a village in the sector of Saint-Jean-des-Piles, and farmers and logging industry employees were living in the territory where the campground of Rivière-à-la-Pêche and the visitor center are located today. Additionally, prior to the park's establishment, there were cottages for vacations, fishing, and hunting. These cottages were primarily owned by individuals from the US, with only a few of these clubs being accessible to local residents.

The resource conservation team decided to focus on restoring a number of backcountry small lakes rather than the forests. According to J, this is because restoring forests would be more complicated. The whole forest has been exploited, posing a significant challenge for restoration; "this is not straightforward because it would require modifying the whole park, 536 square kilometers of forest within this area of 536 square kilometers."[9] Thus, the ecological integrity teams chose to privilege the restoration of fish and lakes over the forest.

This restoration process involves an extensive cycle of human intervention, as scientists and technicians spend long sessions in backcountry lakes taking out logs. Removing submerged logs requires significant resources and machinery. Moreover, the process involves scientific knowledge, labwork to reproduce fingerlings with DNA and reinsert

[8] Avec différentes méthodes scientifiques, on est capable de dresser un portrait assez clair des forêts avant exploitation à une échelle industrielle versus le portrait qu'on a aujourd'hui voir. Idéologiquement, on voudrait ramener le plus près possible de ses paysages la composition forestière, là, mais pour les forêts, il y a un changement climatique qui nous empêche de retourner vers..

[9] Mais ça, ici, ce n'est pas évident parce que sur 536 kilomètres carrés du parc, il faudrait modifier 536 kilomètres carrés de forêt.

them in the water, monitoring, and a substantial budget. To put into context, each phase of restoration projects typically incurs a cost of around $500,000 CAD. These logs were once part of industrial development in Quebec and travel many kilometers to reach the British market. Due to cost and logistics, the floating and sunk logs are now burned rather than being transported away to be reworked.

J and Y explained they are enthusiastic with the result. The process, while long and costly, resulted in recovered areas which are showing an increase in the diversity of species. As Y stated, "now we are seeing frogs and other aquatic species repopulating the recovered areas." Species that were disappearing under the eyes of scientists in the park's territory are now thriving. The process of scientific intervention of nature creates opportunities for the reproduction of other species and enables the coexistence among different species; however, a significant challenge is that the patches of restoration remain isolated.

5.3.2 Fish

While hunting was outlawed in Canadian national parks in 1890, fishing remains an important recreational activity in national parks including both Jasper and La Mauricie. In this section, I introduce former fish management practices in Jasper and La Mauricie. I then focus on strategies of restoration of fish ecologies in both parks.

Fishing and the fish hatchery at Jasper

Today, fishing is a popular recreational activity in Jasper National Park, where almost half of the lakes in Jasper have introduced species, reflecting a mix of history and various scientific and technological approaches. During my visit to Jasper in September 2021, I did not observe many people fishing as the high season had ended and temperatures had started to drop. However, stories about fishing emerged in my conversations with my research participants, revealing that fishing is a popular recreational activity for both local residents and visitors.

The introduction of fish was a common practice managed by park wardens to provide more recreational opportunities for visitors. These practices were supported by scientific knowledge at the time for the expansion of fingerling production and dissemination in lakes. In her 2016 piece "Downstream Memories," published in the local paper The Fitzhugh, Loni Kettle, the daughter of a backcountry warden who grew up in Jasper, reveals that park management in the 1920s and 1930s prioritized fishing to draw in more visitors. Kettle narrates the anecdotes surrounding the fish hatchery established by Parks Canada in the 1930s, with an expansion of production in 1942 facilitated by the construction of a new fish hatchery building (ibid). To meet the growing demand for trout, instead of the local whitefish, Parks Canada stocked lakes and streams throughout Jasper with non-native trout species such as eastern brook, speckled, rainbow, and splake. Scientists at the time worked to improve mountain park trout fisheries, which were the main attraction for mountain parks and were supported by the Canadian Wildlife Service. By the mid-1960s, Jasper had bred over one million fingerlings.

This process was also narrated in films, which showed that Parks Canada was proud of managing lakes with introduced fish. The National Film Board actively promoted fishing as a way to increase tourism and recreation in Canada's national parks with a series of films. For example, the film "Jasper" (1946) illustrates the importance of stocking rainbow trout to create an attractive landscape for visitors (see sequences of images on the next page). Anchored in the idea of recreation, managers introduced many allogenic, or what we now call invasive, species in Canadian national parks, as a sequence of images shows all the technical steps that the managers follow to reproduce and introduce stocked fish for recreation. Furthermore, the film "Ticket to Jasper" (1947) invites visitors to fish in the park (see image 8). The narrator intones: "you can come here [Maligne Lake in JNP] to fish; it provides the perfect setting that the gentleman deserves..." Another example is the film "Away From it All" (see image 9) which asserts that the park is ideal for fishing.

Image 7. Sequences of images from the film Jasper (1946). Introduction of trout rainbow in Maligne Lake from the hatchery to the lake. Fish Hatchery in Jasper and introduction of trout fry in Maligne Lake, Jasper National Park. [10]

Parks Canada stocked lakes with non-native fish communities from the 1920s until the 1980s (Parks Canada Agency, 2022e). Since the 1970s, Parks Canada has reduced its stocking program, dramatically reducing fishing activity (Environment Canada, 1986). However, according to the survey for the Parks Planning Program for the 4 Mountain Parks in 1985, visitors expressed a strong motivation to maintain stocking, as indicated during the consultation process in which 70% of participants actively supported sport fishing and demanded its continuation.

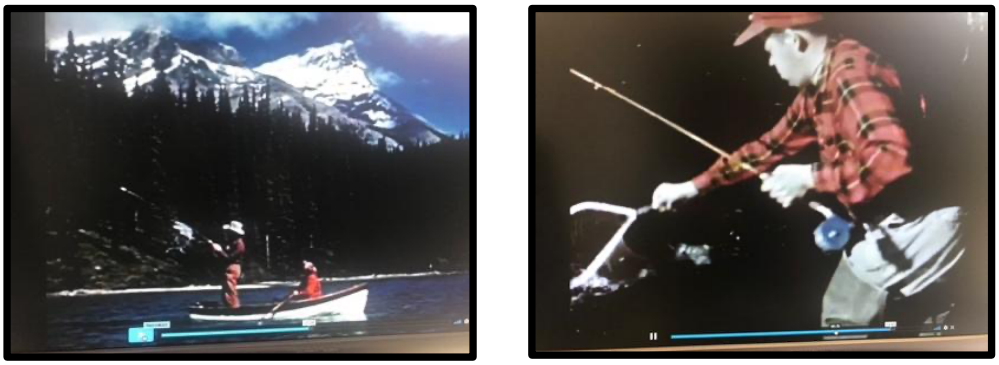


Image 8. (left). Stocking of fish in Maligne Lake (Film Jasper, 1946). Image 9. Fishing in Jasper national park. Film Away from it all (1961)

[10] Photos taken by the author from the screen projection as part of the permit NFB granted me for my research.

Fishing remains an attraction for visitors. To fish in Jasper National Park, visitors must hold a Parks Canada fishing permit to capture non-native species, regulated by certain conditions such as location, seasonality, and species. The Resource Conservation team uses scientific knowledge and technology to measure species diversity, density, and possible diseases in the parks. For example, in Jasper, 53% of lakes that are monitored scientifically on a regular basis have native fish communities (Parks Canada Agency, 2022e). Thus, almost half of the lakes in Jasper have introduced species, reflecting a mix of history and various scientific and technological approaches.

Fishing clubs and fish restoration at La Mauricie

The territory of La Mauricie National Park represents a story of human intervention and adaptation. For over a century, as previously described, the territory of what is today the park has experienced intense forest extraction as part of the lumber industry, in addition to hunting, fishing, the construction of dams, and the introduction of stocked fish species. In what follows, I explain this evolving process of managing and transforming natures from fishing and hunting clubs to scientific management for restoration.

Starting in 1895 until the park's creation in 1970, sixteen hunting and fishing clubs were installed in the territory, mostly owned by wealthy businessmen from Canada or the US, although some smaller clubs were managed by local residents. These clubs began introducing a variety of stocked fish species and creating dams to control access to certain lakes. For example, the Shawinigan Club introduced Atlantic salmon to the region, while other clubs experimented with speckled trout and lake trout, eventually introducing fish into more than twenty lakes (Craig-Dupont, 2011). These practices pushed the native fish species, like brook trout, to the brink of extinction or severe decline, leading to a population decline of 50% of its original habitat within the area that is today the park. Thus, the brook trout has been absent from half of the lakes in the park. J, a park manager, indicated that "there is a loss of ecological integrity that justified the real urgency to preserve and restore aquatic environments. Without intervention, brook trout in La Maurice National Park would have continued to decline."

In 2004, Parks Canada ecologists launched an ambitious restoration project in La Mauricie National Park. To protect native fish populations, they had to remove dams and culled introduced fish. As J explains, these fish were very attractive to fishermen due to their aggressiveness. They are very combative, so managers used a biodegradable chemical product to kill them. According to J,

> The [chemical] product once put in the water can kill fish caught by the gills so that helps to remove these introduced species. Some people argue that it goes too far because we are eradicating entire [fish] populations...we might restore native fish, that is crucial…we must return to the natural balance for the sake of the fish[11].

Additionally, scientists and park managers had to resort to DNA analysis of ancient native fish species, reproducing them with identical genes, to reintroduce 68,200 fingerlings into the park, a species that no longer inhabited the territory. Park managers are seeking to restore the ecosystem to a state before settler colonization, or the original ecosystem, as the manager J called it. Even with the help of experts, technologies such as DNA analysis and progressive interventions under scientific rationales, making lakes more “natural” through restoration scientific practices is reduced in scale and number. Scientists also identified lake size as a limitation, and their main strategy was to focus on small, backcountry lakes. Only some small lakes can be restored, most of which are inaccessible to visitors.

Larger lakes still contain introduced fish and it is too difficult to extirpate them. J elucidated that removing all the introduced fish in lakes such as Edouard, La Pêche, and Wapizagonque is impossible, as they are too large. Invasive fish species are dominant in those lakes, the park’s main watersheds. Furthermore, in addition to human occupation

[11] C'est un produit qu'on peut mettre dans l'eau qui va faire mourir les poissons attrapés par les branchies, qui permet d'enlever les espèces qui ont été introduites. Il y a des gens qui disent que ça va très loin parce que on va éradiquer des populations complètes. Mais il y a quand même des bienfaits parce que on travaille sur les poissons. On doit d'être revenu pour la situation régionale, pour les poissons

and landscape transformation, climate change presents a further challenge to ecosystems restoration. One example is the rising temperatures of lake water as J explains,

> reaching ecological integrity has become impossible due to climate change. For example, the water of some lakes in the summer is too warm for the species that were originally there. We cannot even restore populations in their habitat, and it is likely lost forever. Because if we continue to try to preserve or restore ecological integrity, we find ourselves in a dead end. We can no longer reach integrity through restoration… we are unable to attain or return to the original state [12]

In 2008, Parks Canada conducted their first scientific monitoring of the restored populations in La Mauricie. The monitoring revealed that the brook trout have reclaimed their dominant position in the lakes that were the primary focus of restoration projects. There are particularities in each of the lakes, which had unique fish populations in terms of genetics. As Y explains, “(this variety of brook trout) are species at risk that are really rare in the Mauricie region or where we have one of the largest populations in Canada.” Restoring this species in lakes, according to the managers, is a strategy to preserve a species in decline.

Accordingly, fish play a significant role in the park's management and planning. The life of fish dominates decision-making, such as changing infrastructure so that roads are less of an obstacle. Specifically, they rebuilt infrastructure and created larger draining culverts for the streams and fish to access. According to Y, the scientific monitoring after restoration brought impressive results and knowledge of species in terms of distribution

[12] Ce sont les enjeux encore les parcs nationaux, avec le principe d'intégrité écologique. Mais on sait qu'on a des situations intègre qui devient impossible avec les changements climatiques. Il y a quelques petits exemples où les lacs en période estivale, l'eau est trop réchauffée pour les espèces qui étaient là à l'origine. On ne peut même pas restaurer des populations dans l'habitat et il est probablement perdu pour toujours. Parce que si on poursuit à essayer de conserver ou restaurer l'intégrité écologique, on tombe dans un cul de sac. On ne peut plus, on ne peut pas avancer et la situation intègre la situation initiale.

and representation of unique populations. After years of restoration efforts, a park manager concluded that “conservation gains are far beyond the fish, the rest of the ecosystem is also recovering. The number of frog species has increased, meaning that the park's approach has been successful so far.”[13]

Even though fishing is considered a threat to ecological integrity, it is still allowed in the park to satisfy visitors' demands. Park managers establish measures to control the numbers of fish populations. There is a quota of five fish per person per fishing zone, and keeping the fish is allowed for consumption purposes. All fish leaving the park are weighed and measured to monitor the exploited population. Fish are an ecological component to the management of the park, but local culture and visitor traditions influence the park's decision-making as well. As Y, the scientific manager, stated,

> When we change the quotas, these people get angry because they know the territory and the complete management of the fishery. Thousands of these people have fished on the territory before the park was created, very old people...and for them, fishing is something sacred; it is still a tradition. However, it is a loss of integrity on the territory. I find it crazy; now we are restoring fish populations...I talk with people in the national office. It's true that fish are hard to value by the park's interpretation program. It's one of the few ways we have to showcase aquatic wildlife. But with the conservation mandate in place, there is no hunting, in theory, people can't capture butterflies; why fish? It's a historical artifact, and I feel like it was originally allowed in national parks' lakes. But it's still allowed for logical reasons to please the visitors because it's still a significant an ecological loss… [14]

[13] Quand on fait le suivi des autres espèces, il n’y a jamais eu autant de grenouilles en nombre, en nombre, mais également en espèces. Est ce qu'on avait un gros prédateur qui avait été introduit… On constate des gains en conservation qui vont bien au-delà des poissons parce que le reste de l'écosystème se rétablit aussi. Je pense qu'on est le plus gros, ça a marché avec. Nous avons réussi jusqu'à maintenant.

[14] Quand on modifie les quotas, ces gens-là sont fâchés parce qu'ils savent comme ça Ils veulent savoir s'ils connaissent très bien le territoire et la gestion complète de la pêche. Mais il y a des milliers de ces gens-là qui pêchent

Fishing remains an activity in parks because of its social and cultural value. Despite twenty years of restoration, including the reintroduction of native fish, the conservation efforts to maintain fish populations are not immediately visible to visitors unless they catch fish themselves. The management of fish populations remains largely underwater and is really only legible to scientists and managers. However, when visitors do catch a native fish while fishing, different regulations come into effect, making the presence of native fish more apparent. Visitors can catch and eat an introduced fish such as the lake trout, large-mouth bass, and pike but need to release and notify the park employees if they catch brook trout, the native fish.

The restoration strategies require significant labor and are designed, implemented, and monitored exclusively by scientists. The narrative presented in the interpretive panels throughout the park, such as the one at the entrance of the Lake du Fou trail titled "Yesterday's Hunting and Fishing Territory - Today an Observatory" (image 10), suggests that nature alone gradually erases past extractions. However, my fieldwork indicates otherwise. In this territory, restoration has not been a passive process; rather, it is a continuous and active process shaped by the managers' interventions and scientific control to (re)produce a certain idea of nature. As mentioned earlier, managers restored lakes and killed “hyperabundant” species to reintroduce the native trout. Together, this process of management is an active scientific landscape transformation to reach an ideal state of ecological integrity.

sur le territoire avant la création du parc. Des gens très âgés. Mais pour eux, la pêche, c'est quelque chose de sacré mais c'est quand même une tradition... C'est une perte d'intégrité sur le territoire. Je trouve ça farfelu, on restaure les populations de poissons... Je parle avec les gens du bureau national. C'est vrai que les poissons sont difficiles à mettre en valeur par l'interprétation sur les poissons. On les voit pas l'empêcher. C'est un des rares moyens qu'on a pour mettre la faune aquatique en valeur. Mais avec le mandat de conservation en a, il n'y a pas de chasse pas à la page. Les gens peuvent pas capturer les papillons. En théorie, pourquoi les poissons? C'est correct. C'est un artefact historique et j'ai l'impression que c'était permis dans les lacs à l'origine, dans les parcs nationaux. Mais c'est demeuré permis pour la mise en valeur de la faune aquatique pour des raisons logiques à faire plaisir aux visiteurs parce que ça reste une perte importante.

