

“DILEMMA IN THE SANDS”

Media, Statoil and the complicated case of the Alberta oil sands

Jan Magne Eriksen Bae

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1: INTRODUCTION – CONTEXTUALIZING THE CURRENT OIL SANDS DEBATE	9
2: THEORIES – MEDIA, THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE RELEVANCE OF GEOGRAPHY . 15	
2.1: “SPEAKING FOR THE THREES” – THE NEWS MEDIA INFORMING ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT.....	16
2.2: WHOSE REALITY? CONSTRUCTIONISM – MEDIA, AUDIENCE AND SOURCES.....	17
2.3: NEWS PRACTICES – JOURNALISTS AS STORYTELLERS.....	20
2.4: THE IMPORTANCE OF GEOGRAPHY – NIMBYs, NOPEs, PIGs, PIPS, AND DIFFERENT SCALES	22
3: METHODOLOGY – MEDIA ANALYSIS AND SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	27
3.1: MEDIA ANALYSIS OF THE NORWEGIAN DEBATE	27
3.2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS OF CANADIAN STAKEHOLDERS.....	29
3.3: SOME ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF MY STUDY	30
4: THE PRESENTATION OF THE OIL SANDS IN NORWEGIAN MEDIA	33
4.1: THE FORMATION OF AN ENVIRO-POLITICAL DISCOURSE-COALITION AGAINST THE OIL SANDS.....	34
4.2: RESPONDING TO THE CRITICS - TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION AND ENERGY DEMAND	43
4.3: THE OIL SANDS/TAR SANDS DIVIDE TRANSLATED TO THE NORWEGIAN CONTEXT	47
4.4: THE OIL SANDS IN NORWAY - AN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE.....	50
4.5: THE OIL SANDS: ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS OVERSHADOW NORWAY’S ROLE AS AN OIL PRODUCER.....	55
5: ANATOMY OF A MEDIA CONTROVERSY: IMAGERY, SYMBOLS, AND POLARIZATION	59
5.1: IMAGERY, SYMBOLS, AND EVENTS - THE UNLEASHING OF A PR-WAR OVER THE OIL SANDS	60
5.2: YOUR CHOICE; “ETHICAL OIL” OR “DIRTY OIL”? - TOWARDS EVEN MORE POLARIZATION	67
5.3: SUMMARY - MAKING SENSE OF THE OIL SANDS THROUGH DRAMA, CONFLICT AND CONFRONTATION	72
6: REVERSE NIMBYISM? – THE OIL SANDS ANALYZED AT DIFFERENT GEOGRAPHICAL SCALES.....	75
6.1: THE GLOBAL SCALE: ENERGY DEMAND VERSUS CLIMATE CHANGE.....	76
6.2 THE NATIONAL SCALE – HARPER’S EMERGING ENERGY SUPERPOWER	79
6.3: THE LOCAL SCALE – NOT JUST ALL HELL FOR A BASEMENT?.....	83
6.4: NEIGHBOURS - THE COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES	88
6.5: PUTTING GEOGRAPHY, SCALE, AND PLACE INTO THE EQUATION.....	93
7: CONCLUSION – THE DILEMMA OF BALANCING TWO CONFLICTING ROLES.....	97
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	103
INTERVIEWS	111
APPENDIX – EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW GUIDE	113

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

FIGURE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF NEWS ITEMS BY MONTH.....	34
FIGURE 2: SUMMARY OF DISCOURSE BY THE OPPOSITION TO STATOIL’S OIL SANDS.....	41
FIGURE 3: THE DISCOURSE OF STATOIL AND OTHERS WHO HAVE REFLECTED NEUTRAL OR POSITIVE OPINIONS ABOUT OIL SANDS	46
FIGURE 4: THE DOMINANCE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL FRAME	52
FIGURE 5: WHO IS BEING QUOTED IN THE NORWEGIAN PRESS ABOUT THE OIL SANDS?.....	54
TABLE 1: ORIGIN OF INFORMANTS	29
TABLE 2: NEWSPAPERS AND “OLJESAND”.....	48
TABLE 3: NEWSPAPERS AND “TJÆRESAND”	48
TABLE 4: OPINION PIECES BY AUTHOR	55
PHOTO 1: THE SYNCRUDE DUCKS – (PHOTO: TODD POWELL).....	61
PHOTO 2: OIL SANDS MINING (PHOTO: JEFF MCINTOSH, AP).....	63
PHOTO 3: OIL SANDS <i>IN SITU</i> – (PHOTO: JAN MAGNE ERIKSEN BAE)	63
PHOTO 4: ETHICAL OIL POSTER – FROM <i>ETHICALOIL.COM</i>	68
MAP 1: THE OIL SANDS DEPOSITS, INCLUDING STATOIL’S LEASE (CERI, 2011).....	80

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AWA – Alberta Wilderness Association

BLCN – Beaver Lake Cree Nation

CAPP – Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers

CBC – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

CEMA – Cumulative Environmental Management Association

CERI – Canadian Energy Research Institute

CHOA – Canadian Heavy Oil Association

CWF – Canada West Foundation

ENGO - Environmental Non-governmental organization

FRP – Fremskrittspartiet (The Progress Party)

GHG – Greenhouse gas

IEA – International Energy Agency

IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

ISEEE – Institute of Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy

KRF – Kristelig Folkeparti (Christian Democratic Party)

NAOSC – North American Oil Sands Corporation

NDP – New Democratic Party

NIMBY – Not in my backyard

NOPE – Not on planet earth

OSLI – Oil Sands Leadership Initiative

PIMBY – Please in my backyard

PIGS – Publics in general

PIPS – Publics in particular

RSC – Royal Society of Canada

SAGD – Steam Assisted Gravity Drainage

SP – Senterpartiet (Centre Party)

SV – Sosialistisk Venstreparti (Socialist Left Party)

WWF – World Wildlife Foundation

1: Introduction – Contextualizing the current oil sands debate

- *This is a red-letter day, not only for Canada but for all North America. No other event in Canada's centennial year is more important or more significant.*

Former Alberta Premier Ernest Manning on the opening of Great Canadian Oil Sands in September 1967 (Sweeny, 2010).

The topic of this study is the debate around oil sands¹ in Norway and Canada. The interest in this particular subject in Norway can be dated to 2007 when the acquisition of the North American Oil Sands Corporation (NAOSC) realized their entry into the industrial extraction of this specific resource. However, at the same time there was gathering a growing movement concerned about the environmental challenges associated with oil sands, and it did not take many weeks before environmental organizations in Norway started criticizing this involvement. As a result, the issue quickly became highly controversial in the Norwegian media, where a cross-section of environmental spokesmen and politicians argued against Statoil's participation in the Albertan oil sands. Since then, there has been a steady increase in attention, mostly criticism, coming through the media from a variety of Norwegian environmental organizations, but also from politicians wanting to pull the company out of this controversial project.

While the interest in this particular topic in Norway can be dated to Statoil's entrance in 2007, the oil sands have a long history in Canada. The first white man to actually see the oil sands was the North West Company trader Peter Pond in 1778, when he came across the deposits while entering the Athabasca River watershed through the Clearwater River in Northern Alberta. The local Aboriginals were, however, already aware of the substance and used it, among other things, to make their canoes waterproof (Kelly, 2009). As a tribute to those early explorers, the biggest shopping centre in Fort McMurray, the hub of current oil sands production in Northern Alberta, is now called the Peter Pond shopping mall.

Although Albertans have been aware of this abundant resource since the explorers of the late 18th century, it was not until 1967 that the first actual plant was inaugurated by The Great Canadian Oil

¹ Beyond the conventional liquid oil, oil sands are naturally viscous mixtures of sand or clay, water, and an intensely heavy substance called bitumen. Bitumen will not flow unless it is vigorously treated, usually by heating it up with the help of steam (Alberta Government, 2008).

Sands, now Suncor. This was the first complex in the world specifically devoted to the mining of oil sands and the upgrading of bitumen to regular synthetic crude oil (Sweeny, 2010). Today, Canadians, and particularly Albertans, have become one of the top oil exporters because of the oil sands. The average Albertan is directly connected to the oil sands both because the industry is a major employer, and because the province depends, to a large degree, on revenues generated from this resource (CERI, 2011; Liepert, personal interview, 2011).

Despite the fact that the first mining operations were opened in the late 1960's, oil sands development at the current high production scale is actually quite new. A number of both external and internal factors have contributed to an explosion in development since the late 1990's and early 2000's. First, the oil sands had to be recognized internationally as a sizeable energy reserve. That happened in 2002 when the *Oil & Gas Journal* formally acknowledged this resource as a major supply, whereas before it had just been considered a curiosity (Kelly, 2009). Almost overnight Canada was suddenly managing the second or third largest recognized oil reserve in the world after Saudi Arabia and probably Venezuela. Second, technological progress has made resource recovery much more feasible, most importantly through the SAGD-revolution making it possible to extract deep lying resources.² Indeed, the first commercial SAGD plant was also opened in 2002, truly a watermark year for the oil sands industry (Kelly, 2009). Third, combinations of more external circumstances have made resources like the oil sands more attractive.

Certainly, with conventional oil reserves gradually drying up, and world energy demand expected to rise 53 percent between 2008 and 2035 (Energy Information Administration, 2011), the resources found in Alberta were considered an attractive opportunity. Moreover, the geographical proximity to the biggest energy consumer of the world, the US, and the apparently never-ending political turmoil in other oil exporting countries in the Middle East surely served to underline the importance of this resource. The latter argument has particularly gained momentum in the world post 9/11. Indeed, Canada actually surpassed Saudi Arabia as the biggest exporter of oil to the US in 2004 (Sweeny, 2010). Furthermore, the rise of China and India as big energy consumers has undoubtedly increased demand. Correspondingly, it has also made the discussions over a proposed pipeline, going from Alberta to British Columbia, and thus facilitating exports by tankers to Asia, even more attractive. Thus, another obviously interesting dynamic going on in the oil sands debate is with regards to the

² SAGD - (Steam Assisted Gravity Drainage) is an in situ method for extracting deep lying bitumen with the help of injecting steam into the wells.

globalization of the issue. The US did, for example, quickly become involved both as the biggest investor and the biggest importer of oil sands. Secondly, major pipelines transporting the bitumen, like Keystone XL, cross into US territory and thus evoke US legislation and decision-making. Indeed, and connected to this, there has been an increased cooperation between Canadian and US environmental organizations in protesting against the industry. *CTV News* dubbed a meeting between ENGOs (Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations) from both countries in 2009 “the day the oil sands went global” as 20 top executives from US environmental organizations sat quietly listening to the emotional presentation of Brian Cox from Greenpeace Canada.³ Consequently, at the same time as these conditions, both internal and external, made the oil sands a major resource in the world energy market, however, opposition has also increased considerably in the last few years. Long gone are the days when the Alberta Government deliberately tried to draw attention to the oil sands in order to attract investors; for instance their famous exhibition of a massive dump truck at the National Mall in Washington in 2006.⁴

Oil sands opposition has certainly turned global in what is not just a Canadian issue anymore. Chastko (2010) has emphasized how resistance has increased markedly since the levels of production really took off in 2005-06, especially through a series of highly publicized events, for example the tragedy of the “Syn crude ducks”⁵. Furthermore, when Greenpeace decided to officially unleash their efforts in the anti-oil sands campaign in 2007, it definitely made a major contribution towards the globalization of the issue. Indeed, Mike Hudema from Greenpeace Canada confirmed this beyond doubt;

I certainly think that starting in 2007 you really started to see the tar sands issue being escalated. Partially I think that is sort of why Greenpeace first joined the campaign, and Greenpeace as an organization is able to use different tactics like civil disobedience to shine the media spotlight on environmental problems. This provided some of the images that media really picked up on” (Hudema, personal interview, 2012).

³ “The day the oil sands went global”. In *CTV NEWS Online*. 23. June 2009. Available at: <http://www.ctv.ca/generic/generated/static/business/article2310137.html>. Accessed: 23. April 2012.

⁴ “Alberta’s gift to culture” In: *Globe and Mail*. 6. June 2006. Available at: <http://www.dreamersanddoers.ca/albertainwashington.htm> Accessed: 23. April 2012.

⁵ Hundreds of ducks that perished when landing on a toxic lake used to separate the bitumen from different residuals.

The escalation of criticism towards the oil sands has to be seen in a wider context that also encompasses the issue of climate change. *The Stern Report* commissioned by the UK government, and the award winning documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* by former US Vice President Al Gore, both brought attention to the possibly grave consequences of global warming. This all happened more or less at the same time as both the production increase from the industry, and Greenpeace joining the campaign. Indeed, one of the major arguments of this study is that the criticism generated against the oil sands is very much connected to the concerns for global warming and climate change. Hence, the powerful imagery of vast open-pit mines being operated by raging monster trucks undoubtedly stand in dark contrast to the desires of many concerned about the potentially grave consequences of high emissions coming from this industry. This imaginary will probably also be of importance for the oil sands debate in Norway, and perhaps even more so as Norway is a country that portrays itself as an international leader it comes to addressing concerns about climate change (Eide and Ytterstad, 2011). At the same time, however, Norway is a major oil exporting country deriving substantial parts of our national income from the oil and gas industry, just like Canada. This complex background is important to keep in mind when analyzing the Norwegian part of the oil sands debate. Thus, it is particularly interesting to study how the controversy around oil sands evolves in the Norwegian setting where we are, to some extent “trapped” between two contradicting targets, concern for the climate and oil revenues to use the expression of Eide and Ytterstad (2011). Furthermore, while using that Norwegian media analysis as a backdrop, I will through a deeper analysis of the Canadian setting also identify and analyze special characteristics of the Canadian oil sands debate, like the role of First Nations in the debate. However, these two debates should not be considered as totally distinct and separated, as there is an interesting dynamic going on between them, and many of the same arguments are being used in both locations. Nevertheless, there are also considerable differences that I will map out through this study. The analysis will set out to reveal what role do geographical proximity to the actual resource, as well as other aspects, play in how oil sands is perceived and debated in the two countries.

