SOCIOPOLITICAL ECONOMY, IDENTITIES, AND ROLES IN PLANNING LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS
CASES FROM KAZAKHSTAN

BY

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B.A. Iowa State University, 1999

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS (PLANNING)

IN

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(School of Community and Regional Planning)

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

The University of British Columbia

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Title of Thesis: Sociopolitical Economy Identities, and Roles in Planning Local Environmental Projects. Cases from Kecakukhi.

Degree: Master of Arts (Planning) Year: 2004

Department of School of Community and Regional Planning

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, BC Canada
Abstract

Multilateral and bilateral development agencies in cooperation with local partners have implemented hundreds of local environmental projects in Kazakhstan since its independence in 1991. This thesis presents case studies of four environmental projects, identifying some of the power dynamics around the projects and exploring how they have shaped and influenced project outcomes as well as social relationships among actors. From data gathered through in-depth personal interviews with project actors and participant observation of projects, the thesis presents and analyses a range of roles, identities and contexts as determining and explanatory factors for power dynamics and, by extension, project outcomes. The findings present evidence that power dynamics, through their relation to and dependence on roles, identities and contexts, have a determining impact on the link between project purpose and outcomes negotiated in the project planning process. Specifically, the findings suggest that relative power is dependent on the roles actors play in the planning process, that these roles are shaped by the identities of the actors, and that all of these are specifically defined by the larger socioeconomic context. Consequently, actors within their roles may possess differentiated levels of relative power, which in turn affect their abilities to shape processes, define goals, and achieve outcomes within the strategic bargaining context of project planning.

The findings highlight the importance of examining and including the redistribution of the various forms of power in future projects as an explicit project outcome, through a better understanding of the existing and future relationships and the dynamics of power among actors; the usefulness of recognizing identities and their contribution to shaping power structures and strengthening project continuity; and the necessity of explicit recognition of how/why knowledge is legitimized as an important link between identity, roles, and power.
### Sociopolitical Economy, Identities, and Roles in Planning Local Environmental Projects: Cases from Kazakhstan

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a few people who were instrumental in the formulation of my ideas for this thesis and who provided support throughout the writing process. First, I would like to thank my colleagues at GEF/SGP especially Raushan Sakhanova for the opportunities to explore the many interesting and important local environmental projects in Kazakhstan as well as all the NGO leaders, community members, and others involved in the projects who gave me their time in interviews, during site visits, and in other capacities. Their candid and insightful observations form the backbone of this thesis. Also, I would like to express my appreciation to Peter Boothroyd and Raushan Sakhanova for their feedback that helped me refine the final thesis. For the constant understanding and patience through the writing process, I would like to thank my family and friends. Finally, I want to give a special thank you to Alison Macnaughton for her consistent encouragement, challenging ideas, and steadfast life support that made this thesis possible.
Chapter 1: Introduction

There has been extensive academic writing about the interstate politics of Central Asia, from authors both inside and outside the region. Many local scholars and a few foreign scholars have published about national level and regional level politics. Similarly, environmental issues in the former Soviet Union have been well documented. However, in the specific case of Kazakhstan, there is little academic writing about political and social relationships among the international development regime, local level political actors, and other social actors as they interact to conceptualize, plan, and implement local environmental projects.

In the summer of 2002, I had the opportunity to work as a Communications and Outreach Assistant at the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program (GEF/SGP) in Kazakhstan and to research participatory community development in local environmental projects. GEF/SGP's more than 70 projects throughout Kazakhstan provided a rich pool of potential cases for the study of community participation in local environmental projects.

However, after my first interviews with Kazakhstani international development practitioners, NGO leaders, and other local actors involved with these and other environmental projects it became apparent that the common western language and techniques of community participation were understood primarily by actors working directly for bilateral and multilateral development agencies and were not a part of the conscious lexicon of many other important actors. Secondly, answering the conceptual questions, "Who makes up the "community"?" and "What constituted "participation"?" were highly dependent on different actors' perspectives and their immediate position relative to other actors, including myself. As a result, I was prompted to reframe my research questions in terms of roles, identities, knowledge, and power, which emerged as less prescriptive and more descriptive concepts than "community" and "participation". This thesis aims to make a contribution to understanding identities, roles, and power dynamics associated with four local environmental projects, funded by Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program (GEF/SGP), and how these factors relate to project outcomes.


3Throughout this thesis the term 'actor' will be used to describe individual persons or groups of individuals that take on roles in social and political processes.

4Local level refers to a specific geographic area including the related administrative units (e.g. municipality, rayon (district), national park, etc.). Local level projects involve planning and implementation that are carried out by local actors (i.e. municipal government, NGO/CBOs whose worked is concentrated in a small geographic area, and/or private enterprises working in a local area) in contrast to the oblast (provincial) or national level where projects are most often carried out by national government agencies, national NGOs, and/or large private enterprises.
International Development Projects in Kazakhstan

The goals of projects funded by international development organizations (IDOs) are formally intended to fulfill goals of higher-level organizational and state development policies and programs. In nations of the South and the former Soviet Union, projects are a primary pathway whereby both multilateral and bilateral IDOs attempt to introduce and implement their own institutional goals and values of social change, which may or may not be shared by the intended beneficiaries. In this way, they are one of the key vehicles whereby political and social institutions distribute resources and influence, thus making them also a direct link between policy and on-the-ground action. However, projects can also serve an alternative function as instruments for the realization of the specialized goals (outside the official policy goals) of those actors who hold at least partial responsibility in conceptualizing, planning, and implementing projects. The questions asked in this thesis are rooted in an effort to understand the factors influencing the actors’ goals and functions in project planning and implementation.

In Kazakhstan, as in most countries who receive funding through IDOs, projects funded and guided by IDOs have had both intended and unintended social impacts on Kazakhstani society. IDOs use projects in attempts to empower Kazakhstani actors that they believe embody their institutional vision and values in order to fulfill their development objectives on a range of social change issues from governance to economic reform to environmental protection. At the same time, projects can be and often are an important source of resources and social power for these project level actors in places like Kazakhstan where state and private capital is often inaccessible to a majority of the population. International development organizations (IDOs) struggle to improve the effectiveness of their policies and programs, which often fall short of their intended outcomes.

Socio-political economy, identity, and knowledge have all been discussed extensively in other development contexts. The following unique historical, cultural, and social characteristics of Kazakhstan make this research useful to those development practitioners intending to improve development projects to better identify and address the specific needs of Kazakhstani:

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5 In this thesis, international development organizations include organizations that provide multilateral and bilateral aid to improve the various aspects of life in the countries of the South through programs and projects partially or fully funded by donor countries. Bilateral IDOs often have the additional and/or primary objective of promoting the political and economic interests of the donor country within the recipient countries (i.e. opening new markets, providing work for subcontractors from the donor country, strengthening a particular political system, etc.). Multilateral IDOs’ policy objectives, agreed upon in international decision-making forums, are very often heavily influenced by (wealthy) donor countries and are intended to promote their political and economic interests.

6 For the purposes of this thesis, projects are defined as independent, time- and geographically-limited plans for the allocation of resources. In this context, projects are intended to achieve specific goal(s) that, in part, fulfill the goals of a broader development policy or program. Policy refers to an institutionalized binding framework of norms intended to influence and guide decisions and actions on a broad matter (e.g. environmental protection law and regulations and corporate gender policy). A program here is defined as a more specific plan that lays out the guidelines for a range of decisions and actions intended to address a specific set of issues. However, in reality the distinction among policy, programme, and project is often blurred. For the purposes of this thesis, the distinct hierarchy of relationships between these planning prescriptions is the primary concern.

7 In this thesis, the South refers to those countries whose economic, geopolitical, and military power put them into a variety of dependent, neo-colonial, and clientelistic positions serving nations with greater global power. Many of these countries are found in the southern hemisphere and are often termed as developing or less developed countries. These countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia have historically been sources of raw materials and cheap labour for the North America, Europe, and Japan. As the nations of the former Soviet Union transition to market based economies they are quickly joining developing nations in these roles while North America and Europe continue to defend their positions of dominance. For further discussion, see Chomsky, Noam. 2003. Hegemony or Survival: America’s Quest for Global Dominance. New York: Metropolitan Books.
• Prevalence of a political economy of ‘crony’ or ‘wild’ capitalism characterized by ‘chaos as a mode of domination’\(^8\) following the collapse of the Soviet welfare state.

• Emergence of both new and reconstructed Central Asian identities competing and merging with the resilient Soviet identities creating struggles and dilemmas for both individuals and collective actors.

• Political unpredictability (universally understood norms and positions of power have not been firmly established) which fosters a unique strategic bargaining game for political resources.

• High-profile environmental crises and a well-established environmental movement, which has created a wide-spread environmental consciousness among the a large portion of the Kazakhstani public.

• High social prestige afforded to professional scientific/technical knowledge that is deeply ingrained in Soviet thought and the widespread manipulation of this knowledge by political actors (especially government officials) at all levels to justify political objectives.

An improved understanding of the dynamic relationships between and among IDOs and local actors may reveal opportunities for policies, programs, and projects to better reflect this unique set of factors. Furthermore, create spaces for the reconfiguration of power leading to systemic change away from the repressive, inequitable and unsustainable current system and towards more equal, democratic, and sustainable system. As I argue in chapter two, new configurations of power are implicit to all types of systemic change and some type of systemic change is at the core of any meaningful definition of development.

Global Environment Facility

Projects focused on environmental protection and rehabilitation, such as the ones presented in this paper, have special practical and symbolic significance in Kazakhstan, which suffers from a legacy of Soviet mistreatment of the physical environment including several regional ecological disasters (i.e. desiccation of the Aral Sea and radioactive contamination surrounding the Semipalatinsk Nuclear Test Site). In response to these extensive environmental problems, the growth of environmental NGOs in Kazakhstan has been the most prolific of any sector within the country’s developing civil society. Although the projects presented as case studies in this paper are all funded by a single IDO, many of the actors involved in the projects have worked extensively with other IDOs and other local governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an influential IDO whose work in Kazakhstan has provided over US$ 33.5 million in funding for environmental projects. This funding is divided into three levels, with allocations totalling US$32.6 million at the large and medium levels, through 2002. Large GEF projects, averaging US$5.5 million per project worldwide, are typically granted to national governments for large-scale institutional capacity building, ecosystem protection, and private sector reform projects to assist countries meet their obligations to the Convention on Biodiversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. In Kazakhstan, past and current large projects have included protecting wetland habitat for migratory birds and developing markets for wind power.

The second level of GEF funding, for medium-sized projects, is capped at US$ 1 million per project and is available to governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, national and international institutions, local communities, and private sector entities. Recent projects in Kazakhstan at the medium level funding included developing a National Action Plan on Biodiversity Conservation.

The smallest level in the GEF portfolio (and the subject of this thesis) is the GEF Small Grants Program (GEF/SGP) which focuses on “building the capacities of communities and NGOs to address issues in the GEF focal areas and to provide a mechanism for demonstrating and disseminating community-level and community led solutions to the focal global environmental problems.” GEF/SGP funds projects in three of the four GEF focal areas: biodiversity, climate change, and international waters. The projects are formulated around the following broad project goals: demonstration, capacity-building, targeted research, policy dialogue and information dissemination, and raising awareness among critical constituencies.

The projects presented as case studies in this thesis were all projects administered under the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program (GEF/SGP). GEF/SGP’s broad programmatic mission,

“...is rooted in the belief that global environmental problems can only be addressed adequately if local people are involved, and that with small amounts of funding (maximum US$50,000) local communities can undertake activities which will make a significant difference in their lives and their environment.”

In accordance with this mission, projects are carried out in specific local regions by local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in collaboration with local political actors, representatives of international NGOs, community members and other local actors.

Local Environmental Projects in Kazakhstan

The GEF/SGP projects presented as case study examples in this thesis illustrate how socio-political economy, social identities, and knowledge impact the outcomes of these local environmental projects (LEPs) through the roles that actors play. In this thesis, I explore how

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9 GEF is a US$1 billion fund that was established at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to improve the global environment in four focal areas: climate change, biodiversity, international waters, and ozone layer depletion. Funding is renewed every four years and, to date has been provided by 32 donor countries. A governing council, comprising 32 members from both donor and recipient countries, sets GEF institutional and programmatic policies. However, the terms of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Conventions provide the eligibility requirements, programme priorities, and policy guidance for the GEF operations.

10 Global Environment Facility Website http://www.gefweb.org

11 GEF/SGP Strategic Framework

12 GEF/SGP Strategic Framework
actors shape their roles in GEF/SGP funded local LEPs in attempts to maximize their power and
influence over decisions about planning and implementation. I recognize that actors’ roles in
these projects are principally defined by the provisions of the GEF’s institutional and
programmatic policy, which sets guidelines defining acceptable and desirable partners, project
design, acceptable use of funds, and other aspects of project planning intended to keep control
over the course and direction of projects. However, I argue that institutional guidelines only
partially determine an actor’s role in a project. Other factors outside the GEF programme have
as much or more influence an actor’s role. Of these factors, I examine the unique characteristics
of Kazakhstan’s socio-political economy described as ‘dikki kapitalism’ or ‘chaos’ which both
predetermines and bounds the portfolio of potential roles that actors may assume in project
planning and implementation. Secondly, within this socio-political economy I examine how
several Kazakhstani identity categories (ethnic, professional, and ecological) inform actors’ roles
in environmental projects. Finally, I explore how the legitimization of knowledge is a common
determining factor in empowering and disempowering certain identities and actors roles within
the strategic bargaining environment of the project planning process.

My aim in this thesis is not to give a comprehensive analysis of the impact and function
of any specific local environmental projects, nor to characterize local level politics throughout
such a large and diverse country as Kazakhstan, but rather to give examples that illuminate some
often overlooked factors that affect the outcomes of a unique set of environmental projects
promoted and funded by outsiders and implemented by and intended to benefit Kazakhstanis.

Research Questions

In this thesis, I explore the following three questions in the context of four specific local
environmental project cases in Kazakhstan:

• How do the unique characteristics of Kazakhstan’s socio-political economy predetermine
  and bound actual and potential roles that actors assume in planning and implementing
  specific projects funded through GEF/SGP in Kazakhstan?

• How do ethnic, professional, and ecological identities inform actor’s roles in these
  specific projects?

• How are sociopolitical economy and identities factors in empowering and disempowering
  certain actors and their roles in strategic bargaining around the project planning process
  with regard to these GEF/SGP projects?

Through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and project document analysis, I
examined roles that various actors played in the planning and implementation of local
environmental projects, specifically as they were influenced by socio-political economy, social
identities, and the legitimization of knowledge.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized in the following way. In Chapter One, I provided a brief introduction
explaining my research rationale, the international development project planning in Kazakhstan,
and my research questions. In Chapter Two, I present the theoretical foundations grounding the relationships between politics, planning, and the ‘development project’ as a planning outcome. Drawing on existing literature, I construct a profile of the post-Soviet socio-political and economic context in which project planning is practiced in Kazakhstan. I conclude Chapter Two by presenting some concepts of identity, including in-depth discussions of three specific identities (ethnic, professional, and ecological), which are relevant to environmental project planning in Kazakhstan.

In Chapter Three, I outline my research methodology. In Chapter Four I present four GEF/SGP projects as cases in two geographic areas of Kazakhstan, Aral Sea and Altai mountains. The theoretical and structural-historical foundations of socio-political economy, identity, and knowledge discussed in Chapter Two inform my analysis of the roles both individual and institutional actors play in the project planning process of these specific cases. In the final section, Chapter Five, I present some implications for local environmental project planning that are relevant for both local actors in Kazakhstan and international development organizations.
Chapter 2: Structural and Strategic Context

Politics, Planning, and Projects

Understanding the nature of political power and its role in society, including its dynamic relationship with the planning discipline, helps illuminate the central role that planning as a political activity can play in guiding and transforming society. Development projects are a commonly used framework for catalyzing societal change and their specific construction shapes actors’ roles in this process. In light of this, a discussion of concepts such as politics, systems of political order, planning, and the ‘development project’ is key to illuminating the unique dynamics of local environmental projects in Kazakhstan. In this section, I discuss politics and systems of political order as the basic framework for collective decision-making and the application of power in that decision-making. Further, I describe planning’s role in systems of political order. Finally, I present an explanation of the ‘development project’ as a theoretical concept.

Power and Systems of Political Order

Although the definition of ‘politics’ has been the object of continuous academic debate and redefinition, there is a consistent component to most definitions: the emphasis on collective social relations and the systems that govern those relations, the dominant contemporary system being the state. All social relations associated with making decisions about collective life, whether they are legal or illegal, in the centres of power or on the margins, conservative or radical, are the stuff of politics. Valeri Ledyaev’s definition captures this concept,

“ ‘Politics’ includes all social relationships and events that significantly affect the life of a community, it has to do with whatever actions social actors, [individual or collective,] undertake to change the arrangement under which they live...all actions can be called political only if they influence- directly or indirectly-the functioning of state institutions (or institutions comparable to them) and governmental policies.”

Encompassing activities that we often already intuitively call politics, such as voting, public debate, policy-making and protest, as well as those extra-legal activities such as terrorism, bribery, and organized resistance to an oppressive state, this definition allows an examination of political action in terms of power in society rather than limiting the concept to ideological or partisan judgements of specific political actions and their impacts on the status quo of the legitimate (legal) political system.

Politics, as it is practiced at all nested and interconnected levels of community life (i.e. social relations) including local regions, nation-states, and globally-networked interest communities, can be divided into two sets of structural-historical political relations: systems of

Established systems of political order are made up of the rules, structures (institutions), and relationships that govern a society (community) within a certain geographic territory. These systems shape social life by distributing resources, determining social values, and establishing structures of social power. Moreover, political power, a specific type of social power, is distributed through the system in a number of configurations that assign certain political actors power to maintain and/or change the system.

Social power refers to the ability of an actor to obtain the ‘submission (compliance or subordination)’ of other actors’ behaviour and/or consciousness to their will, in order to produce a particular intended outcome. It is a determining factor for both how and why actors choose certain political actions over others in various political settings. This is not to suggest that actors always make explicit cognitive evaluations of their own relative power and the power of other actors (although they may), but rather that understandings of power are embedded in “goal-oriented habitual actions, tacit knowledge of a desirable outcome, favourable attitudes, beliefs, hopes, etc.” The understandings of power are shaped by structural-historical characteristics of existing power relations.

Power is an enabling agent that pervades societies and can be divided into six main forms: force, coercion, inducement, persuasion, manipulation, and authority (See Appendix A). All forms of power are dependent on their legitimacy or validity in the eyes of the subject. Power legitimizes itself by the rational deduction that power is effective or, in other terms, it has the ability to achieve the submission of the subject. In the case of authority, legitimacy is based upon whether the powerholder has the specific set of characteristics (e.g. received enough votes in an election, confirmed by another authoritative body like a city council or bar association, sufficient age or kinship, personal charisma, etc.) in the eyes of the subject that give the powerholder the right to command irregardless of the content of that command. If the authority is over a group of subjects, then these characteristics are usually based on a set of commonly agreed upon norms. For example, legal authority is based upon the common principles of the legal system (e.g. right to representation, trial by jury, knowledge of legal precedent). If an actor wants to gain or maintain legal authority then they must follow the norms of procedure and qualification. Conversely, the legitimacy of other forms of power is dependent only on whether they are effective at achieving the subject’s submission. The application of force, for example, is concerned with being legitimate only in the sense that it can achieve the subject’s submission through the use of greater physical power, although a powerholder who uses force may be concerned with whether she has the legitimate authority to use that force. In this way, the use of force by the state is legitimate if it is successful in stopping resistance to its policies and actions, but if its citizens feel it has gone beyond its legitimate (legal) authority to use force then its authority to use force is the component that is illegitimate, not the application of force itself. This is an important distinction in an empirical analysis of power. Critiques from a social justice framework often assume that the legitimacy of power is based on a set of subjective criteria determined to be beneficial to the subject(s) of power, while in reality powerholders can and often ignore these criteria of legitimacy.

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16 Political power is the power over the behaviour and/or consciousness of social actors with respect political decision-making in order to guide or change a current and/or future system of political order
17 Ledyaev 1997
18 Ledyaev 1997, p. 172
19 Ledyaev 1997
Most often, combinations of power are exercised, and "pure" examples of these powers are rare. Hence, while the type of power exercised in a specific situation is often difficult to unravel, it is important to identify power that different actors' potentially could and do possess, in order to understand the pathways by which they can fulfill their needs and desires in society.

Relevant to this thesis, the practice of development project planning, as a negotiation process to determine collective goals and action, is inherently a political activity. As such, power, delineated as political power, is a determining force in shaping project outcomes. In the cases presented in Chapter Four, I present examples of the combinations of power held by different sociopolitical actors, although the legitimacy of these powers is only explored in so far as they are effective in achieving submission of other actors in order to realize their own goals. In the particular case of "authority", the analysis does not dissect the criteria for legitimacy of the various types authority, but rather explores how actors fulfill their own objectives by using this authority. I also propose that a better understanding of these relationships and dynamics may lead to a reexamination of the criteria of legitimate authority.

Application of Political Power

Political power, in all its forms, is applied within a spectrum ranging from strengthening the system of political order and the position of current dominant powerholders to dissolving the system to create a new system of political order with new powerholders. By definition, all applications of political power fall within this spectrum and are manifested through the political actions taken by political actors.

Each type of system of political order has its own dynamics, institutions, and practices, based on the premise that certain social actors are charged with political decision-making authority and others are beholden to that authority. Access to this decision-making authority is granted based on any of several interlocking criteria of legitimacy, which may include education, wealth, expertise, kinship, personal charisma, electoral mandate and citizenship. Criteria for legitimacy are valued differently depending on the structural-historical context and, by extension, increase or decrease the political power of different social actors. Other forms of power can allow actors to gain influence over the political decision-making, but this does not necessarily give them legitimate political authority in the view of the subjects that submit to that political authority.

Once social actors acquire political power and become political actors, they can shape social and political institutions (e.g. policy, social values) to serve their physical, social, and political needs and desires. Thus, legitimizing their political authority is a key task enabling actors to guide or change systems of political order through the structures of that system. If actors cannot legitimize their political authority, they may turn to other forms of power to fulfill their political and social needs and desires.