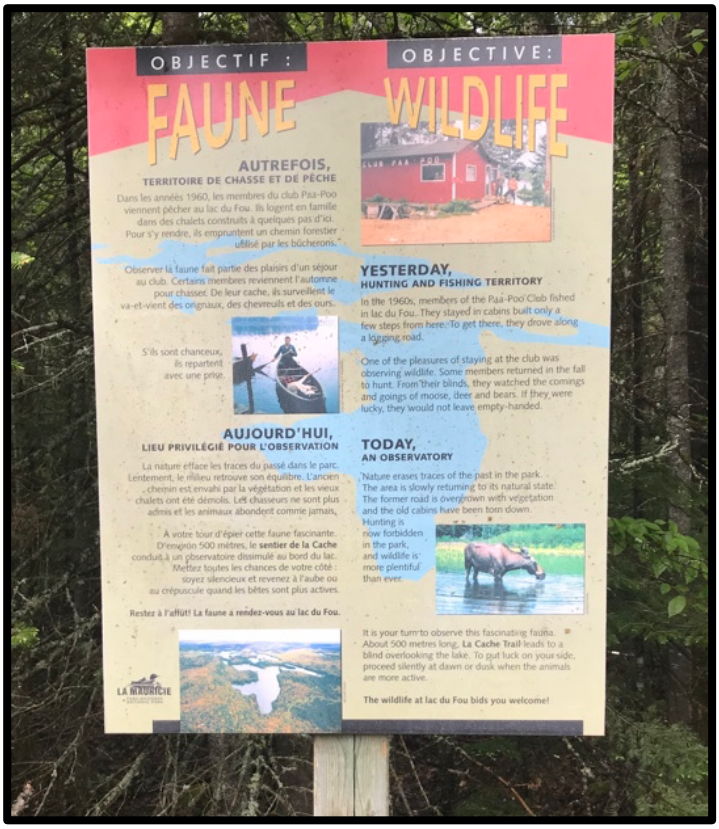


Image 10. Interpretative panel in Lac du Fou. Photo by the author.

In this section, I stress that restoration initiatives predominantly focus on specific areas, especially small lakes within a specific national park. These initiatives are primarily led by scientists. Regarding ecological restoration initiatives, I believe there is an opportunity to enhance social restoration and to make this work more participatory. The restricted involvement of other actors, such as Indigenous peoples, residents, or visitors in these restoration efforts not only limits the scope of the work, but also maintains the centrality of the knowledge and learning processes among scientists and is not shared with other actors.

5.4. Changing ecologies

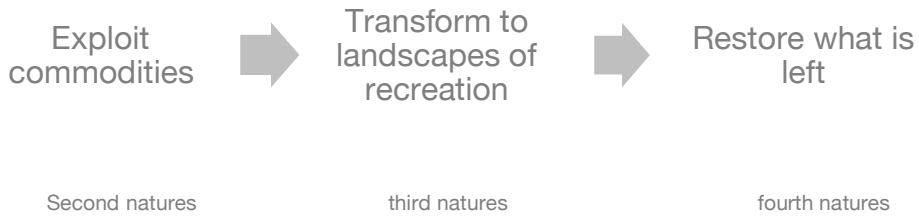
In the previous section, I explored the evolving ideas, interventions, and transformations of park ecologies by examining practices involving trees and fish. In this section, my focus shifts to the concept of changing ecologies. By doing so, I aim to critically examine ideas

of nature and ecological integrity. I divide the transformations and interventions of nature into three distinct phases: the exploitation of commodities; the transformation of landscapes for recreation; and the subsequent efforts to restore what has been left behind by capitalist exploitation and scientific interventions.

Almost three decades ago, Cronon argued in "The Trouble of Wilderness" that the wilderness is not natural but a created notion. He wrote, "[t]he concept of wilderness is entirely the product of the culture that holds it dear. It is a product of the very history it seeks to deny" (1996:16). Thus, the idea of wilderness is deeply problematic. Popular imagination still upholds notions of wilderness, especially in relation to national parks. Emma Marris (2011: 6) addresses a similar point in her book "Rambunctious Garden:" "Nature is almost everywhere. But wherever it is, there is one thing that nature is not: pristine." As shown in the previous examples, Nature is not stable and pristine just because it is bounded and protected in a national park.

As I described in the previous section, national parks are transformed spaces, with histories and phases of ecological disturbances. Fishing and hunting clubs and park wardens introduced lake trout, large-mouth bass, and pike in La Mauricie's lakes, and eastern brook, speckled, and rainbow trout, and a hybrid called splake, in Jasper national park. Those species have completely dominated aquatic ecosystems for at least a hundred years. As part of this process, managers in La Mauricie and Jasper further transformed ecologies to produce landscapes for recreation. Parks territories were transformed for conservation, tourism, and recreation. Concerned with biodiversity loss, ecologists and scientists today are leading one of the most influential approaches to environmental conservation; restoration becomes a significant component of ecological integrity, or what I call here, fourth natures.

Figure 7. Transformation of Landscapes



5.4.1 Exploitation and extraction of commodities

Jasper National Park has experienced ecological interventions and extraction of commodities through various means. Prior to the park's creation, settlers and explorers, accompanied in their routes by Indigenous guides, sought commodities for capitalist expansion in the area. During the early years of settler colonization, hunting and the extensive fur trade led to the extinction and disappearance of mammal species (e.g. Sandlos, 2011). Then coal mining industries were established in the park and its surrounding areas. One example of such extraction processes is the Pocahontas coal mine that began operating in 1910 when the park was already created. The mining site was located 45 km north of Jasper town, lasted for 11 years, and has now been transformed into a campground (for its specific location see figure 3 in Chapter Four). At the time, coal was a primary commodity used to heat homes and loaded onto the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, and over 2,000 workers lived in the area (Lothian, 1976; Taylor, 2009). Additionally, the development of railroads, highways, and roads further transformed the landscape of the park. A few decades after the park creation, managers began supressing fire to secure tourism experiences which had the greatest impact on the forest in terms of scale.

C, a manager that has lived for decades in Jasper, states that during the first decades of the park creation there were different land uses within the park territory. There were farming areas that are now called Palisades Center and the Miette campground is on the

site that was formerly the Pocahontas mine. Part of the mine territory used to include a large town, which included a cemetery for some of the miners. While certain land uses and their related commodities, like coal mining and farming, have long faded from the landscape, others such as tourism persist, remaining present and relevant in parks management. In Canada, starting from the 1940s, parks were enclosed excluding other commercial activities; commercial exploitation, other than tourism, was prohibited (Kopas, 2007). Financed and managed by the state, parks were seen as areas to protect different natures and to isolate them from further commodification.

Before the park La Mauricie was created, the logging industry exploited trees in that territory for over a century. During this same era of forest exploitation, fishing and hunting clubs settled in the area and introduced different fish species in lakes such as the lake trout, largemouth bass, and pike, and built dams to protect the migration of these fish. These species dominated the aquatic ecosystems for at least a hundred and fifty years. These intervention practices led species to the brink of extinction or vulnerable to survival in these territories. Accordingly, layers of “second natures” produced by different capitalist interventions in the landscape form part of the changing forest and lakes ecologies of these territories.

5.4.2 Transform to create recreational landscapes

For decades, parks in Canada were transformed into landscapes for recreation or “playground areas.” These territories produced for recreation and leisure time were greatly promoted by the Canadian state though films and brochures to invite Canadian and international tourists to visit. The National Film Board of Canada (NFB) co-produced dozens of films with Parks Canada to promote what was envisioned as recreational landscapes and named as "playground areas" (NFB, 1961) or “natural vacation lands for Canadians and their guests” (Scythes, 1947). Reflecting this, these films invited tourists to access the park by train, car, or bus, marking a shift from viewing wilderness as a frontier to an accessible social space for recreation by privileged elites. For example, in "Ski Holiday" (1947), the narrator emphasizes that Canadians can visit "these

playgrounds by train as well as cars and buses" in an era of automobile expansion. Likewise in "Ticket to Jasper" (1947) the narrator states that, "you can get to every corner of the park's recreation area by road or train.” Although defined as public spaces, national parks were commodified by the early tourism industry that marketed these areas and their recreational opportunities as a commodity for consumers of the upper-classes and ruling elites. Accordingly, Parks Canada transformed these territories into recreational landscapes. Wardens stocked fish in hatcheries and then released them into lakes in Jasper in order to increase fish population and thus to attract tourists. Moreover, suppressed fires were used to create secure recreational spaces for visitors and tourists.

Also, in La Mauricie, from its creation until the year 2000 the park has been managed as a recreational area for local residents to fish and camp. From the outset, managers designed and built a road that traverses the park and a variety of facilities to attract visitors (Brosseau, 1970). Recreation has been state-managed since the beginning and thus experiences have not been commodified by private agents. The creation of the park was, however, intended as a driver of economic growth outside the park. Attracting local residents to enjoy recreational activities was envisioned as a cornerstone that would bolster the consumption of other commodities in the surrounding territory (*ibid*). According to N, a manager within the visitor experience directorate, the park was seen as a node for economic development through tourism in an area that was economically disadvantaged. As iconic state-managed territories, the commodification of nature in national parks like La Mauricie remained largely at the margins. However, since their creation, the discourse surrounding these territories has consistently emphasized their potential as hubs for economic development.

Following these interventions and transformations, a variety of species ecologies survived and coexisted in these human-transformed ecosystems, initially caused by exploitation and subsequently transformed for recreational purposes, evolving into a “third nature” landscape. Despite the potential reduction in heterogeneity within the forest due to the disappearance of certain species or the spread of diseases, these landscapes narrate

diverse capitalist stories of transformation and the survival of species amidst human-led exploitative and management practices.

5.4.3 To restore what remains

Under an ecological integrity approach, scientists and managers actively intervene in ecosystems to restore and expand the possibilities of life for a greater diversity of species, which is what I identify here as a “fourth nature.” Restoring ecosystems is not a passive process and involves multiple and successive interventions guided by scientific rationales, people, machines, and significant budgets.

In Jasper, almost a century of fire suppression resulted in a forest now facing a pine beetle infestation and a lack of forest diversity. The reintroduction of fire has been the main strategy for forest restoration, but it poses significant challenges, including the threat to human safety. Infested trees are easily combustible, which can make fires difficult to control, especially with the increasing frequency of wildfires due to climate change.

Jasper managers are also trying to restore wildlife. Previous management strategies have contributed to the vulnerability and decline of various species within the territory, some of which are in the process of becoming extinct. This is the case of the caribou population. Due to evolving wildlife management practices that significantly altered elk and wolf populations, the caribou population in the park is currently on the brink of extinction. Therefore, these managers and scientists are focusing on restoration, which includes a project of breeding caribou in captivity from 2025 (Parks Canada, 2023). Also, certain trails have already been closed to visitors, and dogs are now prohibited in areas designated as caribou habitat. Restoration becomes the main strategy to ecological vulnerabilities such as extinction of a species.

In La Mauricie, traces of past interventions and transformations have created a more uniform forest that lacks white spruce, a tree that used to dominate the area. Logs remain at the bottom of many lakes, serving as a record of the logging industry, and introduced

fish species still inhabit the waters of big lakes. Faced with ecological changes, scientific restoration was prioritized for lake ecosystems and not for forests.

In light of this dilemma, managers have instead decided to focus on restoring small, backcountry lakes. During the last fifteen years, over 60 thousand fries were raised in fish farms and released into 14 of the 150 lakes. Despite the small scale of intervention for restoration, parks managers agreed that the ecological integrity of lake ecosystems in La Mauricie has improved. The resurgence of lake shore frogs is one indicator of this process. Still, in the larger landscapes of the park, wolves remain threatened, and the ecological integrity of the forest remains poor (Canada, 2022b).

Some research participants have suggested that a lack of Indigenous knowledge in park management has contributed to a decline in ecological integrity. Although managers have recognized the need to shift towards acknowledging Indigenous peoples' rights and knowledges, there are still significant structural barriers that prevent their active involvement. For example, during my fieldwork, there were no Indigenous representatives within Resource Conservation and only one in the Visitor Experience team from La Mauricie. While Indigenous peoples are increasingly participating in consultation processes and hunting activities to control of hyper-abundant species as termed by Parks Canada, they have yet to be included in the scientific decision-making processes of the parks.

Finally, while successful on a small scale, scientific restoration projects are often limited to specific territories, such as small lakes, and serve as local efforts to restore the habitat of critical species in those areas. Ecologists spend significant time and effort trying to stop ecologies from changing. These projects are difficult, as the cases of the previous sections illustrate, and also expensive. As I outlined in section 5.2, each phase of a restoration project costs approximately half a million dollars. The challenge of ecological restoration initiatives is that it often represents isolated and limited efforts within larger territories, where the same species remain under threat. As such, perceptions of nature

or restoration should go beyond national parks and protected areas, involving efforts that surpass the work of scientists alone.

5.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, I analyze the complexities and contradictions inherent in the concept of ecological integrity, which is the key scientific approach to governing nature in Canadian national parks. Ecological integrity is mandated in Canadian legislation, an idea that Canada exported while influencing international environmental organization particularly in the context of protected areas.

I focus on the inherent contradictions within the ecological integrity model. While it aims to improve or maintain the structure, function, and biodiversity of ecosystems over time, it also perpetuates the idea of pristine or untouched wilderness landscapes. Therefore, as I illustrate in this chapter, the idea of ecological integrity is problematic, as scientists and managers shaped, produced, and transformed ecologies. Furthermore, the ecological integrity paradigm seeks to restore or maintain a certain idea of nature, but it excludes the human's role in producing fourth natures. However, nature has already been transformed not only by Indigenous peoples, but also through capitalist exploitation, and by parks managers to produce landscape adapted for recreation.

Moreover, to reach "integrity" scientists are actually intensively intervening, transforming ecosystems with chemicals, DNA, removing some species, reintroducing others, reshaping lakes, reinitiating controlled burns, and so forth. This raises questions about how we can consider something "natural" when we are not actively acknowledging our role and agency in transforming ecosystems. Human agency plays a significant role in shaping and enhancing ecosystem diversity and to strengthen the ecosystems' capacity to reproduce themselves. As such, it is essential to better place human agency in nature's transformation and living spaces.

I highlight the tensions involved in restoring vulnerable ecosystems that remains after centuries of different exploitation and ecological changes. Firstly, the idea of returning to

a specific origin ideal moment is inherently problematic. Ecosystems are dynamic, as managers acknowledge, and they have changed fundamentally due to past actions of Indigenous peoples, capitalists' exploitation, scientific transformations for leisure and recreation, and currently due to climate change.

Second, the concept of ecological integrity is in a certain way a projection of the idea of wilderness. However, as mentioned earlier, it requires ongoing and permanent human intervention. Humans are not included in the concept of ecological integrity, but we have caused biodiversity loss, species extinction, and furthermore we are the main agent to restoring what remains within the ongoing ecological vulnerabilities.

Building new "fourth natures" lies at the center of these scientific transformations toward restoration—interventions that are designed, implemented, and monitored by scientific teams. Still, despite decades of scientific work on restoring native species, watersheds, and fire, these transformations and restoration efforts are only visible to scientists and managers. Furthermore, visitors' perceptions of national park ecologies continue to be shaped by the idea of untouched wilderness.

Here, I do not seek to diminish the value of scientists, park wardens, or managers in their efforts to prevent biodiversity loss or find better balances among species, including humans. The lives of species such as the caribou, white spruce, brook trout, wolves, and many others forms of life are significant to help them flourish, reproduce, and expand. Scientific knowledge and work are necessary to address the challenges we are facing within the ecological crises in which we live. However, scientific restoration efforts demand decades of work and a sufficient budget but remained localized in particular sites, often within park boundaries. Thus, the power of science and scientific knowledge remains bounded to experts and localized scales of interventions. However, biodiversity loss is a process that occurs both within and outside national parks. In Canada, about 2000 species are currently in risk of extinction. Restoration is nowadays performed and monitored by scientific and technical teams, using very specific equipment, laboratories, and technical knowledge. In this vein, restoration is a scientific practice and fails to spread

its knowledge outside the scientific world. Furthermore, restoration, as it is governed and implemented in Canada's national parks, is hard to imagine outside the Global North where conservation budgets are significantly lower.

As such, since humans face an urgent need to adapt and learn to coexist with non-human species, learning to restore is an essential process of humans' adaptation in today's changing ecologies. Restoration must become a social process that involves Indigenous people's knowledges and the work of local residents and visitors. This would allow for an expanded scale of fourth natures and lead us to an understanding that in the world we live in, humans and non-humans are always interconnected.

Chapter 6. Governing and financing public spaces for public access and conservation

6.1 Introduction

"Parks Canada is one of the wealthiest park services on the planet," a manager tells me. However, financing these public spaces is a challenging task, as national parks have dual mandates. In the eyes of the scientific community, the public, and international commitments, parks serve as sites for biodiversity conservation. From the public's perspective, parks are also recreational areas for outdoor activities. As stated by the Minister of the Environment (Parks Canada Agency, 2021b: 6): they are "a source of enjoyment and pride for Canadians." In this chapter, I delve into the financial architecture that underpins the financial model. In an era of neoliberal restructuring, this chapter discusses the nuances and which neoliberalization has shaped parks policy and governance. To do this, I explore the complexities of managing public spaces and the efforts to enhance their value to society.

Amidst an era shaped by neoliberal reforms, geographers have increasingly directed their attention to the challenges inherent in maintaining public spaces and services. These difficulties arise due to inadequate revenues, deteriorating infrastructure, and inefficient use (Furlong, 2016). Scholars have addressed the increasing adoption of neoliberal frameworks in relation to the various processes of managing public spaces, such as the rolling back of the state, the privatization of public services, deregulation, and the adaptation of institutional frameworks that supports and extends market functions. In regard to conservation and national parks management, geographers and political ecologists have been examining these processes over the past two decades (Corson, 2011; Holmes, 2011; Igoe & Brockington, 2007; Sullivan, 2006). For example, Büscher et al. (2012) illuminate the diverse ways in which the market operates to facilitate circulation and open new avenues for capitalist expansion within national parks. One form of neoliberal conservation involves incorporating market-based instruments, such as

expanding tourism in protected areas, based on the premise that tourism can support conservation efforts (Adams et al., 2014; Büscher et al., 2014; Holmes & Cavanagh, 2016).