The media is a main site for studying the public unfolding of scientific, political and technological controversies (Boykoff, 2009; Anderson, 1997; Nelkin, 1995; Ryghaug, 2006). Accordingly, the main analysis of this study (Chapter four) will consist of a Norwegian media analysis of the oil sands debate based on content from a selection of Norwegian newspapers. Discursive elements like *storylines* and *discourse coalitions* (Hajer, 1995) will be identified, and the analysis will reveal on what terms the Norwegian oil sands debate is being conducted by for instance

illuminating what *frames* are dominating the discussion (Goffmann, 1974). Further, I seek to highlight special characteristics of the Canadian media debate concerning the oil sands through semi-structured interviews. This will be done in Chapter 5. The goal of this chapter is to characterize the debate in general terms and with respect to important news values like “drama” and “conflict” (Bonfadelli, 2010). Some differences with regards to the Norwegian debate will also be identified here. Chapter six will elaborate even more on the Canadian context for oil sands development. Here, the role of geography is analyzed with regards to different geographical scales like the global, national and local scale, and whether and how arguments used in the oil sands debate change depending on these scales. Indeed, the role of distance to the actual sites of production is thoroughly analyzed by reference to scholarly literature dealing with factors like local opposition or “NIMBY-ism” (Robinson, 1999; Dear, 1992). In the next section I will give more detail to the relevant theoretical concepts mentioned above. Since the media has such an important role in this study, I will begin with an elaboration of some theories relevant for studying media representations that will serve as important tools for the analysis in chapter four and five. Furthermore, I will also elaborate on some important underpinnings with regards to geography that are important to the analysis in chapter six.

2: Theories – Media, the environment and the relevance of geography

Although concerns about issues like conservation and wildlife had been on the agenda for more than a century, there is generally some consensus about when a more specific emphasis on media reporting on “the environment” began. Rachel Carson’s book from 1962, *Silent Spring*, has received quite a lot of attention for how it increased public awareness concerning environmental issues in general, and the consequences of pesticide exposure in particular (Lester, 2010). Nevertheless, an important environmental commentator like Al Gore has by his movie *An Inconvenient Truth* specifically dated the onset of the constructionist approach to the “the environment” to 1968 with the publication of the iconic image *Earthrise*, a couple of days after Apollo 8’s return to earth. This image arguably represented a visual awakening as it revealed for the first time the planet’s fragility (Cosgrove, 1994). Indeed, “the Americans discovered another frontier, the search for a state of harmony between humankind and the only earth we have” (Schoenfeld et al., 1979: 43). It is perhaps not by coincidence that around the same time span, *Earth Day* was initiated in 1970 and *Time Magazine* introduced their own “Environment” section in its 1st of August 1969 edition (Allan et al., 2000). The *New York Times* also appointed its first reporter entirely entrusted to environmental reporting in 1969. That clearly demonstrated not just how elite newspapers were increasingly committed to environmental issues, but also how the environment was now identified as both a social problem, and an issue for the media (Lester, 2010).

Since then the media attention for environmental issues can be characterized by cycles and periods with heightened levels of awareness that are followed by periods with relatively less attention surrounding such issues. Perhaps the latest surge in media attention was initiated by a series of events related to climate change in the years 2005 to 2007. I have already mentioned the movie by Al Gore that had a global release in 2006. Moreover, the much anticipated *Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change* was released during the same year, followed by the largest and most detailed summary of the climate change challenge ever undertaken, the *IPCC Fourth Assessment Report* in 2007 (Boykoff, 2009). It is impossible to understand the media scrutiny of the oil sands without bringing into consideration that particular context. Indeed, global attention concerning the oil sands really started to escalate at the same time as heightened concerns about climate change. International media quickly picked up on this interest in the Albertan oil sands. That is why it is important to take a closer look at the media and their reporting on the environment.

2.1: “Speaking for the threes” – The news media informing about the environment

People abundantly turn to the media whether it is television, newspapers, magazines, radio, or increasingly the internet in an effort to make sense of the many complexities related to environmental science, and the policy governance that contribute to a shaping of our lives (Boykoff, 2009). Especially when confronted with scientific uncertainty, the general public is likely to turn to the mass media outlets for an enhanced understanding of what the issue is about. According to Allan et al. (2000) the journalists then become particularly charged with the burden of enforcing meaning upon such uncertainties. Arguably, there is a certain recognition that we are inescapably relying on the media in order to comprehend and understand the “world out there” which is beyond our immediate experience (Allan et al., 2000). Following the same argument, Boykoff (2009) implied that although the cultural politics of the environment is present in a selection of places like neighborhoods, county councils, workplaces, schools and town centers, the media serves as a prominent link between these varied spaces. The mass media thus play a pivotal role of communication in the intersection between science, policy and the general public. Indeed, that is perhaps why he claimed that the mass media effectively “speak for the threes” (Boykoff, 2009) when referring to the specific case of environmental reporting. Furthermore, when it comes to the particular issue of environmental risk, Beck (1995) contended that the media has a leading role in sounding the social alarm and raising attention to such problems.

Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1982) have contributed with an interesting “dependency theory” that advocates how the relative importance of the role of the media in the formation of meaning-construction actually will vary from issue to issue. On some issues the audience or readers will have little direct experience by which to evaluate media-generated images and meanings; while in other cases they will have considerably more. This media-dependency theory thus suggests that the importance of media discourse will depend on the availability of direct meaning-generating experiences in people’s everyday lives. In that context, Bocking (2010) has demonstrated how the public’s lack of direct experience with the case of aquaculture outside of their own regions has made the role of the media more important in both the framing of specific questions, and in defining the relevance of information coming from elsewhere. How is that related to the oil sands? Will those located far away from the areas of extraction, for example Norwegians, depend more on media’s portrayal of this resource than those living nearby?

Interestingly, Ryghaug, Sørensen and Næss (2011) have analyzed how Norwegians understand and domesticate the issue of climate change through particular sense-making devices that were

present in the media coverage of the issue. Those were specifically “nature drama“ and “science drama“. The former involves the media presentation of quite striking episodes like extreme weather or melting polar ice caps. The latter is about the coverage of ongoing disagreement between scientists concerning global warming (Ryghaug, Sørensen and Næss, 2011). Related to this, Nelkin (1995) argued that in the case of diffusing scientific information in the specific context of environmental controversies, the public tend to understand the science related to these controversies “less through direct experience or past education than through the filter of journalistic language and imagery” (Nelkin, 1995: 2). In that context, such sense-making devices as presented by the media are likely to be important when it comes to public understanding of complex environmental issues like the oil sands debate. Norway certainly is in a complicated situation with regards to the oil sands being a country largely depending on oil revenues, and at the same time concerned about addressing questions with regards to climate change. Hence, and based on theories about media’s coverage of environmental issues, (Lester, 2010; Anderson; 1997; Nelkin; 1995), I expect the debate to be quite polarized and conflict-oriented.

2.2: Whose reality? Constructionism – Media, Audience and Sources

The importance of the news media as a source of information for the general public about different and complex environmental issues is perhaps not the most controversial aspect of the media’s role. A number of different researchers have asserted exactly that particular point (Boykoff, 2009; Ryghaug, 2006; Nelkin, 1995; Allan et al., 2000; Wikins, 1987). What is more complicated, however, is the degree to which this transmission of information from the media to the general public is happening freely and unconstrained. Hansen (1991) denoted that there is a root problem of looking at the process of communication through a perspective of a simply linear diffusion of information where recipients passively consume information coming from the media. On the contrary, this process should be recognized for the inherently interactive nature of meaning construction that is apparent among different institutions in society (Hansen, 1991: 447).

Indeed, such interactivity is one of the defining principles behind a more *constructionist* view of the relationship between media, sources, and the wider general public. Arguably, the media does not just present a comprehensive and purely objective depiction of environmental events and other phenomena; neither do they simply transmit information from one site to the other. Instead, there is an ongoing negotiation between scientists, policy actors, interest groups, and the wider public. In this context, the media will to some extent mediate these negotiations, but also contribute in their own

right to the construction of meaning over the very same issues, especially through framing (Allan, 2002).

Journalists writing in the general news media might draw some of their ideas and language from other sources like specialist journals, but at the same time they contribute with their own interpretations and catchphrases influenced by a popular culture that they very much share with their general audience (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Contrary to the traditional diffusion model, there might even be some doubts in terms of the direction of influence between news media and the general public. In his research concerning media coverage of nuclear power in Sweden, Lindahl (1983) has for instance demonstrated how journalists basically responded to their apprehension of the public mood on nuclear power and thus adjusted their coverage accordingly. Related to that, Ryghaug (2006) has indicated how a complex issue like climate change has been popularized and expressed in the media in a way that made it resonate with non-expert readers, i.e. the general society. Indeed, both Schudson (1989) and Gamson (1988) have indicated how certain “cultural givens” of a society, i.e., the audience, facilitate, but also limit the elaboration and coverage of specific issues. Hence, in order to gain eminence in the public sphere, the issue has to be crafted in terms which resonate with widely held cultural concepts of the respective societies (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Furthermore, Nelkin (1995) has termed this interaction between journalists and the general public as “audience assumptions” where the preferences of the latter directly influence the content and style of news production. Specifically about the coverage of oil sands in the Norwegian media, on what terms will the issue have to be crafted to gain eminence amongst the Norwegian public, as mainly an environmental problem or more in line with Norway’s role as an important oil producer?

Notwithstanding this complex relationship between news media and the wider audience, the affiliation between journalists and respective sources is similarly complicated. Different news sources will fight in order to privilege their version of reality over others (Anderson, 1997). Various social - and political actors, like industry, government, business, environmentalists, and scientific groups are all attempting to persuade the public into accepting *their* exclusive version of a technologically related question, in this case the oil sands. Claim-makers will strive to advance their specific frames to reporters, whereas at the same time, the media will most likely also forge their own frames largely because of reasons based on ideology, efficiency or story suitability. Such an interaction between different claim-makers can be described as a subtle “contest over meaning”, where the different claim-makers try to advance their preferred images, views, or arguments to

reporters (Gamson and Wolfsfeld, 1993). What is central to this symbolic contest is: Who gains access to media representation, and what specific themes surface in the media treatment?

In order to analyze the particular techniques that claim-makers use to portray their specific interpretation or understanding of a given issue, scholars usually engage with *discourse analysis* to deconstruct the specific elements of their discourse. Even though some have claimed that such a term as discourse, and its usage by scholars, is almost too broad to be meaningful (Bryman, 2008: 511), I understand it in line with Hajer (2009: 61) as “an ensemble of notions, ideas, concepts, and categorizations through which meaning is ascribed to social and physical phenomena”. These notions, ideas, concepts, and categorizations contribute to the structuring of language and create certain patterns in a discussion among different actors. In this context, and when looking at specific media debates, two concepts elaborated by Hajer are particularly useful. Those are *storylines* and *discourse coalitions*. A storyline is “a generative sort of narrative that allows actors to draw upon various discursive categories to give meaning to specific physical or social phenomena” (Hajer, 1995: 56). Hence, storylines can be working in a reductionist manner by referring to wide and complex debates through the use of simplified narratives, different buzzwords, symbolic topics, and other discursive elements. In an analysis of the Norwegian debate on gas power, Næss (2007: 87) argued that the storylines were a way of actively mobilizing one particular point of view through “reducing the complexity of the issue and to create possibilities to steer clear of any opposition”. *Discourse coalitions* refer to “groups of actors that, in the context of an identifiable set of practices, share the usage of a particular set of storylines over a particular period of time” (Hajer, 1993: 47). Both these concepts are potentially relevant when studying the Norwegian debate on oil sands. Indeed, what discourse coalitions can be identified in the Norwegian and the Canadian media debate? What storylines unite them and keep them together, and are some of the storylines repeated in both countries? How do Statoil create storylines, and to what extent are they able to unite with other actors to create discourse coalitions?

Those who actually succeed through a variety of methods to get their views to dominate the news presentation can be labeled the “primary definers” of that particular issue. Furthermore, it has been claimed that these capabilities are held notably by powerful sources, such as the government (Hall et al., 1978). Nevertheless, Anderson (1997) asserted that this relation is much more complex and that Hall et al. for instance fail to consider instances where the media itself acts as the primary definer of an issue by drawing attention to a certain problem - thus pressuring the government to act. Who the primary definer of an issue is can also vary, and the news media should not just be seen as the

extended mouthpiece of society's most powerful. For instance, in the heavily reported case of the deadly seal-virus outbreak in Northern Europe in the summer of 1988, Greenpeace arguably acted as the main definer of that particular issue (Anderson, 1997). Nevertheless, apart from this struggle over meaning between different stakeholders, the role of the media itself should not be underestimated. Thus, in relation to the oil sands debate it will be interesting to see if we can identify any primary definers and what role media itself has in relation to this in the oil sands debate.

2.3: News practices – Journalists as storytellers

Professional discourse about the news media usually involves terms such as “fourth estate”, “objectivity”, “independence”, “exposing the facts”, or “revealing the truth” (Lester, 2010). Nevertheless, the relationship between news and reality is certainly a complex one, not least because of the intricate relation between journalists, the audience, and sources discussed in the previous section. Following that constructionist viewpoint, news should, according to McNair, (2006: 6) be thought more of as a “socially constructed account of reality rather than reality itself, composed of literary, verbal and pictorial elements that combine to form a journalistic narrative”. Gaye Tuchman (1978: 1) famously described news as a “window” to the world. However, she stressed that such windows can actually misrepresent the view as the angle and depth of vision will vary depending on where you are standing in the room. Such a constructivist perspective, where journalism refines and simplifies the complexities of the real world based on its own media-specific logic, should be seen as an underlying basis when trying to understand news reporting on environmental issues, also including the oil sands.