The dynamics of political power within development project planning shape how project outcomes influence the larger system of political order. Project outcomes can reinforce existing systems of power by funnelling resources to existing centres of power, strengthening existing criteria for political legitimacy, and continuing to exclude politically marginalized actors, or they can redistribute political power by creating new political structures and relationships, establishing new criteria for political legitimacy, politically legitimizing new social actors, and performing other redistributive functions. The application of political power in system guidance and transformation is described in the following sections.
Political Power: System Guidance

Systems of political order can be classified into several general types of political power structures dominated by certain forms of power. Totalitarian and oligarchial systems of political order concentrate political and social power in the hands of a few actors and primarily depend on force and coercion to maintain the system using inducement, persuasion, and manipulation more peripherally. In democratic systems\textsuperscript{20} political power is more dispersed and powerholders rely primarily on persuasion, inducement, and manipulation to guide the system. In others, such as theocracies and monarchies powerholders primarily depend on different forms of traditional authority to maintain the system. Although in most modern societies the location of formal political decision-making power resides in the state, the legitimacy of state authority is not always clear.

The legitimacy of all forms of state authority in the view of its citizens is created and maintained through a number of deliberate mechanisms of socialization including education and propaganda (public relations). States that fail to legitimize their authority through socialization lose their ability to exercise authority and are at risk of challenge by non-state actors (e.g. private corporations, organized crime, etc.) that exercise their power to control or dissolve the state institutions itself and/or control social relations directly.

State-supported socialization processes also create other forms of social power that maintain systems of political order. Given that state political discourse and decision-making is often located in specific political spaces with restricted access (e.g. legislatures, executive and bureaucratic meetings, political debates, etc.), it is difficult for the norms of authority to remain legitimate outside these spaces without the creation of other types of social power that reinforce state power.

The existence of a dispersed, system reinforcing social power maintains the system of political order and existing political power. In what Michael Foucault calls disciplinary power, power is held within the various forms of professional disciplinary discourse and authorities (i.e. prisons, hospitals, bureaucracies, and schools). These forms of power create stability within a system of political order by psychologically and physically “controlling large numbers of people, rendering their behaviour predictable and stable without using uneconomical and ostentatious displays of sovereign power, in particular military and police force, which can risk open rebellion on the part of the masses.”\textsuperscript{21} Disciplinary power itself is not centred in individuals or singular institutions, which can be removed from power, but rather in the general accepted authority and its discourses and understandings of the professional disciplines exacting control on consciousness of all humans within the system. As Fischer puts it,

“... regulatory discourse produces “truth,” in the sense that they supply systematic procedures for the generation, regulation, and circulation of statement . . . rules are constructed, objects and subjects are defined, and events for study are identified and constituted.”\textsuperscript{22}

The millions of micro-power discourses that occur between actors to determine who holds power and as a result controls valued resources in any given space or time are based upon and uphold

\textsuperscript{20}Here democracy refers to representative democracies, parliamentary or presidential, which have become the dominant form of government around the world, irrespective of how they function as democracies in which the supreme power of the government is vested in the people whom are governed and/or there is rule by the majority.


\textsuperscript{22}Fischer 2000, p. 25.
generally accepted truths about expert and legal authority, right to coercion and other social values about power. Examples include workplace discourse between employee and employer, street interactions between the homeless and the passer-by, lawyer and client, etc. By legitimizing decisions made in state level political discourse, these micro-discourses are the intended products and remnants of earlier political and social discourses that determine the function and structure of community life.

Relevant to the LEP cases, the description of the sociopolitical and economic context in this chapter reveals the structures through which the Kazakhstani state and other powerful actors apply political and other forms of power to maintain the system of political order. In the project planning process, the application political power including disciplinary power to maintain the system of political order is expressed through the identities and roles rooted in the existing system, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

**Political Power: Systemic Transformation**

Sources of change for a system of political order can be grouped into two sets of actions. First, actors may take political action through the system's established mechanisms of change (i.e. elections, policy-making, protest, etc.). Alternatively, actors aiming to radically transform the system (revolution) may take political discourse and action outside legal means (e.g. coup d'état, terrorism, civil disobedience), especially those actors who have little access to formal political power. Although the traditional elite (based on wealth, kinship, etc.) often monopolize state power, other social groups that lack access to state and other legitimate power (e.g. economic, cultural, and military) can create political power (e.g. coercion, persuasion, personal authority) through organized challenges to the system in the form of political mobilization, the most absolute being revolutionary practice.

Similar to direct opposition to state political power, discourses arise in opposition to disciplinary power that challenge generally accepted truths about the infallibility of expert knowledge, obligations to obey powerholders, widely accepted social values, and the fairness of societal institutions. Although different from state centres of power, challenging institutions and individuals representative of disciplinary power does not in itself reformulate the system of political order because the network of power is more pervasive and dispersed. However, organized discourse and action informed by sustained and widespread changes in fundamental understandings of human relations and structures of power (e.g. feminist movement and environmental movement) can transform disciplinary power.

The exercise of political power to maintain or change the existing system of political order is a dominant force shaping community life. State and non-state sponsored development projects intended to improve community life are both an outcome of political power itself and a medium through which political power is exercised. Accordingly, actors shape their roles in all stage of project design including conceptualization, planning, and implementation, in order to increase and legitimize various forms of power that they hold (including political power). They exercise this power during the course of the project and often aim to make increased power a resulting benefit for themselves. However, development projects are constrained in various ways and often prescriptive. Actors must still take actions within the existing socio-political and economic power structures, which limit the roles actors may assume in projects and other political contexts. The next two sections discuss specifically how planning practice can guide and transform the system of political order and how development project planning has its own unique set of functional characteristics of power.
Planning as a Mode for System Guidance and Transformation

In accordance with both early pre-modernist and post-modern conceptions of planning, Friedmann proposes in *Planning in the Public Domain* that planning's main objective is to "confront the meta-theoretical problem of how to make technical knowledge in planning effective in informing public action." In practical terms, a planning process starts with the conceptualization of an idea for action and ends with implementation of that action. However, not explicit in this definition are two key points, first most planning processes occur in multiple iterations and all processes involve meta-level planning decisions about the "framework" of the planning process such as: 'Who shall be included?' ‘What resources will be designated for the planning process?’ and ‘How will decision-making be structured?’ At the core of these questions is the fundamental analytical question, how is knowledge deliberately linked to action in this particular case? From a standpoint of knowledge-action theory, this question must be answered to consider any particular course of action a process of planning. Otherwise the correlation between knowledge and action can only be attributed to circumstance.

There are two functional requirements if an action is to be deliberately connected to specific knowledge. These are: (1) identification of the epistemological foundations (knowledges) required for an action to be undertaken and (2) organization of the types of relevant and legitimate knowledge to inform action. First, action without the identification of the relevant knowledge(s) is an impulsive reaction to the present situation without accounting for historical understandings, considerations for the future, or integration of knowledge from multiple sources and thus cannot be considered planning. On the other hand, organization of knowledge that does not result in deliberate action is 'wishlisting', cataloguing, or some other socialization/educational activity not intended to inform deliberate action and likewise is not in the realm of planning. Organizing knowledge does not necessarily require technical tools and mediums such as computers, databases, drawing, or even written documentation, but it does require that existing oral, written, and tacit forms of relevant knowledge are identified as important and given legitimacy and by extension authority to inform an intended action (e.g. empower actors with specific knowledge, creating spaces conducive to specific dialogue, etc.). Furthermore, an early iteration of a planning process may produce new knowledge that informs the next iteration. Positivist methods such as evaluation and monitoring are commonly used to organize this new experiential knowledge acquired from past action for integration into new action.

The intention and the outcome of a particular planning action depend on the historical and structural interpretation of the two theoretical pillars of planning: knowledge and action. These theoretical foundations of planning are the key to understanding the role that planning fills in maintaining or changing the system of political order. Friedmann combines knowledge and action into four theoretical traditions in planning: policy analysis, social reform, social learning, and social mobilization. Policy analysis and social reform fall under the broad category of the 'top down management of public affairs' called societal guidance while social learning and social mobilization as classified as social transformation or 'a mobilized political community acting autonomously vis-à-vis the state'. For the purposes of this paper, there is no need to review the intricacies of these traditions except to discuss generally how theory has linked power to the legitimation of knowledge and ability to carry out action.

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23 Friedmann 1987, p. 36.
24 Friedmann 1987, p. 33
25 Friedmann 1987, p 32
Both forms of societal guidance, social reform and policy analysis, present scientific and technical knowledge as the only form of knowledge that ‘rationally’ and ‘objectively’ explains the immutable social laws that govern social relations and thus appropriate to inform planning action. State planners, often supported by corporate actors are the main producers and holders of technical-scientific knowledge hence powerholders in these traditions. The social reform tradition is at the centre of this planning epistemology and is focused on scientific analysis, prediction, comprehensive plans, and central coordination as the essential activities for state planning of economies and society that would distribute resources more efficiently and equally than the market price system.\(^{26}\) Policy analysis applied similar principles of scientific-technical rationality to policy design intended to bolster market “rationality” and mitigate its negative consequences. Based in the ascendency of Enlightenment thought, the historically high position given to scientific reasoning empowers planners working in the societal guidance traditions with the authority to turn their form of knowledge into action thus affecting the course of society.

Societal guidance traditions have shaped and continue to influence the epistemology of IDOs. Moreover, the pre-eminence of technical knowledge as the basis for development projects has historically favoured the interests and perspective of technical knowledge and those actors that hold that knowledge. However, the authority of social reform and policy planning institutions in development planning and the dominance of technical knowledge has been repeatedly challenged by other social and political discourses.

Captured in the challenges to the societal guidance traditions are the traditions of social transformation or fundamental challenges to the existing political order and power structures. Although social transformation traditions also have roots in the positivist scientific-technical forms of knowledge, the extension of legitimate knowledge, embodied in social learning theory, to include knowledge ‘learned through experience and validated through practice’ moved planning from the exclusive domain of specialized scientific-technical actors and institutions to include a range of actors with varied types of experiential knowledge.\(^{27}\) Through the legitimization new knowledge, power can be theoretically transferred from the small group of specialized individuals to a wider range of actors. However, dispersing power to social actors traditionally outside planning’s scientific-technical actors and institutions required the discourse of social mobilization tradition or ‘asserting the primacy of direct collective action “from below.”’\(^{28}\) Social transformation theory has thus revealed the possibilities for planning to be force for systemic transformation not just guiding society within the existing structure. In elucidating these potentials, these traditions exposed the ‘façade’ of planning as ‘apolitical’ and ‘objective’ actions that attempt to uncover and coordinate with the natural laws of society. Instead planning has become acknowledged as a mode of both guidance and transformation society and the system of political order, which governs it. The LEP cases in this thesis demonstrate the potentiality of development projects to become system-transforming activities by expanding the types of legitimate knowledge in the project planning process.

**Planning as Politics: A Definition**

The recognition of politics as an implicit part of planning has led to the redefinition of planning itself from a discipline largely considered a technical exercise of determining the appropriate land-use schema, allocation of resources, and policy formation to a process of negotiating social and political objectives whether it is for land development, social welfare

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\(^{26}\) Friedmann 1987

\(^{27}\) Friedmann 1987, p. 81

\(^{28}\) Friedmann 1987, p. 83
Taking Friedmann’s basic proposition that planning’s task is linking knowledge and action, expanding ‘technical knowledge’ to include other forms of knowledge such as Sandercock’s six different ways of knowing, defining the ‘public domain’ as the realm of politics or “a sphere of common discourse and concerns, along with the institutions and laws that regulate conduct within it,” and including the earlier discussion of political power, a definition of planning in terms of political power emerges. Planning in the public domain is the specific application of political power to organize and transform knowledge(s) into deliberate action, which affects social and political life. Thus, planning is a type of political action and, consequently, if actors are to be effective planners they must hold some form of legitimate political power. In the cases, actors’ attempts to organize and transform knowledge into deliberate action through the steps of the LEP planning processes illustrate how power dynamics are an essential determinant of how project outcomes will affect social and political life.

In the next section, I outline the theoretical foundations of the development project as a planning prescription with specific characteristics in its application for guiding and transforming the system of political order.

The ‘Development Project’

Along planning’s path from knowledge to action, the implementation of a project is a point in the planning process where on the ground action is taken and either fulfills or fails the vision of policy-makers. Projects’ unique role in directly distributing financial and/or physical resources as well as social and political benefits makes them the “point of commitment” on a particular course of action. Policies, in contrast to projects, are “abstract [and] are subject to an infinite variety of contingencies . . . They have no resting point, no final realization; they are endlessly evolving” which means they can be amended or discontinued before any one individual or group benefits or loses in material and/or financial terms. However, political benefits of policies and projects, which are often difficult to measure, can be and often are distributed through the policy debate and planning processes.

In the context of what is termed ‘international development’, projects are a primary tool for ‘wealthy’, ‘First World’, or ‘developed’ countries to conditionally transfer financial, technological, and intellectual resources to the ‘poor’, ‘Third World’, or ‘less developed’ countries through bilateral and multilateral development policy. Like planning, ‘development’ has been presented as ‘objective’ and depoliticised concept. Although there have been varying critiques of the development industry (i.e. government and multilateral agencies, private consultants, NGOs, etc), its practices, and underlying motivations, the implicit theoretical assumptions, the concept of ‘development’ itself continues to be considered an inherently neutral, desirable, and scientific force for change in societies.

Similar to the post-modern critique of planning, the deconstruction of development theory reveals that development interventions have traditionally and principally served to reinforce existing systems of power.

30 Knowing through Dialogue; Knowing Through Experience; Learning from Local Knowledge; Learning to Read Symbolic and Non-verbal Evidence; Learning through Contemplative or Appreciative Knowledge; and Learning by Doing or Action Planning Sandercock 1998, p. 76-83.
31 Friedmann 1987, p. 340
(e.g. ‘aid-givers to reproduce themselves’, ‘perpetuate bureaucratic procedures’, etc.). As Crewe and Harrison point out, even critics of development theory have difficulty moving beyond the ‘us’ (donors) and ‘them’ (recipients) framework where ‘us’ holds something of value and ‘them’ need or want it. A critical examination of this basic assumption reveals that development interventions like other planning processes are essentially a set of actors applying political power to transform their knowledge into their desired action. However, development’s theoretically imbedded donor-recipient power relationship and ‘development is good and neutral’ paradigm predetermines certain boundaries and potentialities of the ‘development project’ as system guiding and transforming prescription. In the context of Kazakhstan, development projects have been a central catalyst in what is presumed as the natural transition from communism and authoritarianism to free-markets and democracy. IDOs strategically decide which actors benefit from the resources allocated directly from their policy, programs, or projects, but rarely is their discussion within development circles about who loses from these interventions and who benefits and loses in the larger systemic transformation. A closer examination of development projects reveals that in many ways, they serve to reinforce the existing system of political order. Consequently, those development projects that will benefit existing powerholders have been welcomed as a positive force by government and those that could potentially transform the system of political order are consistently resisted, undermined, and manipulated by existing powerholders.

The discontinuity between assumptions about the neutrality of development and the interests of actors involved in development projects is often reflected in the disjuncture between policy expectations and project outcomes. Often in the view of policy-makers and intended beneficiaries, development projects only partially and inadequately fulfill the stated goals of policy and programmes. In the view of policy-makers, costs often seem high relative to the success at achieving expected policy outcomes and the projects frequently fail expected reproducibility or ‘scaling-up’. Intended ‘beneficiaries’ don’t experience/receive the benefits promised or expected during project conceptualization and planning. Those development projects that are successful at meeting expectations are due more to the skills, networks, and power of individual actors and organizations than to the higher-level policies that constrain and guide their project-level actions.

In the LEP cases, projects did not fulfill policy goals and had resources redirected to other non-project purposes often because the needs (i.e. capacity development, obligations to informal networks, etc.) and interests (i.e. income generation, ethno-cultural preservation, etc.) of the important actors were not adequately identified and addressed. The GEF/SGP policies like other IDO policy frameworks assume that actors at the project level both openly express their needs and interests and that these needs and interests are largely static from the beginning of the project to the end. In reality, in the contingent political and social environment of Kazakhstan, actors adapt to meet changes in power relations among actors, thus shift priorities, resources, and roles. Those projects that adequately identified and built-in flexibility to meet the changing of needs and interests of a variety of actors (i.e. income generation, organizational capacity development, environmental education, ability to support informal networks, etc.) were more likely to meet intended broad outcomes. Most often it was the particular knowledge and agency of local actors that allowed project plans to be shaped to reflect changing actor needs and interests and not specific aspects of policy. Although, GEF/SGP policies did enable actors to shape project outcomes through policies of local control and participation in planning and implementation.

34 Crewe and Harrison 1998, p. 17.
35 Crew and Harrison, 1998
Conventional attempts by development analysts to explain and remedy the consistent gap between policy/programmatic goals and actual project outcomes are based on these same basic technocratic assumptions about the mechanical functions of projects in relation to policy and programmes. Project planners faced with social and political decisions that don’t fit into their predetermined framework often reduce these decisions to “the realm of administrative decision-making where they can be redefined and processed in technical terms.” While policy and social analysts quickly re-examine the stated goals of policy and programme to find them often incompatible with those of the intended beneficiaries and attempt to prescribe strategies for better inclusion or participation. Similarly, administrative analysts examine the dysfunction of the project-support bureaucracy examining ways to improve such things as accountability, efficiency, monitoring, and evaluation. This results in the creation of new universal management and monitoring frameworks (Results-Based Management, Logical Framework Analysis, etc.) instead of recognizing of the unique social and political contexts and relationships and attempting to work through them.

All of these analyses assume project planning is primarily the nested product of the guidelines set out in larger policies and programmes and, consequently, that the success or failure at the project level can be systematically determined by changes policies and programmes. Furthermore, this positivist approach to policy and administrative analysis assumes that the formal power vested at the policy and programme level can significantly determine or change project outcomes and only greater policy precision, inclusion of the appropriate set of interests (stakeholders), and adjustments in the policy-making and project design processes are needed to redress failures in project planning and implementation.

Reconceptualizing development project planning as a strategic political bargaining process (and not as linear, mechanistic, and neutral process of identifying goals, methods, and information that will produce an action with universally positive benefits) reshapes an analysis of both policy and their progeny projects. A good analysis begins with basic questions such as, ‘How does a particular development project reinforce existing systems of political order at all levels of political decision-making?’ ‘How do some actors benefit more than others?’ and ‘What are the possibilities (if they exist) to make projects into the system transforming prescriptions that they purport to be?’

A political analysis of a development project can link the outcomes of the project to influences and definitions of context, actors, and processes at the spatial and temporal level of the project. Policy-makers may attempt to maintain some control over project outcomes through guidelines in several key areas such as programmatic goals, eligibility, and output requirements. However, even in the face of these modes of control project-level social and political actors can still manipulate the project planning process to serve their own goals which often compete with those set out by policy-makers.

The importance of the dynamic construction of actors’ roles at the level of project planning can determine their ability to shape outcomes. More specifically, the roles of actors that are involved only at the project level can shape and adapt to the exercise of power in the changing socio-political context surrounding a specific project, and thus have significant influence over project outcomes. Although it is true that project structure and guidelines as set out by policy partly determine actors’ roles, the socio-political economy in which an individual project is planned overlays another set of boundaries and potentials for actors’ roles concerning a project.

Actors’ multiple pre-project identities, as shaped by the socio-political economy and cultural norms are at the foundation of actors’ roles in the project planning process. They are the source of core values, obligations, and understandings that underpin subsequent project decisions. The Kazakhstan cases presented in this thesis give examples of the roles that actors assume in the development project planning process.

The next two sections describe the structures of power of Kazakhstan’s system of political order, society and economy, and how the construction of their constituent identities informs actor’s understandings and actions within this system. The articulation of structure and identity, manifested in actors’ social and political roles as development professionals, NGO leaders, scientists, defenders of ethnic heritage and others in the development project planning process illuminates the nature of the system changing potential of these projects. The subsequent case presented below analyzes how the roles informed by the actors’ multiple identities determine relative political power in the strategic bargaining of project planning. Dynamic relationships between political power and roles influences the decisions that actors make in allocating resources, forming alliances, and putting forth a public identity in the project planning process.

**Socio-Political Economy of Kazakhstan**

In 1991, Kazakhstan’s leaders reluctantly accepted independent statehood for the first time in history in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and with it there was much fanfare from Western neo-liberals about the prospects of creating new market-oriented democracies that could become potential economic and political allies. However, much of the optimism faded when World Bank and IMF “shock therapy” prescriptions failed to immediately transform the highly educated Soviet population into new economic and social entrepreneurs that would firmly establish the necessary political, economic, and social institutions of democracy and free markets. Instead, state enterprises closed, social welfare programs went bankrupt, inflation ballooned, and initially markets for even basic necessities (e.g. food, clothing) failed to provide goods at prices the majority of the population could afford. Corruption has since become widespread and democratic norms and institutions have not been fostered or given the opportunity to become the pre-eminent political system.

Since the initial “shock”, the economy has stabilized in some sectors and continues to decline in others. For instance, local producers and traders have responded to demand for basics such as food and clothing, but many imported goods still remain out of the price range for many Kazakhstani. At the same time, work as a commercial street trader and salesperson yields low wages and is widely considered demeaning work. Quality of life indicators have also stabilized, but malnutrition, infant mortality, and rates of disease remain well above Soviet levels.

Although most sectors of the economy have been in decline, the mineral and petroleum sectors have attracted significant investment from both Kazakhstani and outside investors. Many government policy-makers and economic analysts have staked Kazakhstan’s future on the projected abundance of petroleum resources in the Caspian Sea region. The attention given to oil and gas sector created a speculative frenzy and considerable investment in exploration from multinational petroleum companies through the 1990’s, but currently doubts are being raised as to the true extent of the reserves and whether the political, social, and economic environment in

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38 Olcott 2002
Kazakhstan will 'stabilize' enough to facilitate the development of these resources. More disconcerting are questions about how the benefits from the exploitation of these resources are being distributed and who will incur the costs (i.e. social, economic, and environmental) of their exploitation.  

The “war on terrorism” and the spectre of global petroleum limits has focused even more geopolitical interest in Central Asia as a new source of petroleum and its potential as “flashpoint” for Islamic fundamentalism. Intense multinational private sector and high-level government interest in petroleum development and the associated legal, political, and economic institutions that support its development as well as IMF structural adjustment policies have drawn attention away from serious public investment in civil society organizations, public institutions, and other sectors of the economy. In addition, the establishment of transparent and accountable state institutions necessary for democracy (e.g. fair and open electoral system, independent judiciary and legislature, and a functioning bureaucracy) has been a continuing challenge. Since Kazakhstan’s political leaders can win favour from powerful Western states by becoming regional security partners in the “war on terrorism” this has allow these leaders to make commitments to democracy to a lower priority. Although economic globalization and its driving institutions have had tremendous influence in shaping the direction the new Kazakhstan has taken, the current socio-economic issues facing Kazakhstan have deep roots in the remnants of the Soviet structures of power that have allowed former and new elites to consolidate their power in the new economy.