In this vein, political ecological research has theorized the corporatization of nature and the emergence of neoliberal conservation in the Global South. Here I shift focus by shedding light on how economic decisions are made within the context of the Global North. More precisely, I center my attention on the governing structure of Parks Canada, which oversees public spaces that are of iconic importance to Canadian society and with the growing prominence of so-called economic rationality. Given the increasing shift internationally towards neoliberal conservation, this chapter examines the degree to which neoliberalism has influenced the financial governance of national parks in Canada. In contrast to existing literature on neoliberal conservation, my argument challenges the assumption that the introduction of business-like management and with it, market-based logics, in Canada inevitably leads to the neoliberalization of conservation governance (e.g. Stinson and Lunstrum, 2022, Youdelis, 2019). I state that while there is commodification of broader experiences, the governance of the Canadian park system has not transitioned into the implementation of neoliberal principles.

I present my argument in five sections. To begin, I present the foundational structural elements that underpin park management: conservation, visitation, and operation, which encompass the maintenance of diverse infrastructures. In section 6.2, I illustrate the extent to which visitation is legitimized as a major financial force for the overall park system. Then, in Section 6.3, I introduce the three core logics of the financial model and provide insights from the national office's perspectives. Next, in Section 6.4, I introduce the managerial perspectives within the two case studies regarding market and business-like rationales in park management. This includes the agency goals of increasing visitation and revenues, as well as their perspectives regarding resisting privatization and further commodification. Following that, in 6.5, I explore different ways in which neoliberal rationalities shape parks policies in a liberal democracy.

6.2 The financial structure of parks to foster enjoyment and conserve biodiversity.

For over a decade, Parks Canada's core budget has held steady at around $6 million dollars in annual appropriations. This core budget is complemented by specific projects, such as the Federal Infrastructure Program (2017-2022) and the Enhanced Nature Legacy (2021-2025). The latter aims to expand the park system to protect 25% of Canada's lands and freshwater by 2025. As of June 2023, Canada needs to increase protection of land by 11.4% and of oceans by 10.3% (Canada, 2023). When establishing a new park, Parks Canada receives $10 million dollars for installation, and thereafter, the park is managed with the same agency's core funding. In the fiscal year 2021-22, Parks Canada's core budget, for instance, was duplicated with these programs, reaching $1.2 billion. While the budget has remained stable since 2012, inflation or the system's expansion has not been taken into consideration, indicating, as R, a senior manager within the national office, states, “an overall budget decline.” Consequently, R noted, "we are tasked to do more and more with the same budget...and it does not account for inflation."

The economic management of national parks involves financing conservation, facilitating visitors' outdoor recreation, and maintaining its associated infrastructure. The agency’s structural organization implements these tasks through its primary programs: resources/ heritage conservation; visitor experiences; and operations. While Parks Canada has fifteen programs, visitors’ experiences and heritage conservation are the two most important in terms of budget and workers as I show in this section.

The current institutional structure implemented in 2008 followed significant restructuring within Parks Canada that began in 2004, and involved both organizational restructuring and the introduction of a revenue policy put place in response to declining visitation numbers and budget cuts. As part of the institutional reorganization, visitor experience and conservation were placed at the same hierarchical level within the agency, highlighting their equal importance for the mandate of conservation and protection, as

emphasized by R. In the previous model, the highest hierarchy was represented by the chief park wardens or conservation managers, with other managers occupying lower positions in areas such as communication, visitor experience, assessment, finance, and human resources.

This new structure sought to better organize the financial framework around its two primary mandates: designating conservation as a state responsibility funded by tax dollars and framing visitation as a service provided by the government but for the personal benefit of its citizens and other users. Consequently, the management of visitation aims to generate revenues within the parks to partially or entirely cover the costs of access and services provided for visitors, such as camping and skiing passes. According to R, the rationale is that the more revenues a park can collect for visitor experiences, the more resources can be liberated and then allocated to finance conservation tasks.

This policy unfolded as a decade-long effort to boost visitation, spanning from 2005 to 2017, during which managers at the individual park level were actively encouraged to formulate initiatives that could enhance revenues in each national park to supplement their budgets. Over the period from 2008 to 2021, revenues increased by 36%, and visitation steadily rose, reaching a peak of 27.2 million under a free admission policy during the 2017-18 Canada 150 celebrations. Although this policy might appear neoliberal at first sight, through a more in-depth analysis, I show that, in fact, the role of the state was reinforced instead of decreased.

6.2.1 Budget for conservation and visitor experiences

Currently, at the federal level, Parks Canada generates $150 million in revenue through entrance fees, camping fees, other recreational charges, concessions, and private licenses (Parks Canada Agency, 2022d). In 2022, these revenues covered approximately 20% of the total cost of managing visitors, with entrance fees and camping fees contributing to 60% of the overall revenues (Government of Canada, 2022). To put this

into context, the revenues from visitors equate to 10% of the agency's total spending budget (*ibid*).

Table 6 offers a comprehensive view of the budget for each program within the $1.2 billion overall budget for the fiscal year 2021-22, encompassing the core budget and additional funding for the Nature Legacy fund and Federal Infrastructure projects. As evident in the table, when examining the broader system, visitor experiences and heritage conservation emerge as the agency's two largest programs. The table underscores the significance of these two programs in both total spending and workforce. Employment is measured in terms of Full-Time Equivalents (FTE), with one FTE representing the workload equivalent of a full-time employee. This may include multiple part-time workers, such as seasonal or student employees, aggregated as an FTE.

Table 6. Snapshot of the 2021-2022 Budget Year for Employment for Visitation and Conservation

Programs	**Spending (cad)** 2021-22	**% of the total budget**	FTE [15]workers
Visitor Experiences	425.4 M	35.5	333,000
Heritage Conservation	256 M	21.3	187,000
Operation (represented by other 13 programs)	519 M	43	30,000
Total	1.2 B	100	5500,000

Source: GC Info Base, 2022

As table 6 shows, maintaining public access while also managing an economic engine to accommodate visitors is a complex task that demands a higher overall budget and a larger workforce compared to conservation efforts. When comparing the workforce for each program, the demands of visitor experience, whether at the federal level are consistently higher. As of the fiscal year 2021-22, Parks Canada employed approximately 5,500 full-time equivalents (FTE). The number of workers employed for visitor experience (3,330 FTE) was nearly double that of FTE dedicated to heritage places conservation (1,870). While the FTE data clearly indicates a significant trend towards more demanding

[15] An FTE represents the equivalent of the hours worked by a full-time employee.

and costly work in managing visitors, it does not provide information about the number of full-time jobs in each of the programs.

When studying the budgets of individual parks, it was challenging to differentiate between allocations for different programs and to identify the sources of funding—whether public or private—for both conservation and visitation. This difficulty arises from the diverse accounting methods employed across the different parks, making it complicated to establish comparisons at the park level.

In Jasper National Park, 52% of workers are assigned to visitor experiences programming including several seasonal workers. Of the remaining 48%, 28% is dedicated to Resource Conservation, and 20% designated for Operations. Regarding La Mauricie, while specific information about workers for visitor experiences is unavailable in this study, it is worth noting that 71% of the workers, encompassing both visitor experiences and operations, are seasonal employees, primarily consisting of students.

When it comes to governing visitation in parks, a significant aspect is managing the necessary infrastructures to accommodate visitors and their cars. Parks Canada administers the largest infrastructure portfolio in Canada, which includes 18,500 built assets[16]. Making the parks operational for public use requires maintaining infrastructure; however, its operation is not considered in the capital budget. This has led to a gradual deterioration of public infrastructure, including bathrooms, roads, viewpoints, trails, and campgrounds. To address this crisis, the federal government implemented a specific 6-year plan from 2017 to 2022 that included a $3 billion investment to enhance the infrastructure of national parks, which was completed in 2022. As table 7 shows, this plan represented an unprecedented investment in the infrastructure of national parks, restoring structures such as trails, campgrounds, visitor centers, and parkways. However, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Steven Guilbeault has stated that despite

[16] Assets for Parks Canada include a wide-ranging infrastructure portfolio such as highways, bridges, dams and other marine infrastructure, historic buildings and fortifications, water and wastewater treatment facilities, campgrounds, visitor centres and operational buildings and compounds.

the investment from the Federal Infrastructure Plan, over 40% of these assets remain in poor or very poor condition (Rabson, 2022). This was echoed by one manager during interviews, who said a significant portion of the infrastructure remains in poor condition, there is no specific budget to maintain what already exists, and the agency its returning to its regular budget. The apparent increase for the period 2025-26 responds to the budget allocation for the Nature Legacy fund provided by the federal government to facilitate the expansion of new marine and terrestrial protected areas.

Table 7. Agency Budget Reduction for Next Years

	Year	Spending
Before the Federal Infrastructure program	2016-17	595.519 M
Last year of the program	2021-22	1.2 B
Budget projected	2025-26	880.5 B

Source: GC Info Base, 2022; Report on Plans and Priorities: 2016-17

In Canada, parks have been designed and adapted with infrastructures to cater to automobile travel. Car travel became highly popular in North America during the Fordist era (Bradley et al., 2016) and has remained prevalent ever since. This type of travel has led to the construction of various facilities including car-accessible campgrounds and RV facilities equipped with electricity, sewage and water access, and parking lots. However, maintaining and managing parks for car travel results in a substantial cost and this cost is not integrated in annual budgets.

As stated by V, an operation manager from the national office, infrastructures and services are what continue to make Canadian parks popular destinations:

> People are coming because the infrastructure and the infrastructure is what drives people coming to parks. Without infrastructure, we wouldn't have the same amount of visitors. Even if we just had a road, you'd probably get people driving through. Where there is no infrastructure like northern parks in the

> Yukon and Northwest Territories… How many visitors do we get there? We get very few. It might be very beautiful and spectacular, but it's very expensive to get to.

Infrastructures encompasses different visible structures such as highways, bridges, historic buildings, campgrounds, visitor centers, and operational buildings like compounds (Parks Canada, 2022). Also, a network of different structures supports visitor experiences underground, such as water, electricity, and sewage services. Thus, natural landscapes are not only scientifically managed as described in chapter 5, but also built to accommodate visitors. Operations managers and technical experts often highlight during interviews the high cost and challenges associated with maintaining parks infrastructures. The development of new infrastructure and the maintenance of old ones are in the margins of budget allocation and always subject to negotiation. This is especially challenging because, as managers explain, many of these constructions were built in the 1970s, and current political and budgetary priorities are focused on efforts to maintain or restore the ecological integrity of the parks and increase the territories of protected areas. Making the parks operational for public use requires the maintenance of infrastructure; however, its lack of operational budget is leading to a cycle of building to attract the public and leaving aside crumbling infrastructure that cannot be managed anymore.

6.3 Rendering Parks Economically Profitable: Paying for enjoyment

How do countries finance public spaces? Why paying for access to national parks? Within the national office, some representatives expressed concern about the use of public funds to finance visitation or what the agency calls "personal enjoyment activities." R, a senior manager, stressed that "there's a general agreement in Canadian society that it's a good thing for people to visit and learn about their natural and cultural heritage, so they shouldn't pay the full price for that, but it's not unreasonable for them to pay part of the price because they're getting a personal benefit." On average, according to R, visitors cover approximately 20% of the associated costs, while the Canadian government covers the remaining 80% through allocations. However, these percentages vary between parks,

since they are influenced by factors such as the number of visitors and revenues from private concessions and licenses managed by each park. For example, visitor revenues cover 20% of the cost of visitor management in La Mauricie, while in Jasper it is approximately 80%. Parks with higher visitation and revenue receive a proportionately smaller financial share of the government budget while places with very few visitors require more government allocations. Regarding the cost of access to national parks, R states that, "they may say it's expensive because they don't want to pay for it, it's probably not the way they want to spend their leisure time, but a vast majority of Canadians could afford it." R argues that they cautioned against offering free admission to national parks, as it would create an unfair advantage in relation to private land reserves that rely on charging for access to maintain their operations, potentially threatening their financial viability. In the same vein, T, a chief from the national office, states that

> economic accessibility should always be a priority. We have to agree that we're only going to charge a nominal amount and that the intent is not profit generation but more like a way to control demand (…).

According to T,

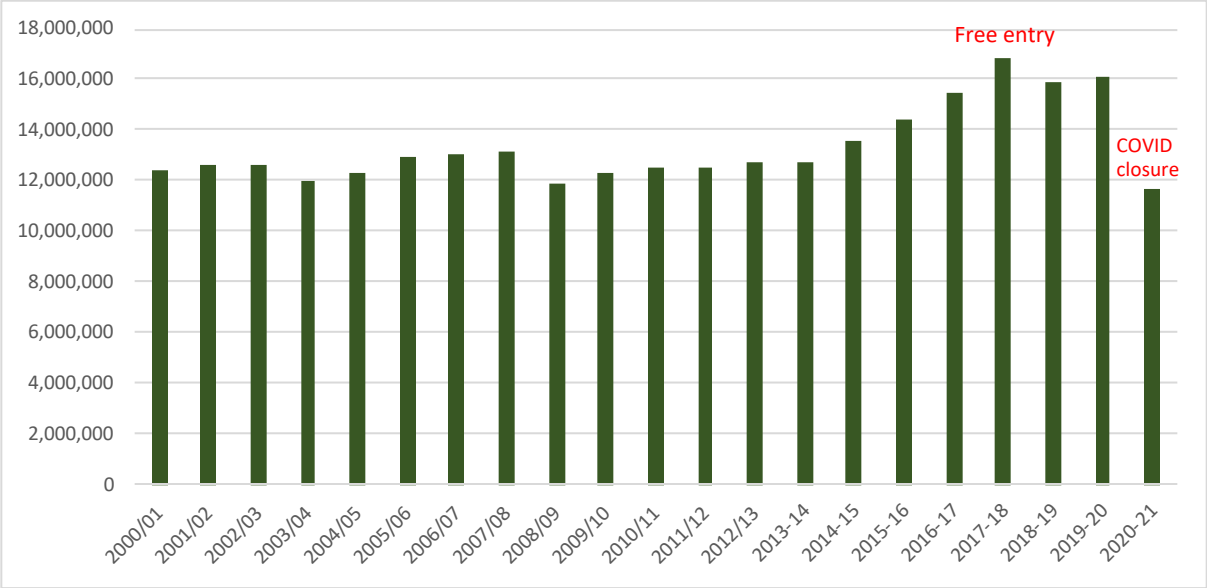
> if is not full-cost recovery another way would be to increase the entry fees. Then the dilemma is to charge Canadians to go and see their own stuff… or don't charge visitors but allow privatization in parks so they generate profit and visitors pay them.

Within the context of a constant pursuit to maintain political relevance, economic viability, and public access, I identify the following three key logics that underpin national park financial model: (1) increasing visitors as a political strategy; (2) implementing revenue policies as a financial approach; and (3) the overall resistance to privatization and further commodification as a social dimension of control of the development of these public spaces. In what follows I first present the perspectives of the national office and then, in the following section, I bring together the perspectives of park managers concerning the same three logics.

6.3.1 Increasing visitors

The first financial logic for Canadian national parks was centered on increasing visitation. As explained in the previous section, from 2005 until 2017, the goal was to attract more visitors in order to maintain or enhance the relevance of national parks in Canadian society and, as such, secure its political support. The idea of increasing visitor numbers emerged when the Parks Canada Agency faced the "challenge of remaining relevant to Canadians" (Jager & Sanche, 2010). This challenge arose from a decade-long decline in visitor numbers to Canada's national parks through the 2000s, with a 5.3% drop *(ibid*), even while the Canadian population grew, reflecting a state of stagnation (Shultis & More, 2011). According to Jager and Sanche (2010), several factors contributed to the decrease in visitor numbers, including an aging population, urbanisation, the distance from national parks, and underrepresentation of the immigrant population in park visitation. This decline raised concerns about a general decrease of interest in accessing these public territories, which could have led to a generalized reduction in public and political support for park systems. According to R, Canadians are the core visitors, and their support is crucial to the agency’s political and economic policy and, as such, the decision-making process. Making parks accessible to Canadians is an important driver of the agency's actions, as R stresses, "If Canadians come, they will support the work we do." In 2017, visitation reached a peak with the introduction of free annual passes, as can be observed in figure 8, and the goal of increasing visitors was fulfilled.

Figure 8. Access to parks: Parks Canada visitation (2000-2020)



Source: Parks Canada visitation database.

The financial model seeks to attract visitors to finance parks visitation not only as an economic source (as stated earlier, visitor fees cover about the 10% of the overall Parks Canada budget), but also as a political constituency in defense of the park system. Visitation fees did not undergo considerable increases during the last twenty years. As stated by R, this is because visitor fees are not elastic, with any small increase leading to dissatisfaction. As public spaces managed by the federal government, visitor and recreation fees are regulated by parliament, a process that occurs every two years. The strategy of increasing visitors, therefore, has political implications that go beyond purely economic ones. It aims to sustain the parks project and shape a distinct social subjectivity, as I will elaborate on in the subsequent chapter. This is further illuminated by the government's implementation of various policies since 2017, such as granting free access to everyone in 2017 in the context of the 150th confederation anniversary. Since then, free admission has extended to all children and to specific groups such as new Canadians and permanent residents through specific programs. Furthermore, N a manager from La Mauricie explains that providing free access has shown to increase political support.