One result of this specific logic is that not every issue has the same chance to be selected for media coverage. Indeed, what becomes news depends on a variety of internal news values (Lee; 2009; Bonfadelli, 2010; Bocking, 2010; Lester; 2010; Anderson; 1997; Boykoff; 2009). Lee (2009) has identified a number of such journalistic news values like novelty, conflict, controversy, interest, sensationalism, timeliness, and proximity. Bonfadelli (2010) emphasized different *dimensions*, for example the social dimension with the prominence of a person or an organization, a spatial dimension related to proximity, and an object dimension covering oddity, drama, conflict and so on. Boykoff and Boykoff (2007) also highlighted repeated news values such as personalization, dramatization, and novelty. Additionally, and following the growing commercialization of media, trends like emotionalization, dramatization, scandalizing, and the staging of events have increased in order to attract a larger audience. According to Bonfadelli (2010) such trends can be summarized under the label of *infotainment*. What makes news is obviously a very relevant question.

Undoubtedly there is a fierce competition among events to make the headlines, as the “carrying capacity” of a public arena like the mass media is too restricted to accommodate all events. Attention is also a scarce resource in today’s society and many events are competing for it. Consequently, public attention is unevenly distributed benefitting those events that comply with certain standards that journalists determine to be newsworthy (Lee, 2009).

After the selection of what events to cover is made, depending on a number of such news values, the actual presentation of the story will also follow certain journalistic norms or habits. One of the most important of these norms is the idea of balanced presentation (Nelkin, 1995). Such balancing of stories is usually provided by quoting different spokespersons with competing views. In the case of environmental stories this will usually imply quoting a concerned scientist or a member of an ENGO on one side, balanced with the views of government or a pro-development representative on the other. Critics, however, will argue that by deliberately plotting two very opposing sides against each other in the debate over, for instance, an environmental issue, other perhaps less polarizing views will simply disappear from the debate and thus reduce the complexity of the issue at hand. Boykoff and Boykoff (2004) did actually call the balancing norm “bias” in the US prestige press’ coverage of global warming. This was because critics or downright deniers of global warming and climate change were given equal space in the presentation of the issue (although this group is clearly a minority within the scientific community), all in the name of a balanced presentation. Hence, the balancing can actually be done in a way that fosters important news-values like conflict and polarization. The focus on conflict that for example has been used in the coverage of climate science can be seen in relation to long traditions within journalism when it comes to the emphasis on divergence of interests and contention (Ryghaug, 2006). Similarly, and related to both a specific news-value and the actual presentation of a story, dramatization has been a traditional journalistic norm. In that respect, it is important to acknowledge that journalists and news-practitioners are storytellers (Nelkin, 1995). Furthermore, most journalists work under considerable cost constraints, and newspapers compete in a market for attention where attractive or sellable stories will be awarded (Lester, 2010; Boykoff, 2009). Hence, dramatization becomes an important tool both in deciding what has news-value, but also in terms of the actual presentation of a story. Ryghaug (2006) has in that context shown how news stories concerning climate change usually portray cases of “nature drama”.

Apart from such norms as news-value and balance, the ways in which journalists more implicitly chose to emphasize certain “frames” in the presentation of an issue has also received a lot of

attention among media researchers. Political issues are almost by nature typically very complex, political discourse is likewise more often than not ambiguous, and levels of public knowledge about politics can often be quite low. Thus, several studies have shown that even just minor alterations in the wording and form of survey questions can actually result in quite dramatic variations in opinions (Iyengar, 1994). The concept of *framing* is generally attributed to Goffman (1974), and has become increasingly important in media research, as well as in other academic fields like political science, sociology and communications. Framing refers to “the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audiences” (Reese, 2003: 7). Another definition is “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text” (Entman, 1993: 52). Boykoff (2006) has done an interesting study of how the US mass media covered the Global Justice Movement and their World Bank/IMF protests in Seattle in 1999. There he argued that by specifically emphasizing and framing the concept of dissent and confrontation, the media coverage actually contributed to an escalation where dissidents felt pressed to radicalize their strategies and rhetoric in order to gain media attention. Taking into account these assumptions emphasizing different news values and the journalists as storytellers; to what extent is the oil sands debate portrayed as polarized and dramatized through for example powerful use of imagery?

The media will obviously play a large part in my analysis where two chapters will be devoted specifically to the portrayal of oil sands in both Norway, and Canada. However, in order to analyze some of the dynamics in the oil sands debate, where both countries are involved, I will also investigate some geographical matters that are thought to be important.

2.4: The importance of geography – NIMBYs, NOPEs, PIGs, PIPS, and different scales

In many cases of major industrial developments, or even ideally more desired projects of renewable energy, like the siting of wind-mills, planners have faced the problem of local opposition usually termed with the acronym NIMBY (Not in my backyard) (Robinson, 1999; Dear, 1992). Indeed, such NIMBYism is related to proximity and perceptions of risk. Put simply, “the nearer someone is to a development they perceive as risky, the more likely they are to oppose it” (Robinson, 1999: 344). Most literature about such NIMBY related challenges is characterized by the displaying of different empirical examples where projects either have collapsed, or have been implemented, after trying to gather local support. Nevertheless, the NIMBY theory has also been

criticized for assuming a too simplistic relationship between what can be termed local interests and different development projects (Devine-Wright, 2009). Particularly, the lack of understanding of a wider social context has been criticized in situations where too much emphasis has been put on the opposition against development coming from specific individuals (Bell, Gray and Haggett, 2005). In this study about the oil sands in Canada it will be interesting to see if the NIMBY theory is relevant, or if it is too simplistic here as well.

An alternative theory to NIMBYism is represented by another much used acronym, NOPE (Not on planet earth), which is less connected to location as the protesters' perceptions of risk associated with development do not decline with distance but can be seen as part of the global scale. Thus, while NIMBY groups are specifically concerned about localized development, NOPE groups are more likely to protest contested development "as merely symptomatic of broader concerns" (Robinson, 1999: 345) like developments that are thought to cause global warming, and consequently a possible strategy to oppose oil sands development. Contrary to these, PIMBYism (Please in my backyard), is a term describing advocacy in favour of local development (Van der Loo, 2001). This may also be a possible hypothesis of the way at least Albertans perceive oil sands developments in Canada, as it might give revenues and jobs for those in the backyard. These different theories represent various ways of looking at the oil sands development in Canada. In my analysis I will determine the relevancy of these theories in the media debate in Norway and Canada, and in the interviews with different stakeholders.

Associated with this emphasis on geography and distance to the actual site of development, two different ways of viewing the public, as PIGS (publics in general), or PIPS (publics in particular), might be relevant when scrutinizing local attitudes towards oil sands in Alberta (Michael, 2009). In this case PIPS would be groups that are particularly associated with the oil sands development, while PIGS are not directly involved to the same degree. Moreover, PIGS can be located basically everywhere, while PIPS would be tied down to a specific location. Hence, the publics in general can be understood as an undifferentiated whole. They can, however, participate politically and engage themselves in a number of issues, while the PIPS are to a greater extent committed to a particular substantive issue where they are locally connected, and where they have an identifiable stake (Michael, 2009). In that sense Statoil in Canada can be identified as PIPS because their Leismer facility is located there and they certainly have a direct stake in the outcome of the debate. What other PIPS can be found in the oil sands debate? Do the Aboriginals operate as PIPS, or more generally as PIGS?

Although much globalization theory articulate the diminishing relevance of geography where perhaps Friedman (2005) is the most famous, others still emphasize the continued relevance of distance, in particular different scales. Indeed, various scholars argue that mechanisms of globalization unfold simultaneously upon multiple but intertwined scales (Robertson, 1992; Brenner, 1999). Such geographical scales are referring to “the nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size, such as the local, regional, national and the global” (Delaney and Leitner, 1997: 93). These scales have for a long time been utilized by political geographers and political analysts as a way to organize their analysis or findings. What is relatively new with theories about globalization, however, is the degree to which these scales are interrelated. Something that happens in one place, can affect what happens far away across different scales. In that context it is interesting to see whether arguments both in favour and against the oil sands might vary according to different scales. I would, for example, expect concerns on the global scale to dominate in the Norwegian media debate, while local matters might be more influential in Canada and Alberta.

Keeping in mind the above mentioned theories about how the media operates and the importance of geography in relation to the oil sands debate I can now sum up the research questions that will serve as the basis for the rest of my analysis as follows;

First, how can the Norwegian debate on oil sands be characterized in terms of what competing narratives dominate, what frames prevail in media’s interpretation of the issue, and what voices are being heard in the debate? More specifically, and related to Hajer’s (1995) discursive concepts, what particular storylines and discourse coalitions can be identified on both sides of an expected conflict?

Second, in what sense is the Canadian debate on oil sands different than the Norwegian debate, and what are the general characteristics of this debate in the media? To what degree does the Canadian debate reflect important news values like conflict and dramatization (Bonfadelli, 2010; Ryghaug, 2006), and what are the implications of that for the general audience? Considering that it is in Alberta and Canada that the stakes are highest because it is here this big development is occurring, can we expect the media debate to be even more intense and polarized?

Third, I will analyze the role of geography in the oil sands debate based on interviews with Canadian stakeholders. Theories about particularly NIMBYism imply that I should expect to find considerable local opposition to the oil sands development in Alberta. In that context an analysis of the relationship between industry and the local Aboriginal communities living nearby is highly relevant. Do they operate as PIGS or PIPS, and how can this relationship be characterized?

Furthermore, and related to different geographical scales, do the arguments used either for or against oil sands vary depending on such scales and actual distance to the areas of extraction? Or, do we find evidence that the issue is framed in a global scale where global concerns, for example, related to climate change are highly visible in the public debate? Likewise, and because the resource is so huge and with potential to supply a lot of energy, one could expect energy demand on a global scale to be a dominating argument in the debate as well. Nevertheless, what is less known from a Norwegian standpoint is the national or the local scale in Canada and Alberta, which make those aspects particularly interesting to analyze in terms of identifying the major arguments of both sides of the debate and identifying relevant PiPS and PiGS in the Canadian oils sands debate. Now, however, I will elaborate on the methods chosen to answer these questions before embarking on the empirical analysis in the following chapters.

3: Methodology – Media analysis and semi-structured interviews

In this chapter I will go through the background for the data that I have collected with the purpose of answering my research questions. This thesis is basically written with the use of two types of data, written media content in chapter four, and semi-structured interviews with Canadian stakeholders in chapter five and six. I will also briefly discuss my own role where I have to some extent been engaged with participant observation by spending considerable time with Statoil in Canada.

3.1: Media analysis of the Norwegian debate

In the first part of the empirical analysis, chapter four, I have done a media analysis in order to characterize the Norwegian debate concerning oil sands, and to answer my specific research questions articulated above. I have chosen four different newspapers for the subsequent analysis; *Stavanger Aftenblad*, *Dagsavisen*, *Dagens Næringsliv* and *Aftenposten*.

Stavanger Aftenblad was chosen in order to get a local perspective from the Norwegian city most influenced by the oil and gas industry. Furthermore, this is the newspaper with the most comprehensive coverage of energy-related issues within the Norwegian press. *Dagsavisen* was basically selected on the assumption that their more leftist orientation would make them rather critical of the oil sands. *Dagens Næringsliv* was chosen for the exact opposite reason; that being mainly a business outlet would perhaps influence their perspective, hence giving priorities to other aspects of the oil sands, such as the business opportunities, or questions about energy demand. Ultimately, *Aftenposten* was selected on the grounds of being a more politically moderate Norwegian newspaper with national reach and coverage.

January 2011 was set as a starting point for the analysis on the premise of being the time when actual production was initiated at Leismer, Statoil's oil sands production facility in Northern Alberta. I set an end point on 30th of November the same year to get the analysis quite updated, but also because by that time the number of articles was sufficient for an analysis. More articles would probably not have changed the conclusions of this study as it was by then reaching a saturating point with many of the main elements being repeated. Such saturation usually occurs when no new and relevant data is emerging regarding a category (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Based on two different keywords, the Norwegian translations of "oil sands" and "tar sands", "*oljesand*" and "*tjæresand*" respectively, I used the *Retriever Media Archive* to access the different news stories. The stories were then analyzed according to a number of elements. First, I had to separate whether the piece was a *regular news story* written by a journalist, or whether it was an

opinion piece written by an external contributor. They were analyzed mainly using the same techniques by looking at words being used, storylines, and framing. However, with regards to the mentioned journalistic norm of balance, I did not include the opinion pieces because they were not expected to follow that norm.

Second, I analyzed, in the former case, *who* was quoted on his/her opinions on the oil sands, and in the latter, who was writing the opinion piece. Added together, that data could tell quite a lot about what voices were actually being heard in the Norwegian oil sands discussion.

Third, I decided what *frame* was being emphasized by each news story or opinion piece. As discussed earlier the frames of a news story serve as a central organizing idea of what the story is really about (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Beforehand I expected the dominant frames to be the *environmental frame*, *the energy frame*, and *the business frame*. The expectation of a prominent environmental frame was quite obvious, based on the news articles I had already read before initiating the analysis. The choice of a specific emphasis on an energy frame was based on the sheer size of this resource. Depending on how you evaluate the somewhat uncertain numbers for oil supply coming from Venezuela, the Albertan oil sands actually represent the second or third largest oil reserve in the world (Sweeny, 2010). I also expected at least some emphasis on business or economy aspects particularly as the entrance into the oil sands is a major investment by Norway's by far largest company by stock value. Moreover, recent technological advances have made North America a very profitable market as abundant unconventional resources like oil sands, tight oil, and shale gas have made the whole oil sector gravitate towards these areas, including Statoil.

Fourth, I read the different articles looking for what words, expressions and arguments were being used repeatedly by the persons cited in the case of a regular story, or written, in the opinion pieces. In particular I was interested to see if I could identify some specific *storylines* being constructed, and to see if they were being repeated by various actors, hence forming notable *discourse coalitions* (Hajer, 1995). These discursive concepts can be very useful in order to deconstruct the mediatized debate concerning the oil sands, and to identify the elements that characterize the discussion. To illustrate the discourses and specifically the relevance of certain storylines, I created visual word clouds. These are composed of citations from regular newspapers. There are two different word clouds, one for those opposed to the oil sands, and one for those in favour. For example, in the case of the former, I added together all citations coming from people that were critical of the oil sands, and used the application called *Wordle* to design the word clouds. There, the bigger the word, the more frequently it appeared in the different citations.