**Bardak: ‘Chaotic Mode of Domination’**

The collapse of the Soviet Union’s social, economic, and ideological system and the ensuing “crisis of hegemony” has created a political order characterized by what Nazpary calls a “chaotic mode of domination,” “the intertwined over-centralized arbitrariness of the state officials on the one hand and the centrifugal and anarchic arbitrariness of the members of different informal networks of influence on the other.” The “sudden brutal emergence of market forces in a non-market society” and their driving force, the “speculative capitalist rationality (the profit-making logic)” is at the root of chaos or what local people term *bardak*. The introduction of unregulated markets coupled with collapse of the institutions of the Soviet welfare state left the majority of the population without access to resources and left with

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40 The Soros Foundation and the Public Policy Research Center in Kazakhstan have funded a project to track the revenues coming from the oil and gas sector in attempts to get the government and private investors to publicly disclosed where revenues end up. See [http://www.kazakhstanrevenuewatch.org](http://www.kazakhstanrevenuewatch.org)
41 Immediately following Kazakhstan independence US bilateral assistance concern was primarily in dismantling the Kazakhstan’s nuclear arsenal and addressing regional security issues. There are numerous American NGOs working on environmental, democracy, and other issues, but there is clear policy focus on petroleum development and resources assigned to development of the sector reflect this.
42 Gramsci described a ‘crisis of hegemony’ as a situation when a whole system of political order is in crisis, but there is an absence of revolutionary practice or it is not strong enough to create a new system of political order. See Gramsci 1971 in Nazpary, Joma. 2002. *Post-Soviet Chaos: Violence and Dispossession in the Kazakhstan*. London: Pluto Press, p. 5.
45 The literal definition of Barak in Russian is brothel, but it is a commonly used to describe situations of ‘legal and moral disorder’ and is often used to describe ‘corruption, cynicism, violence, the mafia, lawlessness, and arbitrariness of state officials, the dissolution of the welfare state’, and other social and economic dispossession.’ It often used interchangeably with the term ‘wild capitalism (diki kapitalism).’(Nazpary 2002, p.2).
relatively little social, economic, or political power resulting in “social disintegration, growth of violence, ethnic tensions, and other indicators of chaos.”

Even before the break-up of the Soviet state economy, the legitimacy of Communist Party authority and the centrally planned economy began to erode with the economic stagnation of 1960’s and 1970’s and was amplified during the economic restructuring of the 1980’s’ perestroika. The significant, but not system transforming, power shift away from the state economy to unregulated private networks was characterized by the “growth in the black market, corruption, mafia-like networks”, and led to a “general decline in morale” among the Soviet population as they lost faith in the moral authority of their leaders and the system. Although these networks undermined state authority they created important pathways to resources especially far scarcer goods like cars and apartments for people with limited access to official channels and for influential individuals to increase their status and patronage. Expansion of the illegal diversion of state resources steadily grew during the Soviet era as the networks became stronger and people lost faith in the state socialist system.

Following the complete collapse of the centralized power in Moscow, local and regional networks increased their influence and power and were able to operate relatively independently. In Kazakhstan, as in the other Republics, managers of state enterprises, regional and local akims, and other elites increased their status and control through networks by monopolizing the control of material resources, invoking traditional and kinship alliances, and appealing to regional identities. Garnering the support of the regional leaders and their networks of influence in Kazakhstan became an essential task for Nulsultan Nazarbaev, Kazakhstan’s former General Secretary and current President, to consolidate the power of the presidency in the early years of an independent Kazakhstan. As Nazarbaev attempted to increase his control over the regions defeating rival regional leaders became an important component to reasserting national-level authority.

Bardak, as a metaphor, should not be considered as “diametrically opposite of order”, but “rather a chaotic order, an arbitrariness resulting from random tensions between and chaotic articulation of myriads of smaller pockets of order.” It is the rules, institutions, and structures of power within these pockets of order and among them in networks based on coercive power, which constructs the reconfigured system of political order. The collapse of official Soviet power did not create a wholly new distribution of power, but changed the rules and relationships of the existing hierarchy between social and political actors. Former communist elites realigned themselves in new political and economic arrangements to maintain and often increase their political and economic power.

As the new Kazakhstani state institutions firmly established their authority, local and regional state officials took more control of the networks of influence. Subordinate networks have become an important part of high officials’ portfolios of power especially because of the weakness of official state authority. The informal power captured by state officials has

46 Nazpary 2002, p. 2
47 Limits on wealth accumulation stimulated the reciprocal exchange of status for material goods between influential individuals (patrons) (e.g. state enterprise managers, Party leaders, state farm managers, etc.) and their “clients” (e.g. workers, lower level party members, farm workers, etc.). Loyalty and support of “clients” expanded the patrons’ networks of influence through kinship and friendship networks. The limits on wealth accumulation and the Soviet welfare benefits prevented patrons from exacting total control over clients in most circumstances, KGB coercion aside.
48 Nazpary 2002, p. 78
49 Regional governors and mayors
50 Luong 2002
51 Nazpary 2002, p. 4
52 Luong 2002
transformed state institutions into “fiefdoms” where bureaucrats from top to bottom use their official positions of authority to control “networks of influence for collection of bribes and tributes and reciprocate resources” and privileges such as permits, diplomas, and use of public facilities to members of their network.

The accelerated expansions of exploitative forms of economic accumulation after Kazakhstan’s independence became what many Kazakhstanis have termed dikii kapitalism or ‘wild capitalism’. The trend towards unregulated capitalism that started in the last years of the Soviet Union continued following independence with the support of international financial institutions, IMF and World Bank. Simultaneously, resources previously belonging to the state are being moved into the private sector with little or no benefit returned to the larger public. State enterprises were sold to friends and relatives of state officials at nominal prices for bribes. Similarly, weak control by central economic institutions has made managers of state enterprises into de facto owners. The resulting accumulation of wealth in the relatively few hands of former communist party members, black marketers, and new Mafioso has deepened the patron-client type relations between the new rich and the new poor.

Likewise, without the coercive power of the Soviet state to maintain some boundaries on predatory activity, Kazakhstan’s state institutions, with their weak democratic traditions, have become instruments of the networks of influence. As state officials and bureaucrats use the networks to increase their own power through partnerships with powerful non-state actors (i.e. mafia, wealthy business people, etc.) These non-state actors gain more influence in the function of state institutions. In addition, the emergence of a dispossessed majority, created by the failure of the state institutions to meet its welfare obligations and a stagnant economy, has provided an endless pool of easily exploitable people for elites at all levels to recruit to elaborate networks of influence.

The dispossessed, on the other hand, have been left to meet their basic needs through networks of survival that exist in the societal and economic cracks where the elite have little or no interest in gaining control. The dispossessed do not depend solely on wages for survival but on various methods of household production such as kitchen gardens, hunting, fishing, and gathering, illegal appropriation of small resources in their work places, and reciprocal exchanges through their networks. However, the widespread breakdown of social trust from the collapse of the welfare state and the sudden a new set of rules and conduct of the market such as accumulation of capital and use of force has created a “extremely contingent and unpredictable” socioeconomic environment “reducing people’s sense of agency.” Thus, even if the dispossessed have good skills at networking the unpredictability of the networks of influence makes life contentious at every moment.

Thus, Soviet society as a moral and economic community has disintegrated into “networks of influence and networks of survival” where networks of survival are based on “face to face reciprocal relations” and networks of influence are based on face-to-face relations and “social relations established between people and institutions.” Both types of networks are based “local kinship, marriage, friendship, and ethnic relations” which are intimately connected to ethnic identity discussed in later sections.

53 Nazpary 2002, p.8
54 The Dispossessed are people dispossessed from ‘property, work, and entitlements’ including homeless, sex trade workers, scientists, low-level civil servants, etc. This diverse array of people together self-identifies as poor in comparison to the middle and high state officials, Mafioso or the new rich whose wealth and power far exceed that of most Kazakhstanis. (Nazpary 2002, p. 13)
55 Nazpary 2002, p. 179
56 Nazpary 2002, p. 4
57 Nazpary 2002, p. 17
58 Nazpary 2002, p. 17
Reciprocal exchanges reproduce and maintain social relations in both networks of survival and influence and are based on social reproduction rituals of everyday life and life cycle events which involved “exchange of drink, food, gifts, and words.” The social relations established through these reciprocal exchanges then form the basis for exchange of material goods and services. The exchange of material resources creates a kind of barter system. Some types of exchanges between relatives and close friends are made without immediate reciprocal exchange of goods, but in expectation of future assistance. These networks of survival are linked to networks of influence through kinship, work place, and residential location (i.e. neighbourhoods, villages), but survival networks are not empowering agents, they don’t redistribute power. They only provide enough resources to allow the member to live to the next month or year and, in fact, they reinforce the system because many people in survival networks are engaged in the same illegal or clandestine activities as those in the networks of influence (e.g. taking materials and tools from the work place, illegally hunting or fishing, etc.). Thus, most of extremely marginalized do not want to risk changes to the status quo that might dissolve their only source of livelihood unless they can be reasonably certain that it will be replaced by a system that will make their lives more secure; keeping in mind many of these people have witnessed the collapse of a powerful social and economic system that had defined most of their lives. At the same time elites now enjoy unfathomable privilege and power unrestricted by Soviet ideology. Thus, the powerful will protect that privilege throughout proactive strengthening of networks and by suppressing threats when they arise.

Informal networks of survival and influence profoundly affect project planning in Kazakhstan. These networks are the key to the success and failure of the project planning process. The distinctive although not necessarily unique characteristics of reciprocity through everyday and life cycle rituals of “drinking, eating, and gift giving” and resources in exchange for status and undefined future benefits play a unique role in how networks of survival are expressed through project planning. Social relations based on these rituals must exist or be established in order for an individual to tap into the benefits of a project. The reciprocal benefits received by a particular individual in charge of distributing project resources may be in the form of status or future benefits. They may take the risk of distributing project resources in a way contrary to the stated goals of the project if they feel that the future benefits received from the network outweigh potential benefits from the project. At the same time the underlying obligations to networks of influence reinforced by coercion and domination can compel individuals to meet those obligations using project resources if potential negative consequences outweigh the benefits received from the project. Thus, projects can become instruments for actors to reinforce existing power relations, which run at the roots of existing social and political inequity. Even environmental projects that often aim to work within the structure of power can have their resources diverted to servicing power rather than address ecological problems.

All networks are in part built on the common identities of social actors. Later sections will explore in more depth salient socio-political identities as they relate to networks and roles that actors assume in project planning, but the next section will describe a few institutional actors that play central roles in planning LEPs in Kazakhstan.

Key Institutional Actors in the Local Environmental Project Planning

Within the broad socio-political context of the Kazakhstan, as described in the previous section, this section outlines the specific institutional socio-political actors prominent in the case LEPs that are examined in Chapter Four. Although the relative importance and the specific

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39 Nazpary 2002, p. 71
strategic roles of each actor varied from project to project, some general characteristics of their roles in the structure of Kazakhstan’s socio-political economy remain relatively universal.

**International Development Institutions – UNDP -GEF**

In 1991, the United Nations was invited by the Government of Kazakhstan to begin work in the country and it became increasingly clear that the international community would play “a more immediate and direct role in shaping political and economic change in the Soviet successor states.” The initial phase of UN assistance assisted the new government and nation establish its basic governance institutions including a new parliament, bureaucracy, and civil society based on a Western model of representative democracy, and supported the dismantling of the Soviet economic apparatus with the intent of spawning the development of market-based economy. In its first years, UN assistance was administered primarily through a UN liaison office and then through its main development agency, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Working closely with the national government to transfer Western-style practices in governance, small enterprise development, and trade development, UNDP became a trusted partner in fulfilling the requests of the national government, which was dominated by President Nazarbaev and his close allies. The unique position of UN agencies as guests of the government allows them to profoundly influence policy and social and economic development through direct access to high government officials, but also limits the organization’s ability to criticize government policies and practices that are considered counter to UNDP’s mandate as determined by the broader world community. For example, UNDP and other UN agencies have been able to support the expansion of civil society and other limited forms of democratic expression while only deferentially challenging central government policies and practices that have led to the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the president and his close allies. Understanding the limitations of the challenging the national and regional powerholders, UNDP’s work at the local level has evolved to be an important source of financing in several geographic regions and sectors including the environmental sector.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has become an important part of the UNDP environmental portfolio in Kazakhstan, funding its first project in 1996 with a grant to develop a country strategy for the Convention on Biological Diversity. Through the GEF large and medium-sized project funding, government and the National Academy of Sciences examined potential for wind-generated energy, the Caspian Environment Program, and the reducing the use of ozone-depleting substances. The large and medium sized projects have largely partnered with government and research institutions with civil society organizations primarily playing consultative roles. Currently, GEF large and medium-sized projects are focusing on protection of the Kazakhstan’s unique biodiversity in the Altai region, the country’s extensive system of wetlands, and the mountain agro-biodiversity in the southern region.

In 1997, the GEF Small Grants Programme (GEF/SGP) became part of the GEF portfolio in Kazakhstan, providing significant funding specifically designated for NGOs and Community-Based organizations. The office began taking grant applications focused in three main...
geographic areas: Aral Sea Region, Caspian Sea Region, and Tien-Shan Mountain Region. Through 2002, GEF/SGP had funded over 60 projects and shifted its focus away from the Caspian Region because of difficulties finding local partners who met the programmatic requirements of GEF/SGP such as reporting, financial management, encouraging participation of the local population, and conducting project planning processes. The target socio-economic population of the GEF/SGP program in Kazakhstan has been “locally economically-poor and marginalized population in primarily rural-based households and communities, whose livelihood directly depends on the natural resource base.”

During the first two years in operation GEF/SGP Kazakhstan reported total allocation of grants at US$200,000 and attracted co-funding from local stakeholders at US$219,000. Although much of the local contributions are given in the form of in-kind contributions, which are often subjectively interpreted (e.g. higher rates charged for renting meeting space, reporting high-end gasoline prices, value of existing technological resources such as computers, copy machines provided through previous donors, etc.) to give the appearance of large local contributions. This does not diminish the value of these contributions in terms of their functional value to the project, their role in demonstrating local commitment, or the real need for GEF/SGP funding, but relying on financial figures to give an accurate picture of the real cost contributions is misleading. If it raises expectations that these highly marginalized populations have the resources to match the finances of even a small grants fund then it is deceptive and hides the true gap in resources that exists between these people on the outside of the world financial systems and those global institutions like GEF/SGP that are highly integrated into it.

At the national level GEF/SGP employs a collaborative decision-making structure enshrined in the international policy guidelines which require that “national coordinators and the national steering committee be composed of government, UNDP, and civil society representatives” consulting various professionals in programmatic and policy development. In the formulation of Kazakhstan’s first GEF/SGP country strategy in 1997 the national coordinator consulted with over 200 professional scientists and civil society representatives to develop focal areas for the GEF/SGP program in Kazakhstan.

The National Steering Committee (NSC) has seven basic functions:

- Examine proposals of project concepts submitted to GEF/SGP;
- Choose and approve projects for financing in accordance with GEF/SGP criteria;
- Provide consultative support to potential grant recipients for pre-project frameworks and project activities;
- Participate in the revision and fulfillment of the GEF/SGP national strategic program;
- Participate in monitoring and evaluation of current projects and broad GEF/SGP programmatic goals;
- Participate in informational project site visits of potential grant recipients;


“Most NSCs are composed of representatives of host governments, UNDP country office staff (the Resident Representative or his/her delegate), NGOs, universities/research institutions, and other civil society organizations. Some NSCs have included donor organizations and the private sector. It is also important to ensure the participation of technical experts in the GEF focal areas; these experts may be affiliated with the government, NGOs, universities, or environmental movements.” GEF SGP Strategic Framework

GEF SGP Strategic Framework
- Participate as qualified trainers in the GEF/SGP training for potential grant recipients.\(^{67}\)

The NSC is made up of national experts who work in the spheres of biodiversity conservation, climate change mediation, protecting international watercourses as well as representatives of NGOs, academia, government, and international organizations. The national coordinator is responsible for the everyday activities of the GEF/SGP national office and implementing the policies established by the NSC.

The NSC and the GEF/SGP staff is heavily composed of experts and representatives based in Almaty and its immediate surrounding area. This has significant implications for both setting the GEF/SGP priorities and the influence that the program has on other areas of the country. Because many of the national level academics and other experts are based at institutions in Almaty, the wealth of high-level, locally-based professional and experiential knowledge distributed throughout the country are underrepresented on NSCs. Many Almaty-based experts have extensive knowledge of particular regions of the country, but their physical separation creates a certain level of cognitive detachment and difficulty keeping up to date on the dynamic political, social, and economic environment in the dispersed regions. Furthermore, the NSCs have been primarily made up of highly-educated, well-connected experts and officials from the NGO, academic, and government sectors, representing a certain set of interests within Kazakhstani society. With little representation from the smaller, less well-established NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), and other community level interest groups, NSC decisions often reflect the priorities of the experts. The NSC has attempted to include those interests not represented in its own ranks through extensive consultation with “GEF/SGP stakeholders and recommendations from outside experts”\(^{68}\). The power of the NSC and outside experts to determine geographic priorities, to review project proposals, and to arrange professional consultation has allowed NSC members, other experts, GEF/SGP staff, and their associates to strengthen their networks of influence in local regions.

The ability to determine the allocation of resources is a role that many academics and other mid-level technical experts working in NGOs don’t often have the privilege to control. In this way, members of the NSC, other scientists, and GEF/SGP staff create a network of influence that can infuse resources into the other informal networks based in geographic regions and/or into their national-level networks of professionals. These new networks can create alternative resources to the exploitative networks that may dominate the local areas. They can also strengthen resilient and mutually beneficial survival networks based on kinship, profession, or other positive social identity groups. Although all of these exploitative networks may still hold some influence over the members of NSC, experts, and GEF/SGP staff. However, as an institution, UNDP/GEF is able to operate relatively independently of these networks because its funding and policies are determined at the international level.

**Kazakhstan NGOs**

The development of the NGO sector and broader civil society in Kazakhstan has progressed consistently over the past twelve years since independence. The environmental NGO sector has had the longest and most prolific development of any sector within civil society. With its origins in the anti-nuclear movement of the late 1980’s, specifically on ending nuclear

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\(^{67}\) GEF/SGP Kazakhstan Website, http://gefsgp.un.kz/

\(^{68}\) GEF/SGP Kazakhstan Country Strategy 1999, p. 14
weapons testing at the Semipalatinsk testing grounds⁶⁹, an environmental consciousness spread widely through a large part of the population. Environmental NGOs initially were concentrated in the major urban areas of the country, but in recent years have grown in many smaller rural communities. The leadership within the environmental NGO sector are often people with professional education in environment/ecology-related areas including many former academics and government researchers who lost their state-funded research jobs with the dismantling of the Soviet bureaucracy. Many NGO leaders have decades of experience doing innovative field and laboratory research that was once at the cutting edge of the international scientific community.

NGOs have both become the centre of the most enduring expression of civil society and important nodes of support networks in local communities. In comparison to other civil society institutions such as religious institutions, neighbourhood associations, political parties, and labour unions, NGOs wield significant influence at all levels of society. At the same time, some aspects of NGOs, particularly the prominence of highly educated, well-connected individuals in leadership positions, reinforces many Soviet and post-Soviet forms of patronage described earlier. Among some NGOs, the professionally trained leadership view their professional qualifications as justification for authoritarian, undemocratic control of NGOs. Thus, many NGOs in Kazakhstan remain 1-2 person organizations becoming operations of self-employment rather than strengthening social capital in organizations or communities. Many NGOs are involved in activities that blur the line between for-profit activities and service provision to communities. Similarly, it is difficult to distinguish between ‘profit’ and living wages. When profit margins are so small in many small- and medium-sized businesses that the insecurity of the market negates any real benefits, the NGO sector seems as good or better source of income for most people. The tax structure reflects the difficulty distinguishing between NGOs and private enterprise by making no differentiation between non-profit and for-profit organizations. A common analysis from government officials and international experts on civil society development attributes people using, “NGOs . . .[as] a source of money-making and making a living,” to a “lack of proper understanding of NGOs role and objectives [in society],”⁷⁰ but an analysis within the bardak framework would attribute the attraction of NGOs as income generators to practical decisions intended to capture available resources that are contingent on more predictable factors (i.e. funders’ guidelines, professional relationships, etc.) than the arbitrary decisions of other networks of influence. In effect, NGOs have become part of the networks of survival for groups of dispossessed professionals and in many cases are indirectly benefitting other actors.

Although creating jobs and pathways for outside resources is an important function for NGOs in many small communities, as organizations they often only superficially establish their own institutional identity and stability outside the image that they create to attract grant, donor, and other funding. Without a consolidated vision and priorities, it is difficult for NGOs to create a cumulative impact of their activities and to create resilient alternative centres of power in the face of the well-established patronage networks linked to state and economic centres of power. Thus, if the intent of civil society is to create spaces for democratic, pluralistic expression, then its institutions must both represent the diversity of ideas and interests and be able to resist the power of dominating institutions to co-opt and homogenize them for their networks of influence.

NGOs and civil society in general face significant challenges from state power through the regulatory system. For example, in order to meet as an official organization in Kazakhstan NGOs must register with the local authorities, which officially includes a registration fee of approximately 100 USD. Through the registration mechanism the government can monitor the


⁷⁰ Taken from meeting minutes of GEF/SGP expert in Almaty, March 12, 2002.
activities and the outside funding of public organizations. In recent years the government has used the legal system and force to crack down on dissident NGOs and media that have become critical of government policy.  