6.3.2 Increase revenues

The second logic is the implementation of a full-cost recovery model. While closely associated with the logic of increasing visitors, the objective is to offset at least part of the operating costs of visitors' enjoyment through revenues. This approach emerged after a decade of significant budget cuts. As one operational manager pointed out, their operational budget suffered one more reductions in the mid 2000s and then significant budget cuts until 2012 that led to policy changes in order to increase revenues. Thus, this policy was created in response to financial pressure and austerity policies, which called for increasing revenues in order to maintain parks as public spaces. Park teams were tasked with creating revenue-generating projects and activities to reach new audiences in each park. Parks Canada prioritizes the increase of revenues from visitors' experiences, identified in the revenue policy as private benefit. This includes services designed for the enjoyment, vacation time, or leisure time of visitors. Consequently, the logic underlying the policy identifies conservation work as a public good that must be financed through government allocations. The fundamental distinction between public good and private benefits forms the core of the revenue policy, stressing that visitors should contribute to the cost of their visits, ideally reaching for full cost recovery. R explains this approach:

> It would be hard to understand why the general public would subsidize me going camping. There's the mix where you should be comfortable with some of it being subsidized through appropriations and the rest being paid by each individual. And then there's the things where you should be looking to fully cost recovery (…) If you don't generate revenue, then you don't have an effective way to adjust your budget to demand. If I get more visitors, then I get more entry revenue. Then I have more money to serve those visitors.

As a result, the agency has devised initiatives to boost revenues from visitors, primarily through state-led services that, ideally, demanded minimal maintenance. Consequently,

the surplus could be retained and reinvested within the same parks. While the fundamental offerings like camping sites, or trails remain largely unchanged, the strategy now involves presenting certain services with added comfort to substantially increase revenues. One example is Parks Canada's oTENTik[17], a canvas-walled tent with a wooden floor, bunk beds, lights, and other amenities in all national parks. Compared with the camping fee without electricity of $27.25 at La Mauricie, the oTENTik's $128 per night results in four times more revenue. This distinction is crucial because the Canadian approach has been to uphold government-provided services rather than turn to privatization.

The adoption of a revenue policy reflects a move toward adopting a business-like approach to visitor management through government services, a process that other scholars have termed the marketization of the state (Fletcher et al., 2014). In the context of Canadian parks, this process involves maintaining state control by expanding offerings to capture more revenues. In both case studies, offerings remained managed by the government. This represents an initial effort by the state to increase revenues for outdoor recreation and the rationale that more tax dollars could be allocated to conservation work by reallocating resources designated for visitor management. In this context, the focus has been on expanding government offerings through the development of a wider range of services, as opposed to reducing its role through privatizing visitor offerings—a trend seen elsewhere (e.g., Büscher et al., 2014; Büscher & Fletcher, 2020; Corson, 2011).

The prominence of state services and the limited cases of privatization or broader public-private agreements in the case of Canadian parks may be a response to the social control exercised by environmental NGOs, local communities, and municipalities, which oversee park management. One example of this control is when different organized actors raise

[17] The word "oTENTik" blends "tent" in English with the French sound of "authentique," meaning authentic, representing Canada's bilingual identity.

an alarm when there are pressures for privatization as the cases of the panel on ecological integrity or the reports of CPAWs (e.g. CPAWS, 2016; EI Panel, 2002).

6.3.3. Resistance to privatization and the further commodification of experiences in the national parks

The third logic involves the resistance to privatization and the further commodification of experiences in the national parks. A common conversation that emerged with officials was the fact that Parks Canada, unlike provincial park services, is resisting privatization. According to T, a chief from the national office, “Ontario parks are now managed by a subcontractor; the park operations are actually handled by a private company and, in my experience, the quality has gone downhill.” While there are financial pressures to maintain the system, the idea of public access and maintaining quality of services is presented as a political choice within the agency. However, it is vulnerable to pressures. The agency website states that Canadians consider Parks Canada the third most trusted federal organization (Parks Canada Agency, 2021d). Moreover, according to the agency, the 2018 National Survey of Canadians stated that “9 in 10 Canadians support Parks Canada’s mandate” and “more than 9 in 10 consider parks a source of pride for them” (*ibid*). Thus, the priority of the agency is to maintain this earned political capital. The organization itself, local communities, and environmental NGOs have resisted policies that encourage privatization and challenged efforts to expand commodification for tourism and recreation within these parks (eg. CPAWS, 2016). According to T, the question of privatizing services also raises concerns about visitor accessibility within the context of commodifying park experiences. As they state:

> Parks Canada has been in the unique position; we are not allowing private companies to encroach on the sovereignty of the sites. If we want to maintain them, we have to find ways to fund them, and we either do that by the Canadian public paying for it or by private organizations paying for it, so we just have to figure out what's the right balance, but I think it's something we need to be careful about all the time. We need to make these sites as

> accessible to the community as possible and not limit their access. I have no issues with private companies providing services within our parks, but that should not take away from Canadians having access to it.

However, there is an ongoing and persistent pressure to shift the park's priorities in order to open possibilities to new market opportunities such as the expansion of tourism experiences and greater influence in decision-making by tour operators, mainly in the Mountain Parks. According to K, a former scientific chief from the national office, the tourism industry in the Rocky Mountain Parks is powerful and continually seeks to expand capital opportunities in order to enlarge the areas and services for tourism consumption. As stated by K, "even though we had to put ecological integrity as a first priority, Parks Canada is having a hard time putting ecological integrity first." M, a manager in Jasper, also pointed out that the private pressures are significant but play out primarily of the Mountain Parks in Banff, Jasper, and Lake Louise. These three parks attract approximately 40% of the overall international visitors to Canada (The Outspan Group, 2011). This is a market that is more profitable for the tourist industry because international visitors stay longer and spend more money (Thornton et al., 2016). The rest of parks in Canada have have much less private offerings. Moreover, K emphasizes that in the Mountain Parks there is one private company in particular that plays a significant role in the tourism industry: "Pursuit is a multinational operation...There's huge lobbying going on, and there are billions of dollars in tourism revenue. It's big stuff." Thus, there are increasing pressures to commodify new experiences in different park sites.

The early history of national parks in Canada is closely tied to the growth of the tourism industry in the Mountain Parks. These parks were established alongside and as an integral part of a capitalist expansion. They were created to produce profit. However, the question that arises is whether a more recent shift toward neoliberal logic has occurred. In this context, I argue that while the system seeks to increasingly commodify experiences, it does not align with a tendency toward neoliberal governance. Based on the data I have gathered, I assert that there is no gradual weakening of the state,

deregulation, or the adoption of a privatization policy. Nevertheless, there are permanent pressures in the Mountain Parks to intensify the privatization of rights for tourism concessions.

The resistance against privatization within Parks Canada managers, local residents, and NGOs is grounded in the concept of preserving Canada's parks as a political state project. This means not putting at risk the parks' political capital. One of the core ideas supporting park access is built upon the notion that national parks must remain available for public use. According to this logic, every national park offers facilities and services for visitors, regardless of their location. Prioritizing public access and state control remains a central strategic goal.

As I will elaborate in the following section, managers express concerns about the contradiction posed by the prevalence of tourism services. They worry about its potential impact on conservation. For instance, S, a representative from the national office, states:

> the problem is that private corporations are profit-driven, not so much environmentally driven...they can make a lot of money in parks like Jasper, but they're going to do whatever it takes to get people there, and if it means building more parking lots and ventures and trails and everything else, that's what they're going to do because that's what you would do to make money.

Neoliberal conservation approaches elsewhere tend to privatize certain state functions and increase private business involvement in decision-making processes (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Büscher et al., 2014). In the case of Canada, rolling back of the state, as is the case with Ontario provincial parks, is seen by federal office representatives as detrimental to service quality. Despite the pressures to expand the commodification of tourism services in the Mountain Parks, Parks Canada aims to maintain the parks' political relevance in public opinion and preserve them as public spaces. However, ensuring public access remains tenuous. L, a national office representative, raises concerns regarding the future of funding the park system. They

state, "it is not clear to me that Canada can sustainably finance these resources solely through taxpayer contributions; it's a substantial cost."

Under this context, W, another representative from the national office, addressed this point and stated that “we are too focused on capital, the priority should be conservation, but animals don’t pay taxes.” The idea remains that the agency prioritizes increasing revenues through visitation because without taxpayers' support for the park system, conservation would not be possible. In alignment with this perspective, R, a senior manager from the national office, added that increasing revenues is also a means to ensure that the budget for conservation is allocated using tax dollars.

6.4 Perspectives at the local level

In this section, I examine the calculations and implications of the current financial system for conserving and enhancing public use for visitors' enjoyment in Jasper, an international tourist destination with significant visitor numbers and infrastructure, and La Mauricie, a smaller park with fewer facilities for local visitors. Even if these two parks have differences in size, both have built their recreational offerings and facilities adapted to car travel. The model of travelling individually by car to do sightseeing requires a lot of infrastructure including parking lots, which need to be maintained and managed, and thus result in a significant cost.

6.4.1 Increasing visitation

Jasper

Jasper is one of Canada's most iconic tourist destinations (Destination Canada, 2018), with a significant concentration of services offered by the tourist industry. However, the primary source of revenue for the park does not come from private services but rather from visitor-related fees. According to C, a manager in the visitor experience directorate, entry fees serve as the main source of revenue, followed by royalty agreements, which include revenues coming from concessionaires, and then camping fees.

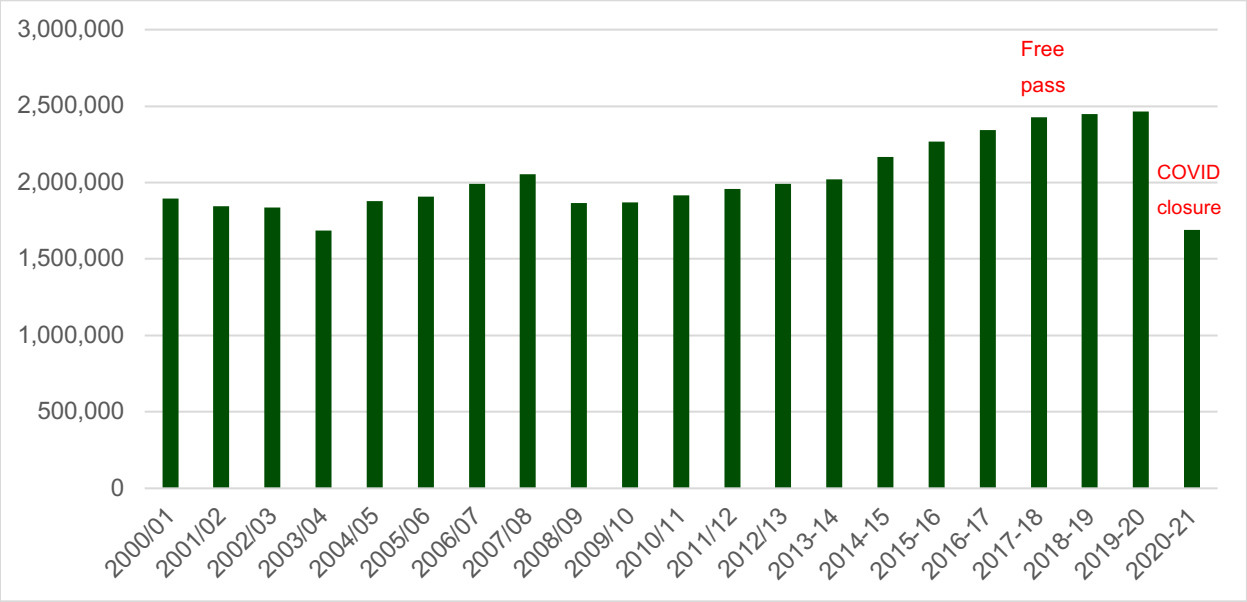
In Jasper, when the policy of increasing visitation was proposed, the park was still the second most visited after Banff, and already faced all the challenges associated with managing a destination that receives over two million visitors per year. In this sense, Jasper is an anomaly in the system. Ideas about overtourism had been under debate in park planning since the late 1960s. For example, during the period from 1956 to 1966, camping stays increased by 350% (Parks Canada, 1967). This growth is evident in the expansion of Whistler Campground, which originally had 370 sites but has now grown to 860 (*ibid*). In 1985, a group of both Canadians and international experts met to discuss the future of the Mountain Parks, including Jasper (Parks Canada, 1985). The main topic of conversation was the tension already evident in those parks between conservation and tourism development. From their view at the time, parks were receiving too many tourists and had too many tourist facilities.

Since 2009, the park has experienced a continuous increase in visitors (as shown in Figure 9). Since early 2000s the park goal was not to increase visitation, but to increase the diversity of visitors, mainly by targeting immigrants and other cultural communities through a tailored visitation offering. For example, according to C, Jasper managers invented the program Learn to Camp, providing camping experience with equipment and activities to new Canadians. However, as C explained, it was significant work to coordinate and work with partners and they received no financial support from the federal government. Yet, as C stated, projects to diversify the public did not last long and C believes that the agency adopted the wrong approach, which resulted in limited impact. For C, the focus should have always been to maintain the traditional offering that Parks Canada has. For this employee, the idea of creating a new offering dissipates the efforts already in place and the focus of maintaining what Parks Canada has always been doing. In this vein, C pointed out that,

> there was this whole idea that we were becoming relevant as a park's agency for Canadians, particularly for new Canadians, and it was probably true, but I honestly think it had a lot to do with just our brand and how we speak and

> relate to people; the offerings didn't change. I think we took the wrong path... what we've done is a lot of work, and it didn't have a great impact...we have a basic offering in Parks Canada, and that offering is really solid.

Figure 9. Visits in Jasper national park (2000-2020)



Source: Parks Canada

C further emphasizes ongoing discussions regarding the potential of excessive visitor use. According to C, overcrowding in the Mountain Parks is experienced by park managers in a different way than other parks because the volume of visitors is much higher. These parks have much more infrastructure to maintain. Furthermore, the marketing campaign to attract visitors is conducted primarily by the private industry and not by the government.

In Jasper, the tourism industry caters primarily to international travellers during eight months of the year, comprising 67% of the total visitors that are also the main users of the private lodging offered in the park. As the CEO of Tourism Jasper, the destination marketing association explained to me, attracting international tourists significantly more profitable for the private sector than local ones. International travellers spend five times

more on their travel than the average Canadian visitor, who spends $248 per person. For private industry the objective is to target those tourists. During the shoulder months in the spring and fall, the marketing strategies focuses more on local visitors who come for fewer days. Private operators book up to 18 months in advance with international tourists. According to N, when Canadians are planning their vacations, the private offering such as hotels and cabins is already full. Yet, to make reservations possible for domestic public, Parks Canada opens camping reservations once a year, and the camping offering is mainly occupied by Canadians.

Although the focus on international travellers creates discrepancies in terms of access to services in certain national parks such as Jasper, for a professional working from the planning team, there is no inconsistency.

> The mandate of Parks Canada is worded very specifically. It doesn't say that we're protecting present natural and cultural heritage for Canadians. It just says that we're doing so on behalf of the people of Canada, so it's not necessarily saying that parks are only for Canadians. I certainly wouldn't want to say only Canadians are allowed in the park and we lock the gates to anyone else…nature should be open to everyone. And I think most of my colleagues kind of share that mentality...

C offered an alternative viewpoint and highlighted concerns regarding making the park more accessible for Canadians: "I think people are concerned about it for sure, the superintendent wants us to look at densifying in the campgrounds to be able to offer to Canadian audiences and other audiences a little bit more affordable option." Another representative from the visitor experience team made the argument that access is also limited due to these planning constraints. They highlighted that when COVID hit and the borders were closed, there was no competition for reservations and park visitation comprised of 97% of Albertans, “just Albertans were able to visit, so it's not that they don't know about us, I think that’s part of the problem.” The high demand of the park makes

local residents compete for a site alongside everyone else. Thus, the park continues to function as a high-demand destination.

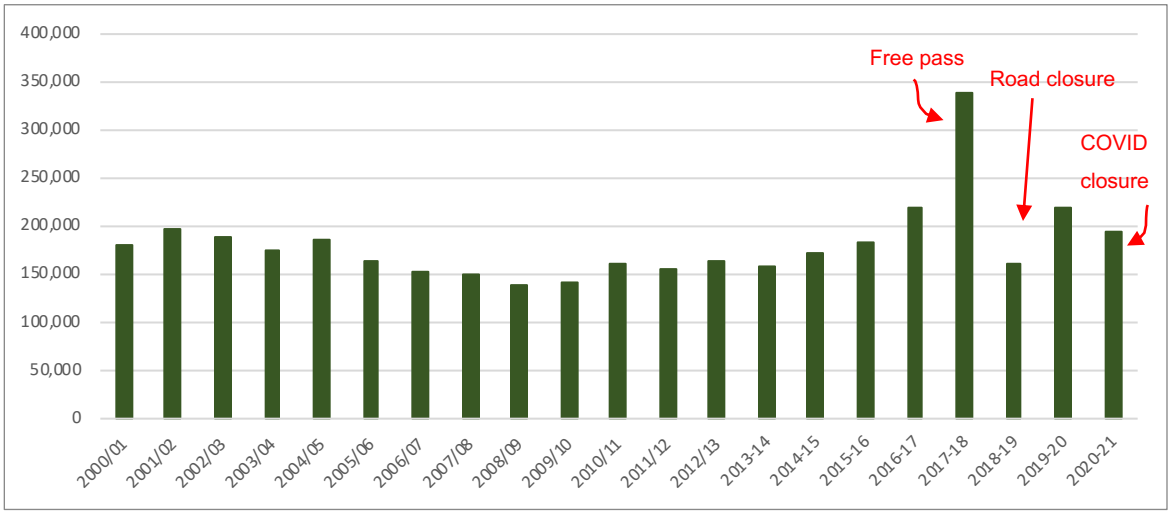
La Mauricie

In contrast, La Mauricie National Park is significantly smaller than Jasper, attracting primarily local visitors. Approximately 66% of its visitors come from Quebec. The majority, around 93%, are families who choose La Mauricie as their vacation destination (Parks Canada, 2019).