3.2: Semi-structured interviews of Canadian stakeholders

Using the Norwegian media analysis as a starting point, the remaining sections of my thesis will, however, look more specifically at the Canadian context for the extraction of oil sands. The method of choice has been semi-structured interviews with a variety of stakeholders that are directly or indirectly connected to the industry, in opposition or in favour. A total of 36 interviews were conducted with a balanced set of stakeholders coming from industry, politics, environmental organizations, media, academics, and a couple of representatives of the Aboriginal population.

Table 1: Origin of informants

ENGO	10
Industry	8
Media	7
Politics	6
Academia	3
Aboriginal	2
Total	36

The vast majority of the interviews were conducted personally, while some interviews were done over the telephone because of geographical distance. Overall, the interviewees were very welcoming, and I was able to speak to most of the people that I had identified beforehand as very relevant for my research. Interviews ranged from about 30 minutes to an hour, with the phone interviews being the shortest. In line with common traditions of qualitative research I used a rather basic semi-structured interview guide that allowed for flexibility during the interviews (see appendix for an example). I also sent the interview guides by e-mail beforehand to the interviewees in order to prepare them, and to give them some indications of what the conversation would look like. Many of the questions included in the different guides were the same for my informants, for example asking them to elaborate on the “main concerns with current oil sands development”, or “ give the main reasons why this resource should not be just left in the ground like some critics advocate”. Almost everybody was also asked to give some thoughts about the relationship between news media and the oil sands, where they commented on specific events, how the resource is presented, or the significance of the media in this discussion. All of them were also made aware of the fact that what they were saying was “on the record” and could be quoted. In the interviews conducted in person, they were also asked about giving consent for the use of a tape-recorder. Nobody had any objections, although some asked for a citation check.

Interviewing such stakeholders who can be sources and producers of news is a common investigative technique (Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). Indeed, the most important advantage of interviewing as a method is its ability to range over multiple perspectives on a given topic. Several interviews can help to increase information and broaden a point of view. Furthermore, the interviews can be used as heuristic devices as new information can lead to new perspectives and new questions for later informants (Newcomb, 1991). By for example asking different informants about who I should talk to next about the oil sands, I was able to identify more and more people to talk too in what can almost be characterized as a “snowballing-effect”. Moreover, I also identified many informants by reading Canadian newspapers about the oil sands and taking notice of who was quoted on the issue. Nevertheless, all of these factors combined lead to the interview’s most important strength; the compiling of more comprehensive information on a given subject (Newcomb, 1991). Whereas the media analysis is valuable insofar as it measures the attention given to particular frames, dominant ideas and discourses, one can argue, however, that combined with more in-depth interviews, the overall comprehension of the issue will increase as it will not just answer specific research questions, but also enhance the contextual understanding of, in this case, the discussion about the Albertan oil sands.

3.3: Some ethical considerations and limitations of my study

I have done my thesis work in a very independent manner where I have not, for example, received much help when it comes to the identification of informants. Nevertheless, I have been staying with Statoil Canada Ltd in Calgary, Alberta, for the period of my analysis. In that way it can be argued that I have to some degree been doing participant observation as well, and accordingly, that I might have been influenced by the opinions held by representatives of Statoil when it comes to questions about the oil sands. Added to that, my own background is from rural Norway, in Finnmark, where resource extraction has been the way of life for generations whether through fishing, or oil and gas as in recent times. Such a background might also influence the assumptions a researcher makes with regards to resource development that has environmental implications. However, and in spite of this, I have strived to make the presentation as balanced as possible. That can for instance be demonstrated in the origin of my informants. They represent a cross-section of interests. Furthermore, I have also deliberately chosen not to interview any representative of Statoil for my research. Hence, industry stakeholders interviewed come from other companies like Total, Imperial Oil, and Suncor. I have conducted interviews mainly in three locations; Calgary, Edmonton

and Fort McMurray. I have also visited two different oil sands sites; Suncor's Millennium mine north of Fort McMurray and Statoil's own SAGD operation, Leismer, further south.

There are obviously limitations to my data material. Although I am very satisfied with the number of informants I have been able to talk too in order to enlighten my research questions, different researchers might get different results, hence affecting the *external reliability* of this study. Unlike more quantitatively-oriented research, it is impossible to "freeze" a social setting. Circumstances might change rapidly, and so will the research on the given subject. Furthermore, whether my methods are the best ones to illuminate my questions can also be discussed. Such considerations about *validity* address whether you actually are observing or identifying what you say you are doing with the methods you have chosen (Bryman, 2008). In that respect, I would have liked to have had access to a similar Canadian service like the *Retriever Media Archive* to be able to compare the media debate in the two countries more directly. Nevertheless, it should also be taken into consideration that such a direct comparison would have been very difficult because the issue itself is several times more pronounced in the Canadian setting. The number of articles produced by Canadian media about the oil sands during a given time would be many times more than in Norway. Another possible option to gauge opinions about the oil sands in different locations, like Norway and Alberta, would be through a large quantitative survey. However, that is a very costly and time-consuming method that unfortunately was out of reach for this study. In the end, I am satisfied with the number of articles I got for the first part of my analysis, and the number, and quality, of informants that I was able to interview for the latter parts.

4: The Presentation of the Oil Sands in Norwegian media

The Albertan oil sands have definitely received its share of criticism, both internationally and in Norway, in recent years. As mentioned earlier, Paul Chastko (2010) pinpointed the gathering of a movement against this industry following a series of well publicized events, including the tragedy of the “Syncrude ducks”, combined with a considerable increase in production levels. All that happened in the years after 2005. Moreover, I would claim that it is impossible to understand the heavy criticism of oil sands production without taking into account the current context of increased environmental awareness on the global level. This relates particularly to the issue of climate change where the oil sands increasingly have become an accessible and contested symbol to rally against (Stanway, personal interview, 2012).

The way the oil sands are presented in the Norwegian media certainly gives the impression that Statoil is participating in a controversial project. Although Statoil has a huge international portfolio, which includes operations in more than thirty countries worldwide, the oil sands project in Canada has alone created substantial debate and news attention in Norway. Much of the public media attention has focused on the oil sands as the epitome of “dirty oil” meaning those heavier grades of crude that require substantial upgrading and refining before it can be converted into a barrel of usable oil.

This media analysis will characterize the portrayal of the Canadian oil sands, and Statoil’s involvement in it, from the perspective of the Norwegian written media. It will consider several aspect of their coverage, such as what voices are heard in the debate, i.e. whose opinions are presented, what frames or angles are emphasized, and it will also look at some discursive elements that are present amongst the participants of this mediatized debate, particularly Hajer’s (1995) *storylines* and *discourse coalitions*. The voices being heard in a public debate is an important element in any discursive analysis (Van Dijk, 1988). Based on the oil-dependency in Norway, I would expect at least some voices to express support for Statoil’s oil sands development. There are also different ways to understand and evaluate the subject of oil sands. One, it can be understood as an environmental issue where the focus will be the environmental implications of large-scale oil sands extraction. Second, the oil sands can also be considered as a major source of energy in a world where energy demand is rising faster than the discovery of new supply (IEA, 2010). Third, the oil sands also represent a significant business venture as it is the largest source of investible oil in the

world (Sweeny, 2010).⁶ Similarly, and within such a business frame, I could also expect a number of articles covering the oil sands based on Statoil's growing stature as a multinational energy company investing more and more in locations outside their main areas in the North Sea. Hence, I expect to see news stories that emphasize an environmental, energy, or business-frame.

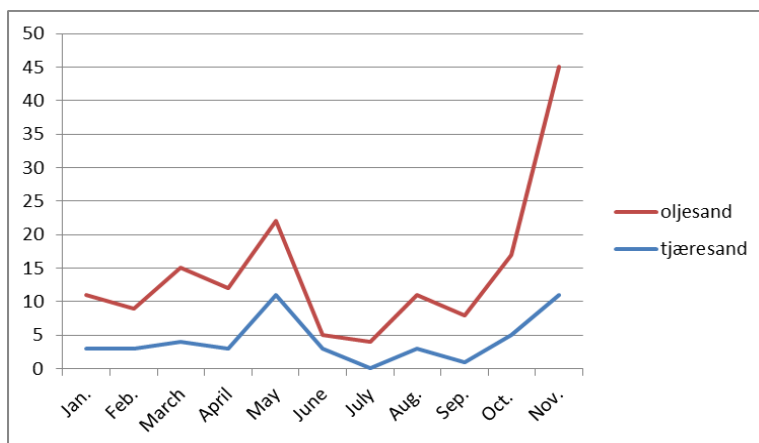
But first I will look at the total number of news items analyzed, and how they were distributed during the period of analysis.

4.1: The formation of an enviro-political discourse-coalition against the oil sands

When I used the Norwegian translation of tar sands, "tjæresand", that produced 47 different items from the period chosen. The Norwegian term for oil sands, "oljesand", had the higher frequency of items with a total of 112 pieces divided between the four selected newspapers. Hence, a total of 159 items from the Norwegian coverage of the oil sands were analyzed.

Looking at the distribution of news items produced during the 11-month period, a certain convergence can be observed no matter what search word is being used. Figure 1 shows how the number of articles is spread out over the period of analysis.

Figure 1: Distribution of news items by month



As we can see there has been at least some level of media attention for the oil sands all through the period of analysis, albeit with a low point occurring during mid-summer. Nevertheless, there can be observed a couple of marked peaks in the months May and November. This concentration during

⁶ The two bigger oil reserves in the world, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, are dominated by state-owned actors, hence making investment possibilities for other actors more limited.

those two months can be explained by a couple of significant incidents that created considerable media attention. Those are Statoil's annual general assembly in May, and Oil and Energy-minister Ola Borten Moe's visit to Statoil's oil sands facility in November.

These two events, but also the attention amassed during the rest of the year, highlighted four different storylines critical of the oil sands that reduced the narratives and concentrated the criticism around certain points. These are;

- *Statoil has to pull out of the oil sands because this is a particularly dirty source of oil that threatens the **global climate**.*
- *The extraction of oil sands comes at the expense of **Aboriginal rights**.*
- *We should not do oil sands, we should do **renewables**.*
- *Statoil's participation in the oil sands is damaging for **the reputation of Norway**.*

The Statoil general assembly in May did bring about quite a few items in the newspapers, as the question of whether or not to pull the company out of the oil sands has been put forward every year at the general assembly since they entered this industry through the acquisition of the NAOSC back in 2007. Accordingly, the newspapers have printed an increased amount of articles, and different critics have also contributed with opinion pieces and comments around the time of the general assembly. Truls Gulowsen, from Greenpeace Norway, did for instance write a comment published in *Stavanger Aftenblad* on May 18th 2011, the day before the general assembly;

For the board of Statoil, the tar sands are necessary. That is a very bleak vision of the future on their behalf because we know that the world has found enough unconventional oil- and gas to make climate changes irreversible if we use everything. We have to leave something. Then it is reasonable to leave the tar sands in the ground. The tar sands industry impairs local water - and forest resources, threatens wildlife and deprives the aboriginal people of their constitutional rights to safeguard their traditional way of living.⁷

⁷ "The Future According to Statoil": Comment in: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 18. May 2011.

Similarly, leader of the Christian Democratic Party (KRF), Knut Arild Hareide, and his environmental spokeswoman, Line Henriette Hjemdal, followed up with an opinion piece demanding that Statoil pulls out of the oil sands;

*Why is it right to develop oil resources that have 10 times higher emissions of CO₂ than regular North Sea crude? The oil production is not sustainable. It is being done at the expense of the constitutional rights of aboriginal people in Canada and the opportunities of future generations. KRF has taken a clear position: Statoil must leave the oil sands.*⁸

In the end, however, and as in earlier years, Statoil's project in Alberta was not terminated by the general assembly. That was a decision lamented by Bente Bakke, a former member of parliament for the Conservative Party (H);

*Statoil's tar sands project in Canada represents the world's most dirty form of oil production. Statoil invested in this without consulting its owners. Nevertheless, the government has not used its ownership status to pull Statoil out of this project that demands massive amounts of energy, results in enormous CO₂ emissions, expels the Aboriginal population, destroys the forests, and poisons the water reserves.*⁹

The other important event leading to considerable media attention was Oil and Energy Minister Ola Borten Moe's visit to Statoil's oil sands facilities in November 2011. More correctly, it was not so much the visit itself as it was the statements made by Borten Moe to the Canadian newspaper *Globe and Mail* that really generated extensive Norwegian media attention. Knowing that this was a controversial subject back in Norway, he still came out quite positive when being asked about his opinions regarding the oil sands. He commented; "it is impossible to not see a future where these resources will play an increasing role in the world's need for energy and security of supply".¹⁰ Furthermore, he even defended Canada's position in trying to work against an EU proposed fuel directive thought to discriminate against this particular resource based on the high levels of

⁸ "Why is it right?": Comment in: *Dagsavisen*. 16. May 2011.

⁹ "Stoltenberg as Pontius Pilatus": Comment In: *Aftenposten*. 26. May 2011.

¹⁰ "Norway's Energy Minister voices support for Alberta Oil Sands". *The Globe and Mail*. 1. November 2011.

emissions involved in its production.¹¹ These comments sparked considerable controversy in Norway almost immediately, especially among politicians.

