

# Tourism development in Norwegian national parks - some management challenges

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## Outline

- National park management in general
- The management of national parks in Norway
- Some basic questions asked in the present empirical study
- Method used
- Results/ Discussion
- Concluding remarks

## National park management in general: A potential conflict with tourism development interests

- The planning and administering of national parks imply the handling of two goals that are both competing and overlapping at the same time;
  - preserving the natural resource base and
  - providing access for visitors that come to enjoy the same nature and landscape

## The conflict is rooted in differences in fundamental goals:

- Dissimilar cultures and divergent social dependencies exist between,
    - professionals representing the governmental protected area planning and administration agencies and,
    - those stakeholders that pursue local tourism industry interests associated with the national parks (McCool, 2009)
  - Natural resource conservation and planning is the primary task and responsibility for the administrators and organizations in charge of managing national parks
  - National park management has not much tradition for visitor management or supporting tourism businesses based on protected natural resources or supporting tourism businesses based on protected natural resources (little visitor infrastructure and visitor services)
  - The local tourism industry stakeholders are often totally dependent on the actual landscape and natural resources alike for their own economic benefit and social wellbeing
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# Management of national parks in Norway (traditional)

- The management regime in Norway has traditionally viewed tourism as a potential threat to the natural resources



- Protected nature areas should be separated from other societal or human activities. In general, the park authorities have tended to oppose
  - further development of the tourism infrastructure
  - new types of outdoor recreation activities
- However, the right to common access (Allemannsretten) in one or form or another should be upheld in most cases

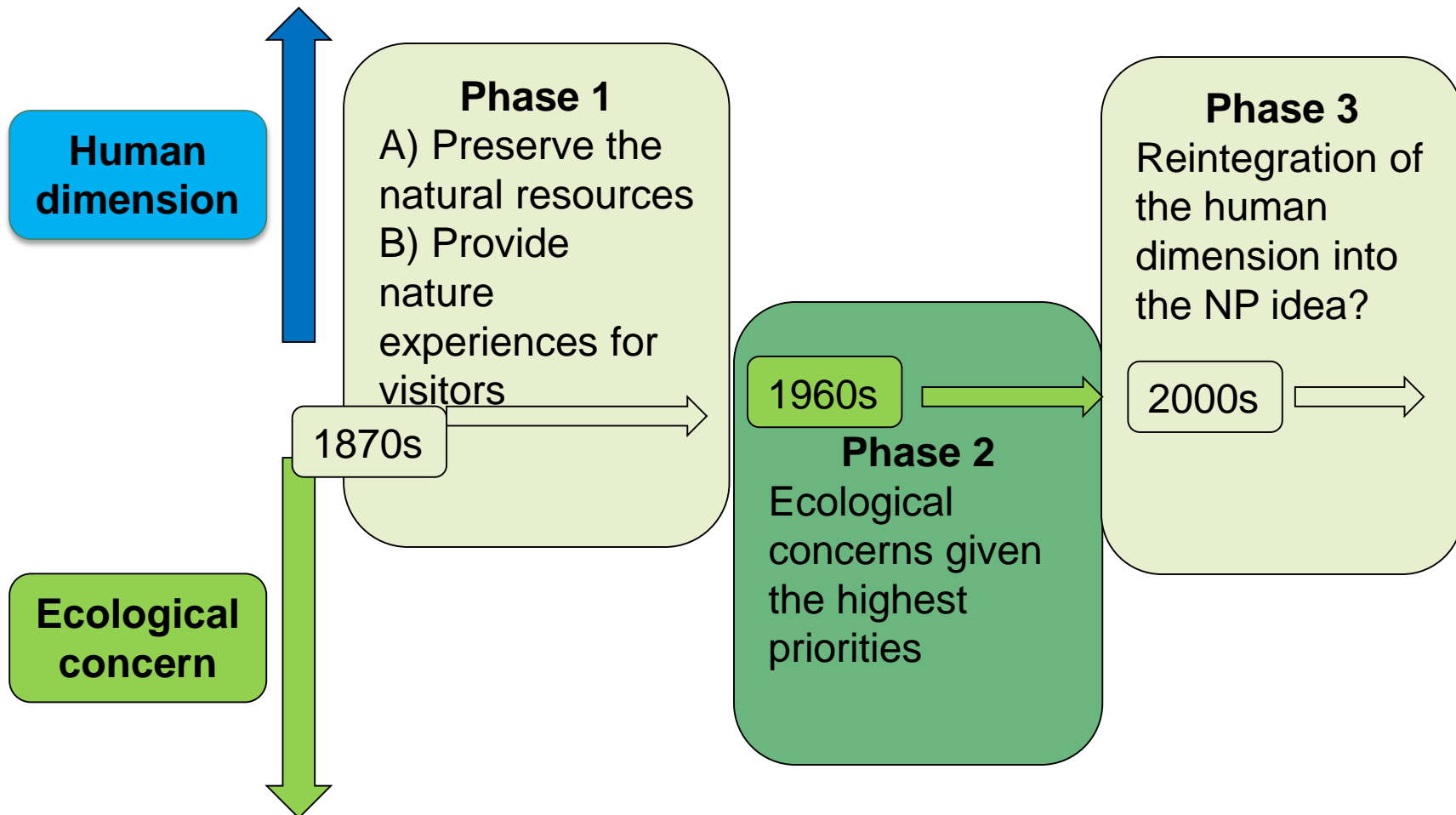
## Management of national parks in Norway (traditional)