From 2012 until 2017 the park had a goal to increase visitor numbers by 7%. Visitation has been steadily growing each year with an average increase of 1 or 2 percent annually (see figure 10). H, a manager in operations, explains the different strategies that the park put in place to increase the number of visitors. “To increase popularity, we strengthened our external relations on Facebook and increased the number of advertisements so that more people who do not know us yet will come to visit us[18].” In addition to an increase in numbers, the visitors’ profile has also changed completely according to T, a park manager. T states “before, we had people who were more used to nature, now they are more neophytes, they are people who are unfamiliar with outdoor activities".

[18] Nous avons renforcé nos relations externes sur Facebook pour augmenter notre popularité et augmenté le nombre de publicités pour attirer davantage de membres qui ne nous connaissent pas encore.

Figure 10. Visits to La Mauricie National Park (2000-2020



Source: Parks Canada

Experiences regarding overcrowding are different in terms of magnitude and scale compared to Jasper. According to the resource conservation manager, overcrowding is very local in certain spots and parking lots, but it demands increasing attention from different teams, both from visitor experiences and conservation including measures such as closing daily visits if parking lots are full. Therefore, managers raised concerns about the potential contradiction between growing visitor numbers and the pressure of visitors on conservation efforts.

Besides overcrowding in the summer, barriers to access were often mentioned among interviewees. According to a municipal representative from St Mathieu du Parc, which is in the vicinity of the park, coming to the park is not easy and it is not possible without a car. In this vein, a representative of the Visitor Experience team highlighted that the local area is rather disadvantaged in terms of its socio-economic environment. Policies aimed at reducing costs, therefore, yielded significant results in La Mauricie. One example was the implementation of the free federal pass policy in 2017 which had a significant impact on the level of visitors in La Mauricie. The yearly average jumped by 68%, one of the most significant increases in Canada. In contrast, the closure of the road for renovations

in 2018 led to a considerable reduction in visits, thus, according to Y, economically impacting nearby communities.

6.4.2 Increasing revenues

Jasper

In Jasper, the expansion of private industry is currently not allowed, including the expansion of urban land or the construction of additional square meters in Jasper town. Consequently, the goal of increasing revenues does not rely on increasing private rights to the private sector, but rather through an expansion of services offered by Parks Canada such as the case of the oTENTIKs. However, the visitor experience manager emphasized that decision-making regarding revenue initiatives at the local level is limited. For example, when renovating the Whistler campground, the park's team proposed increasing the number of sites with electricity in order to generate increased revenue by charging higher fees for these sites. According to the manager, there is a growing demand for electricity at campsites: "Everybody wants electricity at their sites now because they want to use their rice cookers, charge their phones, or even watch TV." However, the national office did not approve those additions, as the manager explains. According to a senior manager from the national office, the primarily reason was because it increased the cost of the project.

La Mauricie

La Mauricie earns an annual revenue of $2.7 million. According to H, the most substantial portion of this revenue comes from entrance fees, followed by other recreational charges like camping fees, fishing permits, and oTENTik accommodations. In addition, the park receives royalties paid by concessionaires. Only a few independent businesses operate in the park, including a canoe rental, a snack kiosk (*casse-croûte*), and a firewood concession.

To enhance its popularity and generate more revenue, the park has implemented publicity strategies and the commodification of certain experiences. The visitor experiences team started to host events including a widely popular bicycle race and a trail running competition. Furthermore, the park's team has crafted new trails dedicated to snowshoeing, introduced oTENTiks (image 11), and employed a range of strategies to expand its visibility on social media platforms. Additionally, as explained by the operational manager, they have increased the number of campsites with fire pits, which do not significantly raise operational costs and are much more attractive to campers, even though they have higher fees.

Image 11. Example of oTENTik. Photo by the author.

Maintaining the popularity of the parks and ensuring public access pose continuous challenges in managing and supporting park operations. Ongoing efforts involve the maintenance of infrastructure and services to enhance visitor experiences. For instance, according to H, keeping the park open for cross-country skiing in the winter leads to a deficit of $100,000 to $150,000. This situation creates a financial shortfall, according to the manager, making it difficult to meet operational costs. However, closing the ski trails in the winter could negatively impact the park's popularity. A few years ago the park

closed a long backcountry trail used during the summers because it was too expensive to maintain. Closing further services to visitors' consumption due to funding shortages is not a viable option, the manager argues as it would likely trigger public backlash. For H, the team relies on the revenues they generate and they seek to expand more revenue generating services and activities to be able to pay the cost of managing infrastructure and visitor experiences. But as H mentioned, having more people also requires more resources, creates more work, and generates additional needs and maintenance.[19]

The experiences depicted by Jasper and La Mauricie national parks exemplify the implementation of the full-cost recovery model, wherein the state expanded its services by diversifying outdoor recreational activities to enhance revenue generation.

6.4.3 Resisting privatization and further commodification of experiences

Nature-based tourism commodifies landscapes not previously governed by the market and incorporates them into the market economy. Commodifying public lands and further marketizing non-humans for tourism creates tensions and resistance among park managers and officials. While in places like Jasper, the tourist industry views parks as the basis for profit and lobbies for more land to develop, in most parks the services offered by private companies are very limited, as is the case of La Mauricie.

Jasper

Tourism Jasper, the destination marketing association, represents 70 tourism-aligned services. However, the tourist offering is dominated by one player, Pursuit, a multinational tourism operator that some consider to have almost a monopoly in the Mountain Parks. In Jasper alone, Pursuit manages eight hotels, five key attractions, including the Fairmont lodge, the golf course, the ski center, and transportation services. Indeed, their established presence grants them significant control over the entry of new services or

[19] In the year 2021, when I conducted my fieldwork, the federal government implemented several budget cuts to offset the economic costs of the pandemic. As a result, all the revenues generated in each park were sent to the national office, leading to a deficit for that year.

products within the enclosed and regulated park environment. This concentration of power positions them as key player in the market. In situations that require public bidding, Pursuit can effectively leverage economies of scale to disperse fixed costs associated with developing tourist products. This strategic advantage creates a competitive barrier that makes it challenging for other potential competitors to enter the market and challenge their leading position. A manager acknowledged the significant presence of Pursuit in the tourist market, and the pressure to expand tourist services by Pursuit, get more land rights for development, and to expand overall the commodification of experiences in the park. The manager states,

> Oh, they're a big player here, really big…they always want to expand their operations, the park has said no to that, but they'll always be asking to do other things. They put in a proposal about running a gondola from the Icefield Center up the mountain, they also want to expand at Maligne lake...time will tell if they're going to be able to do things like that.

Informal conversations and input from professionals and interviewees have highlighted that in the past the private sector's influence extended to high levels of government, surpassing the abilities of the local team to contain their influence. This was evident when the conservative Harper Government granted authorization for the construction of Skywalk (see image 12), owned by Pursuit, in an area that was not originally designated for visitor use. At the time, Pursuit controlled tourist services in the Columbia Icefield, and they sought the right to develop the Skywalk as an additional attraction to bring together more visitors in one area. According to one manager, “they [Pursuit] built that skywalk, it was pretty controversial when it went in, and it still is because the park awarded them the right to build it because they were the only ones. It was sort of a sole source…people were not happy about it.”

Image 12. Jasper skywalk. Photo by the author.

The people I interviewed often refer to this case as a case of governance failure. It serves as a prime example of the private sector's influence in decision-making. Based on the insights gathered from interviews and fieldwork, the construction of the Skywalk development stirred considerable concerns within Parks Canada, among NGOs, and in the local media. A process that generated resistance among park employees and locals, as they saw their voices overridden by decisions made at a higher level.

The commodification of experiences is a process of permanent reinvention. Pursuit is now commodifying the-end-of-times, such as enabling the viewing of glaciers melting as a result of climate change. The Athabasca glacier in Jasper is one example (see image 13).

Image 13. Tourism, glaciers and climate crisis. Photo by the author.

Brewster, the tour operator (now owned by Pursuit), sends buses to the glacier, which is receding at a rate of 7 m per year and is expected to disappear before 2100. Also, as part of the same experience, Brewster runs the Columbia Icefield Center manages a Starbucks coffeeshop so visitors can view the glacier with a coffee in hand (image 14). When asked about this project, one manager expressed concerns that bringing buses to the glaciers might contradict the preservation efforts for such resources for future generations. But for now, Pursuit is also lobbying to expand these experiences through building a gondola to go to the glacier.

Image 14. Starbuck coffee at the Columbia Icefield Center. Photo by the author.

La Mauricie

In La Mauricie, the pressure of privatization and the expanding commodification of services are not experienced in the same way. In fact, there is no current private interest in expanding services. At one point, as N explained, one person wanted to develop a rental cabin project, but the proposal did not go far. Thus, in La Mauricie, the privatization of park services remains limited in number and scale, and recreation services continue to be mainly state-led. However, the idea of the park as an engine for economic development is strong in La Mauricie, as mentioned by managers and representatives from surrounding municipalities. For example, according to the visitor experience manager, the park plays a strategic role in the region as it serves as an economic driver. Local communities view the park as a significant source of employment opportunities, both through short term contracts and as permanent park workers.

6.5 Different ways neoliberal rationalities shape parks policies in a liberal democracy

As discussed in the chapter on the theoretical framework, neoliberal conservation approaches seek the privatization of certain state functions and the increased involvement of private actors in decision-making in the management and governance of these areas. In Canada, however, park management has not a clear tendency toward a neoliberal shift.

The introduction of business-like logics and the increasing efforts to boost revenues has not necessarily led to a neoliberalization of park governance, and much less to the neoliberalization of conservation. In relation to park governance, “rolling back of state” is not evident even though pressures in the Mountain Parks to influence decision making are permanent. I state that the overall state-led governance of parks holds significant power and influence over park management. Accordingly, Parks Canada strives to maintain political significance within public opinion as valued public spaces to safeguard public funding. Consequently, the agency adapts its financial governance to remain both a political and strategic state territorial project. Nevertheless, as I explain below, some neoliberal approaches emerge in the park’s governance in Canada.

One main trend is the integration of market-based principles into park governance. This shift in approach aligns with the emphasis on treating visitors as consumers to support park operations. Parks Canada grapples with limited budgets to manage these territories effectively for visitor enjoyment, as it must compete with other public agencies for budget allocations. Consequently, the revenue model aims to recuperate costs through visitor programming and increasing revenue from park visitors. However, the revenue model encounters various challenges, particularly in terms of maintaining park infrastructures. Ensuring the economic profitability of the parks often leads to tensions at the park level, where managers are compelled to make difficult decisions such as closing visitor sites or allowing infrastructures to deteriorate due to insufficient funding.

A second trend is the growing pressure for privatization for tourism development. According to T, a chief from the national office, “there's pressure in Canada for privatization; private companies certainly see the value in having access to our sites in general, using them for their own profitability, tour operators, guides, tourism companies …everyone sees the value of our natural resources to make profit.” While the land in Canada’s national parks remains public, privatization of land rights for tourism development is a permanent pressure by tourist operators. However, it remains limited by Parks Canada management plans and advances on a case-by-case basis. Although the expansion of the tourism sector is located primarily in the Mountain Parks, including Jasper, the pressure from the tourism industry has the potential to influence the decision-making process. Park governance is vulnerable to political shifts and changing priorities from governments. Yet, the privatization of sites management in the overall park system for tourism remains limited and contested by local communities, environmental NGOs, and the media.

Despite the prevalence of neoliberal logics that push for the marketization of nature and the economic viability of parks as competitive tourist destinations, this phenomenon is primarily observed in more touristic parks such as Jasper, where there has been an historical and ongoing commodification of landscapes for tourism purposes. However, in most parks, including La Mauricie, the absence of private interests for development prevails, and the management remains primarily state-controlled.

In Canada, the governance of parks depends on taxpayer support to sustain the park system. Consequently, parks provide a range of state-led services to facilitate the enjoyment of park visitors and to maintain their significance within Canadian society. Parks are regarded as recreational landscapes and iconic sites that hold cultural importance. As a result, the decisions made by parks are continuously monitored by local organizations and NGOs to prevent further commodification and privatization of park landscapes. This position against neoliberal expansion in Canada stems from the social perception that access to parks and spending leisure time there is a social right. This perception contrasts with the global trend, particularly in the Global South, where tourism

growth is often prioritized for generating international currencies for conservation and development projects, through promoting parks for a global tourist elite, and as such emphasizing economic development for developing countries over public recreation in parks (see for example in Latin America; Hardenberg et al., 2017 and Leal, 2017; and in Africa; Snyman & Spenceley, 2019; Spenceley, 2015). Additionally, as will be discussed in the following chapter, parks are valued as a significant space by Canadian settler society.

Lastly, it is important to emphasize that tourism businesses do not contribute to the financing of conservation practices intended to maintain or restore ecological integrity in national parks. While private tourism companies use public land and conservation territories through royalty agreements for commercial activities, the funding for conservation management primarily comes from the federal state budget and is carried out by park employees. Therefore, conservation efforts in national parks do not rely on the private sector, despite the fact that the tourism industry also profits from these territories. Thus, the argument often used elsewhere of neoliberal conservation to "sell nature to save it" (McAfee, 1999) does not apply in the same way. In Canada, national park conservation continues to remain within the public domain, without reliance on private actors for management and governance.

6.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, I recount how the management of nature is intertwined with economic and market logics and practices: how it happens, the state's rationalities, and its limitations. The integration of business-like management approaches is involved in governing and financing public spaces for enjoyment and conservation in Canada’s national parks. This form of management is a shift in approach, targeting park visitors as consumers while aiming to maintain these public spaces as accessible and economically profitable destinations. I analyze the calculations and the implications of the financial system for conserving and enhancing public use for visitors' enjoyment in two cases: Jasper, an

international tourism destination with significant visitor numbers and infrastructures, and La Mauricie, a smaller park with more local visits.

Governing these areas cannot be understood solely as a response to a pursuit for profit, at least pursuit of profit for private actors. I argue that the introduction of business-like logic in Canada does not necessarily entail the complete commodification of nature or the neoliberalization of conservation. Rather, state management has strengthened as a response to the implementation of the policies to increase visitors and revenues.

Additionally, a significant point to reiterate is that in Canada's national parks, visitation and tourism do not finance conservation efforts. Instead, it represents a complex political assemblage of ideas and rationales where state actors try to reconcile conservation needs, the state commitment to the expansion of conservation territories, and social needs and interests for access to recreational areas within changing institutional mandates and priorities. The case illustrates that the neoliberalization of conservation in Canada is far from complete. The multiple economic logics driving park management centers on maintaining relevance with the Canadian public as taxpayers supporting the park system.

Governing parks entails the growing need to legitimize outdoor recreation through the development of different visitor experiences. Despite being more expensive and labor-consuming than conservation, managing visitors remains pivotal to justifying and supporting state-managed conservation territories which are reliant on tax-based funding. The agency's financial system does not provide budget for maintenance, resulting in challenges in infrastructure and facilities upkeep as they undergo cycles of construction, deterioration, decline, as well as adaptations to changing social demands. Therefore, financing these spaces encompasses not only conservation and enjoyment, but also the maintenance of these material structures.

Lastly, in contrast to the increasing privatization of visitor and tourism services in some Global South regions, Canada continues to prioritize the socialization of nature in parks

as public spaces, and the organization of parks remains a state-led system. As a result, national parks in Canada are managed and subsidized spaces encouraging leisure and recreation for Canadians.

Chapter 7. Governing Visitors: Citizenship, Access and Perspectives of Inclusion in National Parks

7.1 Introduction

Who has access to recreational enjoyment in national parks, and who does not? International discussions often revolve around enhancing the right of local communities to access resources for survival (Brockington Daniel & Wilkie David, 2015). Moreover, international organizations are increasingly promoting nature-based tourism in national parks as a means to foster economic development (eg. Denman & Denman, 2015). In Canada, on the other hand, in addition to the ongoing land claims by Indigenous peoples seeking to reclaim their land rights from the Canadian state, there is a strong emphasis on strengthening notions of citizenship and promoting access to parks as a right.