Erling Sande, a member of parliament, and the environmental spokesman for the Centre Party (SP), Borten Moe's own party, promptly criticized the minister for his statements; "There is no support in the party program for Borten Moe's statements. On the contrary, we clearly emphasize renewable energy as the energy of the future."¹² In a similar fashion, government colleague, and Minister of the Environment, Erik Solheim, also rejected the claims made by Borten Moe; "I take note of Borten Moe's personal view. I do not agree with him. The Government has yet to make a statement in this case".¹³ The Liberal Party (V) leader Trine Schei Grande expressed confusion and challenged the Government to explain their position on the oil sands;

*We have to clarify what really is Norway's relationship to the EU climate policy and what the Government's view really is. We have to team up with the EU if we are to accomplish the climate targets, and in such a perspective Minister Borten Moe is moving backwards into the future.*¹⁴

Apart from those two major events, the general assembly and Minister Moe's visit to Canada, there was, however, a steady stream of news stories and opinion pieces mostly critical of the oil sands in general, and Statoil's participation in particular, all through the period of analysis. What all these critical statements have in common, however, is the use of one or more of the above mentioned storylines, the discursive concept developed by Hajer (1995). The most important of those is related to concerns for the climate, more specifically; "*Statoil has to pull out of the oil sands because this is a particularly dirty source of oil that threatens global climate*". This storyline can be seen in the opinions expressed above by Greenpeace, the former parliamentarian for the Conservative Party (H), Bente Bakke, the two Christian Democratic (KRF) - politicians, and many more. Indeed, the examples are numerous. Youth candidate for the Liberal Party (V), Kjartan Aleksander Lunde, did

¹¹ "Norwegian Minister Reveals Rift over Oil Sands". *The Globe and Mail Online*. 3. November 2011. Available at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/norwegian-ministers-reveal-rift-over-oil-sands/article2224642/>. Accessed: 8. December 2011.

¹² "To the knees in oil sands". In *Dagsavisen*. 5. November 2011.

¹³ "Thinks the world needs more oil sands". In *Dagens Næringsliv*. 4. November 2011.

¹⁴ "Asking the Government to clarify on the EU and oil sands". In *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 8. November 2011.

for example use exactly the same storyline in his argument against the oil sands; “the oil sands are the world’s most dirty form of oil extraction. It brings with it destruction for the climate”.¹⁵

Furthermore, not only Greenpeace, but other ENGOs were using the same storyline. The Secretary General of WWF Norway, Rasmus Hansson, emphasized that “the tar sands are playing in a league of their own because of enormous negative climate and environmental consequences”.¹⁶ Inga Marie Thorkildsen, a parliamentarian from the Socialist Left Party (SV), rhetorically summed up this particular storyline with the question “can we stand that Norway’s leading oil company is betting that the climate policy will fail?”¹⁷ These examples demonstrate the centrality of the storyline connecting the oil sands to the broader environmental concern of climate change.

Another central storyline is already mentioned in the above statements by Bakke, the politicians from the Christian Democratic Party (KRF), and Greenpeace, namely that “*the extraction of oil sands comes at the expense of Aboriginal rights.*” When being interviewed about her opposition to the oil sands, Johanne Sæten from the Grandparents’ Climate Action asserted that “Statoil is destroying the environment and the livelihood of the Aboriginal population”.¹⁸ Nevertheless, what is interesting about this particular storyline is that it is not very much elaborated, nor really discussed in the Norwegian media. It is just added on to a list of grievances directed towards Statoil without much further scrutiny. Whereas, for instance the storyline about climate concerns is usually backed up at least with data on emissions or claims by certain scientists, the Aboriginal-concern storyline is more often than not just mentioned. Indeed, throughout the period of analysis just one article had a particular focus on the Aboriginal issue.¹⁹

A third important storyline is “*we should not do oil sands, we should do renewables*”. This apparent dichotomy between oil sands and renewable energy is repeated with great regularity in the Norwegian discussion. This was emphasized by the environmental spokesman for the Centre Party (SP), Erling Sande, who was quoted above saying that an emphasis on renewables was the official

¹⁵ “Statoil must get out of the oil sands project”. Comment in: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 26 August 2011.

¹⁶ “Norwegian resistance is working”. Comment in: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 4 January 2011.

¹⁷ “Oil sands is a wrong investment” In: *Dagsavisen*. 11. October 2011.

¹⁸ “Greyhaired resistance against Statoil’s oil sands”. In *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 5. April 2011.

¹⁹ See: “The beaver escaped from the oil sands”. In *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 1. April 2011.

policy of his and Borten Moe's party. Vågard Erdahl Nyaas from the ENGO Nature and Youth also elaborated on this;

*The future has to be based on the renewable solutions. We cannot continue to search for more oil, coal and gas without it having widespread consequences. If Statoil is to appear as socially responsible, it is not enough to spend money on big advertisement campaigns. The transition from fossil fuels to renewables has to start today.*²⁰

Likewise, the environmental spokesman for the Socialist Left Party (SV), Snorre Valen, also gave priority to renewables over fossil fuels. Commenting specifically on Statoil's acquisition of the shale gas company Brigham in October 2011, Valen stated; "this is money that could have been spent contributing to a solution to the world's renewable energy needs, instead we are worsening the process"²¹ Climate advisor at WWF Norway, Ragnhild Waagard, underlined that buying up more and more of such fossil energy resources like oil sands, and at the same time selling off a windpower facility in onshore Norway, is the wrong priority. She claimed that this illustrates clearly how Statoil lacks the motivation to invest in the "green energies of the future".²²

A fourth and quite influential storyline that is very much present in the Norwegian debate is the notion that "*Statoil's participation in the oil sands is damaging for the reputation of Norway*". This is related to the claim that their involvement in the Albertan oil sands is supposed to damage both the reputation of Statoil as a company, as well as the reputation of Norway as a country devoted to effective climate policy. Specifically about the reputation of Statoil, Truls Gulowsen from Greenpeace commented; "People think it is nice to see the Statoil flag waiving in the wind on top of a well-run North Sea platform, but I don't think they will feel the same way about seeing the flag by a tar sands facility".²³ Member of Parliament, Snorre Valen, did remark that "Norway's climate reputation is at stake" if they continue to invest in oil production with very high emissions.²⁴ Head of

²⁰ "What happens in Norway doesn't stay in Norway". Comment in: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 30. June 2011.

²¹ "Wants to split Statoil for the climate". In: *Dagsavisen*. 19. October 2011.

²² Ibid.

²³ "A dark day for the environment". Comment in: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 28. January 2011.

²⁴ "Wants to split Statoil for the climate". in: *Dagsavisen*. 19. October 2011.

the ENGO Bellona, and special advisor to EU Climate Commissioner Günter Oettinger, Fredric Hauge, repeated the same fear when claiming that the pro-oil sands comments made by Minister Ola Borten Moe did indeed damage Norway's reputation in the international climate work.²⁵ In a similar fashion, Helge Solum Larsen from the Liberal Party (V) commented;

*These cases are about the reputation of Norway abroad. Now we are closing in on a limit to what we can accept. We cannot live with double standards where we are bragging about formal guidelines and our good environmental policy while a state-owned company is being accused of environmental crime abroad.*²⁶

To summarize, I have identified four different storylines that are critical of Statoil's oil sands operations in Alberta. Those are related to concerns about the climate, which is the most important one, the constitutional rights of the aboriginal people living nearby the facility, that renewables should be the priority, not fossil resources like the oil sands, and ultimately that our involvement in this industry is detrimental to the environmental reputation of Norway.

Figure 2 illustrates the discourse used by the opposition to the oil sands visually. The word cloud generates larger words the more frequently they are used. "Emissions" is the word that appears biggest because the critics of Statoil's oil sands operations almost always point to the higher emissions associated with production. Words like "climate", "climate change", and "global warming" are also particularly big, hence demonstrating the relevance of the storyline underlining the implications for the climate connected to oil sands extraction. That is further reinforced by the appearance of "dirty oil" in the word cloud. The fact that the expression "dirty oil" is used also in the Norwegian context is actually quite interesting insofar as the term is much used among Canadian critics of this industry. I will get back to that term, but for now it serves an observation of how a term that originated in Canada was quickly picked up amongst Norwegian critics.

"Aboriginals" or "Aboriginal rights", "renewables" and "reputation" are also prominent and point to the relevance of the other three storylines. The fact that the surnames of the Oil and Energy

²⁵ "Asking the Government to clarify on the EU and the oil sands". in: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 8. November 2011.

²⁶ "Demanding an oil cleanup". in: *Dagsavisen*. 12. February 2011.

When observing these different storylines, and their proponents, it can be argued that there is a strong discourse coalition at work in the oil sands debate. I propose to call this the *enviro-political discourse coalition* which operates in opposition to the oil sands and Statoil's participation in it. In the above paragraphs it has been clearly demonstrated that members of the environmental NGOs like Greenpeace, Bellona, and the WWF align themselves with representatives of political parties like the Christian Democrats (KRF), the Socialist Left Party (SV), and the Liberal Party (V) with the use of the same storylines in their discourse against the oil sands. Nevertheless, considering the broad opposition to oil sands that manifests itself through the Norwegian media, it could even be claimed that such an enviro-political coalition is actually too narrow because other groups are also using the same storylines. One example is representatives of academia, in particular professors like Sigbjørn Grønås and Gunnar Kvåle, who used the storyline connecting Statoil's activities to world climate crisis;

*The important emission cuts that are necessary to stabilize climate change demand that we leave most of our fossil fuel reserves in the ground; the use of coal needs to be phased out while unconventional resources like the oil sands must be prohibited.*²⁷

Furthermore, different journalists have directly criticized the oil sands in their editorials with titles like "Written in oil sands" or "Borten Moe – The Problem".²⁸ Opposition can even be found in the cultural sector with musicians like Maja Ratkje rejecting the Statoil music scholarship because of "Statoil's participation in the world's most dirty form of oil extraction that is destroying the international environmental reputation of Norway".²⁹

Nonetheless, even if these examples show that the same storylines are being used by a wide range of different actors, the most important discourse coalition arguing against the oil sands is still the one consisting of members of the environmental movement and representatives of the various political parties. The number of quotations in regular newspapers and the amount of opinion pieces authored by those two groups clearly indicate the dominance of such a coalition in the Norwegian media discourse about oil sands.

²⁷ "A scientific climate assessment". Comment in: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 15. July 2011.

²⁸ See: "Written in oil sands". Editorial in: *Dagsavisen*. 12. November 2011. Or: "Borten Moe – The Problem". Editorial in: *Dagsavisen*. 7. November 2011.

²⁹ "Dirty money". Comment in: *Aftenposten*. 19. February 2011.

Having seen the different storylines being used by most notably the enviro-political discourse coalition, now is the time to take a closer look at the discourse of Statoil when trying to counter this critique. What are the alternative storylines present in this mediatized debate? And does somebody support their view?

4.2: Responding to the critics - Technological innovation and energy demand

Generally speaking, there are not many articles that can be termed “pro-oil sands”. However, the following storylines used by those defending the industry are mostly constructed with the help of citations found in regular news stories. In accordance to the balancing norm mentioned in the theoretical chapter, journalists usually try to get the comments of someone from Statoil as well when they write a story about the oil sands. Moreover, there are a few opinion pieces written by either Statoil employees, or others taking a more supportive stance towards this specific industry. Consequently, it was possible to identify two particular storylines through the discourse of Statoil, and the group of very few supporters. Those are;

- *Technology will mitigate much of the environmental impacts related to production*
- *The oil sands are necessary because of increasing **global energy demand***

The controversy originating with Minister Ola Borten Moe’s visit to Canada was sparked by comments like “They seem to improve their results, in both efficiency and emissions, quite fast.”³⁰ Hence, Borten Moe was referring to technological innovation as a way to mitigate the emissions-problem. Indeed, Bård Glad Pedersen, the media spokesman for international operations from Statoil, responded to criticism coming from Greenpeace by referring to exactly such technological solutions; “We have developed a technological program that will reduce CO₂ emissions with 40 percent within 2025”.³¹

³⁰ “Norway’s energy minister sees progress in oil sands”. In *Reuters web*. Available at: <http://af.reuters.com/article/energyOilNews/idAFN1E7A22E420111103?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>. Accessed: 13. March 2012.

³¹ “A dark day for the environment”. In: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 28. January 2011.

Furthermore, Chief Executive of Statoil, Helge Lund, also referred to technology in general, and that specific technology program in particular, when asked by a journalist about what makes Statoil different than other oil companies;

*We have a targeted technology program that will enable us to become more energy efficient and will result in less CO₂ emissions and better use of our reservoirs. Thus, we will also become more profitable. There is a great connection between work on environmental initiatives, climate and profitability.*³²

Bill Maloney, the head of Statoil's North American operations, also summoned to this particular argument when emphasizing that Statoil would respond to the critique from politicians and environmental organizations with the technology plan that would both "increase production and lower emissions".³³ The repetition of the argument that technological innovation will contribute towards a mitigation of challenges associated with emissions and climate change makes it possible to identify that as the first storyline among those who are supportive of the industry.

The second important storyline refers to the rising energy demand as a result of population growth and rapid industrialization in developing countries. Karl Johnny Hersvik, Statoil's Director of Research, emphasized exactly energy demand when arguing for a sustained development of fossil resources. In an opinion piece published in *Dagens Næringsliv* he stated that because of population growth and poverty reduction, the global demand for energy will rise considerably. That makes it necessary to commercialize the recovery of unconventional energy resources like heavy oil, shale gas, and oil sands.³⁴ Moreover, both Erik Wærness, head of Energy Market Analytics at Statoil, and Fatih Birol, from the International Energy Agency, both acknowledged that in spite of the usefulness of renewable energy, in order to cover growing demand, energy coming from unconventional sources would still be needed in the future.³⁵

³² "Increased support for Statoil in oil sands". In: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 20. May 2011.

³³ "Profitable environmental villains". In: *Dagens Næringsliv*. 14. January 2011.

³⁴ "Competence is fresh goods". In *Dagens Næringsliv*. 2. March 2011.

³⁵ See: "The World needs unconventional energy". Comment in *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 16. November 2011 and "The Energy bureau is pricing Statoil's oil sands". In: *Aftenposten*. 10. November 2011.