**International NGOs**

NGOs based outside of Kazakhstan play an important role in funnelling funding, expertise, and ideas to both the NGO sector in Kazakhstan and at times to government agencies. Central Asia in general has not been a focal area for many international NGOs well-established in other parts of the world in part because the needs of countries of the former Soviet Union are not comparable to the situations in countries of Africa, South America, and other parts of Asia. Many of these international NGOs partner with local Kazakhstani NGOs to conduct projects or short-term programs (e.g. Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries (HIVOS-Netherlands)-Institute of Development Cooperation (Kazakhstan), and the Danish Society for the Living Sea-Aral Tenizi). At the same time, new NGOs focusing on the specific needs of countries of the former Soviet Union and Central Asia have been started in North America and Europe (e.g. Initiative for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia (ISAR), International Research and Exchange Boards (IREX), German Society for Nature Conservation (NABU), and Eurasia Foundation). Often in-country offices of international NGOs are staffed primarily by Kazakhstani with one or two foreign nationals in management positions. Although these NGOs operate on tight budgets their level of financing is often more secure than local counterparts, in part because they receive large amounts of funding from members, philanthropic organizations, and governments in their home countries. International NGOs work on a number of different issues in Kazakhstan ranging from education to economic development. Often NGOs provide space for social and political critiques that are repressed in other forums dominated by government and other powerholders (e.g. Soros foundation’s oil revenue watch). On the other hand, some international NGOs work closely with government and other centers of power, serving functions that often reinforce the system of political order in Kazakhstan.

Two of the four cases (“Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” and “Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve”) presented in this thesis involved international NGOs (Danish Society for the Living Sea, NABU, and World Wildlife Fund) as partners in varying capacities. The international NGOs provided organizational and technical expertise for the planning and implementation of these projects and their expertise had significant influence on the purpose and goals of the projects, which were principally determined by the local NGOs and other local partners. Partnerships with international partners, both NGOs and IDOs, allowed local NGOs to resist attempts to co-opt their projects for the benefit of powerful local actors. Only one of the international NGOs had offices in Kazakhstan. Its staff was composed entirely of Kazakhstanis and it had closer links to other local actors and organizations, thus its actions within the project also reflected its close relationships with government, other NGOs, and academia that developed outside the framework of the project.

**Local Government**

Local government in Kazakhstan remains under the control of senior levels of government with little ability or impetus to respond to local needs except as justification for officials to extend their networks of influence. The President ensures central control over local

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leadership by appointing all _oblaut_ governors and mayors (akims). In some areas of the country President Nazarbaev changes appointments often to ensure that appointed officials don't build too strong of a local network that could then be used to challenge Nazarbaev's authority in the local area. Elected local city councils do exist, but they have relatively little power in comparison to appointed local akims.²²

Relationships between local government and foreign actors are largely seen in practical and ceremonial terms. Local officials welcome most types of investment in their region as long as it doesn't change either their formal or informal sources of power. Often local governments are not willing to make the time and resource commitments to be involved in project planning at all stages and instead offer symbolic support in the form of official letters of support and efficient service from the local bureaucracy.

Conversely, foreign actors, recognize the monopoly on authority held by local officials at the local level and take great aims to ensure that adequate homage is paid to the symbolic and administrative support given by local officials. However, in the case of outside interventions that may create challenges to local or national government control, local officials are more reluctant to allow activity, but opportunities for income are so scarce they may allow activities on a limited basis. In their examination of NGOs and local government in Kazakhstan, Luong and Weinthal find,

"For the most part, regional [government] leaders saw international democracy-building organizations [NGOs] as a nuisance, but saw they could 'contribute to the local economy' for example, by utilizing local facilities to hold seminars and generally keeping people occupied"³³

and

"it is really the akims [governors and mayors] who influence environmental policy in their regions. . . 'what the centre [government] decides is not clearly meaningful in the regions unless it is what the akim wants to support'"³⁴

In the cases analysed in this thesis, local government officials were involved in the public meeting and stakeholder roundtables to discuss project goals, increase public support and involvement, and evaluate project outcomes. A few local level bureaucrats were involved in the project activities themselves, but generally other actors found this created conflicts, because some officials would use their official authority to manipulate project activities to serve their interests without regard to the interests of other actors. The blatant use of coercive authority by government officials created a kind of closed atmosphere where other actors recognized there might be negative consequences if the authority were challenged directly and openly. Not all local government officials involved in the case projects tried to manipulate them. Those officials that recognized the positive impact of a successful project on their reputation and the value of the collective benefits supported the planned goals and activities determined collaboratively.

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²² Olcott 2002, p. 99
³³ Luong 2002 p. 151
Components of socio-political identity

Individual actors’ decision-making in political and other social contexts is influenced by any of various personal and social identities, which determine values, beliefs, and understandings.\textsuperscript{75} Identities help construct meaning in the world, particularly relevant to development project planning, they determine how actors interpret knowledge and action. As Erikson, an early theorist in identity construction stated, “ego identity ... is the awareness of ... self-sameness and continuity ... [and] the style of one’s individuality [which] coincides with the sameness and continuity of one’s meaning for others in the immediate community.”\textsuperscript{76} It is actors’ unique, enduring and changing identity characteristics that ground the roles they assume in project planning.

There are many theoretical conceptions of the origins, components, and processes of identity formation, but most theories can be divided into some commonly recognized traditions. The first two traditions assume a predominantly static identity formed early in life. The ‘primordialist’ presupposes that identity is based primarily on inborn characteristics and Freudian identity is grounded in early childhood experiences that are heavily influenced by parental relationships. Accordingly, identities, from the Freudian perspective, are primarily a ‘function of basic identificatory processes and parental introjects’ and ‘not significantly revised or updated through adolescence and adulthood.’\textsuperscript{77} Although these traditions have had wide acceptance in Western-thought through most of the past century, they inadequately explain empirically observed phenomenon of multiple conflicting identities, identity change, and mixed identities. Accordingly, alternative concepts of identity have arisen.

Erikson challenged Freudian early life determinism by hypothesizing that self-selection of identity is a fundamental distinction between childhood and adulthood.\textsuperscript{78} He recognized the importance of inborn personality traits and early childhood experience at influencing identity formation, but as a chosen component of their self-concept people weren’t bound to childhood expectations or essential identities determined by kinship. Identity choices are made based on the range of possibilities available, influenced by past and present experience, and are ‘discursively and interactively constituted.’\textsuperscript{79} Consequently, the sociocultural context is a primary determinant in identity formation because it constructs the pool of potential identities and the platform of discourse and interaction, which creates shared experience among social actors. As the first component in identity formation, Mokros describes identity discourse as the expression, based on sociocultural knowledge, of ‘possibilities and permissibilities’ that ‘guide human agency’ which establish the boundaries for self-identity. Social interaction, a deterministic relationship between two or more social engagements of mutual or reciprocal influence, is the site at which identities and discourses are constituted.\textsuperscript{80} Social identities reflected in macro-level societal and institutional norms are transferred to personal identities.

\textsuperscript{77} Swartz 2001, p. 9
\textsuperscript{78} Swartz 2001 p. 9
\textsuperscript{80} Mokros 1996.
through micro-level interpersonal discourses as well as through institutional-individual interaction.

An individual’s self-identity can be divided into two main components that represent two competing tensions differentiation and integration. Personal identity is the unique set of core characteristics, goals, values, and beliefs that differentiate an individual from other individuals while social identity is the set of assigned and chosen collective affiliations that integrate an individual into society. An important distinction between personal identity and social identity is that social identity is limited to the ‘available categories that both divide and unite people in a society inter alia national identities, racial identities, religious identities, and hometown identities’ while personal identity by definition is uniquely constructed by each individual and is not wholly like any other. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be on specific social identities, recognizing that personal identity has a profound impact on an individual’s chosen social identities and actors’ decision-making.

Both social groups and individuals have tapped into the inherent emotion built from the collective reciprocity of affiliation with a particular social identity. Mid-twentieth century political leaders spanning the ideological spectrum from Joseph Stalin to Woodrow Wilson were influenced by ‘primordial’ and Freudian conceptions of identity. Concurrently, assumptions that identities were predetermined, inflexible, and linked to essential characteristics justified state policies to control people who were determined to have identities (e.g. class, ethnic, gender, etc.) contradictory or threatening to the system of political order. The assumptions underlying ‘primordial’ concepts of identity promote stereotyped and discriminatory behaviour and underpin much social, cultural, and economic policy intended to maintain societal ‘stability’. At the same time, political leaders have recognized how new social and political identities can be constructed to reinforce a ‘political story’ that legitimizes or de-legitimizes the system of political order. Luong outlines three ways that state institutions create sociocultural cleavages and intergroup competitions by creating and transforming identities:

(1) By favouring some sociocultural identities or groups over others
(2) By empowering certain social groups—whether elevating their status or granting them privileged access to scarce resources— and not others, and
(3) By repressing certain identities and groups and hence rendering them politically inexpedient and potentially dangerous.

In the Soviet Union, the tension between the ideologically constructed social and political identity of sovietkii narod or the ‘Soviet people’ and the hundreds of nationalities that made the Soviet one of the most diverse states on the planet created unique membership for many Soviet citizens in two conceptions of ‘nation’, often with competing interests. On the one hand, many people associated their nationality with their ethnic heritage and its language, cultural, and historic knowledge. At the same time there was intense social and political pressure to conform to concepts of communist internationalism and the homogenizing forces of the Soviet state. Although the dual recognition of ethnically-based nationalities and Soviet pluralist identity has its roots in Lenin-Stalin strategic political alliances established time of the Bolshevik Revolution, both have persisted in collective memory of the new states of former Soviet Union, including

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81 Swartz p. 38
82 Laitin 1998.
83 Differentiation of individual identity should not be confused with individualism which is a certain type of collective identity emphasizing individual self-determinism over linked collective fate.
84 Laitin 1998 p. 12
85 Luong 2002 p. 62
Kazakhstan.\textsuperscript{86} The state policies intended to establish sovietkii narod as the dominant social identity had differing consequences for the various ethno-nationalities. These consequences will be discussed further in the section discussing ethnic identity in more depth.

As these social identities entered political discourse they became political identities with political values and differentiated power in the system of political order. An individual may possess internalized multiple conflicting identities, so long as external factors do not force them to make a choice. However, a unique quality of politicized identities is that public discourse and action requires an individual to choose between multiple conflicting identities where actions and behaviours of one identity conflict with another identity.\textsuperscript{87} This choice is not always made in instrumental terms, but made based on varying factors including the level of commitment that an individual has made to a certain identity. The public face of an individual's multiple identities becomes that person's social role, which is discussed in the next section.

\textit{Identity and Roles}

Since personal identities and the particular set of social identities are unique to each individual then each set of identity characteristics will not integrate exactly into the identity of another individual or institution.\textsuperscript{88} The interaction among individuals and between individuals and institutions is constructed of agreement, conflict, consensus, compromise, and negotiation in the context of power. The complex of consistent public actions, behaviours and contradictions can be found in the competing demands of an individual's multiple identities and social roles. An individual can have multiple identities that can potentially contradict one another. When an individual has multiple conflicting identities an individual is in what can be termed a state of identity confusion or identity exploration. However, individuals attempt to reach an identity synthesis or commit themselves to a certain set of identities.\textsuperscript{89} Social roles on the other hand are constantly in a state of flux as social actors adapt to the institutional and power arrangements that structure particular social discourse and actions in which they engage. Castells states clearly the distinction between social identity and social role:

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"By identity as it refers to social actors, I understand the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related set of cultural attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning. For a given actor, there may be a plurality of identities. Yet, such a plurality is a source of stress and contradiction in both self-representation and social action. This is because identity must be distinguished from what, traditionally, sociologists have called roles, and role sets. Roles (for example, to be a worker, a mother, a neighbour, a socialist militant, a union member, a basketball player, a churchgoer, and a smoker, at the same time) are defined by norms structured by the institutions and organizations of society. Their relative weight in influencing people's behavior depend upon negotiations and arrangements between individuals and these institutions and organizations...identities can also be originated from dominant institutions, they become identities only when and if social actors internalize them, and construct their meaning around this internalization...some [identity]
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\textsuperscript{87} Laitin 1998, p. 23

\textsuperscript{88} In fact, relationships among individuals and institutions that strive for complete integration may be seen as pathological (e.g. cults, obsessive, etc.)

\textsuperscript{89} Swartz 2001
self-definition can coincide with social roles... yet, identities are stronger sources of meaning than roles because the process of self construction and individuation that they involve... In simple terms identities organize meaning while roles organize functions.\textsuperscript{90}

Personal and social identities are key factors in understanding the roles that different actors take in the project planning process. Often, public roles serve to inhibit or enable actors to assert their goals and needs in the project planning process while personal identities are the root of true motivations and priorities. At times public and private identities coincide, but often they take on different characteristics. Identities constructed during the early Soviet era, reshaped during perestroika and post-independence Kazakhstan, interplay and often clash with newly constructed identities that have emerged in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. The next three sections examine three particular categories of identity, how they are uniquely shaped in the context of Kazakhstan, and how they influence particular roles in the context of project planning.

These three identity categories are highlighted here because they often revealed themselves in different discourses and interactions as important to actors involved in the case projects and because they have particular qualities unique to post-Soviet Kazakhstan and important to understanding project planning roles. I am not making the argument that these categories have more or less influence among them or in comparison to other identity categories such as gender, age, political affiliation, or any other social category. In a real world context it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish the particular weight or influence that any particular identity might have in a given situation because of the blending of social categories and the unique construction of personal identity in each individual, as well as the dynamic construction of roles themselves to adapt to the functionality of a particular situation.

**Ethnic Identities: Foundations of Informal Networks**

The tension among ethno-national\textsuperscript{91} identities, assumed to be "primordial," and the state-constructed Soviet identity has structured republican-level political discourse on ethno-nationality and ethno-national group relationships throughout the history of Soviet control of Central Asia. Although widely critiqued among many modern and post-modern scholars, Stalin’s "primordialist" policies establishing national identity continue to have significant influence on the constructed national/ethnic identities of the people of the former Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{92} The Soviet government simultaneously promoted Soviet internationalism and required that all Soviet citizens possess an internal passport after the age of sixteen which had their ethno-nationality written on it. A person’s nationality was passed down from their parents’ nationality. In some cases of parents of different ethno-national background, the parents could chose which

\textsuperscript{90}Castells 1997 p. 7
\textsuperscript{91}I will use the term ethno-nationality as the translation of the Russian term natsionalnost, which is often used interchangeably for the English terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nationality’. Although nationality often refers to groups with common territory, language, history, and economic community and ethnicity implies kinship relations with common cultural background, the concepts are intertwined in the Russian term natsionalnost as the ethnicities with the Soviet Union are often associated with origins in a particular geographic territory. Fierman, William. 1998. “Language and Identity in Kazakhstan: Formulations in Policy Documents 1987-1997,” Communist and Post-Communist Studies. 31(2): pp. 171-186.
\textsuperscript{92}Laitin 1998
nationality to put on the passport, often opting for the paternal lineage.\(^93\) This policy continues in Kazakhstan and other former Soviet Republics, officially and psychologically linking an individual to an ethno-national identity. Because in most cases ethno-national affiliation is not chosen, the underlying assumption, at the very least, is that ethno-nationality is determined by kinship and that certain historical and lineage characteristics are linked to the individual. However, the myth that ethno-nationalities are intrinsically linked to a specific geographic territory fails to recognize the multi-and inter-ethnic reality that has historically developed and exists in present-day Kazakhstan, beginning with Cossack incursions of the 18\(^{th}\) century and Russian-Kazakh alliances of the 1820's and becoming even more diversified with Stalin and Khrushchev's massive relocation programs of the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's.\(^95\)

Today, Kazakhstan is an ethnically diverse state claiming over 100 different ethno-national groups, including Kazakhstan's titular nationality, other Central Asian groups (e.g. Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Tajiks), Slavic groups (e.g. Russian, Ukrainian, and Poles), Jews, Koreans, Moldovans, and other Turkic speaking nationalities (e.g. Tatars, Uighurs, Jungians). In fact, at independence, Kazakhs made up only 39 percent of the population and Russians consisted of 37 percent, but emigration of Russians and other non-Kazakhs nationalities, higher birthrates of Kazakhs, and repatriation Kazakhs from Mongolia and other former Soviet Republics has raised the percentage of Kazakhs and lowered the percentage of other nationalities.\(^96\)

In terms of social interactions in the past decade, ethno-national relations in Kazakhstan have on the whole been less strained than those in other Central Asian nations. This is due to a number of factors, the first being the long history integration with Russia and the cultural melding of the two largest ethno-national groups, Kazakh and Russian, and cultures on many fronts including significant intermarriage. Secondly, the vast territory of Kazakhstan has both allowed ethno-nationalities to establish their own small, relatively isolated, communities and the competition among social groups for scarce land and resources has as a result, been less intense. Third, no one group has been able to secure a strong majority to capture a secure hold on power (as Stalin's planners had anticipated).

Kazakh and other ethno-national resistance and resentment to the domination and primence of Russian culture and society has been a constant part of Kazakhstani social life through both tsarist and Soviet rule. The dominance of Russian language and cultural created the perception among Russians and other non-Kazakh nationalities that Russian culture was intrinsically better or more civilized. This led to widely held stereotypes that Kazakhs (and other Central Asians) were less "civilized" or "cultured" people.\(^97\) During the late Soviet era, the historical Russification of the Kazakh culture, its ill treatment by central authorities and the predominance of Russians in high level government and state industry positions led to a strong

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93 Mixed ethno-nationality were either not permitted or not typically chosen. Most often the fathers ethno-national affiliation was placed on the passport, but at times parents would make a strategic choice put the ethno-nationality in social and political favour.

94 Russian military frontiersmen

95 Stalin exiled dissenters and other people considered dangerous to the Soviet state to Kazakhstan to isolate them from strategic political and military location. The resulting amalgam of competing minorities also made it more difficult for one group to consolidate power over far-flung regions of the Soviet Union. For example, exile Russian dissenters to GULAGs in Kazakhstan during the 1930's and relocated Germans and Koreans from respective Western and Eastern fronts during WWII. Khrushchev followed with his own relocation program by promising land to Russians, Ukrainians, and other Slavic people as incentive to relocate to Northern Kazakhstan as part of the "Virgin Lands" program to increase grain production.


97 Laitin 1998, p. 175
movement for the revival of Kazakh ethno-national traditions. Ethno-nationalism throughout the Soviet Union became one driving force behind its dissolution.

As part of ethno-national revival, Kazakhstan, like other Central Asian nations, has been moving towards more emphasis on Kazakh identity through the introduction of language and culture programs. Pointing to long-time suppression of Kazakh language and culture and prominence of Russian culture during the Soviet Union, proponents for raising Kazakh language and culture to the dominance in Kazakhstan have supported the expansion of Kazakh schools, requirements for government officials to speak and write in Kazakh, and revival of Kazakh history. National policies and kinship networks have lead to de facto affirmative action-type hiring practices for government positions with jobs primarily going to Kazakhs, while other groups are excluded. Kinship networks have also played an important role in putting Kazakhs in control of many private industries. Appealing to Kazakh nationalism and tribal loyalties and drawing on Kazakh kinship tradition, President Nazarbaev has placed family members in key government positions to secure his position in power. Privileges for family members and friends seem to be pervasive throughout the government and also have been a major part of the government sales of former Soviet industries. For example, President Nazarbaev’s son-in-law owns a mega-consortium called Oil and Gas Transport, which unites the state enterprises Kaztransoil, Kaztransgas, and Kazmortontransflot to form a monopoly over oil and gas export pipelines, and, Caspian Sea tanker traffic. Another son-in-law was the head of internal security, and his daughter is the head of the national television company.

At the same time, national policies have been focused towards placating the large Russian population “with 'automatic citizenship, wide tolerance of Russian language and culture, and government subsidies to the Russian-dominated industrial sector.'” Similarly, the Kazakhstani government has made Kazakh the state language and Russian language remains vaguely defined as 'officially used on par with Kazakh' in state organizations and organs of local administration.

Kazakhs are now prominent in high government and private sector positions, creating an exclusionary atmosphere for other non-Kazakh ethnic groups and even Kazakhs not fluent in Kazakh language. This is a significant ethnic rift that is growing in Kazakhstani society, causing Russian and other ethnic groups to leave Kazakhstan in the face of a stagnant, specialized economy where most of the career jobs are in government or private industries with close connection to government. In a survey conducted in 1994 of Russians and Kazakhs in Kazakhstan, 25 % of the Russians surveyed responded that the reason they will be leaving Kazakhstan as "changes in the national political status of Russians" and 6.3% felt “they were being driven out” of Kazakhstan. From 1990-1992, 483,000 Russians left Kazakhstan, from 1989 to mid-1994, 958,00 Germans, as well as large numbers of Ukrainians, Tartars and Jews. On the other hand 120,000 Kazakhs have returned to Kazakhstan between 1991-1994.

The multi-ethnic reality has created a political conundrum for the dominant Kazakh leadership of Kazakhstan, who have used Kazakh ethno-national sentiments in order to consolidate support from the Kazakh population, particularly the rural population, in supporting the new state and its leadership. At the same time, the leadership is responsible to a large non-Kazakh population, many of whom have lived in Kazakhstan for at least two or three generations and consider Kazakhstan their native home.

98 Olcott 2002, Appendix 12
99 Luong 2002 p. 153
100 Fierman 1998
101 Olcott 1996
While Kazakhs can make strong historical claim to a majority of the territory of modern-day Kazakhstan, other ethno-national groups can make an equally strong historical and demographic claim to native rights in particular regions (e.g. Russians in the north, Uzbeks and Turkmen in the South, Uighurs in the south-east). Regional identities have their roots in the Soviet system, where Moscow-appointed government officials often relied on alliances with regional and local leaders and their informal networks to implement government directives. These networks were heavily influenced by ethno-national affiliations, however not exclusively comprised of one ethnic group. These regional networks continue to hold significant influence in Kazakhstan prompting Nazarbaev to implement policies and practices designed to reduce their influence (e.g. moving the capital to the north, making all gubernatorial and mayoral appointments, redrawing oblast boundaries, etc.).

In the cases analyzed in this thesis, ethno-national and regional networks are important enabling agents for local actors to secure matching contributions to projects (e.g. reduced prices on goods, short-term loans for procuring project items, use of vehicles, sweat equity). Projects also become resource nodes for the networks, as local project partners gain access to significant financial capital and thus individuals within their network who are experiencing particular hardship may ask them for small short-term personal loans, which according to the implicit understanding of reciprocity discussed earlier, they feel obliged to honor. These obligations may prove more compelling for project actors than does a sense of absolute loyalty to strict project accounting standards. Furthermore, most projects have a certain budgetary flexibility that allows this type of allocation to go unnoticed, and in many cases a small loan or donation may be repaid through an exchange for in-kind service or materials. The system often increases the status of local project planners among their networks, but may create resentment among those outside of those networks in the community. Thus, ethno-nationalities and their related networks play an important role in the implementation and outcomes of projects by directing, to a certain degree, how resources are allocated.