In this chapter I ask: How have national parks have been conceptualized as public spaces and for whom are they governed? As discussed in previous chapters, visitation is a significant aspect of parks governance. National parks in Canada receive an annual influx of eighteen million visits and it plays a significant role in their planning, budgeting, and land use strategies. A central element of the governance of these places is the idea that they are managed "for the enjoyment of the Canadian people" (Parks Canada Agency, 2018), thus within their core responsibilities is not only providing access, but making visitation enjoyable. As such, one of the agency's objectives is to encourage the "connection of Canadians with nature" (Parks Canada Agency, 2022d). National parks in Canada are popular public spaces providing leisure and outdoor recreation opportunities for all visitors, but existing policies and management practices have historically privileged white settlers (MacLaren, 2011), excluded Indigenous peoples (Mortimer-Sandilands, 2011; Thorpe, 2011), and, I posit, marginalized other cultural practices of enjoyment. In this vein, some scholars have highlighted unequal access to parks, with wealthy, white, male, able-bodied individuals being overrepresented among visitors (Lemieux et al., 2022). As such, in line with Janae Davis's argument for U.S. national parks and wildland

areas (2019), the historical and cultural context of traditional users influences the development of park space, user perceptions, and visitation patterns. In this chapter, I argue that the management of parks has not encompassed an understanding of the spatial and recreational requirements of culturally diverse citizens and users. Despite programs aimed at promoting greater equity in access, the prevailing concept of recreation continues to perpetuate an idealized image of wilderness linked to the discrimination of other sociocultural groups from these recreational landscapes.

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in diversifying access to national parks, and ideas of inclusion have taken up growing space in the public agenda. This chapter aims to address my third research objective, which focuses on examining the social dimension of national park governance in Canada, particularly in relation to its conceptualization of citizenship and inclusion. I explore the evolution of these concepts within contemporary park governance and their potential to foster new socio-spatial formations for more socially diverse futures. I ask: which visitors are the focus of parks policies and management practices? What kinds of inclusion strategies are put in place in Canadian national parks? Lastly, how do diverse groups experience or contest access to national parks and the recreational experience they offer? To do this, I first describe who the park visitors are, delving into historical approaches for park users and forms of travel (section 7.2). Then, I explore evolving approaches for inclusion and citizenship according to the perspective of Parks Canada officials (section 7.3). Next, by drawing on perspectives from my case studies, I explore the spatial conceptualization of outdoor recreation and discuss how these notions underpin different ways of exclusion (section 7.4). Finally, I bring perspectives from community organizations and NGOs in order to discuss how the significance of privileges and inequalities attached to outdoor recreation is materialized through national parks (section 7.5).

7.2 Parks for whom? Citizenship, visitors and ideas of inclusion.

While much has been said about citizenship and public space as sites where citizens exert their rights and encounter diversity (Staeheli & Thompson, 1997; Ye, 2019), or as

grounds for citizenship negotiation and struggles (Massey, 2013), these debates often focus on the city. Less attention has been paid to access, or the lack thereof, to public spaces in rural areas, such as national parks. Unlike urban public spaces, access to these rural areas has been historically less diverse and, consequently, less subject to contestation. In Canada, as described in chapter 3, fostering citizenship in terms of access and experiences is one central dimension of national parks as state-led projects. However, there is a growing but still limited recognition of the underrepresentation of culturally diverse communities in these spaces. In this vein, despite a growing interest in exploring encounters with diversity and promoting inclusion in public spaces like Canadian national parks, the way in which these notions are incorporated into local management practices remains poorly explored. Examining ideas of citizenship, visitation and inclusion in public spaces such as national parks require first exploring the historical approaches taken by the state towards visitors.

At their inception, Canadian national parks were originally designed for the upper-middle class population. Visitation was closely tied to social class and such organization was around revenue-generating projects (Campbell, 2011; Lothian, 1976). Parks such as Banff and Jasper featured exclusive hotels, golf courses, and downhill skiing facilities that attracted famous individuals including Queen Elizabeth, renowned writers such as Conan Doyle, and celebrities like Marilyn Monroe and Bing Cosby, as well as businesspeople (Cronin, 2010; Taylor, 2009). This emphasis on exclusivity was evident in promotional films produced by the park service (Chapman, 1963; NFB, 1961; Parry, 1946; Scythes, 1947). This vision of visitation changed with the passage of the National Parks Act in 1930. This act declared that parks are "dedicated to the people of Canada," thereby reflecting a broader public mandate. In line with this act, the government intensified its efforts to promote parks as easily accessible outdoor "playground areas" that could be reached by train or car (Sandlos, 2011). This concept of fostering broad “democratic” access by automobile continues to shape the perception of national parks in present times. However, spots for privilege tourism remain in place in parks like Jasper and Banff,

where the public is segmented, with a concentration of international tourists hosted by the private tourism industry and Canadian public use facilities managed by Parks Canada.

The geographical expansion of the park system also embodied the idea that these places were an intrinsic part of Canadian identity. As noted by Campbell (2011), in the 1970s, a main driver of park expansion was the idea that national parks and its outdoor recreational activities could contribute to unifying Canada. As a result, the federal government established parks in every province, and promoted visitation across Canada (Mortimer-Santilands, 2009). Canadian national identity has been central to the agency discourses and planning documents; for example, the report of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity states that "Canadians prize wild nature and hold our parks among our most significant icons of national identity" (EI Panel, 2000:1). In this same context, more recently, national parks and historic sites have become venues for citizenship ceremonies to foster sense of nation and identity.

Despite a real mandate to democratize access to national parks, visitation continues to be organized around a specific mode of travel and sociability. Infrastructure and programming are designed for small groups of up to four people who use cars and bring camping and other kinds of outdoor gear. In this sense visitation still remains geared towards white settler Canadian families. Claire Campbell and others (2011) argue that outdoor recreation in parks is predominantly organized as "white spaces," and, as such, access is limited in a substantial sense which has reinforced privilege.

While specific demographic data for Canadian national parks is unavailable, scholars and managers generally agree that visitation is designed by and for white people, often referred to as "traditional visitors." This tendency is similar in the United States. According to a study that analyzed data from the National Park Service (NPS), there are low visitation rates from non-white populations (Scott & Lee, 2018). Hispanics and Asian Americans each comprised less than 5% of visitors, while less than 2% of visitors were African Americans. A separate survey found that white people represented 78% of visitors to national parks and 95% to national forests and grasslands (Thomas et al., 2022).

Furthermore, as Scott and Lee (2018) show, 80% of the workforce in the NPS is white. Scholars like Carolyn Finney (2014) in her work "Black Faces, White Spaces" assert that the historical underrepresentation of African Americans in visiting these sites stems from the reproduction of racialized constructions and representations of wildland as white spaces. This perpetuates essentialist stereotypes of blackness, influencing how African Americans engage with national parks, and other natural spaces. Moreover, Janae Davis (2019) builds on Finney's research, contending that racism and elitism embedded in wilderness ideology are evident in policies that erase the historical connections and day-to-day experiences of African Americans in national parks. Davis argues that these ideas persistently circulate through the media, reinforcing a racially stereotyped representation that suggests African Americans are disconnected, absent, or uninterested in wildland spaces, while portraying whites as outdoor enthusiasts who frequently visit backcountry areas. In the Canadian case, as discussed in section 7.5, community and non-governmental organizations are gradually trying to make parks more diverse and socially just spaces.

7.3 Approaches of Inclusion and Citizenship in Parks Canada: Four dimensions

In Canada, discourses, programs, and ideas about citizenship and national belonging have shifted during the last few decades. These shifts have had an impact on the ways that ideas of diversity and inclusion are conceptualized and prioritized in national parks. I have identified through my research four dimensions of the broad debates about citizenship and inclusion that have shaped national parks policy. These dimensions are not necessarily discrete but rather intertwined and overlap. The first dimension involves a desire to engage immigrants as a means for reflecting the changing sociodemographic and more diverse composition of the country. Recognizing their participation through visitation has been seen as crucial for the long-term political and economic relevance of parks. The second dimension focuses on accessibility and prioritizes removing physical barriers for persons with disabilities, largely through the federal infrastructure projects.

The third dimension concerns the idea of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The fourth dimension emerged in response to social justice movements and the acknowledgment of systemic racism within the federal government. Lastly, while not yet a clear dimension, there is an ongoing process led by community organizations to diversify access which is beginning to shape policies and specific programs. In what follows I offer details regarding these evolving processes.

The first dimension, which emerged in the early 2000s, aimed to engage a new generation of Canadians and increase visitor numbers to ensure support for national parks. R, a senior manager from the national office, explained the rationale behind this approach, stating, "we recognized that the visitors to our parks were predominantly rural Canadians and more traditional Canadians, rather than urban newcomers. So, we targeted urban cultural communities and newcomers to Canada in cities." R emphasized the importance of these social groups for sustaining the agency's work, stating, "If we want to have national parks in the future, we need their support." To achieve this, the agency focused on creating programs such as “Learn to Camp” in order to introduce camping and camping skills, such as setting up a tent, starting a campfire, and cooking outdoors, in parks or historic sites in cities or surrounding areas. The objective was to encourage visitation among cultural communities in cities with higher ethnic diversity. Engaging with “new Canadians,” including recent immigrants or first-generation Canadians, was seen as strategically important due to their increasing demographic importance. As stated in the Learn to Camp Handbook (Parks Canada Agency & MEC, 2013)

> As more and more Canadians are choosing to live in urban centres, we are finding a large percentage of the population living further away from national parks, national marine conservation areas and in some cases, national historic sites. In addition to this, research has suggested that both families with young children and new Canadians are facing many barriers to visiting and camping in Canada’s outdoors. These barriers include a lack of equipment, difficult

> access, and insufficient knowledge and understanding of outdoor opportunities (p.1).

In a similar vein, T, a chief from the national office asserts that some of these groups lack a cultural connection to national parks and have never visited one. This point was also addressed by B, a representative from an NGO, who added that, “the majority of newcomers are not aware that this is how you're supposed to enjoy nature in Canada.” Moreover, some managers pointed out that camping can have negative associations for certain people such as refugees who may link camping with traumatic past experiences. Thus, Parks Canada actively developed various strategies to make the parks more attractive, which involved offering a diverse range of experiences in urban settings, such as the Program Learn to Camp. Within this dimension, immigrants or new Canadians, started to be actively approached as a "new market," as I explain further in the next section.

Additionally, the agency implemented the oTENTiks (introduced in chapter 6) to attract visitors who may not be familiar with camping or who lack the necessary equipment. Currently, there are over 400 oTENTiks units at 30 different locations across Canada (Parks Canada Agency, 2022h). However, managers and officials have observed that they are not reaching new Canadians. An expert in infrastructure notes, "I can't confidently say that we are reaching the immigrant market. What we do know is that the oTENTiks are consistently fully booked across the entire country. They are extremely popular wherever they are." Due to privacy laws in Canada, Parks Canada cannot directly inquire about visitors' ethnicity or origin. Thus, managers have observed that visitors, tourists and even people with RVs are frequent users of oTENTiks, the latter because it is less expensive for them than renting a specific site that supports an RV.

The second dimension of the debate about inclusion encompasses gender identity, accessibility, and virtual inclusion. With the implementation of the Federal Infrastructure Program between 2016 and 2021, the focus shifted from a concern about including immigrants to emphasizing accessibility as a response to the recently enacted Accessible

Canada Act (SC. 2019, c 10). While Parks Canada has had an accessibility policy for the past 40 years (Parks Canada, 1984), the federal infrastructure program further expanded this concept. Infrastructure designs incorporated accessibility criteria to accommodate, for example, wheelchair users and strollers, but also to facilitate access for people with other mobility limitations. For instance, every national park has developed at least one accessible trail while also providing accessible picnic areas.

Recognizing sexual and gender diversity also became part of the infrastructure agenda, leading to the development of gender-neutral washrooms, also known as inclusive washrooms, in parks and workplaces. Park officials also extended perspectives on inclusion to virtual visits to some attractions. An engineer from the national office explained this approach, stating, "if we cannot make it physically accessible, we integrate virtual accessibility. We must ensure that we are providing an experience that is as equal as possible, minimizing any significant discrepancies." Thus, Parks Canada utilizes tools like Google Earth and internal photography to showcase virtually some of the park's remote sites. With this shift towards accessibility, the efforts related to engaging immigrants appears to have lost momentum.

The third dimension of inclusion shifted the focus towards reducing access costs by targeting specific demographics. In 2017, the Liberal government introduced the "free discovery pass" as the initial approach to lower access costs to celebrate Canada's 150th confederation anniversary. This pass allowed anyone interested in visiting national parks or historic sites to have year-round access, without distinction of citizenship status. That year, the government distributed 5.4 million free passes, and national parks saw a surge in visitors, with a total of 27 million people, breaking a decade-long declining trend. From then on, the agency began granting free access to all youth aged 17 and under. These measures complemented the "cultural access pass," now known as Canoo to target immigrants to access national parks and other iconic sites. While the pass was introduced in 2012, it underwent an expansion in 2022 to encompass all permanent residents who have arrived in Canada within the last five years. The motivation behind this decision was the significant decline (75.1%) in the number of permanent residents who had applied for

Canadian citizenship over the past decade. Canoo is managed by the Institute of Canadian Citizenship (ICC) which was co-founded by former Governor General of Canada Adrienne Clarkson to “facilitate and encourage newcomers on their journey towards full and active Canadian citizenship” (ICC, 2022).

According to the ICC CEO, the plummeting of citizenship “goes against everything we tend to think about Canada being a welcoming country” (ICC, 2023) and could potentially “harm Canada’s long-term economic, social and democratic resilience” (*ibid*). As such, facilitating access through free passes is, for the ICC, “a way to contribute to the connection of new Canadians with different places and histories of Canada” (B, personal communication).

The fourth dimension of debates about inclusion and access emerged in response to wider social justice movements such as Black Lives Matter, Every Child Matters, and Land Back, which led to the federal government acknowledging systemic racism in 2020 in Canada. The following year, the government introduced the year after the "Call to Action on Anti-Racism, Equity, and Inclusion in the Federal Public Service" (Shugart, 2021). Among other measures, the government provided funding opportunities for local organizations to raise awareness about systemic racism and the specific challenges faced by black people, people of colour, and Indigenous communities, including inequitable access to outdoor spaces. More specific to the agency, Parks Canada identified three key strategies as part of their priorities: increasing representation through inclusive hiring practices; strengthening participation; and collaboration with Indigenous groups as part of the reconciliation agenda, and that’s fourshowcasing a diverse range of users including black people, people of colour, and Indigenous peoples in public documents and social media (e.g., Parks Canada Agency, 2022). According to some research participants, some of these measures contained funding from the federal government for community organizations dedicated to addressing systemic racism during the pandemic, yet this funding was discontinued for the 2023-24 budget.

More recent discourse surrounding access to national parks and protected areas is being framed in yet another way, although it has not yet had an impact on policy. For community and non-governmental organizations, greater equity in accessing public spaces like national parks has become a topic of political and citizens' rights and a means to strengthen democratization. An article in Le Devoir, a Quebec newspaper, highlighted the issue with the headline "Québec solidaire veut «démocratiser» l'accès à la nature" (Provost, 2022). The article addresses existing inequality in terms of access to large green spaces in Quebec, such as national and provincial parks in particular, and proposes a discussion on the "right to nature." The suggested measures include making national parks accessible by public transportation, ensuring free entry, establishing a comprehensive network of urban parks, and providing free loans of equipment in public libraries and local parks.

The idea of promoting access to national parks is currently reinforced by movements like Healthy Parks Healthy People (HPHP), which aim to promote equitable access to parks and other public spaces in the context of health promotion and well-being. Originating in Australia in 2010, this initiative expanded to other countries, including Canada in 2017 (Lemieux et al., 2022). In 2019, the focus was extended to incorporate access to nature within health programs. Doctors and other licensed health care professionals in Canada prescribe free access to national and provincial parks through a program called PaRx (PaRx, 2022) to encourage patients to spend time outdoors as a way to improve mental and physical health.

However, attracting diverse visitors is not without contradictions and tensions. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a notable increase in people's demand for open and green spaces, resulting in a 50% surge in early reservations at national parks. As a representative from the national office highlighted:

> we've seen a big push to go to nature, people want to get out and they want space around them...a lot of people bought trailers, camping gear, people

> have started camping coming from urban centres that are probably not traditionally close to parks.

During my conversations with visitor experience managers, they acknowledged a shift in visitor demographics. Managers raised concerns regarding the increasing number of visitors and the emergence of new conflicts among this changing profile of visitors. For example, C, a manager in Jasper, observed that with COVID they were receiving more local visitors that were not used to visiting parks. C explained that this new profile of likely first-time visitors was less respectful of their surroundings and caused more issues such as garbage problems, wildlife conflicts, and conflicts with other visitors. Another manager in Jasper echoed similar sentiments, stating, "no, we don't want to invite just anybody. We want people to come who will follow our laws and show respect." This manager believes that maintaining an open invitation policy is no longer feasible, asserting, "we have everybody; there are too many of them. We want high-quality visitors who will respect our natural spaces." Similarly, La Mauricie experienced a significant increase in popularity, leading a representative from the visitor experience department to express a similar sentiment, saying, "we are currently at full capacity and do not require more visitors"[20]. In the present situation, with park services operating at full capacity, primarily by white visitors, the prioritization of diversity and inclusion has diminished. Political support for parks appears to be more influenced by the sheer volume of visitors and their increasing needs than by a deliberate effort to actively promote diversity.

These dimensions and their policy debates highlight the diverse approaches that Parks Canada have taken to address a lack of diversity. Some initiatives, such as offering free passes, are gaining momentum, while others, like focusing on specific groups such as immigrants, seem to be losing prominence. From this perspective, in the following discussion I present three different approaches to the spatialization of outdoor recreation in Canada. They emerge from my analysis as foundational planning concepts for outdoor

[20] On est plein… on n'a pas besoin de plus de visiteurs.

recreation, based on a particular way to experience nature, on what McLean (2013) identified as the reproduction of outdoor experiences as white spaces. However, these categories are not suitably adapted for the diverse preferences and requirements of other sociocultural groups.