Per Otto Dyb, the Managing Director of Siemens Norway, was one of a very few actors outside of Statoil who actually spoke about the continued necessity of fossil fuels, and thus also tried to counter the mentioned renewable energy-storyline by the opposition;

*The world needs oil. Not only today, but in the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, it is neither politically correct nor especially “hot” to take the discussion about how we can extend the oil age. Most people spend the time looking at the distant horizon and dream of a world driven by renewable energy sources.*³⁶

Although it is possible to identify these two storylines coming from Statoil’s discourse that are trying to respond to criticism and the storylines coming from the already identified enviro-political discourse coalition, it is difficult to advocate for the existence of an actual discourse coalition in the Norwegian media debate. For that to have been the case it would have been necessary with more direct discursive support for the oil sands coming from different groups like politicians, media or organizations. However, there are a couple of exceptions. These are the opinion piece already referred to by Per Otto Dyb from Siemens Norway, two opinion pieces written by Professor Øystein Noreng from the Norwegian Business School (BI), and the (by now very familiar) statements made by Minister of Oil and Energy, Ola Borten Moe. Statoil was, however, with these very few exceptions, generally on their own in their defence of this resource in the Norwegian media debate. Even if the government is the majority shareholder, their different members were more often than not silent, with the obvious exception of Minister Borten Moe.

Figure 3 summarizes the discourse by the Statoil representatives commenting in the media and those very few expressing more neutral to positive statements about the oil sands. The prominence of “technology”, “technology plan”, and “mitigate” confirm the first storyline, while “energy demand” establishes the second. Interestingly, “facts” also appear quite clearly. This is most likely because of some frustration from the part of Statoil with being associated with environmental problems connected to mining, instead of SAGD. Similarly, “responsible” is quite visible, pointing to Statoil’s attempt to reassure the critics that this development can be done in a responsible way. When it comes to the choice of words, there is also an interesting dynamic going on as the divide between “tar sands” and “oil sands”, a divide very common in Canada, is also visible in the Norwegian context.

³⁶ “Before the last oil”. Comment in: *Dagens Næringsliv*. 31. August 2011.

Figure 3: The Discourse of Statoil and others who have reflected neutral or positive opinions about oil sands



4.3: The oil sands/tar sands divide translated to the Norwegian context

As an illustration of how polarized the discussion about the oil sands is, in many cases the opposing stakeholders cannot even agree on what to call it. Indeed, one interesting finding from the analysis of the Norwegian media discussion is exactly that this politicized debate over the choice of words, the oil sands/tar sands-divide, is actually extended to the Norwegian context. One particular example is a panel debate in the Norwegian current affairs show *Aktuelt* on October 25th 2011 where the participants were choosing the words adjusted to their general position in the debate. On the one side, Inga Marie Thorkildsen from the Socialist Left Party (SV), and a representative of the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), consistently referred to the resource as the Norwegian equivalent of “tar sands”, while on the other side of the table, a representative from Statoil and Kjetil Solvik Olsen from the Progress Party (FRP), both referred to it just as constantly as “oil sands” (*Aktuelt*, NRK, 2011).

That particular divide in the choice of words is a direct reflection of a rather polarized discussion in Canada as well. The Calgary based industry-critic, Andrew Nikiforuk, named his book *Tar Sands – Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent*, where he argued that by extracting what he calls the world’s ugliest and most destructive hydrocarbon we are polluting the air, poisoning our water, destroying the boreal forest and even undermining democracy itself (Nikiforuk, 2010). Similarly, the American based organization, Environmental Defence, used the title *Canada’s Toxic Tar Sands – The Most Destructive Project on Earth*, where the argument basically runs along similar lines (Environmental Defence, 2008).

On the other side of the discussion the industry has for a long time preferred the term “oil sands” to describe this vast fossil energy resource hidden under Albertan soil. Gordon Kelly, the president of Integrated Planners Inc., a Calgary firm specializing in corporate intelligence and international marketing, wrote in his book *The Oil Sands – Canada’s Path to Clean Energy* that as Canada develops this resource in the cleanest possible manner it should also use much of the revenues to invest in research of “clean” fuels for the future (Kelly, 2009). By the same token, Alistair Sweeny called his book *Black Bonanza – Alberta’s Oil Sands and the Race to Secure North America’s Energy Future* where the importance of energy supply triumphs other aspects of this industry (Sweeny, 2010). Similarly, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP), as well as Statoil for that matter, both consistently use the term “oil sands” in their descriptions of the resource.

Back to the Norwegian debate, this divide in the choice of words manifests itself in a couple of very interesting ways. Firstly, when looking at the frequency of items by newspaper, the results actually change depending on whether you use the “tjæresand” or the “oljesand” search term.

Table 2: Newspapers and “oljesand”

Newspaper	Frequency
Stavanger Aftenblad	41
Dagens Næringsliv	36
Dagsavisen	29
Aftenposten	6
Total	112

Table 3: Newspapers and “tjæresand”

Newspaper	Frequency
Dagsavisen	27
Stavanger Aftenblad	11
Aftenposten	5
Dagens Næringsliv	4
Total	47

The newspaper beforehand expected to be most critical of the oil industry, *Dagsavisen*, is also the paper with the highest frequency of items by far when using the Norwegian translation of tar sands. Conversely, the newspaper anticipated to have the most favorable position on oil sands, the business daily *Dagens Næringsliv*, was the newspaper with the lowest count using that search term. When changing the search term into the Norwegian equivalent of oil sands, *Dagsavisen* makes a drop on the list and the number of items found in *Dagens Næringsliv* increase significantly. *Stavanger Aftenblad*, the Norwegian newspaper writing most about energy issues, tops the level of frequency when using the “oljesand” search term.

Another indicator of the relevance of the tar sands/oil sands divide in the Norwegian context is the relationship between the number of comment pieces and regular news stories, and how that relationship alters depending on what search term is being used. Remembering that “tjæresand” generated a total of 47 pieces, an interesting observation is that a majority of those are different opinion pieces rather than regular news-stories written by in-house journalists. In total 27 opinion pieces were written by a number of different authors under this search term, including Greenpeace, WWF, Friends of the Earth, and the Future in Our Hands. That may indicate that people with strong opinions who are opposed against this industry actually prefer to use “tjæresand” over “oljesand”, also in the Norwegian context. When the latter term is being used, the ratio between those two changes completely with regular news-stories outnumbering opinion pieces with 77 to 35.

Truls Gulowsen from Greenpeace did, for example, use the term preferred by critics of the industry. In this example he used that combined with the already mentioned storyline involving the

aboriginal population; “As a result of the tar sands projects the local Aboriginal population will not have the chance to exercise their constitutionally given rights to live in a traditional way”.³⁷ Likewise, Bente Bakke, the former parliamentarian from the Conservative Party (H) also used the same term when arguing that “Statoil is involved in Canadian tar sands – the dirtiest form of oil extraction in the world”.³⁸

Statoil obviously refer to it as “oljesand” when arguing through the use of the storyline concerning the demand for this resource; “The oil sands will have an increased role in the world’s energy mix, and there are very few signals that indicate that the demand for oil will drop”.³⁹

Consequently, the choice of words when referring to the vast reserves found in the Albertan soil has now, as shown above, become very polarized and may thus de facto position the various participants in the debate accordingly; either they are critical of it and use “tar sands”, or they are supportive of it, and use “oil sands”. Nevertheless, the divide is not as complete as it apparently seems. There are some complicating factors, meaning that the choice of words does not necessarily mean that you have taken a definitive stance in the debate. This can be observed on both sides of the Atlantic. The Alberta based Pembina Institute consistently used “oil sands” in their publications even though their researchers are indeed highly critical of current industry development. The Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) also referred to the resource as “oil sands”, in spite of being critical towards the industry, and specifically the danger it poses to local wildlife. In the Norwegian context, head of Greenpeace, Martin Norman, actually called it “oljesand” when claiming that it can never be sustainable.⁴⁰ Similarly, Johannes Bangum from the Liberal Youth Party (V) also expressed that “the extraction of *oil sands* implicates enormous amounts of GHG emissions”.⁴¹

However, there are no examples of “tar sands” or “tjæresand” being used on neutral terms nowadays, meaning that when this term is used you are taking a stance and actively opposing the industry. With “oil sands” or “oljesand” there is at least some ambiguity; you can support, remain

³⁷ “The half-truths of Statoil”. Comment in: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 25. March 2011.

³⁸ “The Environmental swine-price”. Comment in: *Dagsavisen*. 31. October 2011.

³⁹ “The EU wants to blacklist imports of oil sands”. In: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 7. April 2011.

⁴⁰ “Oil sands up for debate”. In: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 19. May 2011.

⁴¹ “Norway’s environmental enemy”. Comment in: *Aftenposten*. 3. March 2011.

neutral or oppose the industry and still use that term. Fort McMurray local politician for the Liberals, and member of the stakeholder organization CEMA, Kyle Harrietha, pointed to the term being used in almost every scientific and peer reviewed academic publication when being asked about what he preferred. That was “oil sands” (Harrietha, personal interview, 2011). Nonetheless, perhaps the most correct and even more precise term would be “bituminous sands”. After analyzing storylines, different discourse coalitions, and specific choices of words that all appear amongst those discussing the oil sands, now it is time to look more generally at some of the characteristics of this debate.

4.4: The oil sands in Norway - an environmental issue

The identification of storylines and discourse coalitions are methods looking at the rhetoric and discourse originating from the sources of journalists writing for the news media. Hence, what does, for instance, Greenpeace say in an article in *Aftenposten*, or how does Statoil respond? However, journalists themselves also use some way of organizing and making sense of complex matters (Nelkin, 1995). Indeed, news articles cannot encompass every aspect of a given subject, like for instance in this case, the oil sands. Obviously there are many aspects to this industry, such as the already mentioned environmental concerns, but also energy supply, as this is the third largest oil reserve in the world, and more economic opportunities connected to the influx of investments, job creation, and a variety of triple-down effects (CERI, 2011). Some features will naturally be given emphasis over others in the presentation of the news story.

An important characteristic of the Norwegian debate on oil sands is the understanding of the issue as almost entirely about the environment. When arguing that the discussion about oil sands in Norwegian media is thoroughly dominated by such environmental discourse, I present two pieces of data to support this claim; the dominance of the environmental frame, and a presentation of the voices that are being heard in the debate. In the latter case, we will see that those dominating the debate are using the storylines already identified and connected to the enviro-political discourse coalition.

Three major frames were chosen as a way of categorizing each news item in the media analysis; an environmental frame explaining the oil sands as mainly an environmental problem or risk, an energy frame where the emphasis was more on questions about energy supply, global demand or discussing the huge size of this resource, and ultimately a more business-oriented frame that would consider the investments and opportunities that the oil sands represented. The oil sands in Canada do actually represent the largest investible oil resource in the world because the resources found in

Saudi-Arabia and Venezuela are mainly state-owned. I found the inspiration for this choice of frames by reading a combination of Norwegian and Canadian articles about the issue. Canadian newspapers did for instance have many articles emphasising the oil sands as a way to cover energy demand in the US or Asia. Moreover, there were also many articles about different nations and companies investing in the oil sands, or how certain projects contributed to the local economy etc. These examples illustrate why I did choose specific energy or business-frames. The environmental frame was obvious because of the criticism that I already have mentioned.

Nevertheless, some criteria were necessary in order to distinguish one frame from the other. Several researchers have argued for particular *framing devices* when differentiating between different frames (Entman, 1993; Shah et.al., 2002; Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). Gamson and Modigliani (1989) understand the framing devices as elements that condense the information through metaphors, examples, catch-phrases, depictions, or even visual images. The presence of one or more of such devices would thus be conducive for the identification of a specific frame. This can be illustrated by a few examples from the media coverage of oil sands.

In an article by *Dagsavisen* the Liberal Party representative, Helge Solum Larsen, demanded that the Government pulls Statoil out of the oil sands because the company has been charged with violations of the environmental law in Canada, and, according to Solum Larsen, also represents a reputational liability for Norway in terms of respect for the environment and the climate. The particular angles and wordings in this article mentioning terms like “environmental crime”, “destruction”, and “climate” certainly positions it within an environmental frame. Furthermore, the article is even illustrated by a quite horrific photo of the Syncrude upgrader situated by the Athabasca River.⁴²

Stavanger Aftenblad had an article about how North America has become a major business priority within the international portfolio of Statoil in recent years, exemplified with operations in the Canadian oil sands or offshore activities in places like Alaska. Moreover, the article contains specific references about investments and the growth of the North American energy market thus placing that particular article within what I have called a business frame.⁴³

⁴² “Demanding oil cleanup”. In: *Dagsavisen*. 12. February 2011.

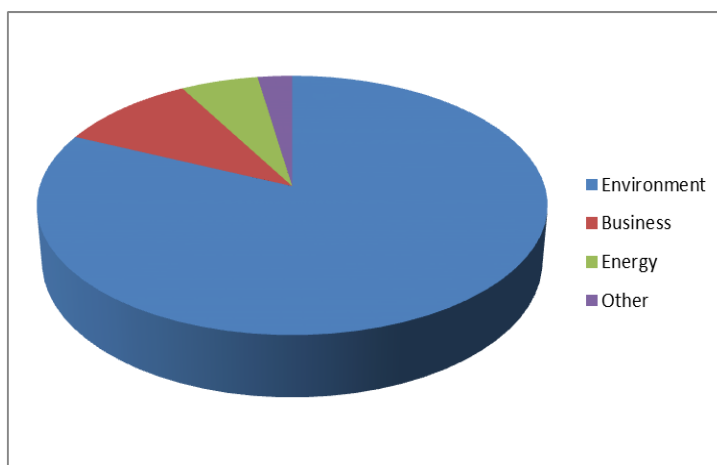
⁴³ “The next big thing”. In: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 22. February 2011.

Ultimately, an article in *Aftenposten* published an interview with Fatih Birol from the IEA who spoke about the need for continued production in order to meet increasing worldwide energy demand. This certainly makes it relevant to talk about an energy frame;

*The world's demand for oil will rise markedly, and because of that Statoil's investments in the oil sands are very much welcome. Most existing oil fields are producing less oil. We need to compensate for this.*⁴⁴

Remembering that a total of 159 news items were identified for the period of analysis, containing either “tjæresand” or “oljesand”, and encompassing both regular news stories or opinion pieces, it should not come as much of a surprise that the environmental frame dominated the way the Norwegian media portray the issue of oil sands. What was surprising, however, was the fact that the presentations were so heavily tilted in favor of this particular frame. Using the framing devices defined by particularly Gamson and Modigliani (1989), a total of 130 items were determined to be within the parameters of such an environmental frame. These articles were usually about how Statoil should pull out of the oil sands because of environmental concerns, articles about the already mentioned water-trial, or about the EU's proposed Fuel Directory supposed to limit imports of oil sands based fuel because of concerns for the environment. All these three examples are articles that I placed within an environmental frame.