**Professional identity: Influencing Social and Political values**

At the core of professional identity are “[p]rofessional values [which] reflect both societal and professional concerns.” Professional identity drives professionals to address a certain set of social issues which are determined not only by their technical abilities, but also by their view of society rooted in a particular set of social values and linked to professional practice through a formal or informal set of professional ethics. Professional identity is also composed of practical concerns about professional practice including the preservation and expansion of the profession. Both social and professional components influence professionals’ relationships with other social actors as well as partially determine their relative power in relation other actors.

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103 Luong 2002
104 Central authorities in Moscow were constantly deriding ethno-national patrimonialism in the Central Asian Republics while non-Russian Central Asians saw favours handed down from leaders of Central Asian lineage as the only way to move through the Soviet system that was heavily Russian biased. The tension reached a head when the Politburo dismissed Dinmuhamed Kunayev, a Kazakh from his post as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Soviet Kazakhstan in 1986 and replaced him with an ethnic Russian, which sparked student protests in Almaty. The accusations from Moscow were of “tribalism” and “tribal protectionism.” Allworth, Edward. 1994. *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview.* Durham: Duke University Press and Luong 2002.
106 Abbott 1998
Professional identities in many ways have been some of the more resilient types of social identities constructed by the Soviet system, especially among the prestigious government intelligencia. Professional identification continues to be an indication of personal and social achievement for many Kazakhstanis, thus has remained a central part of many individuals’ primary identities. It is common for people to refer to themselves as an engineer, researcher, scientist, machinist, etc. regardless of their current employment. These professional identities and their implicit set of knowledges continue to inform values, beliefs, and understanding about the goals of social, political, and economic development. Logically, those who identify with an industrial profession point to the need to revive the industrial economy as the priority to restoring the health of the national economy and society as whole. Scientific professionals are concerned about the massive ‘brain drain’ caused by the emigration of highly educated Russians and other professionals as both a signal and cause of the downward spiral of Kazakhstan’s economy and society.

Within the Soviet scientific community, especially the natural sciences, an influential group advocating for nature protection persisted throughout the history of the Soviet Union. Since former scientists and researchers now lead many NGOs from the natural sciences, their professional identities were the direct predecessors of those defining the environmental NGO sector developed in Kazakhstan at independence. Thus, the professional values of the scientific community that developed through course of the Soviet Union continue to influence the individual and organization values of NGOs and the activities they undertake.

In the case of Soviet professionals working in the environmental field, several epistemological traditions emerged as dominant forces in shaping their professional identities. The first epistemological tradition is rooted in challenging in the positivist traditions that have dominated scientific thought through much of 20th century. This has particular impact in the Soviet Union where scientific bureaucrats has particular political influence to justify all social policies and actions. Like other modern states, the facade of an omnipotent Soviet industrial society built on the basic premise that “neopositivism and its rationalistic worldview, . . .[and its] ambitious (if not arrogant) epistemological assumption: that the positivist method is the only valid means of obtaining “true knowledge”107 could transform an inexhaustible nature into anything the state desired. This view influenced the natural sciences just as any other. However, the field biologists and other environmental scientists, strongly committed to empirical research, challenged the positivist views of linear relationships and panacea of industrial development with extensive detailed and field observations. A worldview based upon observed phenomenon of nature and the inherent and genetic value of ecosystems often put them at odds with other applied scientists and politicians who advocated for the transformation of nature to serve the Soviet state. These scientists were often accused of being traitors and threats to socialism, thus “defence of their identity...became an important component of their professional identity...”108 This prompted them to link their scientific knowledge to a certain explicit social identity that allowed them to collectively influence and protect themselves from Soviet repression. As Weiner describes it,

“The early movement, which described itself as “nauchanaia obschvestvennost” scientific public opinion, a self-designation that connoted a social identity with its own values, traditions, interests, and ethical norms, does not derive its sole historical importance from its accomplishments in the areas of species protection, landscape preservation, and support for multidisciplinary and unique ecological

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107 Fischer p. 17
research in the zapovedniki\textsuperscript{109}. Perhaps its greatest significance for Soviet society resided in its role as an institutional “keeper of the flame” of civic involvement independent of the Party’s dictates.\textsuperscript{110}

Thus, the Soviet scientific community used the legitimacy of their scientific knowledge to open spaces for limited forms of democratic expression that challenged the authoritarian Soviet system. While scientific public opinion may have challenged the Soviet technocrats, it implied that scientists represented a certain set of knowledge that should be privileged in some way. Although nature preservationists still suffered acute repression during Stalin’s rule, their professional and social values persisted in academic and Communist Party organizations to re-emerge with force in the late 1980’s to stop pollution of Lake Baikal and to stop nuclear testing at Semipalatinsk Test Site in Kazakhstan.

In independent Kazakhstan, environmental NGOs continue to express many of these professional identities fostered in the scientific community under Soviet rule. Combined with new professional identities permissible since Independence, professional identities of environmental NGO leaders have come to embody the democratic values of participation, transparency, and accountability as well as other ecological values. Even as these two sets of values have many possibilities for mutual support, the prestige given to scientific knowledge in policy and practice often takes precedence over experiential or anecdotal knowledge when actors are forced to prioritize. Similarly, technical languages themselves “work both directly and indirectly to hinder participation of ordinary citizens, as it underplays-if not denigrates-everyday moral vocabularies.”\textsuperscript{111}

In the context of the four cases analyzed in this thesis, the professional identities dominant among actors representing the environmental NGOs had a significant influence on the roles these actors assumed in the project planning process. Drawing on both their historical democratic values and their environmental knowledge as professionals, they were able to shape their roles to exercise power over other actors in the strategic bargaining to set project goals and activities. For example, they used the authority of their scientific knowledge to gain legitimacy in the eyes of government officials, donors, and some portions of the community in which they worked. Commitment to democratic values had less sway in the local context than it had with donors and international NGOs.

Other professional identities (i.e. fisherman, entrepreneurs, development officer, etc.) have more or less influence in particular these cases, but as environmental NGOs were the main planners of the projects their identities seemed to have the more profound impact in shaping the outcomes of the projects.

\textbf{Ecological identities: Determinants of Project Goals}

Ecological identity is not a commonly explored category of self or social identity, but it has particular relevance to LEPs and, as I argue, to most collective action undertaken. Mitchell Thomashow defines ecological identity as follows,

“Ecological identity refers to all the different ways people construe themselves in relation to the earth as manifested in personality, values, actions, and a sense of self. Nature becomes as object of identification. The interpretation of life experience transcends social and cultural interactions. It also includes a person’s connections to the earth, perception of the ecosystem and direct

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{109} Nature reserve
  \item \textsuperscript{110} Weiner 1999, p. 5
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Fischer 2000, p 16
\end{itemize}
experience of nature. . . ecological identity describes how we extend our sense of self in relationship to nature and that the degree of and objects of identification must be resolved individually. To be specific, each person’s path to ecological identity reflects his or her cognitive, intuitive, and affective perceptions of ecological relationships."™

Although the influence of an ecological identity on an individual’s everyday behaviour is not always explicit, it actively shapes an individual’s understanding and interaction with his/her physical environment, as well as shaping societies’ relation to the ecosphere. An individual may not even have conscious self-recognition of her own ecological identity, as it is often embedded in values, beliefs, and understandings of our material needs and how we meet them. Similarly, “differing livelihoods, resource endowment, career trajectories, and positions relative to axes of power correspond to differing environmental ‘knowledge communities’™ or identities, which each lead to different ways of viewing human ecological relationships. An ecological identity is strongly correlated to an understanding of economic systems, which serve as the functional link between ecological systems and sociopolitical systems, defining collectively what are those material needs and how we enable people to meet them.

Different epistemologies explaining the relationship of humans to nature characterize different ecological identities. As Thomashow explains,

“For some, it is the cognitive understanding of scientific ecology that leads them to this view [ecological consciousness]. They use this knowledge as a means to extrapolate principles for living and as a way to understand their place in the world. Yet, some people arrive at notions such as interconnectedness and interdependence from a purely experiential perspective. They have had experiences in nature or connections to the earth that have allowed them to understand ecological relationships from a more intuitive approach. Their knowledge of scientific ecology may be anecdotal and metaphorical.”™

In the Soviet Union, Marxist-Leninist anthropocentrism designated the primary function of nature (ecosystems) as the source of resources for the development of the state (i.e. large-scale industrial and agricultural development). The state “cultivated” this view of nature this authoritarian treatment of deviant opinions, ideological indoctrination, and government propaganda. For example, during the 1950’s Virgin Lands program to bring the steppe in northern Kazakhstan into grain production the popular image of Kazakhstan was “A Storehouse of Natural Riches . . . A Republic of Major Industries . . . of Collective Farms and State Farms . . . A Land with a Great Future,”™ emphasizing the role of nature in servicing the development of the state.

Many ecological identities existed among the Soviet people that challenged state view of human ecology. In contrast to state policy, “many ethnic Kazakhs were extremely disconcerted by the potential impact of Moscow’s initiatives on the economy and environment of northern Kazakhstan.”™ This example, the case of the Aral Sea, and opposition to nuclear testing at Semipalatinsk Test Range, highlights how Kazakhs’ concern for the environment has been

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113 Robbins 2000
114 Thomashow 1995, p. 20
116 Hussey and Thompson 2000, p. 143
strongly tied to ideas of homeland and nationality. Another, less divisive, more enduring, and ecologically grounded understanding of the relationship between humans and the environment may be found in the Kazakh ‘nomadic’ identity, which attaches a certain importance to the symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment.

Complementing these ethno-national roots of ecological identity are ecological identities rooted in scientific understanding of ecology and linked to the professional identities discussed in the previous section. Soviet scientists developed many theoretical conceptions of human ecological relationships. However, because of the ideological constraints discussed earlier many Soviet ecologists (even those who felt that humans could live in balance with ecosystems) publicly adhered to an ecological view that humans were inherently separate from the pristine function of ecosystems. Based on this view of ecosystems . . . Soviet nature protection advocates cherished delusions about protected territories they encompassed pristine, self-regulating, ecological communities that existed in healthy equilibrium until the appearance of [modern] humanity.” Thus, in creating a cognitive separation between the ecosystems on which humans depend and the pristine ecosystems protected areas, economic development could be conveniently separated from the ecological impacts. However, this also allowed nature protectionists to advocate for creating more protected territories as long as they didn’t limit economic development directly.

During the Soviet era, identities based on a scientific understanding to ecological functions were primarily confined to specialists in the scientific community, but in the late 1980’s the Chernobyl accident and the greater openness of glasnost created more widespread interest in ecological issues. This further undermined the Soviet view of nature and created widespread awareness and concern of human relationships to ecosystems.

In the cases analyzed in this thesis, actors’ ecological identities play an important role in shaping the purpose and goals of the LEPs. Within the broad framework of GEF/SGP programmatic goals, actors’ ecological identities determine how the goals of LEPs are directed towards shifting or maintaining certain relations between humans and ecosystems. In most cases, this also concerns shifts in socio-economic activities. Ecological identities do not confer power directly to actors, but rather are rooted in deeply held values and understandings about how human environment relations work. These identities have the potential to affect the nature of economic activity to the extent that an actor’s other identities and roles enable them to be dominant or to exert influence in the strategic bargaining process or any other given situation. Consequently, resulting shifts in the distribution of socio-economic resources and conditions have strong potential to contribute to changes in the system of political order and structural power relations. Thus, ecological identities can have a positive or negative effect on human relationships to ecosystems and on the existing systems of political order to extent of the effective power of the actor who possesses them.

Strategic Bargaining and Negotiating in project planning

117 Horsman, Stuart. “Environmental Politics in Central Asia: The Environmental-Nationalist Linkage in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Causes and Implications”
118 Weiner 1999
119 Weiner 1999, p. 448
120 Hussey and Thompson 2000
While the preceding section primarily discusses the structural-historical context of LEPs, these factors alone are insufficient for explaining the context for project planning and implementation. A second set of important relationships among actors comprises the project specific strategic bargaining arena, “a space in which the problems of differential interests and interpretations of what should be done must be settled.”121 Three sets of immediately contingent factors - motives, resources, and tactics, shape the relative power of actors within the strategic bargaining arena. Actors exercise relative power when they engage in a social interaction such as putting forward a proposal, initiative or argument, manipulating information, building alliances, or coercing opponents.122 The boundaries of these factors of power are delineated by the structural-historical context, but it is the dynamic interaction among actors, each influenced by these factors, while negotiating project goals and resources in the strategic bargaining arena that produces the project outcomes. Pauline Jones Luong developed a heuristic model for examining the nature of this transitional bargaining game elites played in establishing electoral systems in the Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Although her study dealt solely with elites, the concepts inherent in the transitional bargaining game model are useful for conceptualizing how the immediate-strategic and structural-historical contexts shape the strategic bargaining around LEP planning in Kazakhstan. Luong’s model is based on “three fundamental pillars”123:

- Both the immediate-strategic context and the structural-historical play a role in shaping the bargaining games parameters (Resources)
- Actors designing institutions (and projects) seek distributional advantage (Motives)
- Actors’ strategies are based on their perceptions of shifts in relative power during the transition (before and after the project) (Tactics)

The nature of the structural-historical context in Kazakhstan has been discussed in the previous section and it needs little more elaboration here, except to discuss its impact the specific set of factors influencing strategic bargaining arena.

According to Few, “Motives refer to an actor’s reasons for intervening and they typically include strategic objectives (based on interests) regarding the outcome of planning as well as articulations of identity.”124 Although strategic objectives are linked the relative power of other actors in the negotiation process, identities discussed in the previous section intrinsically influence all motives by constructing the lens through which actors interpret strategic factors. The specific types of knowledge linked to certain identities can shape the motivations from both a strategic as well as a structural perspective.

Power resources are all the factors over which an actor can exert some sort of control, enhancing their power to shape interactions with other actors so they can achieve their objectives. These resources can include personal skills and social connections as well as structural properties of social systems, including discourses.125 By drawing on prevailing discourses and transforming them to their own purposes, actors can shift the strategic bargaining arena and enhance their bargaining position.126 Knowledge is a key resource for both

122 Few 2002
123 Luong 2002 p. 30
124 Few 2002, p. 33
125 Few 2002, p. 33
126 Few 2002
understanding discourses and evaluating one’s own power relative to other actors. The flows and legitimization of information therefore can shift the bargaining arena to favour certain actors and thus control over these processes is a key factor of power in the strategic bargaining arena.  

The third factor in shaping an actor's strategic power in strategic bargaining are tactics they employ or

“...strategic social actions that draw on resources and that agents employ in power systems characterized by negotiation (rather than domination). Tactics such as alliance-formation, enrolment, persuasion, manipulation, compromise, and exclusion are all designed to improve the negotiating position and order interactions so as to effect objectives.”  

The tactics that actors choose are an expression of the forms of force that they have at their disposal, fitting within their set of identities, and predicting what will be most effective based upon the actor’s current knowledge of their relative power.

The structural-historical context in which actors function in Kazakhstan has a significant impact on the tactics they employ. Although there is a certain political order in bardak and dikki kapitalism, power relationships, especially among non-elites, remain fluid and unpredictable. This directly relates to the ability of actors to obtain accurate knowledge of their own relative power. The unpredictability of contextual and future power relations requires that actors rely more heavily on their perceptions of shifts in power rather than relying on norms of the past, which may or may not be relevant to a particular project planning context.  

The immediate-strategic context of project planning is framed by the unique definitive characteristics of its spatial and temporal limitations, as well as by specific policy and programmatic guidelines. Also, if the intended change that the project proposes is perceived to increase an actor’s future political and social power, those actors with existing political power will likely take the risks to both build consensus with other actors and invest the time and energy into the project planning process because their current situation is secure. However, if these actors perceive intended change through the project as a net loss in relative power, or if they are uncertain about the outcomes, they may use their existing power to manipulate, coerce, and persuade other actors into undermining the project activities or gaining as much short-term benefit as possible. Marginal actors, on the other hand, will often attempt to secure any short-term benefit from a project, even at the risk of their long-term interests. When compelled to focus on short-term gains, actors most often reinforce the existing or pre-transition systems of power. Finally, if the actors perceive the project as a unique opportunity to secure certain valuable resources, they will likely take bigger risks to control the shape of the project.

In the next two chapters I present my research methodology and the cases. Using the concepts introduced and discussed in this chapter, I analyze the influence of context, identities and roles on the dynamics of power among actors and their impacts on project outcomes.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

When I began undertaking the research for this thesis, my intended focus was on identifying opportunities and barriers to participatory community development in local environmental projects in Kazakhstan. Due to difficulties in reconciling the multiple and perspective-dependent definitions of the concepts of “participation”, “community” and “development”, I was prompted to reframe the research question, resulting in the focus on roles, identities and context as determinants of power dynamics in the local environmental project context. The conceptual framework presented in the first sections of this thesis emerged from analysis of the information gathered through extensive personal interviews, participant observations and informal conversations with participants and beneficiaries about the GEF-SGP projects. Often, over the course of an interview, while discussing issues about project function and bureaucracy, NGO leaders pointed to issues usually considered to be outside of the official project planning discourse, including intra- and inter-organizational conflicts and alliances, informal or traditional relationships, larger socio-economic issues, and even their own professional identities. While the GEF-SGP strategic framework dictates that each country programme “encourages and supports the participation of communities, local people, NGOs, CBOs (community-based organizations), and other stakeholders in key aspects of programme implementation,” the real dynamics of participation in particular national and sub-national contexts apparently can vary quite significantly.

Initially in the interviews, I asked questions about the use of particular ‘project planning’ language and about participants’ understandings of North American principles of participatory planning and development. I conducted these first interviews with several community development specialists working for an international IDO and several GEF/SGP project partners in the late May and early June 2002. It quickly became obvious that while the ‘project planning’ language and techniques of community participation were well understood by professionals working closely with the international community, understanding and applicability in the broader context of Kazakhstan and among intended beneficiaries was mixed. Community development professionals intending to engage in community development-type activities and environmental protection were characterized by the distinct roles they played in response to the project framework laid out by GEF-SGP and to the larger socio-political structural framework. It also became apparent that with the time and resources that I had available to me, I would not be able adequately establish a trusting and mutually beneficial relationship with a diversity of community members to adequately examine the inclusivity or the depth of participation by local communities as whole. Accordingly, I shifted my focus to examining the construction and functions of the roles of particular actors in local environmental projects. The interviews, participation observation, and document analysis that followed filled out my understanding of the roles that actors constructed within the LEPs, revealing three major themes of sociopolitical economy, social identity, and knowledge as the primary determinants in these roles.

Case Study Methods

Three case study methods were used in the research undertaken for this thesis: participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

131 GEF Strategic Framework
Participant Observation

Working as an intern at GEF SGP, I was involved in a variety of participant observation opportunities and settings, which served as the first level of understanding of the project planning process. As an intern with the GEF SGP I was a participant and an observer of processes, attitudes, and relationships that shape the planning context of local environmental projects, through a variety of settings, including meetings concerning GEF SGP policy planning for the Kazakhstan country programme as well as planning and implementation meetings at the project level, informal and formal interactions with project participants and intended beneficiaries.

Through my work in Kazakhstan's GEF SGP country office and interactions with the GEF SGP staff and the local NGO partners in Almaty, I was able to formulate an understanding of the function of the country office and begin to identify the important relationships that existed both at the country office level and between the country office and the local communities.

Interviews

I conducted six formal interviews with project partners from local NGOs, international NGOs, and GEF/SGP staff. The interviews covered a range of questions about the structure of their organizations, levels of participation among members, relationships with other actors including NGOs, government, and international donor agencies, and their main activities. The questions were generally open-ended. I continued questions on a specific topic if the topic seemed important to the interviewee. Thus, each interview was unique and the answers to the questions are rarely comparable, but common themes arose, particularly with regard to professional knowledge, community networks, and ecological identity, as previously highlighted in the earlier conceptual sections of this thesis. I also had numerous informal conversations with people involved in the projects over meals, in transit, in the office, and other daily settings where themes of ethnic relations, community conflicts, and family/community obligations were discussed candidly.

Document Analysis

I analyzed numerous project proposals, project monitoring and evaluation reports, policy and programmatic evaluations, and other official documents. I focused specifically on examining the goals, activities, and priorities that reflect intrinsic identities and structures of power that were expressed in the observational and interview data and the broader observations about Kazakhstani socio-political economy. Analysis of GEF/SGP program and project evaluations made by Kazakhstan NGOs, GEF/SGP staff, and grant recipients gave me insight into the concurrence and deviation of my own analysis from the analysis of others working closely with GEF/SGP projects.

Biases, Limitations, and Risks

Several biases, limitations and risks put this research in my own perspective. According to Chambers, outsiders are “those that are concerned with rural development, but are neither rural nor poor.”132 Expanding on this definition one might reasonably include all development

professionals entering societies and communities not their own with the purpose of affecting some change. Development professionals carry a number of commonly held biases just based on their functional relationship to host country (i.e. easily accessible informants, short-term visits, etc.), which requires significant self-reflection as a professional. The biases are embedded in the unperceived aspects and misperceptions of the realities of poor people and also in the unbalanced political, social, and economic relationships between outsiders and the poor. As part of that self-reflection, it is important to openly state the existence of certain “blind spots” that may be inherent in my analysis, stemming from my own identity and role in the project.

Priorities and protocols of the organizations that I represented are set primarily by highly educated professionals and politicians in New York (UN), Washington (World Bank), and Nairobi (UNEP) and tailored to fit within a global political agenda, and the perceived or real goals and objectives of these organizations are part of my public identity as a professional. Since small rural Kazakhstani communities, from most perspectives, sit on the periphery of the international political economy, they have negligible, if any, influence over the priorities of international institutions and their subsidiaries. Thus, more often then not, the local actors tailor their concerns to fit within the priorities of the international political community, as determined by powerful global actors (i.e. corporations, national governments esp. North America and Europe, and large international NGOs). In this way, by defining the ‘development task’, these organizations inherently favour western knowledge, which is more suitable for fulfilling this particular development task. This is important to understanding the power relationship that exists between myself, the development professional with specific knowledge appropriate for fulfilling task of planning local environment projects, and people attempting to capture GEF/SGP resources.

The second set of “blind spots” originates from my personal socio-economic background. As a middle-class American, highly-educated, and living primarily in urban areas, many of the everyday concerns of rural Kazakhstanis I can only understand cerebrally. I have never made the emotional, strategic, and/or culturally informed decisions that characterize their community life. Moreover, much of my data was collected on brief project site visits, which Chambers terms “rural development tourism”, limiting a deeper understanding of the local communities where the GEF/SGP projects were implemented. My own limitations in Russian and Kazakh language should also be noted here. As a non-native speaker of the Russian language I was required to seek clarification from interviewees and other native Russian speakers for some of the nuances of language in order to ensure correct understanding. I had to use a Kazakh translator at times when meeting were conducted in Kazakh.