7.4. Spatializing notions of nature: Outdoor recreation in Canada's national parks

Settler colonialism is deeply rooted in outdoor recreation practices in Canada, and as such has influenced the development and spatial planning of visitor experiences. In this section, I discuss three notions that have shaped the spatialization of outdoor recreation and privileged the white settler public as the standard. First, the spatial organization of infrastructure remains centred on a family of four who travels by car. Second, the designation of specific spaces and times of silence and noise responds to certain social values. And thirdly, recreational spaces mobilize a narrative reflecting a unique and dominant settler story of land occupation. These approaches have been pivotal in promoting a specific notion of nature while limiting alternative perspectives, alternative uses of space, and historical narratives related to Nature.

7.4.1 Sites for four

As several managers mentioned during the interviews, the typical visiting pattern for white Canadians involves camping with a family of four, including two kids and a tent. Parks Canada infrastructure experts and managers acknowledge that they design park facilities and services with this audience in mind. While recognizing the importance of attracting a more diverse range of visitors, park representatives admit that the current layout does not sufficiently address the needs of diverse groups. As explained by an infrastructure expert, "when other groups show up, they may have different preferences, such as travelling with multiple families." A manager in Jasper pointed out that the new Canadian market, or immigrant market, tends to travel in larger groups, and Parks Canada needs to consider how to accommodate them in a better fashion. This may involve designing sites that can

accommodate more people, introducing group areas for picnicking and barbecues, and creating connected sites with less separation between them.

The concept of having sites specifically designed for four people brings into question who exactly this idea of travel and enjoyment is intended for. It also offers a particular "Canadian" experience, focusing on small groups such as families or couples rather than accommodating larger groups of immigrants or groups from different cultural backgrounds. This raises concerns about inclusivity and diversity in park planning.

7.4.2 Politics of Silence and Noise

Since the 1930s, Parks Canada, then known as Parks Branch, has been crafting outdoor recreation experiences centered around the concepts of enjoyment and solitude. This period also coincided with the significant influence of automobile culture on park design and visitor experiences (Campbell, 2011). Park visitation planning since then has been based on motor vehicles (see for example image 15 in the following page) and for families of four, a standard approach that has influenced the politics of silence and noise. Campgrounds, for example, have quiet hours at night that go from 23h to 7h. However, the perception of noise and silence is often subjective according to different standards and priorities. In Jasper, for example, the sounds of railways and highways can be heard from most campgrounds day and night.

Image 15. Miette hot springs auto-camp (1946). Source: Jasper Yellowhead Museum &Archives, Courtesy of Parks Canada

In La Mauricie, motorcycle travel has become popular, with a growing number of riders traversing the parkway, an activity that has been promoted increasingly by the regional press (e.g. Durivage, 2022). The sound of motorcycles reverberates through the valleys and can be heard on almost every trail in the park, including the campgrounds.

Thus, definitions of noise and silence are certainly contestable. Some groups associate visiting a park with tranquillity, while others view it as an opportunity for celebration with music, dancing, and larger gatherings. However, there are no designated spaces for these activities. The regulations surrounding noise are influenced by specific values, leading to questions about which sounds are permitted, in what manner, and which ones are not.

7.4.3 Hegemonic settler history

As Desiree Valadares (2018) has argued, parks have one official story: a settler colonial history that has significantly shaped national identity. Other narratives, such as those of Indigenous peoples and their relationship to the land, have been overlooked and are still missing from these recreational landscapes. Thus, parks continue to reflect a powerful settler story of colonization and science through interpretative infrastructure, peoples and guides, while Indigenous peoples strive to share their own histories.

In Jasper National Park, the main narrative surrounding the parkways, through interpretative panels and historical plaques, focuses on the story of colonization. Jasper is one of Canada's most iconic tourist destinations and is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. There are five national historic sites tied to the settler colonial history within the park: the Athabasca Pass, Jasper House, Jasper Park Information Centre, Maligne Lake Chalet and Guest House, and Yellowhead Pass. These sites uphold and perpetuate the dominant story of explorers and white settlers in their occupation of the territory which address the fur trade troops crossing the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and the early development of tourism. Additionally, there are many historical signs and plaques along Highway 93A including 37 federally listed heritage buildings (see images 16 below). In contrast, there are no records of Indigenous people's settlements, as these settlements were dismantled by park wardens following the park's establishment. Furthermore, access to homestead sites that remain in the park is limited.

The images below illustrate some of the historical signs for sites of attraction in Jasper. For example, the Henry House panel (top left) marks the location of the house owned by William Henry of the North West Company. It was built in 1811 to support David Thompson's exploration of the Athabasca Pass. The plaque states "when the pass became the principal route to the Pacific this was the staging point where travellers crossing the mountains changed from water to land transport." Next the top centre image, the plaque on the Athabasca River commemorates David Thompson's 1911 expedition, establishing the inaugural fur trade route through the Rockies. This river was proclaimed

as part of the Canadian Heritage Rivers Systems in 1989. To the far right, the landmark of the Jasper house refers to the former location of a trade post for crossing Athabasca Pass to the Pacific, under the ownership of the North West Company. Managed by Jasper Hawes, the house was built in 1829. In the bottom left, a white panel dedicated to Pocahontas provides a concise history of the namesake mine owned by Jasper Park Collieries Limited. The panel states that “[t]he town was named after a very successful coal town in Virginia but did not share the same success. The company closed the mine in 1921 when it could no longer compete for a share of the coal market. Since then, the mine entrances have been closed and the buildings either moved away or destroyed. Overgrown trails and foundations remain.” Lastly, the Jasper Information Centre plaque described that the building was designated as a heritage site due to its influential park architecture. Constructed in 1914 as the town's primary building, it operated as both the administration office and a museum. Its location in front of the train station offered a welcoming sight to incoming visitors.

Image 16. Some of the commemorative plaques or historical sites that can be observed in Jasper. Source: Photographs by the author, Jasper national park 2021.

Settlers explored and traveled in the area with the guidance of Indigenous guides who showcased the various trails, sites, and passes. Then, once the park was created, early tourism services relied on the assistance of Indigenous peoples, who helped carry the equipment or set up teepees to accommodate travelers (e.g. Schaffer & Beck, 2011). The narrative overlooks the history of Indigenous land occupation and their knowledge as central element for the establishment of parks and the early tourism industry.

Although the park has hired Indigenous interpreters in the past, a manager explained that they left because they faced daily racism when sharing their culture with visitors. Additionally, they found it hard to work in an organization that did not completely accept their heritage. The closest Indigenous communities are four hours away from Jasper town, making reconnections with their traditional land difficult. Indigenous communities do not own any buildings within the park territory, making their role in the park governance harder. The park is currently working with more than 20 First Nations, Métis, and non-status Indigenous communities and organizations with connections to the land of Jasper National Park. The main mechanism of dialogue and participation with Indigenous communities is through the Jasper Indigenous Forum, which has met bi-annually since 2006 (Parks Canada Agency, 2021a). However, according to the various managers, significant gaps persist in community representation. Furthermore, according to the Tourism Jasper CEO, there are only two businesses owned and operated by Indigenous. representatives among 70 tourism services.

In La Mauricie National Park, the Atikamekw and W8baniakak Indigenous groups are trying to strengthen their connection with the land. In this process, the park holds three or four meetings per year with these communities in what they call as the "tripartite committee." The committee includes the director and representatives from the communities, and is mean to create a space of dialogue and community consultation. Based on my conversations with managers, the W8baniakak's relationship with the park is focused on the pursuit of development opportunities via contracts facilitated through the W8baniakak Grand Council, which functions as a company. Additionally, the

Atikamekw community has also expressed the need for consultation in matters concerning scientific and management decision-making within the park. Still, besides the ongoing contracts, the Indigenous people's presence within the park remains disconnected. For example, the park's workforce includes only one Atikamekw full time employee. Overall, the acknowledgement of stories from and by Indigenous peoples, who have historically been barred or marginalized from accessing their traditional land, is lacking or remains marginal.

7.5 Inequalities and privileges: Perspectives from community and non-governmental organizations

The approaches discussed in this section highlight a specific perspective on public space, in which the general public, predominantly white Canadians, are commonly viewed as the standard, while immigrants or individuals without park experience are seen as a "new market." The imagined "visitors" raise concerns about representation, race, and their implications within the park system. It prompts us to consider how the ideal visitor is perceived, who is considered a citizen in this context, and how racial biases may influence this perception. In the following discussion, I explore the central elements that contribute to the lack of diversity and the perpetuation of privilege in outdoor recreation for traditional visitors or white settlers. To do this, I draw upon interviews and informal conversations with representatives from five community organizations and one non-governmental organizations (NGOs), discussing their advocacy efforts for increasing diversity in these public spaces, the sense of exclusion experienced by diverse groups, and then describing the inequalities and privileges associated with outdoor recreation in parks.

7.5.1 Feeling of Not Belonging or Being Out of Place

The feeling of not belonging or being out of place is a common experience for non-white communities, including black communities, people of colour, and new Canadians, when they engage in outdoor activities. As a representative from a community organization in Montreal remarked, "when individuals from marginalized communities enter these

spaces, they experience a range of reactions, from feeling unwelcome to encountering a sense of exclusion or questioning their presence." Thus, the question of who is considered a citizen and to what extent policies are adapted to accommodate diverse human groups becomes relevant for discussion.

The feeling of not belonging was mentioned in different conversations with community representatives. For example, during our conversation, W a researcher on "Black Outdoors," drew attention to the predominant white representation in visitation to Canadian national parks. According to W, "when Black people show up, it's like, *oh, surprise, what are you doing here?*" As W points out, the act of surprise is a way of erasing hundreds of years of Black history in Canada: "it sets up the idea that Black people are recent immigrants" (W, personal communication) undermining their long-standing presence as well as history of slavery in the country. W also states that the absence of black people in national parks is expressed in different ways. For example, in the National Geographic Guide to National Parks in Canada (2016), which is published as an official guide of Parks Canada, none of the 256 pictures has a single black person, and "it tells you that black people are not the target audience, are not expected and are not wanted in those spaces" (W, pers. comm.) This exclusionary representation has significant implications, as it erases black experiences in outdoor recreation and undermines black people's sense of belonging. W emphasized that when people do not see themselves represented, they do not identify with the space and may even perceive it as an insecure or unwelcoming environment.

In addition to these insights, a representative from a Toronto-based outdoor organization shared with me his experiences as an immigrant and canoeing enthusiast in national parks. He explained, "they (the staff) have never made me feel unwelcome, but I feel out of place...they're making me feel out of place. It's a really difficult feeling to go through, because of my own ignorance or lack of knowledge or whatever…"

According to B, an ICC representative that works with the Canoo pass, experiencing outdoor activities is a way of participating in this society, thus facilitating access and

activities is a way to strengthen a sense of belonging of diverse sociocultural communities. For B,

> a big percentage of the life of somebody who is born and raised in Canada is interacting with the park system or outdoor activities in general, biking, skiing, hockey, skating, camping, kayaking, canoeing…however 60% of Canoo audience is people coming from India, China, Philippines, and Brazil. Their cultures, it's more about city living, it's more about sort of urban life in most cases.

Nonetheless, for immigrants, having leisure time is not always a reality; rather, it is a privilege that is often unattainable. According to B, the priority is to find a job, learn the language, and adapt to their new life. In this vein, B points out "that newcomers have a difficult life. Getting a job isn't easy, enjoying yourself is expensive…" Overall, for B, "facilitating leisure time is crucial for fostering positive experiences and memories of Canada...we hope that that makes newcomers feel that Canada appreciates them, and we hope this makes newcomers appreciate Canada more as well" (pers. communication, 2023).

Leisure and access to parks is, for the Canadian society, understood as a right and a significant element for citizenship formation. As such, organizations such as the ICC understand integration with society through supporting leisure with free access to different sites, including fostering enjoyment in national parks. However, having leisure time is a privilege, and engaging in leisure activities is frequently associated with high costs.

7.5.2 Inequalities and Privileges in Cost and Leisure Time

A central characteristic of the Canadian national parks is that they are located far from cities and lacking public transportation access. Access within national parks is predominantly by car. Thus, access is a real limitation, restricted to people that have access to a private vehicle and/or the ability to pay for the cost of transportation, including renting a car, plus the entry fees. The lack of public transportation to these territories is

an element that fosters inequality in access. Additionally, hiking, fishing, canoeing, cross-country skiing, and biking requires gear, which means briging their own or renting. Consequently, a general comment from community organization representatives is that going to national parks is expensive. For the representative of Plein Air Interculturel:

> Affordability is a crucial criterion for me when searching for places to visit. It's very expensive for me to organize a trip to a park because there is the cost of getting there, the cost of getting in, and then there's the question of where do you get the gear… the advantage of some municipal or regional parks is that some of them don’t have entry fees.

The absence of public transportation to and within national parks is a situation that immediately creates a limitation and privileges those with access to a car over those without. According to a representative from a community organization in Montreal, "for many racialized people and other cultural communities, nearby nature may be the only accessible natural space." Therefore, emergent social organizations try to reduce these barriers, offering transportation services, such as Park Bus (or the Navette Nature in its Quebec version), to provide accessible transportation and to organize trips for people of different backgrounds. Such programming is often subsided by local governments.

To acknowledge and address these barriers, Parks Canada has, for over a decade, been implementing different strategies to organize outdoor activities in urban centers. Since 2012, the Learn to Camp program has introduced camping experiences in urban environments across Canada, providing camping equipment, and offering instruction in setting up a tent, building a campfire, and camp cooking (for a reference see image 17 below). Recent initiatives like Learn to Fish, Learn to Canoe, or Learn to Cross-country Ski aim to overcome the cost barrier and lack of equipment by offering these activities for free or at a low cost in cities. According to the coordinator of Plein Air Interculturel, "this represents a significant first step. However, the challenge lies in bridging the gap and making the link to getting those people to actually go to visit national parks, which are typically located far away. This requires further efforts and considerations." Community

organization representatives agree that visiting national parks can be expensive and is often seen as a privilege reserved for those who can afford the necessary leisure time and resources.

Image 17. Learn to Camp at the Canal (National Historic Site).
Photo by the author when I registered to Learn to Camp in June 2019 and camped in downtown Montreal.

Ye (2019) points out a limitation of inclusion approaches, which often equate inclusion with assimilation practices that expect newcomers to conform to the norms of the majority. While these programs may seek to assimilate immigrants or first-time visitors by instructing them on how to behave or to adopt settler notions of nature, representatives from local organizations argue that collaborative efforts in designing and managing activities are crucial. This collaborative approach ensures that activities are grounded and tailored to various audiences' diverse needs and voices and overall integrating multiple ways of seeing and enjoying nature.

In this perspective, the focus shifts from a solely state-driven vision of inclusion to creating spaces where community and non-governmental organizations collaborate to democratize public space and outdoor recreation, including within national parks. In this vein, community and local organizations, such as Colour the Trails, Black Canadian Hikers, Plein Air Interculturel, Park Bus, and Navette Nature, L'Environment est Intersectionel, among others, strive to move away from privileging white settler standards

and explore alternative strategies to enhance and diversify access to public spaces, such as national parks. They are advocating for the rights of diverse populations to enjoy these spaces. For the Plein Air Interculturel representative, access to these places should be a matter of equity:

> People come here to Canada and some of them may have heard about these great parks they want to experience…everyone should be able to experience that in a canoe, hopefully, should be an issue of equity, but in the end, it turns out to be complicated and hard to get there… coordinating this program I've come to really value urban nature so much more.

Access to national parks represents a form of leisure time consumption, making it a privileged activity for engaging in outdoor recreation, which is unattainable for some groups. However, community organizations are increasingly recognizing the need to make this privilege a matter of equity, ensuring that everyone has opportunities to access, experience, and enjoy the recreational offerings of these parks.

7.6 Conclusions

The representation of Nature in Canada's national parks is continuously remade, reflecting shifting ideas of citizenship. Understanding who is Canadian in the park context remains contested. The parks agency often views white settlers as the standard, while immigrants or new Canadians are represented as a new market to educate, integrate or assimilate. In this vein, settler colonialism remains the dominant framework in shaping the geography of parks, reinforcing a particular image of nature as wilderness ethic and emphasizing its history of colonization. Consequently, the politics and management of parks are deeply intertwined with the intersections of race and colonialism.

Despite the shifting perspective on inclusion and the changing initiatives within Parks Canada to make park visitorship more diverse, which involves including nontraditional

visitors within the realm of "Canadian nature," the primary objective remains to uphold the political relevance of parks.

Overall, I consider that white Canadians build and reproduce their privileges through leisure in outdoor recreation in Canadian national parks. This cumulative, intergenerational practice shaped by privilege is continuously reproduced through generations by means of ongoing exposure and educational experiences in outdoor recreational activities. Learning those skills is like participating or being a member of a community with a common identity, recognized and valorized by governmental approaches. Thus, to break down social inequalities in Canada and foster inclusion of diverse marginal communities, one government strategy is to facilitate and provide leisure and outdoor recreation in national parks or urban public sites.