Figure 4: The dominance of the environmental frame⁴⁵



⁴⁴ “Energy bureau pricing Statoil's oil sands”. In *Aftenposten*. 10. November 2011.

⁴⁵ The category “other” represents articles that did not fit any frame, for instance a piece about the communication of the oil industry, or the only article about the aboriginal perspective that was found in the analysis.

This complete dominance of the environmental frame is in stark contrast to the Canadian media debate. Obviously, there are numerous articles that emphasize specific environmental challenges with the industry there as well. Nevertheless, this is to a larger degree balanced with a stronger emphasis on what the oil sands mean to the people of Alberta and Canada in terms of taxes, revenues, job opportunities, energy supply, etc. There will be more on this in later chapters.

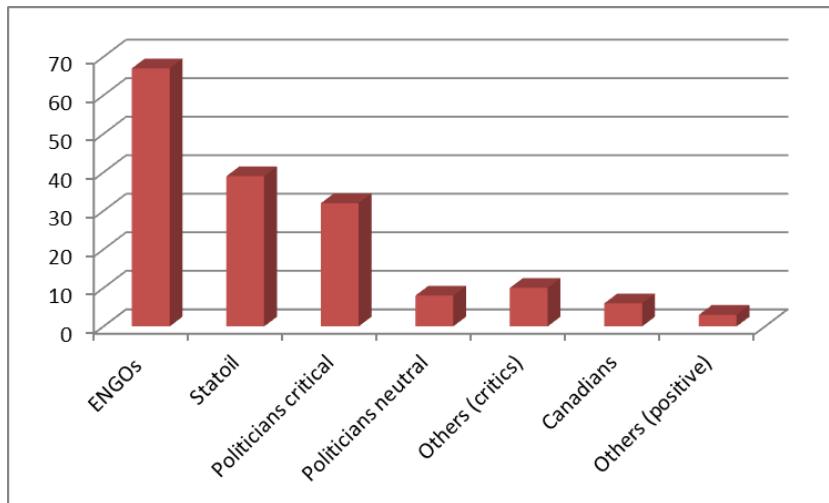
The second element that illustrates the predominantly environmental emphasis on the Norwegian debate on oil sands is looking at what voices are literally being heard in the discussion, i.e. who are writing the different opinion pieces and who are quoted in regular news stories. Van Dijk (1988: 46) argued that one of the most important questions to be asked in a media discourse analysis is exactly finding out “who is speaking”, and especially if he or she is speaking as an agent of an institution.

Starting with the regular news-stories and looking at who was being quoted by the journalists the numbers show quite a clear majority for different representatives of the ENGO community with a total of 67 quotations. The two other major groups being quoted are different representatives of Statoil and politicians with opposing attitudes towards the oil sands. Statoil is quoted a total of 39 times while the politicians opposing the industry are quoted 32 times. The latter group represents together with the ENGOs the enviro-political discourse coalition that already has been emphasized. Greenpeace alone, as represented by Martin Norman and Truls Gulowsen, is quoted 19 times. Politicians like the already mentioned Ola Borten Moe, Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg, and Minister of Trade and industry, Trond Giske, are being quoted with more neutral bordering positive views a total of eight times. Moreover, there are a few Canadian actors being quoted by the different newspapers. Author of *Tar Sands – Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent*, Andrew Nikiforuk, is indeed quoted twice. For example; “I have no reason to believe that the industry in Canada will be able to establish mitigation for CO₂-emissions coming from the oil sands. It is way too expensive.”⁴⁶

Interestingly, however, no Canadian that is supportive of the industry is being quoted at all. Added together, various actors ranging from ENGOs to critical politicians and others opposed to the industry make up 68% of total quotes in regular news stories - for every voice supportive of the industry there are two that are critical in the Norwegian media.

⁴⁶ “Looking to Mongstad for the mitigation of oil sands-emissions”. In: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 14. March 2011.

Figure 5: Who is being quoted in the Norwegian press about the oil sands?



There was also a total of 62 different opinion pieces written in the four newspapers concerning the oil sands. Such pieces are usually comments written by external actors who have strong opinions on a given issue, in this case Statoil and the Alberta oil sands. Looking at the authors behind the different pieces strengthens the dominance of an environmental understanding of the issue. Actually, there are only three pieces that can be defined as being in favor of the industry. Two of them are written by representatives of Statoil, namely the already mentioned Karl Johnny Hersvik, the Director of Research, and Erik Wærness, head of Energy Market Analytics. The only author external of Statoil who has written comments that try to underline arguments in favor of developing this resource is Professor Øystein Noreng from the Norwegian Business School (BI) in the midst of the controversy surrounding Borten Moe's visit to Canada. There he argued that the demand for oil- and gas is created by the consumers' need for energy - no matter what Norway decides to do with regards to the oil sands. After all, Norway is a relatively small player in the petroleum market. Furthermore, he reminded that a higher oil price would also lead to a higher demand for abundant coal resources, leading to even higher emissions of greenhouse gases.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ "Oil, Norwegian emissions and the world". Comment in: *Dagsavisen*. 14. November 2011.

Table 4: Opinion pieces by author

NGOs		21
Politicians ⁴⁸		11
Newspaper editorials ⁴⁹		10
Academics ⁵⁰		9
Other ⁵¹		9
Statoil		2

In total, when taking into account the results from this analysis that exhibits how the environmental frame dominates how news-stories about the oil sands are presented, how there are twice as many quotes from opposition to this industry compared to those in favor, and how almost every opinion piece written about the subject is criticizing Statoil and the oil sands, one can adequately argue that this issue is extensively viewed on environmental terms in the Norwegian media debate.

4.5: The Oil Sands: Environmental concerns overshadow Norway's role as an oil producer

From the media analysis I have identified a relatively broad enviro-political discourse coalition that were opposed to Statoil's participation in the Albertan oil sands consisting of different members of Norwegian environmental organizations and a number of politicians. This coalition is held together by a set of storylines that they use repeatedly in their argumentation against Statoil's oil sands. Statoil, on their side, is very much forced on the defensive in this discussion without much support from actors or stakeholders external to the company itself. The exception was, however, the statements made by Oil-and Energy Minister Borten Moe.

Notwithstanding what the different stakeholders are saying, when looking at the media itself, and how the journalists and news practitioners frame the articles about the oil sands, the environmental frame or understanding of the issue clearly dominates and guides the discussion. Based on the

⁴⁸ These are politicians critical of the oil sands, hence forming part of the enviro-political discourse coalition.

⁴⁹ These are editorials that entirely criticize Statoil's participation in the oil sands

⁵⁰ These are academics, most notably different pieces by scientists that worry about climate change

⁵¹ These are a range of actors, including the only supportive piece by Professor Noreng, but also musicians, artists and even an author.

frames chosen by the journalists covering the oil sands, from a Norwegian perspective the debate is arguably first and foremost an environmental issue. Furthermore, the data also shows how those opposed to the oil sands are quoted twice as much by the journalists, compared to those holding more supportive views, almost exclusively representatives of Statoil. In sheer numbers this contrasts somewhat with the balancing norm mentioned in the theory chapter (Boykoff, 2009). Nevertheless, and referring to the audience assumptions referred to earlier (Nelkin, 1995), if most Norwegians are against the oil sands, then it would be natural that more space are devoted to those opposing the industry. Furthermore, and using Hall's (1978) concept, it can be claimed that this discourse coalition in general, and Greenpeace/WWF in particular, are the "primary definers" of the oil sands debate in the Norwegian context. Although, these two organizations are not the biggest environmental organizations in Norway, they are the biggest when it comes to this particular issue. They are quoted the most times and have even organized tours to demonstrate against the oil sands. Moreover, and not surprisingly, the vast majority of opinion pieces or letters to the editor are also overwhelmingly critical of the oil sands in general, and Statoil's participation in particular. Another interesting observation is also that the polarized tar sands/oil sands divide is to a considerable extent translated to the Norwegian context.

One reason why the opposition is dominating so extensively could be because Statoil *is* in Canada right now. Hence, those in favor of Statoil's oil sands operations do not have much reason to engage themselves in the debate. That explains to some extent their defensive position as well making the whole debate less polarized. If there had been more of a debate beforehand, concerning whether or not Statoil should involve themselves with oil sands, perhaps more people would have entered the debate in favor of the industry. That is actually the case in the Canadian debates regarding the construction of big pipelines transporting the oil sands, like Keystone XL or Northern Gateway. Since the construction is yet to commence, the opposing sides are extremely polarized. Another cause might be that certain "cultural givens" of the Norwegian society in this case facilitates this specific elaboration of the oil sands in the Norwegian media where the environmental implications dominate (Schudson, 1989; Gamson; 1988; Nelkin, 1995). According to this constructionist viewpoint the issue has to be crafted in terms that resonate with widely held cultural concepts of the given society (Gamson and Modigliani, 1989). And concerning this particular issue it seems like the belief in Norway as a country advocating measures against climate change triumphs Norway's position as a major producer of oil and gas.

In the Norwegian media analysis the voices of Canadians are rarely heard, albeit with the exception of just a few quotes from a handful of well-known industry critics. The national Norwegian media has in many ways “domesticated” the issue by making the media debate almost exclusively a question about whether Statoil should pull out of their activities in Alberta based on a number of concerns. Now, I will look more closely at the Canadian media debate concerning the oil sands. This is interesting because although Statoil is involved, it is there that both the resources are located, and where the people affected by this industry are living, hence it will give some important background information for the Norwegian debate, and additionally it will also illuminate some of the dynamics going on in what can be characterized as the internationalization of the oil sands debate. I will characterize the media debate generally and also compare it to some extent with the Norwegian discussion.

5: Anatomy of a media controversy: Imagery, symbols, and polarization

Whereas in the Norwegian media the oil sands is a quite contentious issue, especially when compared to the many Statoil operations in other countries, in Canada, however, it is regularly front page news. Indeed, journalist Rebecca Penty from the *Calgary Herald* called the oil and gas industry, where the oil sands make up the vast majority, the “biggest business story in Canada” (Penty, personal interview, 2012). Furthermore, journalist and author Andrew Nikiforuk labelled the oil sands development “a nation-changing event” (Nikiforuk, personal interview, 2011). All stakeholders, whether they are industry, members of the environmental community, politicians, or even Aboriginals have views concerning the media’s presentation of the oil sands. Interestingly, however, nobody is satisfied. To exemplify, oil sands advocate and author of *Ethical Oil – The case for Canada’s oil sands*, Ezra Levant, complained about the “green lobby”;

I think the oil sands are generally demonized in the media. I think that the leading sources of information about the oil sands have not come from the oil sands, but rather from partisan critics like Greenpeace and David Suzuki with their fundraising organizations (Levant, personal interview, 2011).

Likewise, Mike Hudema from Greenpeace complained about media’s presentation in favor of industry;

I would say that there is a tremendous resource imbalance between the ways the media characterizes the two sides of the saddle. So on one side you have in my opinion fairly poorly funded environmental groups. They are up against the Canadian government that has no problem using tax dollars in promoting the industry and conflating the debate (Hudema, personal interview, 2012).

Bart Robinson from the Alberta Ecotrust summed it up by saying that if you talk to government or industry, they are going to say that media is biased in favor of the ENGOS. If you talk to the environmental groups, they will say the exact opposite; that they cannot get any space in the media (Robinson, personal interview, 2011). Perhaps this complaining coming from both sides also indicates the relative importance that each side give to the media. Indeed, this observation actually confirms what I noted in the first section of the theoretical chapter; that the media is where most people get the knowledge about environmental issues, hence making it even more important for the opposing sides to get their specific view publicized. A parallel can be found in the climate debate

where both sides also complain about the amount of coverage given to the opposing side (Boykoff and Boykoff, 2004).

These diverging views on the media are also an indication of the high level of polarization that is characteristic of the current oil sands debate. Based on interviews with a variety of stakeholders from the Canadian debate, this chapter tries to identify some elements that are symptomatic for this mediatized discussion, namely the importance of imagery, symbols, particular events, and indeed polarization. Specifically, it will be about the oil sands, but it will also tell more generally about how the media presents environmental issues. In the end of the chapter I will also compare somewhat with the Norwegian debate.

5.1: Imagery, symbols, and events - the unleashing of a PR-war over the oil sands

In April 2008 about 1,600 ducks landed and perished on the toxic tailings pond operated by the oil sands consortium Syncrude on their Aurora site north of Fort McMurray. Although several stakeholders involved in the oil sands debate have emphasized to me that this number is low compared to the amount of ducks that annually meet their fate in collisions with wind mills and buildings, the powerful images of the oil soaked ducks quickly spread to news desks around the world, and contributed to an escalation of criticism towards this particular industry. The *National Post* called the demise of the ducks a “public-relations nightmare” for the Alberta Government insofar as they had gone to great lengths trying to convince critics from Canada and abroad that their production was environmentally friendly.⁵² Indeed, there seems to be a significant agreement between representatives of the environmental community, industry, and others that this was a game-changing event when it comes to the public awareness and perception of the oil sands. Professor Andrew Leach from the University of Alberta commented;

I think the ducks were game changing. That's the image that defined the start of the PR-war. Like before that, the oil sands were pretty unknown to the rest of Canada, and that accident was front page news in every newspaper in Canada – lead story on every news desk. In 2008, in the middle of this big boom, then this happens, and kaboom! (Leach, personal interview, 2011).