Despite these biases, I believe triangulation of observational data, information from interviews, and document analysis allows me to construct a relatively accurate picture of the functioning of the GEF/SGP projects that I studied. Additionally, more than two years of previous experience living and working in Kazakhstan have given me some understanding of many cultural norms and behaviours that other outside observers might not be attuned to. Finally, as my analysis is limited to the GEF/SGP projects and the actors with whom I interacted (i.e. NGO leaders, government official, GEF/SGP office, and community members directly involved in the projects) it cannot and should not be extrapolated to other actors peripherally associated with the GEF/SGP projects or other projects or programs under a different funding or organizational structure.
In this chapter, I present four local environmental projects as cases demonstrating the theories outlined in the previous sections. The case projects are from two geographic areas: Aral Sea Region and Altai Mountain Region (Northeast Kazakhstan). In each geographic region, intersecting relationships based on social identities and common socio-political, economic, and environmental issues link actors in the projects together. The relationships elucidate the networks of survival and influence that underlie capacities, motivations, and potentials involved in strategic negotiation for project resources.

I chose these particular projects because of the access I had to observing the function of the projects on the ground and the accessibility of project actors for discussions about the project. I had an opportunity to attend several seminars/workshops organized by NGO partners and to interact with a variety of actors from NGOs, government, and the community organizations. An examination of other GEF/SGP projects shows that these projects are typical in terms of project duration, size of the grant received, scope of objectives, and types of project participants stipulating that many of the trends observed in these projects may been seen in other GEF/SGP projects. However, geographic and specific issues will shape how those trends may be expressed.

In this chapter, I first give a brief background to each region. Secondly, I outline the specific projects and the actors involved. Thirdly, I use the concepts developed in Chapter Two to highlight important and relevant aspects of the structural historical context, identities and roles, and the strategic bargaining processes of the projects. This is followed in Chapter Five by a set of implications for project planners and others interested in project design and effectiveness.

Aral Sea Region

Possibly, there is no better example of human-induced ecological collapse than the Aral Sea. The Aral Sea was once the fourth largest inland lake in the world, but ecologically-inappropriate, overused, and mismanaged diversions of water for irrigation in the Central Asian desert have caused the Aral Sea to shrink at a rapid rate. It is a crisis that has resulted in the destruction of an entire delta ecosystem and the subsequent extinction of endemic species, destruction of local economies, and the decline of human health in the area surrounding the Sea. Though the destruction is widespread and in many ways irreversible, both the regional and international actors have decided that measures must be taken to mitigate the effects of the Aral Sea desiccation. The projects funded through the Global Environment Facility Small Grants Program (GEF/SGP) have been a significant in the range of outside interventions in Aral Sea region.

The Aral Sea ecosystem was and remains the basis of life for both humans and other species in the region that straddles the border of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. However, the importance of the Aral Sea ecosystem goes well beyond its shorelines and the area immediately surrounding the Sea. The two main tributaries that feed into to the Aral Sea are the Amu-Darya (historically known as the Oxus River) and the Syr Darya. In 1995, 84% of the Syr Darya water
and 88% of the Amu Darya water was diverted for irrigation before it reaches the Aral Sea.\textsuperscript{133} As a result, since 1960 the water level of Aral Sea has progressively dropped and today the Aral has half the surface area and three-quarters of the volume than it had in 1960. The drop in water volume has been accompanied by a rise in salinity, which is approximately 2 to 7 times higher than in 1960 (salinity varies of across the sea).\textsuperscript{134} The initial impact of a decrease in water flow and increase in salinity of the Aral Sea was the disappearance of endemic\textsuperscript{135} ecosystems in the Aral Sea Basin and the resultant extinction of species within those ecosystems. The endemic tugai vegetation of the deltas of the Amu Darya, which was once the spawning areas for fish, habitat for muskrat, and many migratory birds, is now being replaced by solonchak (salty marshes), sandy soils, and other less diverse ecosystems. Wildlife that inhabited the tugai forests and meadows unique to the Aral Sea Region has all but gone extinct. Of all species, fish have been affected the most dramatically demonstrated by the extinction of 22 of the 24 endemic fish species.\textsuperscript{136}

Another factor affecting local ecosystems is the change in the Aral Basin microclimate. Before it began to disappear, the Aral Sea served as moderator for the climate of the Central Asian desert and steppe, but since the Sea began to shrink a microclimate 100 km ring around the shoreline has changed from a maritime climate to more continental climate.\textsuperscript{137} This has caused the summers to become shorter and hotter and the winters to become longer and colder (± 2-3 °C) (IFAS).\textsuperscript{138} Precipitation has also decreased ten fold.

The combination of water flow reductions, decreases in water levels, and microclimate changes has driven the process of desertification in the region. The falling water levels have exposed 36,000 sq. km\textsuperscript{2} of the former seabed, which has left large amounts of dried salts and pesticides deposited by the receding seawater.\textsuperscript{139} These salts and pesticides are blown throughout the region causing numerous health problems and reducing crop yields.

The ecological damage in the region is extreme and widespread and humans have played the primary role in causing Aral ecological destruction, but the reciprocal effect on socio-economic relations has also occurred. Human health and economies have been profoundly affected by both the negative consequences of ecological destruction and by the economic consequences.

Along with changing natural ecosystems, soil degradation has severely affected agricultural productivity. In the oblasts surrounding the Aral Sea the portion of irrigated land that is salinized ranges from 60 to 90 percent.\textsuperscript{140} It is estimated that 17 million tones of grain are lost annually due to saline and secondary salinated soil. Degraded land has resulted in the removal 1.3 million ha of land from cotton production between 1987 and 1993.\textsuperscript{141}

Forty million people live in the Aral Sea Basin including numerous ethnic groups and nationalities.\textsuperscript{142} Kyzyl Orda oblast\textsuperscript{143}, the region in Kazakhstan adjacent to the Aral Sea, is the

\textsuperscript{133} Libert 1995, p.51.
\textsuperscript{135} Endemism is confinement of plant or animal distributions to particular continent, country, or natural region.
\textsuperscript{138} International Fund for the Aral Sea (http://www.aral.uz/)
\textsuperscript{139} Micklin 1998, p. 402
\textsuperscript{140} Spoor 1999, p. 421
\textsuperscript{141} Libert 1995, p. 60
\textsuperscript{142} Micklin 1998, p. 400
\textsuperscript{143} Oblast is a analogous to a province or state
poorest oblast in the country, the most ethnically Kazakh and arguably has retained the strongest pre-Soviet Kazakh traditions. In contrast to the rest of Kazakhstan where average life span is 63 for men and 66 for women in Kyzylorda oblast is average life span are 45 for men and 63 for women. Similarly, average income is only US$ 45 per month in Kyzyrl-Orda oblast and Kazakhstan’s average monthly income averages approximately US$ 166 per month. Since the 1960’s, prior to and through the first years of large-scale irrigated agriculture, the regional economy surrounding the Aral Sea supported a fishing industry that employed 60,000 people as well small-scale irrigated agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting (over 60 different game birds once inhabited the area) and trapping, fishing, and harvesting of reeds.

In terms of health affects, statistics reflect widespread incidence of disease due to pollution and poverty. The populations living in the areas adjacent to the Aral Sea suffer from an increased number of acute health problems. A significant increase in respiratory disease (tuberculosis, asthma, etc.), cancerous diseases, and waterborne diseases (dysentery, viral hepatitis, paratyphoid, etc) caused by the decline in drinking water and air quality has also been documented. Since the beginning of irrigation in the 1950s, it was well understood by Soviet scientists that diversions of the quantities of water needed for irrigation would result in the shrinking of the Aral Sea (An obvious ecological problem for an internally-drained sea). There were a variety of Soviet scientists and planners studying and suggesting ways to reverse the decline in water levels to the Aral Sea. One example was the plan to divert water from the Ob-Irtysh River system in Siberia to the Aral Region in order to increase the available water for irrigation. Generally, these grand schemes have been disregarded in part because these remedies seemed only to satisfy the same obsession with large-scale eco-system alteration that was the root of the Aral Sea Crisis in the first place. The outcomes and the analysis of their cost and benefits of development in the Aral Sea Basin are a reflection of the former Soviet power relations and networks of influence including regional identities and central monopoly on ultimate power (e.g. force, coercion), in order to maintain control over local populations in the region. While the central planners in Moscow were obligated to abandon most of these grand schemes, the research and data on the Aral Sea ecosystem executed and collected by Soviet scientists provide a rich picture of the process of the ecosystem change.

In this context, national socio-political and economic trends in Kazakhstan discussed earlier emerged with devastating consequences. Although there was significant emigration from the region during the late Soviet era, after independence emigration intensified as travel restrictions were eased and large central government transfers to the region ended. Even with large emigration from the region, a significant population has remained because of their cultural and historical connection to the region.

Although not the oblast capital, Aralsk, a town of approximately 22,000 people, was once on the shores of Aral Sea and the centre of fishing and processing on the Kazakhstan side of the Aral Sea. Similar to the Karakalpakstan region in Uzbekistan before the 1970’s a significant portion of the region’s economy was based on fishing industry and provided jobs for thousands

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146 Micklin 1998, p. 400
147 Glantz 1999, p 141
of people. Today the fishing industry has virtually all disappeared because of the decline in the traditional fish stocks as well as difficulties accessing the sea as it is now 100 km from the city.\textsuperscript{149}

Since independence the region has become the focal point for international assistance and civil society development. The development assistance that accompanied the dubious distinction of being an international disaster area was significant with over US$81 million flowing to the region from multilateral, bilateral, international financial institutions, and the international non-governmental sector.\textsuperscript{150} The large influx of development aid has spurred the development of local NGOs in a region to fill the service gap left by the collapse of social and government institutions. Initially, development assistance focused on the delivery of humanitarian aid coming from organizations such as UNDP and Medicins Sans Frontieres to meet immediate water, health, and food needs. In 1998, Saiko wrote,

\begin{quote}
"Quite a few developments have been successful. The effect of some projects, however, has been disappointing because of a lack of concern for local needs and lack of account for existing cultural traditions. Few projects rely on participation of local non-governmental organizations. Some of the funds are lost to the region because of corruption within the bureaucratic stratum at national and local levels. . . Overall, local people feel that there are too many conferences, that much of the money spent on these projects is wasted and that they are ignored by the big projects. The most popular local joke is that if every foreigner who visited this region brought one bucket of water with him, the sea would have been full and the problem would have been solved.\textsuperscript{151}\"
\end{quote}

Early efforts by several IDOs to plan projects intended to improve infrastructure to meet basic needs such well building projects (UNDP and USAID), water delivery and sanitation (World Bank), and improve basic health and nutrition (UNICEF)\textsuperscript{152} often failed to meet expected outcomes. For example, UNDP/Nordic fund developed a Remote Village Development Project, but after the preparatory work had been carried out on 2 pilot wells, the donor stopped execution of the project due to what the donor describes as problems with "local setup and absence of interest from local authorities."\textsuperscript{153} However, during my research trip to the region, an NGO leader called my attention to an abandoned well in the middle of the desert that was dug through the assistance of UNDP, which prompted a comment about the lack of consultation with local residents. This resulted in little support from any local actors and inappropriate design (i.e. inaccessible location and salt intrusion). As a result, UNDP and other donors shifted their strategy from provision of primarily technical expertise to development of the organizational and social capital necessary for quality local participation in project conceptualization, planning, and implementation. UNDP began to focus on development of the NGOs as local partners through project support centres, which assisted NGOs register with the local government and train NGO


\textsuperscript{151}Saiko 1998. p. 236

\textsuperscript{152}UNDP 2003

leaders in organizational management, grant writing, facilitation, and project design as well as providing technical expertise.  

Altai Mountain Region

The Altai mountain ecosystem extends from Kazakhstan, north into Russia, and east into China and Mongolia. It stands in stark contrast to the steppes that expand from the central and western regions of Kazakhstan and Russia. The transition from steppe to mountain landscape has created a unique spectrum of ecosystems differentiated by dramatic changes in altitude, rainfall, and other climatic and landscape conditions within a relatively small territory. The large variety of flora and fauna used for food, medicine, fodder, and building materials found in this temperate ecosystem stands in stark contrast to arid and semi-arid ecoregions that border it to the east, west, and south.  

The region is also rich in mineral and rare metal resources such lead, zinc, and gold.

There are four main urban centres in Eastern Kazakhstan oblast, but the urban centre that is most closely linked to the Altai Mountains is Ridder (formerly known as Leninogorsk). The city was established in 1786, when the territory was the frontier of the Russian empire. It was territory that been under control of several groups over the course of the 18th and 19th centuries from the Dzungars, Oirats, Russians, and Kazakhs.

Ridder has a population of 56,600 and extracts the largest volume of total raw ore in East Kazakhstan and is the second most important city after Ust-Kamenogorsk in the output of processed lead, zinc and rare metals. The main industry in Ridder is the Polymetal Complex which is closely linked with the Leninogorsk Mining and Metallurgical Complex "OAO Kazzinc" both former state enterprises which are now joint-stock companies.  

Ridder throughout the Soviet Union was dominated by the Poly Metal Complex, which provided most of the jobs in the city as well as funded other facilities for its workers such as health spas, schools, cultural centres, etc. Although the industry employs only a fraction of the population that it did under the Soviet Union, its owners still exact tremendous influence over community life as wealthiest company in the city.

Aral Tenizi and the “Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” Project

The rise of NGOs in the Aralsk, the main urban center in Kazakhstan’s Aral Sea region was in part spurred by the designation of the Aral Sea Region as an ecological disaster zone. Aral Tenizi is one of the leading NGOs in the region and . Aral Tenizi began work in 1994 working primarily on a collaborative project, “From Kattegat to the Aral Sea – A Fishing Project,” with the Danish Society for the Living Sea, Danish Development Agency (DANIDA). Working with their Danish partners, Aral Tenizi developed the project, establishing the link

156 Eastern Kazakhstan Website http://vkonline.pushkinlibrary.kz/engliblio/Cities.htm  
157 The background information for this project came from interviews and discussions with the leadership and members of the NGO, the GEF Project documents, ‘Report and Introduction to the Aral Sea and its Fishery’, ‘Setting the Course for the Fishery on the North Aral Sea’ Masterplan 2003 (Russian version), and the homepage of the Aralsk region website at http://www.aralsea.net/en/news/
between local Aral fishermen and fishermen from Denmark who have extensive experience in
depth-water plaice fishing. Aral Tenizi was the GEF/SGP partner organization as well as the
principle planner and leader driving project goals, activities, and implementation.
Aral Tenezi claims 1000 members, made up primarily of fisherman and residents of
fishing settlements. The organization employs ten people on staff whose salaries are paid
through the project funds. They are the organizers a fishermen's cooperative comprised of
approximately 600 fishermen. The goal of the broader project was to assist local fishermen
change their fishing practices; from fishing the endangered, endemic fish in the delta lakes to
fishing the abundant plaice, an introduced species, in the northern Aral Sea. A species
introduced from the Caspian Sea, plaice has flourished in the increased salinity of the Aral Sea
creating an attractive alternative to fishing the increasingly threatened endemic fish species
found in the delta lakes of the Aral Basin. The project sought to address several barriers that
stood in the way of changing fishing practices. First, to the address the difficulties accessing the
sea and storing and transporting plaice because the seashore was now 50 km or more from
villages that once stood on its shores. Secondly, the project aimed to train in deepwater fishing
techniques necessary to catching plaice, a deepwater fish that differed from most of the
commonly fished endemic lake species. Finally, create widespread awareness of the importance
of biodiversity and the potential impact of over-fishing can have on fish populations and
diversity.
Several different mechanisms were designed to achieve this central purpose, the main
organisational body was to create fishermen’s cooperatives that would enable the fisherman to
restore and maintain a fleet of boats, collectively market and sell their fish, and raise awareness
of the importance of biodiversity protection.
GEF/SGP’s complementary project, “Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” aimed to
strengthen the conservation aspects of the project through public awareness campaigns,
extological studies on the condition of local biodiversity and hydrology, and development of a
draft legal framework for conservation of local biodiversity. There was also an important
infrastructure upgrading component, whereby the fishermen repaired the roads used to transport
the plaice from the Aral Sea to market and purchasing a floating dock to improve the efficiency
of the unloading process.
The Aral Tenizi “Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” Project began in July 2000
and ended in the summer of 2002. Two main communities, Tastubek and Akbasty, were the
main sites of the infrastructure upgrading aspects of this project because of their advantage of
having better existing fishing infrastructure than many of the other communities in the area
surrounding the Aral Sea. However, fishermen from twelve other communities were also
included in the public awareness raising, educational and cooperative building aspects of the
project because their communities were located on delta lakes, which are the repositories of the
biodiversity that is in the most danger of being overexploited.158
The data on this project were gathered from formal interviews with Aral Tenizi leaders
and the GEF/SGP coordinator in addition to my own participant observations which included
participation in a project evaluation seminar and visits to project sites. During site visits, I had
informal conversations with Aral Tenizi volunteers and employees, and several other community
members. All my observations were recorded in a journal and detailed notes were taken from
the formal interviews. I also conducted a document analysis of the project proposals,
monitoring reports and evaluations.

158 GEF/SGP Kazakhstan Analiticheskii otchet po proektou “Cokhranim bioraznoobprazie ozer” za prodelannou
"Water for Life" Project

In order to address some of the issues of water quality in the region, the central goal of this project was to pilot solar water distillers and heaters to serve as a source of clean water. The distillers were intended to reduce reliance on groundwater, which is both scarce and often contains high levels of salt, pesticide, and fertilizer residues. By introducing solar heaters, the project also aimed to reduce the cutting of native saksaul. The project was implemented between July 2001 and July 2002 and was built a partnership between a local Aralsk NGO, Kosaral, and the manufacturer of the solar distillers and heaters, Erkin K CJSC, based in Almaty. The water distillers/heaters were installed in two small villages in the Aral Sea region, Karateren and Tastak. The project involved manufacturing and installing 50 water distiller/heaters in total, all of the 30 households in Tastak and 20 households in the nearby village of Karateren. The main source of water for these two villages before the project was water taken from the Syr Darya River, which is the most accessible and convenient local source.

The apparent livelihood impact of the water distillers and water heaters can be seen in improved health, connected to a reduction in waterborne illnesses, and time savings in terms of heating water and collecting fuel wood. In an interview with the NGO leader, who installed a water heater in his own home, he has noted improved health especially among his children when they used water from the distiller and heater during the summer months. He also indicated that the water heater was useful to his family like other Kazakh families who used a significant amount of hot water for tea, washing, and other household tasks.

On the other hand, the distiller which distilled approximately 5-6 liters of water a day in the summer did not produce enough water to meet all the drinking water needs of his family of two adults and five children. A distiller needed to be about twice the width of the current distiller (approximately 2 meters wide) would provide enough drinking water for his family during the summer months. When we visited the neighbor of the Kosaral director, his neighbor's distiller had a leak because one of the rubber seals had dried and cracked. This made the water distiller almost totally ineffective. A trip to Almaty was required to get a replacement seal, which is a 16-hour train ride away. Lack of parts and ability to repair the distillers on site seem to be a significant obstacle to the long-term effectiveness of the water heaters and distillers in the region.

For this project, data were primarily gathered through formal interviews with the Kosaral director and GEF/SGP coordinator and observations from project site visits, which include conversations with project participants (recipients of solar water heaters). Observations were recorded in journal. I also conducted a document analysis of the project proposals, monitoring reports, and evaluations.

"Network of Local Volunteers" Project

This project aimed to establish a network of local volunteers to raise awareness of environmental issues affecting the region as well as carry out environmental restoration and public works projects. The NGO Aral Aelderi is the grant recipient and the principal planning organization for establishing the network and organizing the initial activities. The core idea of the project was to build the environmental awareness and social capital necessary to carry collective action to protect the environment that would improve the lives of the people in the villages. These activities were intended to build strong relationships across villages, stimulate

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**Saksaul** is a native shrub in the region, traditionally important as a source of fuel.

ideas for environmental restoration and protection projects, and increase the capacity of leaders in each village to motivate and organize within their village. The network consists of people from 14 villages in the Aral Sea region, and began in October 2001 with funding for set-up and pilot activities until August 2002. At the time the research, almost all of the 14 villages have the beginnings of a volunteer center, in the form of a room designated in a local school or other public building. Some of the centers have a few information resources on environmental topics. The network has also been engaged in seminars and awareness raising activities about environmental issues in the region. Under the leadership of Aral Aelderi, villagers organized to undertake a number of public works projects, such as cleaning and repairing canals, trash clean-ups, tree planting, painting, and other activities.

According the Aral Aelderi the project’s notable success was demonstrated through its ability to bring people to action through the volunteer network and an increased understanding of mutual benefit that voluntary collective action can achieve. The overall success and specific impacts of each environmental clean up and green space enhancement projects varied, Aral Aelderi leaders indicated the immediate success of creating a ‘sense of community’ across villages formed the basis for future actions. In a place where community divisions can be accentuated by limited resources, the success of a self-starting project and development of the concept of ‘volunteerism’ was also important to future community mobilization.

I visited 6 of the 14 villages and met with volunteers and government officials. Officials often support the network by giving them space for volunteer centers in government buildings. Though each village volunteer group works relatively independently from the others because the villages are isolated by bad roads and financial constraints on travel, through the volunteer network shares information and holds seminars and trainings collectively, facilitated by the NGO Aral Aelderi.

For this project data were gathered primarily from a formal interview with Aral Aelderi leaders and the village site visits where I had conversations with community members and government officials; visited a canal repair project and several volunteer centers. My observations were recorded in a journal and detailed notes were taken at the formal interviews. I also conducted a document analysis of the project proposals, monitoring reports and evaluations.

“Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve” Project

The NGO Youth of the 21st Century was the GEF/SGP partner and main planner of this project. The central goal was to advocate for the establishment of an Altai Biosphere Reserve by attracting attention of the government of Kazakhstan, interested ministries and departments, local authorities, the local community, and Altai NGOs to the ecological problems of the Altai-Sayan ecoregion and lobby for a project to establish a biosphere reserve. The main ways for achieving this goal included producing and distributing a promotional video, publish articles in print media, and organize a seminar to bring the interested parties together to discuss the issue of NGOs in the establishment and function of a Biosphere Reserve.