Chapter 8. Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

As I prepare to write these concluding thoughts, my former colleagues from Chile are in the midst of preparing for their journey to the Seventh Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), scheduled for the end of August 2023 in Vancouver. The GEF Assembly will meet to discuss the way the outcomes of the COP 15 will be implemented. Specifically, the focus will be on determining which conservation practices are going to be promoted for attaining the goal of protecting the 30% of the planet by 2030, along with determining how and for what purpose funds should be transferred from the Global North to the Global South to support conservation and restoration. The debates and negotiations that will be held at the Assembly reaffirm the significance of conservation governance in the contemporary moment, debates that I have explored in relationship to national parks through this research.

The objective of this dissertation has been to examine the rationales underpinning the governance of national parks. More specifically, this dissertation has explored the way national parks simultaneously govern conservation and public access. In this context, Canada presents a unique case for exploring national park governance. It represents the world's first park system, a system that was created and reproduced in a way that maintains political and social relevance and, as such, it is one of the most well-funded park systems globally. Strategies for governing parks in Canada focus on both scientific managerial strategies for conservation and promoting access for people's enjoyment as identified by the government priority "Connecting with Canadians." Conservation, or more precisely, restoring and maintaining ecological integrity, has political implications given that Parks Canada presents the outcomes of its monitoring to the parliament every year. Meanwhile, access policies aim to shape environmental subjectivities, while serving as a means to sustain and support the park system both politically and financially. Thus,

conservation, citizenship, and access to these public spaces stand as core concepts in their governance.

This dissertation has centered on the different dimensions of governing these public spaces amidst growing ecological crises and an increasing demand for public access. While I emphasize the importance of scientific approaches for biodiversity conservation to ensure a multispecies future, my broader objective is to expand the discourse to encompass and intersect with the intricate scientific, political, social, and economic dimensions of nature conservation. Thus, throughout this dissertation I offered important insights into different policies and practices by asking 1) How have different scientific conceptualizations of Nature shaped the governance of national parks? 2) To what extent is the economic governance of parks in Canada shifting towards neoliberal logics? 3) How have national parks been conceptualized as public spaces and for whom are they governed? In addressing these questions, I examined various scales of state power, encompassing visions mobilized at the federal level as well as within specific parks. Throughout this process, I explored the distinct regulations and practices put in place to oversee nature and treat visitors as subjects of political, environmental, and economic concern.

8.2 Synthesis

Each chapter provides a distinct lens to understand the management of nature, specifically focusing on the scientific, financial, and social approaches as core components of parks governance. These perspectives represent different management rationales and, as such, distinct techniques of government. What I have shown in this dissertation is the complexity of political assemblages of Parks Canada rationales through which state actors attempt to reconcile past ecological management through restoration and social interests for outdoor recreation, all within changing institutional mandates and priorities, including the current state commitment to significantly expand conservation territories.

I have argued that in Canada national parks are sites of privilege and inequality. These privileges and inequalities are situated in different scales. First, the managerial perspectives of governance represent a system of political and social priorities. This includes emphasizing scientific management to reshape and restore natures, privileging the scientific management of some species over others, as well as prioritizing enjoyment for specific social subjectivities. These privileges have been created and reproduced through the exclusions of others, particularly Indigenous groups whose historical and ongoing displacement is a condition for the broader settler population's enjoyment. Furthermore, these privileges have prioritized granting access for outdoor recreation as a prevailing value in parks planning. Therefore, planning policies do not address alternative ways through which marginalized groups enjoy nature. In this context, experiences have been planned historically for traditional Canadians as a standard. A resulting sense of exclusion experienced by immigrants or other sociocultural groups in these places has resulted in a growing demand by community organizations and NGOs to democratize access as a social right to nature.

In Chapter Four I began by exploring the national park concept, policies, and institutions, both historically and geographically. One point that I make in this chapter is that, from the Global North to the South, the notion of park access takes on distinct meanings, promoted for domestic enjoyment in the Global North and managed as international tourism destinations in the South. Thus, the role of the state and the market varies significantly in parks governance at the global scale. I also delve into Canada's influential role on the global stage in different periods and, more specifically, I address how Canada introduced the concept of ecological integrity into the international agenda of conservation and protected areas.

Accordingly, in Chapter Five I examine the rise of ecological integrity in the 2000s as the main concept guiding scientific management of biodiversity in Canada’s national parks. My investigation illustrates the turn to this paradigm through an analysis of the management of trees and fish in Jasper and La Mauricie national parks. These case

studies unveil the dynamic processes of past natural resource exploitation and the subsequent transformation of park spaces for recreation, as well as the ongoing scientific interventions for ecological restoration within these parks. The analysis interrogates the concept of ecological integrity and more precisely scientific management of restoration. I refer to these “restored” spaces as “fourth natures;” they follow historic, capitalist-driven exploitation and modifications of ecosystems for recreation. I focus on scientific work that produced new natures through efforts of restoration. This process involves different scientific actions including the reproduction of fingerling species using DNA, the killing of invasive species with chemical products, and the reintroduction of controlled burns, actions that seek to enrich biodiversity and create systemic stability over time. Restoring ecological integrity is a process led by scientists and technicians in concrete and often small territories. The chapter shows that the concept of ecological integrity and the practices of scientific restoration fail to take into action the agency of humans and, as such, reproduce an inaccurate concept of ideal wilderness. This ideal is reproduced in scientific practices in the search of “integrity,” as well as for visitors, through the representations of transformed landscapes as wilderness.

In Chapter Six, I undertook an examination of the economic principles that underpin the ways conservation and visitor experiences are financed as core components of parks management. I explored the state adoption of business-like logics to finance the management of these public spaces as economically profitable destinations. In this context, I argue that business-like management is one expression of a market-based approach, given that its goal is to increase revenues from visitors. I particularly focused on the degree to which these approaches have led to a full engagement with neoliberal management strategies, a prevailing trend in conservation governance elsewhere (Adams et al., 2014; Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Fletcher et al., 2014). I posit that Canada has taken a distinct path. Despite efforts to boost revenue from visitors, market-driven justifications have not resulted in the neoliberalization of conservation governance in Canadian national parks. While influences from the tourism industry are significant in some places—as has been the case since the first parks were established in the Mountain

Parks—I state that Canadian parks policies are resisting further commodification and privatization. Instead, the state is increasing funding to facilitate public access for visitors, granting free access for some social groups including children, new citizens, and permanent residents. A pivotal idea underpinning the financial management is that visitors and tourists do not directly finance conservation efforts. Rather, their consumption partially offsets the expenses of their visits through entry and campground fees, along with other recreational fees (such as fishing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing trails). Assuring the popularity of parks is a strategy to uphold these spaces as state-led political and territorial projects, sustaining the relevance of park management within the government's priorities.

The last empirical chapter explores the concepts of citizenship and access. I focused on the ways the parks are sites that socialize a particular perspective and relationship with nature, that of outdoor recreation. I explored the social dimensions of national parks, examining to whom these policies and practices are directed and to whom they are not. I state that privileged groups in Canada augment their subjectivity through leisure in outdoor recreation in Canadian national parks. This privilege is reproduced generationally, through ongoing exposure and educational experiences in outdoor recreational activities. Learning those skills is like participating in or to being a member of a community with a common identity, recognized and valorized by the government. To break down social inequalities in Canada and foster inclusion of diverse marginal communities, one government strategy has been to facilitate and provide leisure and outdoor recreation in national parks and urban public sites. Here I shed light first on state approaches for inclusion and then to the growing demands of community organizations and NGOs for the right to nature. As such, I aim to show that in Canada there is an ongoing trend of demanding park access as a social right.

8.3 Research contributions

By taking a broad view of the entanglement of scientific, economic, and social policies and practices in an effort to manage nature and human access in national parks, this

dissertation has developed an integrated picture of the way national parks governs simultaneously biodiversity conservation and human access. Through this work, I demonstrate the interconnections between park sites, as well as the origin of the logics underpinning the different rationales and decision making of national parks. In the paragraphs that follow, I highlight the main theoretical contributions of this study.

Theoretically, this study addresses several debates in geography and political ecology. First, this research presents a case study of national parks governance in the Global North. As such, this study offers a perspective of a “first world political ecology,” as termed by McCarthy (2002). While most political ecology scholarship has centered on case study analysis in the Global South, this study offers a distinct framework for geographic and political research by providing a rich and qualitative analysis for the Canadian park system. Thus, my aim is to contribute to the knowledge gap in conservation governance in the Global North. I did this by exploring the main debates, tensions, contradictions and possibilities that currently exist in Canada at the federal level and in two case studies, Jasper and La Mauricie national parks.

Second, this dissertation contributes to debates on the social construction of nature and more specifically, to the idea of the restoration of ecological integrity as a process of scientific reconstruction of nature. I demonstrate that scientific management marks a continuous effort to create new natures after capitalist extractions and, in the context of national parks, after past management strategies that shaped landscapes for recreation. I refer to these efforts as fourth natures, following Cronon's (1992) second natures, denoting capitalist environmental transformation, and Tsing's (2015) third natures, referring to that which thrives despite capitalism. The reconstruction of fourth natures involves shaping nature under intensive control, management, and monitoring, demanding substantial resources in terms of funding, people, and technologies. Fourth natures offer the potential to rebuild ecosystems and increase diversity of species; however, their geographic scope is very limited, resembling localized laboratory experiences. Therefore, they are processes that are legible and visible only to scientists

and park managers, unfolding in specific locations. Accordingly, these processes are not necessarily evident for the broader public for whom nature in national parks is still presented as an ideal wilderness.

Third, this dissertation speaks to the broad debate in conservation governance in relationship to neoliberal conservation. Although Canadian parks were conceived, expanded, and continue to operate within a deeply capitalist system, my perspective diverges from scholars who assert that Parks Canada has shifted toward a neoliberal conservation governance approach (e.g. Stinson & Lunstrum, 2022; Youdelis, 2018). The rise of neoliberalism in conservation has garnered substantial attention within the political ecology research, illuminating the growing market influence on conservation decision-making, alongside the advancing processes of marketization, commodification, and privatization. Here I contend that, as of now, Canada has not fully embraced a neoliberal system. While the government has aimed to enhance park profitability over time to augment revenues, these policies have lost momentum. The management of parks as state-led initiatives remains a significant political and public project. Support of public access has materialized through different strategies, including waiving park entrance fees for specific groups and implementing inclusion projects.

Fourth, this research also adds to broader discussions surrounding inclusion, citizenship, and public space. By presenting state perspectives on inclusion concerning national park access, this study enriches the debate about belonging or the lack thereof when accessing public spaces, such as national parks. As I have pointed out, the management of Canada's national parks has perpetuated the values and perspectives of dominant groups, identified by Parks Canada as traditional Canadians, in defining and planning outdoor recreation. Consequently, this has led to the exclusion and marginalization of certain groups, resulting in their limited participation in these spaces. In this context, I emphasized the growing engagement of community organizations and NGOs in promoting access to national parks and other public spaces to democratize and diversify accessibility. Therefore, this dissertation bolsters an emerging debate in political ecology that advocates for the right to nature (Apostolopoulou & Cortes-Vazquez, 2018). The

study emphasizes how these organizations are gaining traction in their efforts to increase diversity and enhance access to public and green spaces. As such, the study highlights the emerging social demands to assert their right to nature as a way of seeking retribution and acknowledging their social right to public spaces. These collective actions operate on the periphery of market and state initiatives, shedding light on collective pathways to make access to rural public spaces, such as national parks, more inclusive.

On an empirical level, my research contributes to some of the Parks Canada research priorities[21] which I will subsequently outline in a policy document upon submitting my dissertation. The government priority, "Connecting to Canadians," stands as a central focus of investigation within this study. I delve into the historical evolution of logics that have guided the attraction of visitors to Canada's national parks. More specifically, I focused on contemporary strategies of inclusion. This research presents an innovative analysis that offers a broader perspective on inclusion and exclusion, shedding light on why immigrants and marginalized groups may experience a feeling of exclusion when visiting these public sites. Consequently, I introduce specific case study analyses and viewpoints that underscore the exclusive nature of park planning and experiences, highlighting the dominance of a single perspective on nature. I also incorporate viewpoints from community organizations and NGOs on this matter to examine the manifestation of privileges and inequalities associated with outdoor recreation within national parks. Exploring these policies and practices becomes crucial in comprehending strategies for and managing visitors and expanding perspectives of inclusion in these sites. I anticipate that these findings will contribute to the ongoing policy dialogues surrounding Parks Canada's approaches toward inclusion and the diverse perspectives of citizenship.

[21] Obtained from their site: https://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/rps/RPSResN_e.asp as part of the application to obtain the Parks Canada Research Permit in 2018.

8.4 Limitation of this study

There are limitations to this study. First, due to the COVID pandemic and the related travel restrictions, the data collection and analysis timeframe was compressed. This limited, for instance, the possibility of returning to the field and validating my findings, as I had originally planned. While I managed to confirm certain findings with a few participants from the national office, this process could have been more extensive. Second, in terms of the selection of case studies, Jasper and La Mauricie are iconic examples of national park management in Canada for both conservation and recreation. These cases showcased the trajectory of these ideas and the complexity of dealing with different past management approaches now. However, in this research, I didn't include other governance and management approaches, such as newer protected areas, marine parks, urban parks, and jointly managed parks with Indigenous communities. This could have provided new insights into more recent management approaches, including aspects of conservation, financing, and access. Finally, a third limitation relates to the perspectives and perceptions of visitors. Here, I focused primarily on the viewpoints of public officials, as well as representatives from municipalities, tourism chambers, some community organizations, and NGOs. I did not directly analyze the perspective of visitors themselves—who they are, their interests, motivations, and perceptions of inclusion or exclusion. I believe that investigating this aspect would be an important undertaking in the future.

8.5 Future research directions

In the course of my studies, I became immersed in conversations, policy discussions at the international debates with the CBD, IUCN working groups to trace histories and ideas and in sessions with community organizations talking about access or the lack thereof to protected areas and green spaces. I also wanted to attend as many (often virtual) conferences, webinars, and training sessions as possible. These conferences and seminars helped me understand where the evolving debates in conservation governance are moving and which are losing momentum. I was constantly seeking to understand the

emerging debates on these subjects, as well as the interests of community organizations, while at the same time these conversations opened up many new questions and research directions.

This research project has given an account of the contemporary moment of the debate on conservation governance and management policies, a strong debate that is taking place here and now, at COP 15 as well as the GEF 7 Assembly. Although throughout this thesis I make gestures towards new productions of nature, much remains to be done by studying, for example, social approaches or new conservation projects and practices that emerge. For example, the Government of Canada announced $800 million funding over seven years at the COP 15 to support up to four Indigenous-led conservation initiatives of lands and waters in the Northern shelf Bioregion in British Columbia, in Qikiqtani Region in Nunavut, and in Ontario's Hudson Bay Lowlands, as well as the coastline of Western Hudson Bay and southwestern James Bay (Canada, 2022a). In terms of providing more diverse and inclusive access to public spaces, Parks Canada is trying to find new collaborative governance approaches with a diversity of social groups including Indigenous peoples, and to create a network of national urban parks in Canada's large urban centers. There is work to be done here which will require different research methodologies and approaches to put into practice different ways of understanding humans' relations with nature.

This doctoral research project engaged with the discourses, practices, and policies of conservation, finance, and access. Therefore, in the future I hope to work closely with those seeking alternatives to traditional forms of conservation governance and contribute more pragmatically to political trajectories. A research direction that I am planning to investigate is the examination of social movements that engage with the right to nature. I am particularly interested in bringing more case studies of the Global South.

8.6 Last words: Navigating ecological futures

Amidst an ongoing backdrop of ecological crises, these concluding words of my dissertation ponder on ecological futures—a future that embraces diverse paths for abundant and diverse species to coexist (Collard et al., 2015), as well as a broader recognition of a right to nature. Such ecological futures might embrace multicultural spaces for walking for humans and a rich diversity of non-humans.

One manager shared with me the opinion that they “protect what remains." This insight sparked a plethora of reflections regarding the structure of capitalist organization, where nature encompasses conservation on one end—where scientists envision ecological futures within defined limits and monitoring, as the cases of national parks. On the other end, beyond the boundaries of parks or conservation territories, exploitation and expanding urbanization threaten biodiversity and the extinction of millions of species. As a result, the reproduction of this specific relationship between humans and nature portends an ecological future of crises where species will continue to disappear. In response, this last section speaks on possibilities beyond capitalist extractions, colonial relations to nature, and beyond the boundaries of scientific work.

Although scientific efforts for restoration play an important role in making space for more species diversity, as many scholars have already pointed out and my research also shows, their geographical scope and capacity is limited. As such, ecological futures might embrace wider possibilities that transcends Western epistemologies and ontologies to foster worlds that makes more room for other species. This could be a project of collective works of social processes of restoration for a diversity of species and humans to walk around and enjoy.

Ecological futures might encompass exploring diverse pathways in order to democratize the (re)creation of ecological integrity, involving collective and social efforts in restoring ecologies that extend beyond conventional scientific paradigms. Such a project might include not only national parks but schools, gardens, urban parks, and farms. Collective

restoration projects could span both rural and urban environments. Democratizing ecological integrity should be a concern that involves a range of human subjects and relies on a different assembly of social natures, one that is not based on the division of nature and humans, or in capitalist exploitation and commodification. The democratization of ecological integrity entails initiatives that encourage collaboration among diverse knowledge systems, and that transcend scientific leadership. These initiatives involve interventions from both humans and non-humans, fostering a multicultural future within a multispecies environment.

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