- The main goal for establishing protected areas is to protect a representative selection of Norwegian nature (Nature Protection Act, 1970) and to protect large areas of natural habitat that contain distinctive or representative ecosystems or landscapes (Nature Diversity Act, 2009)
  - Outdoor recreation is normally defined as a secondary objective of park creation with little emphasis on active management and care
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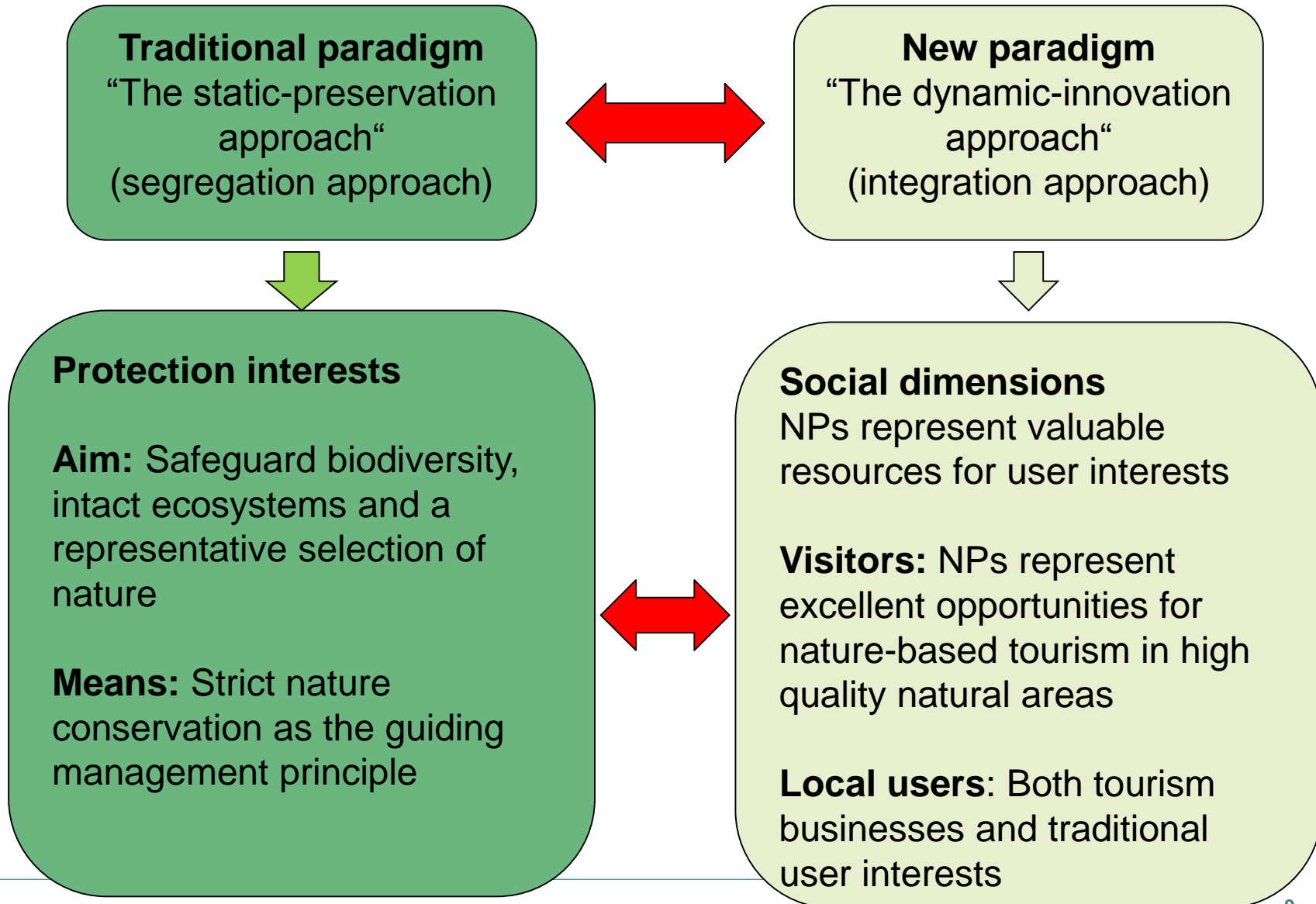
# NATIONAL PARK POLICIES IN A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE





# EMERGING PARADIGM IN EUROPEAN POLICY

(Mose, 2007)



## Management of national parks in Norway (new political signals on the national level since the Millennium)

- Value-added activities in national parks
- Increased local responsibility: Local national park management boards
- More emphasis on experience based knowledge (in addition to knowledge based on natural science)
- The purpose of the new Nature Diversity Act (2009) is to protect biological diversity and ecological processes through conservation and sustainable use, “and in such a way that the environment provides a basis for human activity, culture, health and well-being, now and in the future”
- Traces of social concern can be observed in the text

*As seen through the eyes of central management authorities:*

**What are the prospects for outdoor recreation and tourism developments in Norwegian national parks?**

- Is the (potential) integration of nature based tourism activities in the protected areas welcomed as beneficial or is it primarily seen as a threat to the natural resources?
- Are the legal frameworks, and the organizational and planning resources at hand, including the recently implemented local management model for national parks, assessed as appropriate means among the managers in order to cope with emerging tourism interests?

## Methodological approach

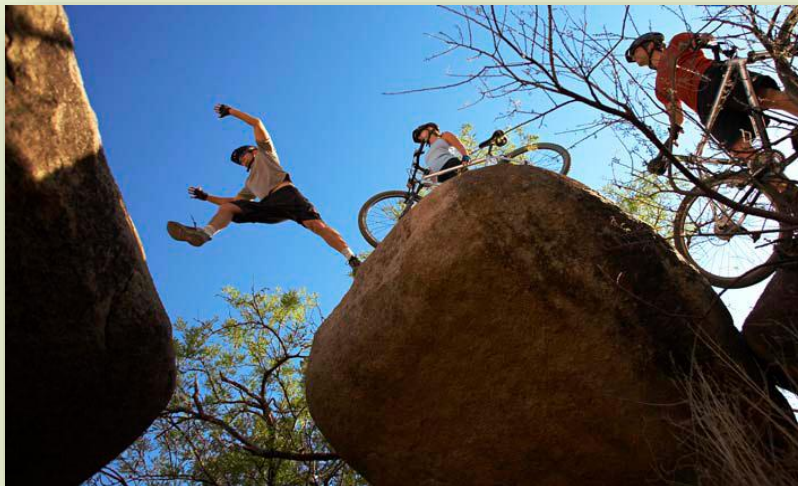
- Eight key representatives of national management organizations were invited to take part in the focus group:
  - The Ministry of Environment (MD)
  - The Directorate for Nature Management (DN)
  - The Nature Inspectorate (SNO)
  - The Directorate for Cultural Heritage (RA)
  - The Norwegian Mountain Board Association' (NFS)
- According to the invitation letter, the institutions themselves were suppose to select their participants
- The focus group included four representatives of the three first mentioned institutions but RA and NFS did not attend
- A supplementary personal interview was undertaken with one representative from NFS
- An interview guide was employed, the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed

## Preliminary results (focus group)

- The central managers underline the historical change:
  - The principal focus has previously been on biological values and protection of nature in the national parks
  - As the protection processes in the Norwegian national park plan (1991-92) is about to be completed, more active and holistic management has been introduced with increased focus on human use
  - Management of nature protection is to a large extent about management of people (i.e. visitors from elsewhere and local users)
- Means to achieve more user friendly management:
  - Increased financial resources, DN's value added program ('Naturen som verdiskaper'), 'management by objectives' (recently implemented management principles) and more (systematic) use of local "experience based knowledge"
  - Management reform with new local management boards, supportive coordinating committees (including tourism actors) and appointments of local managers
  - Co-localization ('knutepunkter') of various management actors/ functions and also tourism interests (expected to counteract fragmentation of the management system and increase beneficial professional cooperation)

## Preliminary results (focus group) continued

- 'Nature protection vs. user interests' should not be perceived as a conflict issue according to central managers:
  - The focus on the conflict issue and conflict mechanisms is misleading (also among researchers!) and precludes further management progress
  - Consensus and mutual understanding between protection and user interests can to a large extent be obtained within a holistic management policy (as opposed to the previous emphasis on processing disconnected applications)
  - Still various managers may react differently to the new integrated policies, i.e. depending on their age, professional background etc.



## Preliminary results (focus group) continued:

- Perception of management roles and problems:
  - Lack of planning instruments to regulate pressures in external gateway areas (intensified private use of land may exclude other users' access to national parks)
  - The central management define their role not to be tourism actors, i.e. development 'drivers':
    - They claim they do not possess the competence but still they are aware of their role as facilitator for tourism.
    - In concrete cases cooperation is seen as important – acting as a partner for tourism interests, they say
  - General lack of knowledge about visitor interests due to lack of management resources





## Preliminary results (supplementary interview)

### ■ The Norwegian Mountain Board Association (NFS)

New political signals about protection and use are registered but NFS is still uncertain if there is a new paradigm:

- The 'environment protection interests' are not willing to renounce power, control and personnel resources. The Nature Inspectorate (SNO) takes over roles and functions that previously have been solved by local bodies (like NFS), for instance field work (monitoring functions)
- Management plans should have been implemented in existing parks before protecting new areas – this neglect has resulted in disregard of user interests
- Local managers should ensure local management but they are still employed by the County Governor (also the appeal unit). Result: Split loyalty among local managers



- The wild reindeer represent a particular challenge in some parks (sensitive to tourist visitation). But tourist activity impacts in all other parks can be solved by management interventions (channeling)



## Preliminary results (supplementary interview) continued

- The Norwegian Mountain Board Association (NFS)
  - Some dialogue exists between management and tourist interests on the central level but little on the local level. Nature management tends to be 'sector oriented' on this level
  - Norwegian parks are not designed for tourist experiences and activities, and there is little understanding of the needs of the tourist industry
  - The Directorate for Nature Management seems to room a magnitude of attitudes not knowing which role to take regarding integration of tourism user and protection interests
  - The internal resistance is 'obvious'; exemptions may create precedents and the precautionary principle is by definition conservative.
  - A more dynamic management with a greater willingness to take risks is wished for.  
'Of course, everything must be assessed after 2-3 years'.



## Conclusions

- The results are preliminary
- Central nature management bodies underline the paradigmatic shift towards inclusion of tourism interests in protected areas
- Focus on conflicts are seen as dysfunctional and precludes management progress
- New roles and functions are neither clarified nor finally settled (the 'partnership' is yet to be defined) and planning instruments are not effective in gateway areas
- A certain resistance towards renunciation of power and control may be traced in the management system (in the legacy of jurisdictions, in management practices as well as in the new local management arrangement)
- Further research will be conducted to illuminate the constraints and opportunities for integrated nature management