As one of the central activities of the “Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve” project, the seminar “Role and Participation of NGOs in the Establishment and Function of the Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve” was the result of collaboration between GEF/SGP partner NGO Youth of the 21 Century and NABU International, a German-based environmental organization. Attendees at the seminar included representatives from the international NGOs (i.e. World Wildlife Fund, NABU), Ministry of Environment of Mongolia, environment department of the Russian Altai Republic, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Kazakhstan (both national and local branches), local government, Kazakh State University (i.e. ecologists) national
level environmental NGOs (i.e. ISAR, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia), local environmental NGOs (BARS, Youth of the 21st Century, Green Streets, etc.) and international development organizations (i.e. GEF, GEF/SGP). The seminar was held in July 2002 in Ridder, Kazakhstan, a small city set in the foothills of the Altai. The objectives of the seminar, and the larger project, are as follows:

- Increasing understanding of the biosphere concept
- Generating ideas for the different roles that NGOs might play in the establishment and function of a biosphere reserve
- Building a sense of cooperation and communication among the various transboundary stakeholders from Russia, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan.

The first half of the seminar was dedicated to presenting background information about the state of environmental protection within the Altai region, the concept of a biosphere reserves, and existing biosphere territories and other initiatives related to the creation of a transboundary reserve. This information was provided by a variety of governmental and non-governmental participants of the seminar through oral presentations and in some cases with the help of visual aids. The presentation on the concept of biosphere reserves stimulated many question over what it meant to have biosphere reserve status and the benefits and requirements that are attached to a biosphere reserve designation.

In the second half of the seminar, participants were asked to brainstorm and present ideas for role that NGOs would play in the establishment and function of a Biosphere Reserve. Many ideas were presented for the roles that NGOS could play in an Altai-Sayan including development of eco-tourism, public inspection, and public awareness and education activities. The ideas were generated by four different groups divided into the following thematic areas:

1. Participation of NGOs and local organizations in the management of the biosphere territory
2. Interaction of NGOs with government structures in the process of establishment and function of the biosphere territory, in adopting government decisions
3. Involvement of other structures in the development of the biosphere territory
4. Opportunities for including NGO project proposals in connection within the establishment and function of the biosphere territory
5. Taking into account the interests and improving livelihoods of the local communities on the territory of the biosphere reserve

I gathered data from this project through formal interviews with the head of Youth of the 21st century, another local NGO leader, GEF/SGP coordinator, and an international NGO representative. I was also a participant in the seminar conducted in Ridder where I had informal conversions with representatives of both local and international NGOs, scientific experts, government officials, and community members. I also conducted an analysis of the project proposals, monitoring reports and evaluations.
Analysis: Networks, Roles, and Strategic Bargaining in GEF/SGP Projects in the Aral Sea and Altai Regions

In this section, I present three sets of findings and the supporting data. Each set of findings addresses one of the three research questions proposed at the beginning of this thesis. In the first section, I address the first research question:

*How do the unique characteristics of Kazakhstan’s socio-political economy predetermine and bound actual and potential roles that actors assume in planning and implementing specific projects funded through GEF/SGP in Kazakhstan?*

As a defining feature of Kazakhstan’s sociopolitical economy, informal networks partially predetermine and bound the roles that actors assumed in planning and implementation of the GEF/SGP case projects in this thesis. In examining the data from the cases, evidence demonstrated the different ways that these networks are closely connected to actors’ roles in the project planning process.

The second set of findings addresses the question of addresses actors’ roles and how they are influenced by identities:

*How do ethnic, professional, and ecological identities inform actor’s roles in these specific projects?*

This set of findings presents evidence related to how significant roles are constructed in the GEF/SGP case projects including the influence of ethnic, professional, and ecological identities.

The final set of findings further develops and synthesizes the first two sets of findings in an exploration of the dynamics of power in the strategic bargaining over project goals and resources. This addresses the question:

*How are sociopolitical economy and identities factors in empowering and disempowering certain actors and their roles in strategic bargaining around the project planning process with regard to these GEF/SGP projects?*

To illustrate the convergence of the factors affecting actors’ roles I provide a brief scenario of a bargaining process, then highlight some key characteristics of power dynamics in project planning as relevant to the cases.

**Findings Set 1: Local Networks of Survival and Influence**

In both interviews and informal conversations, all types of actors in the case projects including NGO leaders, government officials, scientific experts, and community members stressed the importance of informal relationships (i.e. friends, relatives, colleagues, and neighbours) to daily life and at times made reference to their importance in implementing project activities. Many less-powerful actors also recognized the importance of paying tribute to powerful actors in the course of project activities in order to gain access to certain resources.
Conversely, powerful actors often used the prestige and resources in projects to increase their own influence in the local areas.

During interviews and informal conversations actors described informal relationships based on kinship, profession, and other categories and what this meant in terms of advantages or disadvantages that they received. My own observations as a participant in GEF/SGP project activities further reinforced the symbolic and material significance that project actors had given to informal exchanges in the interviews that I conducted. I witnessed many informal exchanges of the “food, gifts, and words” while participating in project activities on site visits to the Aral Sea and Altai regions.

**Finding 1.1- Local networks of survival are main source of livelihood for most residents involved in GEF/SGP projects.**

*“Network of Local Volunteers” Project and “Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” Project*

Networks of survival were particularly important to the GEF/SGP projects in the Aral Sea region. Aralsk, a city of approximately 22,000 people, and its many surrounding villages, have small but essential community networks. Given that many people have left the region since independence because central government transfers, the main source of economic investment, has become virtually insignificant. In discussions with several local residents not affiliated with any of the GEF/SGP NGO partners, they viewed the only viable source of a monetary income as international development funding which they had difficulty accessing.

It was starkly apparent on my visit to the villages in “Network of Volunteers” project, the importance of informal networks to the villagers’ survival. In the desert environment, most of the households that I visited had minimal livestock and few other resources. There were only a few vehicles if any in each village and the public resources basically consisted of one building that served as both a school and community hall. Villagers and a Aral Aelderi leader discussed how family members would send food and other goods from Aralsk to the villages. When I asked NGO leaders and volunteers in Aralsk to describe the economy and quality of life before Kazakhstan’s independence, many people indicated that there had been jobs and services for most of the population, but the region was still considerably poorer and isolated than other parts of Kazakhstan. Older people discussed where they worked and the purchasing power of their salaries as well as often mentioning who was their supervisor and how important this person was in the community. One influential community member discussed how they used to serve in the Communist Party with President Nazarbaev and showed me a group photo with himself and Mr. Nazarbaev.

Many local professionals, former officials, and others have migrated from the Aral Sea region to other parts of the oblast and country in search of jobs and an improved quality of life. This has fragmented many of the former networks of influence built during Soviet control.

One former influential community leader who is now living in Almaty tried to assert control over project benefits and resources. However, because he now lives in Almaty his influence over the community was is only over the few relatives and acquaintances that depended on his direct financial and material support. The former influence that he had in government, state industry, and the Communist Party disappeared with the change or disintegration of these institutions.

The shrinking of the sea has left many villages in the region physically isolated and economic collapse has isolated them from the national economy. In the Soviet state economy government enterprises and direct transfers reached all parts of the Soviet Union, but today the
market system has left isolated regions like the Aral Sea Basin out of the national or even the 
oblasm economy.

During the Soviet Union informal networks depended heavily on the workplace for 
resources and Communist Party affiliations, but since independence the networks have become 
increasingly dependent on traditional small household subsistence production based on kinship relations. As an NGO leader in Aralsk said, “Families are the strong in the Aral region and 
without a strong family many of us would have to leave for Almaty.” Household production 
consists of a variety of the products derived directly from the natural environment. The primary 
source of food is livestock production: camels, horses, and cattle, supplemented by local fishing. 
The strength of the networks often indicated how well residents could engage in other 
activities. For example, some of the most actively village residents involved in the GEF/SGP 
case projects were from those villages those located next to small delta lakes. The plant life in 
lakeshore areas provides fodder for the livestock as well as fish from the lakes an important 
supplement to residents diet.

“Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve” Project

In the Altai region, where the population, as a whole, is less economically and ecologically 
marginalized, networks of survival are still important and highly interconnected, though there is 
greater diversity in resources that feed into these networks due to significant industry in the 
region and more diverse and biologically productive local ecosystems.

A recurring theme in discussions of the function of a Biosphere Reserve was how this would 
affect the collection of medicinal plants and the illegal poaching of both fur bearing animals (i.e. 
sable, snow leopards, mink, etc.) and animals for meat (i.e. mountain sheep, deer, etc.).

Many of the NGOs participating in the seminar were actively involved in the preservation of 
medicinal plant species, which are an important part of local health practices and exchanged 
through both the market and informal networks. Likewise, park officials from an existing 
national park in the region were concerned about salaries for park officials as an incentive to 
prevent them from taking bribes from illegal hunters or they were hunting valuable (and at times 
threatened) species themselves. In this way park officials have valuable goods to trade in 
informal networks.

According to the background information in project plans and talking with NGO leaders, 
hunting and fishing (mostly outside parks) are important supplements to people’s diets in the 
region where livestock ownership is not as high as in other parts of Kazakhstan. The products 
from the mountains are also valuable in exchange through networks of survival. Many people 
collect certain forest products (i.e. mushrooms, berries, etc.) on their own helping them to be 
fairly independent of networks of survival, but they often still need the networks for scarcer 
goods like tools and building materials.

Finding 1.2 - Specific regional characteristics of kinship relations define the construction of 
networks of survival and influence intimately connected to the GEF/SGP projects

“Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” Project

Since ethnic Kazakhs largely populate the Aral Sea region traditional Kazakh kinship 
relations characterize the informal networks. Some general characteristics include large families, 
open invitations for accommodations for all relatives and guests, strong sense of generalized 
reciprocity among family members, and distant relatives are part of the network. Guests are
always offered food and accommodations if desired. These are all important ways that resources are exchanged informally between relatives and friends.

On my last evening in Aralsk, I was invited to visit the home of the parents of an NGO leader who now lives in Almaty and was joining me on my trip back. In preparation for going to the train station many members of the extended family came to say good-bye and to assist loading goods on the train to send with the NGO leader back to Almaty. Many of the goods were food products from their gardens or other basic household goods bought through the informal market. This event encapsulated many of the descriptions made by other NGO volunteers and leaders of Kazakh kinship mentality.

"Water for Life" Project

Although I wasn’t able to determine exactly kinship relations among all of the NGO leaders, volunteers, staff, government officials, and other community members involved in the “Water for Life” project, several times it was revealed the certain relatives worked for the same NGO or relatives/friends had been included as participants and beneficiaries in the project. For example, in the “Water for Life” project the 20 solar distillers and heaters were provided to the Karateren village where the main project planner lived in addition to Tastak a nearby village.

“Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve” Project

Networks of survival in the Altai region are divided more starkly along ethnic lines than the in Aral Sea region. Distinctions between Russian and Kazakh traditions define informal networks in this region. In general, Russians have smaller families and weaker ties to extended family. Since their direct kinship networks are smaller, ties to other social groups have greater importance. For example, many of the ethnic Russian that spoke with in the Altai region referred to professional affiliation as relevant to project activities in contrast to Aral Sea region where kinship relations were frequently cited.

Although ethnic tensions are often not discussed openly in public in private conversations that I had with non-Kazakhs, some resentment was expressed toward Kazakh dominance of government. Often referring to the networks from which they were excluded Russians talked about the advantages given to Kazakhs in getting government jobs and other advantages through the national programs to promote Kazakh heritage. I didn’t have an opportunity to talk with any Kazakhs from the Altai region in any depth so I cannot compare Kazakh network in the Altai region to the networks in the Aral Sea region.

Finding 1.3 - GEF/SGP projects that had strong livelihood component strengthen the networks of survival by providing alternative sources of livelihood not previously available to beneficiaries.

“Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” Project

Based on my interviews with NGO leaders and discussions with several of the fisherman’s families, there was a general consensus that the reestablishment of the Aral Sea fishery resulted significant improvement in livelihood of fishermen and their families involved in the project. The fish caught through the new fishing cooperative opened up a new important source of income for fishermen many of whom were unemployed before the project and had few other pathways to increase their monetary wealth. As the same time the fish has become a
reliable source of food to supplement the livestock diet. Both the monetary income and the fish are important to the fishermen and distributed through their informal network(s) can potentially create a new source of credit or food for others in that network in the most immediate being extended family.

At the same time, NGO leaders mentioned how collective decision-making among fishermen strengthened relationships and created a strong network of households that had a common interest.

“Water for Life” Project

In the case of “Water for Life”, the project planner and participants a reduction in waterborne illnesses and time-savings in terms of heating water and collecting fuel wood for their immediate families especially their children. The project planner indicated that his family used the heaters and distiller throughout the summer months. However, the main project planner pointed out that the water distillers and heaters were too small to prove useful beyond the immediate family. On the other hand, with changes in design the concept of solar heaters and distillers has the potential to replace state provided water in villages that depend on state water. Additionally, the construction and especially the maintenance of the distillers and heaters could become a source of income for residents in remote villages. Strengthening the pool of resources available for survival. At the end of my research, project planners and participants were discussing ways to duplicate and scale-up project outcomes and activities.

Finding 1.5 – Overall, the GEF/SGP case projects that provide alternative sources of livelihood and improve the local environment can affect both in the immediate and longer term context of the existing networks of survival and networks of influence. In some cases networks of survival strengthened and developed through GEF/SGP case projects presented strong challenges to existing networks of influence.

“Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” Project

For the reason that Aral Tenizi has a proven ability to secure resources from the international donor community and that the fisherman’s association now controls important physical resources (i.e. generators, freezers, trucks, boats, nets) together they possess a certain amount of power and potential influence within the community. Although still influenced by established powerholders, they are also not fully dependent on local government authorities or other historically powerful individuals to meet all of their livelihood needs.

At the same time, while resources become more valuable, powerful actors become more interested in attaining enhanced control over these resources through their networks of influence. During the evaluation seminar attempts by politically influential actors to take control of project activities and outcomes were effectively resisted through the direct challenge of Aral Tenizi leaders. Moreover, the fishermen had effective control over their organization and vital physical resources giving them the confidence to resist challenge from powerful actors.

With the possibility of operating largely independently of the government’s network of influence, Aral Tenizi’s successes inherently challenged the government’s monopoly on all forms of power. In a place with extremely scarce resources, the combination of social capital and organizational capacity heighten the value of seemingly minimal capital investments and equipments procured through the project. Organizational capacity also enabled Aral Tenizi to multiply the organization’s overall effective power to take other action (e.g. draft legislation of utilisation of bioresources of lakes).
Finding 1.6 – The networks of survival and influence, through their inherent cultural aspects and protocols, can also affect the acceptance, and ultimate effectiveness of the GEF/SGP case projects.

In my initial interviews with Kazakhstani community development practitioners working with USAID, they discussed the importance of matching strategies for improving community participation with cultural understandings and practices. In my observations of project activities, cultural practices were integrated closely with most projects. In all the project activities from seminars to site visits, meals were important events for building personal relationships and paying tribute to important actors through sharing food, toasts, and conversations. At both seminars that I attended there was at least one main meal where all the participants sat around the same table and shared words and food. These events were an essential part to the success of projects.

“Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” Project

The dinner at this seminar linked culturally important practices to the business of the project (e.g. discussing goals, financing, actions, responsibilities, etc.). The meal involved toasts to the leadership of Aral Tenizi, the local akim, and the guests who attended the seminar including myself. Poetry about the beauty of the Aral Sea was recited by a local journalist/poet. Everyone shared in a meal funded through project funds and transferred to the local café. These peripheral activities have a significant impact by making certain project activities less confrontational and creating a forum that is comfortable for most of the participants.

“Water for Life” Project

A story the main project coordinator told me about some of the difficulties he had implementing the project exemplified the importance of meals and other cultural protocol as modes of legitimacy in networks of survival. The project coordinator told me that some of local community members were reluctant to become involved in the project and accept or install water distillers and heaters without first being formally invited to the project planner’s residence for a meal, as Kazakh hospitality dictates. These households were not closely related by kinship to the project coordinator so they refused to be involved in any new agreement or partnership without first establishing a personal relationship. Unfortunately, in this case, the project supervisor felt he did not have time, or available resources to extend personal dinner invitations to all of the intended participants, and was frustrated that these community members failed to see the potential benefits of installing distillers and heaters. While this may also be a reflection of many other factors in project design, it does point strongly to the relevance of cultural protocols in networks of survival.

In effect, cultural norms are the fundamental building blocks of such informal networks, and hold a high place of importance in personal relations and in negotiation processes to access resources provided through the networks or through projects and tap their benefits. Potential benefits available from projects that are unattached to or outside of networks of survival are difficult for some people, usually those most dependent on those networks for meeting their needs, to identify and to capture. Sometimes, this also relates to reluctance on the part of individuals to become beholden to what they believe to be networks of influence where they do not perceive a proportional benefit to themselves.
During the course of the planning seminar in Ridder several cultural activities were integrated into the course of the seminar including two meals that provided an opportunity for verbal tributes. We also took a trip to a farmstead that served the burgeoning ecotourism industry in the region. When we first arrived, we ate bread and salt and drank shot a shot of vodka according to the Russian tradition of greeting guests. The farmstead host also provided a meal, paid for through the project, which included fermented horse’s milk, the traditional Kazakh drink. Although in this instance most of the cultural traditions were on display for the foreign visitors and not necessarily the pathway for economic transactions, they were still important symbols of pride for the respective ethnic groups. When I asked one Russian seminar participant about the integration of Kazakh and Russian traditions they answered, “We share out traditions with others, but they are still ours,” indicating the importance of cultural practices for building bridges across ethnic divides, possibly creating integrated informal networks.

**Findings Set 2: Actors and their Roles**

Actors took on an incalculable number of different roles in the GEF/SGP project activities and each role defining the actor’s functional relationships in those activities to institutions and other social actors. In part, local networks of survival and influence discussed earlier define these roles, as do other aspects of the sociopolitical economy.

Identities also had significant influence on the roles that actors assumed in the planning and implementation of the case projects. Often the actors with whom I spoke did not talk about identities explicitly, but through our discussions of project details and their roles in the project. People often referred to the relative importance of different identities in relation to project activities and other actors. When I asked project participants why the GEF/SGP case projects were important to their work or community some of answers were, “The natural environment is at the heart of the Kazakh soul,” “The Altai region is our homeland,” “Protecting medicinal plants is important to our traditional medicine,” or “People in Aral Sea region are poor GEF/SGP helped us make money to feed our families.” When I asked NGO leaders about the reasons why they were involved in the GEF/SGP projects both personally and as an organization. Some responses were “GEF/SGP gave us money to conduct a project,” “During the Soviet Union, I worked as a scientific worker at the university doing research on bees, but I lost my job after independence. The GEF/SGP project allowed me continue work in the biological field,” and “We employ expert botanists in our organization making us well qualified to research medicinal plants and protect biodiversity.” These responses reflect both actors’ ethnic, regional, and ecological identities as well as their relationships to other actors including myself as representative of GEF/SGP. The following findings describe some of the roles which actors that assumed which impact project outcomes.

Project goals and outcomes found in documents and discussions in the formal meetings were windows into actors’ roles and identities. In relation to roles and identities much of the data was extracted from formal interviews and informal discussions.

**Finding 2.1 – In some ways GEF/SGP became de facto patrons for local NGOs creating its own network of influence that had both positive and negative influences on local actors. This had an effect on existing local networks of influence, or potential to create new local networks.**
Although GEF/SGP presented itself as a partner to the local NGOs, the organizational authority and the power of financial inducement made equal partnership difficult. The grant recipients that I interviewed often made extra efforts to communicate the positive outcomes from their projects in part because of the authority of that I had as a GEF/SGP representative. Even powerful individuals recognized the influence and power that an outside financier could have on their community. For example, in the interviews that I had with NGO leaders who had received grants from GEF/SGP they often lauded of the organizations policies and practices. They expressed few criticisms even when I asked questions about how GEF/SGP could improve its service to the NGOs. I recognized that my position as a representative of GEF/SGP most likely influenced their responses. Conversations with other project actors that were very willing to criticize GEF/SGP reconfirmed the notion that my position influenced the interviewees responses. Some of the criticisms expressed by other project actors pointed out that GEF/SGP funding often went to the friends and acquaintances of GEF/SGP staff, which further reinforced the idea of a network of influence linked to GEF/SGP office. On the other hand, in conversations with GEF/SGP staff they often pointed out the merits of the NGO grant recipients that met the project design requirements. A significant portion of the GEF/SGP staff time was spent getting grant recipients to adhere to the programmatic reporting requirements because they were a central mechanism for GEF/SGP to control/monitor the activities of its grant recipients.

GEF/SGP’s patronage was both actively and passively promoted through its projects. Programmatic limitations on project design, organizational policy of promoting its logo and image in all its projects, and the monitoring and evaluation guidelines all require grant recipients to demonstrate how they are serving GEF/SGP interests (i.e. programmatic goals). Although GEF/SGP programmatic goals may be mutually beneficial for both GEF/SGP and the grant recipient, the institutional relationship requires that grant recipients pander to GEF/SGP. Although the National Steering Committee is composed of NGO, government, academic, and business representatives, current grant recipients have little direct voice on this appointed committee unless they know a member through an informal network. With little voice in GEF/SGP policies and administrative decisions grant recipients have difficulty shaping the GEF/SGP- grant recipient relationship.

Finding 2.2 - The professional identity and leadership roles of the NGOs involved in the GEF/SGP case projects at times enabled them to serve as advocates for other community members (i.e. fishermen, volunteers, households, farmers) to government.

Largely due to the legitimacy of their roles, as well as their existing capacity, they have the potential to create good working relationships with the government technocrats (i.e. local wildlife officers, hydrologists, planners). However, NGO most often appear to have little influence over the political appointees (i.e. mayors and his appointees).

"Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes" Project

In this project, Aral Tenizi served as the liaison between the fishermen’s cooperative and the local government. Aral Tenizi used its legal knowledge and technical capacity to draft proposed legislation on the regulation and use of bioresources of lakes at the national level to support protection the biodiversity of lakes as well as allow the local population to utilize some of the resources for their livelihoods. In their role as facilitators at the evaluation seminar, Aral Tenizi leaders served as advocates for the fishermen and other community members creating space for them to voice their opinions. When local government bureaucrats began to be the
loudest voices in the room drowning out the fishermen who appeared to be less comfortable in the meeting setting, Aral Tenizi made an intentional effort to create space to allow the fishermen to express their opinions. Similarly, Aral Tenizi offered a private space for the fishermen’s cooperative to meet and provided administrative support to help the fishermen with their accounting and other organizational management issues.

"Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve" Project

Representing the diverse interests of the population from youth, scientists, natural historians, tourism advocates, and conservation groups, NGOs that participated in the planning seminar with government officials they voiced both the interests of the social groups that they represented as well as their own organizational interests such as funding NGO projects in the biosphere reserve. These NGOs had less influence over powerful state actors than NGOs in the Aral Sea region.

Instead of being the facilitators the leaders of Youth of the 21st Century and other local NGOs were relegated to primarily organizational and logistical duties rather than equal participation with the representatives from government and international NGOs. This was evident at the seminar where many NGO leaders were on the margins at different times during discussions and even social exchanges.

At one point during the seminar, a group of government officials from all three countries and several members of international NGOs and commercial organizations informally sat around a map of the territory under consideration. They discussed the existing zapovedniki and potential designation of strictly protected territories, buffer zones, and development zones. Many of the local government officials had questions for the representative from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) on possibilities of certain areas to be designated for buffer zones and protected areas. Also, a local naturalist who held broad knowledge of the plants and animals within territory was asked about locations of rare and endangered species within the territory.

This activity seemed to catch the interest of the government officials and brought them to talk about possibilities within the context of the biosphere territory. For example, one of the questions posed to the WWF representative was whether a strictly protected area could be established within the existing zapovednik territory. The WWF representative pointed out that it depended on where the protected territories existed in the adjacent territories of the bordering countries because one of goals of a transboundary park was to create corridors for wildlife. However, the composition of the group discussing issues around the map reinforced the larger dominant decision-making structures and practices. The group was primarily composed of high-level government and scientific experts at the exclusion of local NGOs who were largely involved in what appeared to be a relatively less important brainstorming activity.

Finding 2.5 - Ecological identity plays an important role in many individual and organizational actors’ actions in the GEF/SGP case projects especially related to their mandates.

As could be expected, the ecological identities of project actors was closely linked to professional roles. Project actors, other than the NGO leaders and the scientific experts actors, including community members, private business owners, and government officials held similar positions about the reasons for protecting or improving the physical environment. Their central concern was human well-being and survival and the integrity of ecosystems was important.

\[161\] List of the most threatened and endangered species in the country
primarily because of its function in directly providing for human needs and wants (i.e. provision of food and clean water, fodder for livestock, increase tourism, etc.). From conversations I had with these project actors, the livelihood components of the projects were the most important components. NGO leaders and scientists whom I spoke with referred to the importance of not only the direct resources for humans, but also maintaining ecological functions, but also within the context of meeting human needs. Rarely did anyone that I talked to refer to the inherent value of the physical environment or its components in their own right.

"Water for Life" Project

In the case of the "Water for Life" project, one of the intended outcomes was to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG). While the global impact of a small village or even several small villages reducing their GHG emissions is globally insignificant compared to reducing household energy use in places like North America, the benefits of raising awareness about global climate change among local residents should not be understated, especially in a region that has been so severely affected by micro-level climate change from the shrinking of the Aral Sea. Through projects like the "Water for Life" and other previous projects intended to protect and restore the Aral Sea ecosystems, local residents have been able to link the observed changes in the ecosystems to ecological concepts. The leader of Kosaral indicated that many of the project participants did not have a deep understanding of climate processes, but did understanding that there was a connection between the hydrology of the sea and more extreme temperatures of summer and winter.

The leader of Kosaral also suggested that people in the region including some of those that have water distillers have been slower to see the connection between water with high-levels of salts and/or chemicals and negative health effects. Many residents think that the bottled or distilled water has no flavour compared to well water and thus prefer to keep drinking water from the well. Although some of the project participants that I talked to recognized the risks and encouraged their children to drink distilled water, they continue to drink well or trucked water.

This project doesn’t enable local residents to make any change to the local micro-climate or even meet their needs for clean drinking water. However, it did start the process of a fuller awareness of the systems affecting their lives and their local environments, while at the same time, providing them with newly available resources in the form of alternative water and energy sources. A deeper understanding of the forces that are affecting their lives in combination with greater livelihood stability can potentially produce social power that allows residents to become active in the political decisions that affect their communities.

"Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve" Project

The seminar brought together a variety of perspectives on ecological relationships. During the seminar proceedings, NGOs representatives and other actors expressed a range of ideas for NGOs’ roles in the establishment and function of a potential Biosphere Reserve. These roles ranged from community based conservation officers to tourism operators to natural historians. For example, some NGOs were focused more on the traditional uses of and relationships with the local ecosystems while other NGOs and local tourism companies took a more commercial view of the ecological resources. In conversations with one NGO leader worked at a local business college, she often lauded the commercial potential of ecotourism in the region. The ideas and goals supported by the different actors in the planning seminar reflected their vision of human-ecological relationships. Similarly, while visiting a local tourism company the operators showed me pictures of the trophy hunting expeditions for wealthy clients.
Finding 2.6 - New identity and role possibilities and permissibilities were created when new discourses arose in several of the GEF/SGP case projects and the social interaction between actors offered opportunities for new identities to be constituted.

Some of the GEF/SGP case projects tapped into existing identities to strengthen old roles (i.e. fisherman, elders, farmers, household breadwinner, Kazakh, natives of the Aral Region) and/or created new roles (i.e. volunteers, environmentalists, cooperative members, NGO members) to give legitimacy to the goals of the project and create possibilities for new social, economic, and political relations. In conversations with Aral Aelderi leaders, they indicated that the volunteer network has been and could continue to be important for reversing Soviet-era socio-psychological dependence on central government structures for improving public life and provide economic opportunity in small villages. The identity of ‘volunteer’ created through the project gave people a sense of importance in their communities empowering them to take positive action. The network itself increased opportunities for the introduction of democratic decision-making, encourages the development of local economies by establishing trade networks, and focuses on the importance of improving public amenities to community economic development.

Findings Set 3: Dynamics of Power: Strategic Bargaining over Project Resources

There are numerous examples where the dynamics of power regarding the strategic bargaining over project goals and resources can be explored. The exercise of power occurred in all project activities, in all social interactions, and at all levels of the project. The forums where power was exercised ranged from discussions about setting timelines or implementation details, to informal conversations over tea, to site visits, to the formal context of planning and evaluation meetings. The dynamics of the bargaining process are often subtle, always interconnected, and usually played out within a project over an extended period of time, at multiple locations, involving numerous interactions. The motives, resources, and tactics are difficult to isolated for analysis or from the specific context in which they take place.

However, at times, certain aspects of power dynamics in the strategic bargaining process become obvious, but a full understanding of how that exact moment of revelation was constructed and fits into the whole of the project is never entirely possible. However, a window of insight into the process, can best be constructed and made useful by understanding the identities informing the roles of various actors in particular socio-economic contexts. This knowledge of potential identities and roles provides insight into actors’ interests in a strategic bargaining process. With regard to a particular socio-political-historical context, those roles take certain places within existing power structures, and are able to influence the bargaining process in different ways.

Given the limited space available here, it would not be possible to explain all of the power plays that I witnessed during my time as a researcher, and of course, there are many, many more which I did not witness that are relevant to each project’s planning, implementation and evaluation processes. In light of this, I have chosen to highlight one particular set of negotiations that I feel illustrates many of the key aspects of the sociopolitical economy, roles, and identities...
in the strategic bargaining process. After describing the scenario, from the project evaluation meeting of the “Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” project, I highlight some key points relevant to bargaining in this process, as well as points relevant to project planning processes of the other case projects analyzed.

On Friday July 26, 2002, Aral Tenizi held its final evaluation seminar to close the GEF/SGP portion of the “Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” project. The purpose of the seminar was to conduct a participatory evaluation of the project and to ‘brainstorm’ potential spin-off projects from the lessons learned. The participants of the seminar included fishermen, local Aral Tenizi volunteers, government officials, private sector representatives, and mass media representatives. The seminar was opened by the new district akim, who took the opportunity to present a proposal for the establishment of a local association of fishermen in direct opposition to the existing cooperative developed through the “Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” project.

During my visit to Aralsk in the Aral Sea region in July 2002, a new akim had just been recently appointed. As a new political appointment in a local region, it was important to his effective control to establish his own network of “loyal” constituents by tapping into the established cultural and political elite. At the same time, it was equally important for local people to get into good favour with the new political appointee and for politically ambitious local residents to establish themselves as important partners to the new akim.

In his proposal, the akim recommended that the former head of the fish processing plant in the region, who, though he now lives outside the region maintains strong kinship and business ties there, organize this association to the surprise of all the fishermen, Aral Tenizi staff, and other community members. Many members of the Aral Tenizi saw this as a backdoor attempt by the new akim to link with an influential (and wealthy) individual and the former factory manager known hereafter as “Mr. Ribanov” to get into good favour with the new local administration. The akim stated that he felt this should chair the rest of the seminar to discuss the issue of new fishermen’s association and other issues related to the results of the Aral Tenizi project. As justification for his appointment, the akim stressed the importance of past experience and authority of Mr. Ribanov as the former head of the local fish processing plant run by the Soviet Ministry of Fisheries, his experience in the fishing industry, and his connection to the local community, but neglecting to recognize his lack of association with the project up to this point and with the seminar participants. Assigning Mr. Ribanov as chair of the seminar threw the Aral Tenizi plan for the seminar into an upheaval and proved to inhibit the participatory atmosphere of the seminar. Backed by the akim’s authority Mr. Ribanov’s ideas and directives were not challenged directly by most of the fishermen and other community members. It became evident through the course of the seminar that Mr. Ribanov aspired to demonstrate his influence and organizational abilities to the GEF/SGP and to increase his influence over the existing informal fishermen’s cooperative strengthened by the “Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes” Project.

The head of Aral Tenizi, with the assistance of Aral Tenizi volunteers, attempted to maintain the participatory and open atmosphere. At times an influential Aral Tenizi leader tried to talk over Mr. Ribanov’s directions in direct challenge to his authority. This was a risky move for someone to directly challenge the appointee of the akim. However, the Aral Tenizi leader saw this risk as less than the risk of Mr. Ribanov fully controlling the proceedings of the seminar. The small group discussion provided an opportunity for participants to exchange ideas without Mr. Ribanov’s influence (He didn’t participate). The participants were divided into three small groups: 1) fisherman, 2) local volunteers and mass media, and 3) local administration officials). The results and opportunities for continued work from “Let’s Preserve
the Biodiversity of Lakes” project were presented by Aral Tenizi’s leader and then each small group discussion was facilitated by a local volunteer. The group recorded their ideas on poster board that were then presented to the larger group. The small group discussions were productive with every group formulating a project idea and some groups producing two concepts in a short amount of time (approx. 30 min). Some of the project ideas included repair of canal systems and establishing fishery inspection service.

Mr. Ribanov continued to exert his authority by shortening the discussion time to half of that originally planned to accommodate his own schedule. He and his allies from local government criticized ideas for potential projects offer by the fishermen and others before they had chance to be discussed on their merits. Furthermore, their criticisms almost exclusively focused on the financial impracticality of a project idea. He gave proportionally more time to the ideas of his allies. When Mr. Ribanov left because of a prior engagement everyone stood in state of shock and some light chuckles came from around the room. Talking with Aral Tenizi leaders and volunteer after the seminar, they said that they were frightened that Mr. Ribanov might continue to take control of the fishermen’s cooperative, but because Aral Tenizi leaders had challenged his authority Mr. Ribanov had exercised in the seminar that ensured that he would not do it easily. The confidence that they had that influential organizations like GEF/SGP and the Danish Development Agency would help them resist attempts at outside control of the cooperative made it possible for them to stand up against locally powerful leaders

Overall, as demonstrated in this scenario and discussed in detail in Chapter Two understanding the informal networks, identities, and roles discussed earlier help understand an actors’ power in the strategic bargaining context. The following key points illustrate how these three components interact in the case projects, highlighting the similarities between the actors roles as informed by identities, and the dynamics of their use through various tactics and with various motives, in the strategic bargaining process in the particular structural historical contexts of the projects, with the intent of attaining control over certain resources.

Finding 3.1 – In several instances scientists often used their monopoly on scientific knowledge to support a certain political motive of an allied political actor during GEF/SGP project conceptualization.

“Let’s Preserve the Biodiversity of Lakes”

During the seminar evaluation, a local scientist aligned himself with Mr. Ribanov who in addition to attempting to develop an alternative fisherman’s cooperative was also attempting to establish an aquaculture facility. As the representative of the GEF/SGP during my project-monitoring trip to the Aral Sea region, I was asked to evaluate a project concept submitted to GEF/SGP by Mr. Ribanov. Mr. Ribanov submitted a proposal to re-establish an aquaculture facility by diverting water from the Syr Darya River. According to the proposal the fish raised in the facilities would help replenish and preserve some threatened species of fish found in the Red Book of Kazakhstan. Mr. Ribanov employed a local scientist to evaluate the viability of establishing an aquaculture facility. This local scientist adamantly argued his case that this project could help restore population of several species of fish in particular the ship, a type of Aral Sea sturgeon. However, I asked him a few questions about how the project would substantially increase populations of the threatened fish and he gave me vague answers concerning the lack of money to fix the inflow canal. I also asked him about how the loss of water from the river would further exacerbate the shrinking of the Aral Sea and he gave me an answer about how the water would flow back into the Syr Darya River. When I asked about the
water losses to evaporation and seepage and he responded that they would be minimal. These answers and others made it obviously apparent that he was using his authority as a scientist to justify Mr. Ribanov's project and that he had not really done an rigorous analysis of the ecological situation.

Finding 3.2 – The flow of information played an important role in the bargaining process around the GEF/SGP case projects. It was often an important indicator of an actor's position within the socio-political economy.

"Altai-Sayan Biosphere Reserve" Project

At the planning seminar there were no authoritative background presentations made by local NGOs and their knowledge was often considered primarily anecdotal. On the other hand "official” background information was flowing from either governmental organizations or international NGOs. Although several times during the seminar the “experts” did turn to NGO members for their knowledge of the local area, in these instances the NGOs only in responded to a request from “experts” and were not choosing which information they thought was the most relevant. One example was when several governmental and representatives of international organizations turned to a knowledgeable local naturalist to ask where certain endangered species could be found in a particular valley.

As the local NGOs were not asked, did not feel qualified, or did not possess relevant background information to present to the discussion. This gave them significantly less decision-making power from the beginning of the seminar and thus were only able to influence the process by reacting to the information that was presented to them.

However, even when they were able to respond to the information presented, the discussion was often cut short which limited their ability to ask important questions to improve their understanding of the information from the “experts”. At the same time government officials were did not open a dialogue with NGOs to understand their interests and position as their knowledge/information had been undervalued and anecdotal.

In conversations with local NGO leaders in Altai region, establishing the legitimacy of their roles as professionals was key to working with both governmental institutions and international organizations. Once their professional legitimacy was established then their knowledge carried a certain authority in the context of interacting with other institutions. In the view of NGO leaders, as representatives of the local community’s interests their knowledge had little legitimacy.
Chapter 5: Implications and Concluding Remarks

Implications for Future Development Planning

By definition, an implicit purpose of development is to produce some kind of systemic change. For those actors engaged in designing development projects, this has implications for ensuring that development projects in fact induce the type of systemic change they are intending. Based on the findings of the cases examined in this thesis, development projects that intend to produce systemic change to improve the conditions of life for the most marginalized populations and also to improve the conditions of the physical environment should perform the following functions:

- Transfer resources to the most marginalized populations
- Creating and supporting alternative political forums
- Promoting new identities and supporting existing identities in concert with the project’s overall goals

Based on the findings from the four cases analyzed, the following are important implications for planner when planning and implementing projects that fulfill these functions:

- For the reason that networks of survival, largely based on kinship relationships, are vital to life for many actors in Kazakhstan, especially the most marginalized, it is important to consider and to work to strengthen networks when designing environmental projects intended to increase the security and well-being of the marginalized. Networks of survival can be strengthened through the creation of alternative sources of resources that can increase and diversify producers and thus provide more choice and independence from traditional centres of power. In considering the ways to strengthen networks of survival it is also essential to understand the culture traditions and protocol that construct them and to design projects so that resources are not prevented from entering the network because of a particular project’s lack of adherence to cultural norms.

- Because of their prevalent role in maintaining existing systems of political order, it is important to consider networks of influence, as well as to consider how to strengthen networks of survival to challenge the networks of influence by providing alternative sources of power. In order to produce systemic transformation in Kazakhstan, projects must necessarily create spaces and empower those actors traditionally outside formal political decision-making (e.g. NGOs, fisherman, foresters, ecologists, farmers, poor, etc.), in order that they can compel formal powerholders to shift existing systems (i.e. akims, national political elites, international donors).

- It is also important to note that while outside funders’ role as an alternative source of resources can challenge local networks of influence, effectively leading to changes in the
system of political order, they can also, sometimes inadvertently replace existing patrons with their own type of patronage. Project design processes therefore, must take into careful consideration the level of power held by all actors in the process, with special attention to the dominant positions of potential leverage of the donors, with their ability to provide resources.

- Because fundamental systemic changes are based on changes in relative power, within relationships between actors, it is important to recognize the existing power held by different actors when entering the planning process, which can be attributed to their motivations, resources, and the particular tactics they use in the strategic bargaining process, as well as to their professional roles and socio-cultural roles and abilities. In this regard, the multiple identities of different actors should also be acknowledged. In Kazakhstan, planners should play recognize as ethnicity and potential inter-ethnic tensions as important issues, as well as to the power afforded to members of certain professions.

- Because existing systems of political order are rooted in the existing identities of actors, projects should promote identity discourse and social interactions that examine existing identities that rooted in sociopolitical economy and cultural traditions. Their potential agents for changing or maintaining the system of political order should be analyzed and for creating new identities that may embody values that challenge dominant power relations.

**Concluding Remarks**

Friedmann postulates that systems of political order have or aspire to have the “basic institutions of self-governance: legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government, political parties, organized system of coercion, legal system and political culture” and that these institutions create the preconditions for a public domain. As a young nation-state, Kazakhstan has made extensive progress in establishing a framework of state institutions with a parliament, judicial system and bureaucracy basic to a representative democracy. These institutions have the potential to perform their intended functions (i.e. make laws, interpret law, implement, and enforce law). However, the increasing domination of private capital, a crisis of sovereignty for the nation-state, has called the ‘authority and legitimacy’ of its institutions into question both internally and externally. In Kazakhstan as in most parts of the world, the increasing power of private capital has both replaced state power in many spheres of socio-political and economic life and undermined the state authority in others. In contrast to Kazakhstan’s state-dominated history prior to 1991, the decline of state authority has decreased its ability to control and provide services for the majority of its citizens. At the same time, state policies and functions have been formulated to service and buttress powerful private interests. The consolidation of power once again is in the hands of a few, and the increasing willingness of those centres of power to use force, points to need for fundamental systemic transformation.

Although development agencies are tied to the interests of the states they serve, the potential exists for individuals and groups of individuals inside and outside these institutions to focus their resources towards real fundamental shifts in how power and resources are distributed. As one pathway to distribute those resources, projects have the potential catalyze a shift in

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fundamental shift in power. However, whether this potential is realized is dependent on our recognition of the fundamental influences that shape the actions we undertake. I believe that this thesis has demonstrated how fundamental the sociopolitical economy, identities, and roles are at shaping actors’ exercise of power in the context of projects. As we collectively plan projects that are intended to make fundamental systemic changes that we should pay close attention to how these factors both affect and are affected by the project planning process.
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## Appendix

### Forms of Power


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<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Force</td>
<td>Ability to achieve subject’s submission by influencing the subject’s body or physical environment</td>
<td>• There are two modes of influence over a subject’s body: physical force and psychological force.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Subject may refuse to obey, but the application of force, reduces or eliminates any alternative action for the subject.</td>
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<td>Coercion</td>
<td>Ability to achieve subject’s submission through the threat of negative sanctions for a subject’s refusal to comply</td>
<td>• The subject and powerholder have conflicting goals and it is better for the subject to comply to the powerholder’s will than to let the powerholder realize her threat.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The powerholder also prefers not to realize the threat although she has the ability to do so in the case that the subject does not comply.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Coercive force usually intensifies conflict between subject and powerholder.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inducement</td>
<td>Ability to achieve subject’s submission through the offer of reward for the subject’s compliance.</td>
<td>• The subject and powerholder have conflicting goals and in order for the subject to comply to the powerholder’s will the reward must be greater than the benefits of not complying.</td>
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<td>• Inducements usually do not intensify conflicts between subject and powerholder, enhancing the subject’s willingness to cooperate in the future.</td>
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<td>Persuasion</td>
<td>Ability to achieve subject’s submission by presenting seemingly ‘rational’ arguments</td>
<td>• Persuasion often implies an absence of conflict between powerholder and subject, but the powerholder still achieves an outcome through submission of a subject’s behaviour and/or consciousness.</td>
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<td>Manipulation</td>
<td>Ability to achieve subject’s submission through exercise of covert influence on the subject, which the latter is unaware of.</td>
<td>Manipulation comes in two main forms:</td>
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<td>• Powerholder exercises concealed control over the subject through symbolic communication (i.e. veiled suggestions, controlling information supply, structuring the agenda of interaction, etc.)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Altering the subject’s environment to evoke a response from the subject without directly influencing the subject (i.e. price setting by sellers, changes in work environment, etc.)</td>
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<td>Authority</td>
<td>Ability to achieve subject’s submission through a set of characteristics of the powerholder that makes the subject obliged to accept the powerholder’s command independently of its content</td>
<td>• A subject that submits to authority “surrenders judgement” to the powerholder voluntarily because of either characteristic of the position that the powerholder occupies or because there is mutual agreement that the powerholder has a special understanding of the situation which the subject does not possess for good reason.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• There are three basic forms of authority:</td>
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<td>- Personal Authority is based on personal traits and capabilities (i.e. moral, competency, etc.) of the powerholder and on the subject’s perceptions and valuation of special personal qualities of the powerholder (i.e. admiration, friendship, etc.) in a non-institutionalized relationship between subject and powerholder</td>
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<td>- Traditional Authority is based on tradition (‘age-old rules and powers’) irrespective of the personal characteristics of the powerholder.</td>
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<td>- Legal Authority is based on mutually accepted legal rules, which give the right to command (powerholder) and the obligation to obey (subject). It generally implies that the powerholder does not have apply coercion or force but that commands are accepted automatically. However, the use of force or coercion can be legitimized through legal authority.</td>
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