⁵² “Syncrude faces scrutiny after ducks land on toxic pond”. In: *National Post*. April 30th 2008. Available at: <http://www.nationalpost.com/news/canada/story.html?id=482931> Accessed: April 10th 2012

Even oil sands-critic Andrew Nikiforuk was surprised by the magnitude of attention that this comparably small industrial accident led to. According to him the ducks had a great impact because it symbolized that this project was not being managed properly (Nikiforuk, personal interview, 2011). Gord Lambert from Suncor emphasized the special status of ducks when trying to grasp the significance of this particular accident; “ducks are iconic in Canada and North America, so that event did indeed catalyze even more scrutiny about our industry” (Lambert, personal interview, 2012).

Photo 1: The Syncrude ducks – (Photo: Todd Powell)



What actually happened that day back in April 2008 was that the devices intended to keep ducks and other wildlife away from the toxic tailings ponds for some reason, perhaps the bad weather conditions, did not work. The result was that, situated in the middle of an important migratory route, the ducks landed for a rest on the tailings pond as if it was a regular lake – obviously with a disastrous outcome. The tragedy itself, and the images it produced, were bad enough, but the long trial that followed arguably made matters even worse in terms of the perceptions of the oil sands industry. Local environmentalist from Fort McMurray, Ruth Kleinbub, was one of the persons bringing attention to this case of industrial negligence. She did not understand, however, why the company charged, Syncrude, chose to fight the case as they did;

They fought first about the numbers and all they really had to say was; we made a mistake, mea culpa and it wouldn't have gone all over the world. They did not. They lied about it and even tried to falsify the numbers. They almost tried to fight in court like if it was the ducks' fault. (Kleinbub, personal interview, 2011).

In the end, however, and perhaps as a consequence of the intense media attention, Syncrude was hit with the heaviest environmental penalty in the history of Alberta. The company was charged

under both federal and provincial laws for failing to keep the ducks away from the tailings pond and had to pay a total of three million dollars in a combination of fines and creative sentencing.⁵³ Nevertheless, the images of oil soaked ducks still linger in people's perceptions, and the reputational costs related to this accident are probably much higher, albeit difficult to calculate precisely in terms of dollars.

In March 2009 the worldwide renowned *National Geographic Magazine* published a lengthy feature article about Alberta and the growth of the oil sands industry, which was creatively labelled "the baby seal moment of the oil sands" by a columnist from the *Ottawa Citizen*. By referring to the immense repercussions the famous images of a bloody baby seal had for the Canadian seal industry, he argued that the perceptions of the oil sands would not be the same after coming under the scrutiny of the *National Geographic Magazine*.⁵⁴ Likewise, Aaron Sanger from the US-based ENGO Forest Ethics underlined the significance of that article in making the oil sands not just a Canadian controversy, but a global one; "This created the beginnings of a global controversy because of how far and wide that magazine's distribution is spread. The issue suddenly became commonly known" (Sanger, personal interview, 2012). Journalist Deborah Jaremko from the *Oil Sands Review* agreed with Sanger by commenting that when somebody like *National Geographic* does this, then it is not just Greenpeace anymore, hence it is quickly becoming mainstream. Jaremko also emphasized that the article was not so much about the text as it was for the photos portraying the industry, which were of trademark National Geographic quality (Jaremko, personal interview, 2011). David Sands from the Alberta Government at first only got a text copy of the article and found it quite balanced, as it also included some of the economic aspects of this industry. Nevertheless, it was only later that he was also made aware of the powerful images used in the presentation of the oil sands (Sands, personal interview, 2011). Furthermore, Pius Rolheiser from Imperial Oil commented specifically on the first photo which was a gatefold, beautifully shot image of the immense boreal forest; "then, when you opened the next one, it had ugly open-pit mines and tailings ponds. It could be interpreted as before and after. I wrote to the editor that the after shots should be when the land is reclaimed" (Rolheiser, personal interview, 2011).

⁵³ "\$3M penalty for Syncrude over dead ducks". In: *Edmonton Sun*. October 22nd 2010. Available: <http://www.edmontonsun.com/news/alberta/2010/10/22/15791431.html> Accessed: April 10th 2012.

⁵⁴ "The tar sands have had its baby seal moment" In: *Ottawa Citizen*. February 25th 2009.

Both the photos of the “Syncrude ducks” and the impressive shots from that particular issue of the *National Geographic* magazine arguably highlight the importance and relevance of vivid imagery in the oil sands debate. Another example is that although 80 percent of currently available reserves of the oil sands can only be produced *in situ* (Kelly, 2009), with considerably less implications for the landscape, the images that probably persist in people’s perceptions are those of the open pit mines. Maude Barlow from the citizen organization, the Council of Canadians, famously referred to them as *Mordor* after having taken a helicopter ride above the areas around Fort McMurray, referring to the horrible landscapes of Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* (Sweeny, 2010). David Sands lamented this focus in a candid way; “There is never a photograph of an oil sands operation that shows an *in situ* operation. It is always a big picture of an open pit mine, and those things are butt ugly” (Sands, personal interview, 2011).

Photo 2: Oil sands mining (Photo: Jeff McIntosh, AP)



Photo 3: Oil Sands *In Situ* – (Photo: Jan Magne Eriksen Bae)



Journalist Mike De Souza, who normally writes for the *National Post*, specifically drew attention to the images of the media coverage concerning the oil sands;

There are many high profile examples of situations that have created an image problem for them - Most notably the case of the ducks landing on the tailings pond. Furthermore, the tailings ponds - those images are very visual and look outright ugly: any description of what they actually are, and then the fact that you need to fire off canons to scare away wildlife to ensure that wildlife isn't contaminated, it doesn't look good (De Souza, personal interview, 2011).

Typically, news media's presentation of the environment has a tendency of being very visual, with striking images (Anderson, 1997; Allen et al, 2000). Indeed, Lester (2010: 142) claimed that "attempts to harness the power of the image have been a dominant motif of modern environmental politics". I have already referred to the powerful images that contributed to an international outcry against the seal industry, the cubs lying on blood-stained ice. Others are, for example, chimneys spewing out smoke into a horizon of darkened clouds, a pelican or any bird covered in thick black oil, or perhaps a whale surrounded by reddening water immediately after being harpooned. The issue of oil sands fits into this trend with dramatic images of the open pit mines, oily ducks from Syncrude, and filthy tailings ponds.

Generally, and not just oil sands specific, environmental news tends to be both event-centered and with a strong emphasis on symbols (Anderson, 1997; Allen et al, 2000). Indeed, several researchers have pointed to news media being particularly absorbed by dramatic incidents, oil spills for example, but also angry demonstrations against a proposed development (Anderson, 1991; Shanahan, 1993). The image of a wide-eyed seal threatened by the outbreak of a virus, or a shivering oil-covered duck, quickly become symbols for something larger - the environment under threat from human induced industrial development. Related to that, John Bennett from the Sierra Club Canada, commented specifically about the Syncrude ducks;

The ducks are a symbol, right, but with the symbolism there they were; they had a legal responsibility to fire off their noise makers to keep wildlife away and they didn't do it. Wildlife does symbolize the proper stewardship of nature for most people everywhere (Bennett, personal interview, 2012).

Ulrich Beck (2009: 86) emphasized the relevance of symbols and how they are connected to cultural perceptions by claiming that these ecological images and symbols are not in any way scientifically confirmed but that they are culturally perceived, constructed, and mediatized, hence forming part of a "social knowledge fabric, with all its contradictions and conflicts".

On a broader level both these symbols and events also represent the relevance of the drama metaphor that is very apparent in environmental reporting. Indeed, such dramatization is an important news value (Lee; 2009; Bonfadelli, 2010; Bocking, 2010) for journalists when choosing what stories to cover. Furthermore, and related to such a presentation, this dramatization is also an important sense-making device for the general public. People understand many environmental issues through these unfolding dramas. Ryghaug (2006) did, for example, illustrate how “nature dramas” like extreme weather, or the melting of the polar ice, were important for people when trying to domesticate and understand the issue of climate change.

Environmental processes are more often than not lengthy and time consuming when they are not about specific events, like for example an oil spill. Whether it is deforestation, climate change, sinking water levels in rivers, or the extinction of a specific specie, we are talking about processes that do not necessarily fit with the day to day realities of news media (Lester, 2010). That is perhaps one of the reasons why spectacular and dramatic events play a larger role than processes in the news media presentation of many environmental issues. Oil sands specific, the ducks are already mentioned. In Norway, and as demonstrated by the media analysis, a specific event has been the annual general assembly of Statoil, where the company, at least potentially, could be voted out of the oil sands. Another event was, as we have seen, Minister Borten Moe’s visit to Statoil’s facilities in Alberta. Back to the Canadian/North American context, the large human chain formed around the White House to demonstrate against the expansion of the Keystone XL pipeline is another example of a very media-friendly event.⁵⁵ It even included celebrities, such as the actress from 20th Century Fox’s *Wall Street*, Darryl Hannah, who was arrested for participating in a similar demonstration back in August 2011.⁵⁶

Indeed, celebrities do often participate in politicized and high profile environmental issues. This is a trend that started in the last decades of the 20th century, and since news media almost inherently are interested in celebrities, their advocacy has brought attention to a range of different environmental issues (Turner, 2004; Brockington; 2009).

⁵⁵ “Thousands protest at the White House against Keystone XL pipeline”. In: *The Guardian*. 7. November 2011. Available: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/nov/07/keystone-xl-pipeline-protest-white-house> Accessed: April 18. 2012

⁵⁶ “Daryl Hannah arrested in protest against TransCanada XL pipeline”. In: *Financial Post*. 30 August 2011. Available at: <http://business.financialpost.com/2011/08/30/daryl-hannah-arrested-in-protest-against-transcanada-xl-pipeline/> Accessed: April 18. 2012.

Actors like Leonardo Di Caprio, Robert Redford, and Neve Campbell, and numerous more have all expressed their concerns about current oil sands development. A few eyebrows were certainly raised when even “Elaine” from popular TV sitcom *Seinfeld*, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, suddenly participated in a campaign video against the Keystone pipeline in November 2011.⁵⁷ *Titanic*-director James Cameron did, however, actually take time off his busy schedule to go far north and visit the oil sands, amid speculations that one of his latest movies, *Avatar*, was actually inspired by this big industrial project in Northern Alberta. Nevertheless, there seems to be some disagreement with regards to the effects of that highly media-reported visit. Carolyn Campbell from the Alberta Wilderness Association claimed that the attention brought by such a high profile visit embarrassed the Alberta Government and pressed them into looking more seriously at their monitoring of oil sands effects (Campbell, personal interview, 2011). Travis Davies, media spokesman from CAPP, however, emphasized that Cameron did not “bash” the oil sands as much as many had expected; “There were a lot of very upset ENGOs because Cameron didn’t gut the industry sufficiently” (Davies, personal interview, 2011).

More generally, the entrance of celebrities into the sphere of environmental politics is most likely a consequence of the need to make environmental stories more media-friendly. Boykoff and Goodmann (2009) are in doubt, however, whether this participation of celebrities trivializes the issues to coddle an ongoing consumerism, or if it serves to enroll a new audience that otherwise would not have cared about the issue in the first place. Nonetheless, the famous anti-whaling campaigner Paul Watson admitted the value of celebrities in a very straightforward way;

Lots of celebrities support us and that really helps. In 1984 we ran a campaign against aerial shootings of wolves in British Columbia. At the press conference, which was packed, a journalist asked; what does Bo Derek know about wolves? And I said, that is not the point. Have you just graduated from journalism school or something? I could have the best wolf biologist in the world here and I would have an empty room (Watson, 2009, cited in Lester, 2010: 155).

⁵⁷ “Seinfeld’s Elaine disses Keystone”. In: *Calgary Sun*. 4. November 2011. Available at: <http://www.calgarysun.com/2011/11/04/seinfelds-elaine-disses-keystone-xl-pipeline> Accessed: April 18. 2012

5.2: Your choice; “Ethical oil” or “Dirty Oil”? - Towards even more polarization

In the midst of the growing global controversy over the oil sands, lawyer, writer and TV-talkshow host, Ezra Levant published the book *Ethical Oil – The Case for Canada’s oil sands*. The rationale behind his book was according to Levant;

It’s about not just measuring one aspect of ethics, the environment, but several aspects of it like the environment, peace, treatment of workers, and human rights. I think those four ethical aspects have given the oil sands more context. So that we are not just judging based on 1,600 ducks, but we are also comparing with for example 300.000 people in Darfur. So it provides other measurements of ethics (Levant, personal interview, 2011).

With this Levant is by using a very specific storyline actually trying to reframe the debate, and take away attention from the dominance of environmental concerns. Remembering that storylines are narratives that draw upon different discursive categories to give meaning to a phenomenon (Hajer, 1995), in this case the storyline would be something like; “Canadian oil sands is more ethical than oil coming from mainly Middle Eastern countries because they have more respect for human rights”. Indeed, storylines can through the use of simplified narratives or buzzwords, like in this case “ethical oil”, refer to a wide and complex debate in a very reductionist manner. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the proposed entrance of human rights and ethics related to that is a deliberate attempt to reframe the debate by including different metrics in the evaluation of oil sands. The entrance of this storyline into the oil sands debate is undoubtedly controversial. The media has, however, picked it up. Such a presentation of the choice between “ethical” Canadian oil, and “conflict” oil coming from other places, certainly fits into certain news values embraced by the media as well. Most importantly it has the potential for conflict and dramatization, values that have long traditions within journalism (Ryghaug, 2006; Bonfadelli, 2010). Levant basically gives importers of oil a very straightforward choice; either you buy your oil from democratic, transparent, and peaceful Canada, or you import from countries that, with very few exceptions, are “dictatorships, human rights abusers, or war mongers” (Levant, 2010: 12). A dramatic example used by Levant is the mayor in Fort McMurray, Melissa Blake; “as a single mom living with her fiancé, she would have been stoned to death in Iran” (Levant, 2010: 19).

Photo 4: Ethical Oil Poster – from *Ethicaloil.com*



For many, the idea of buying either “ethical oil” or “conflict oil” may be seen as unnecessary polarization and a complete alternation of the subject that originally was the environmental challenges associated with the Canadian oil sands. Nevertheless, Levant’s storyline has actually entered the debate quite significantly, at least in Canada. Indeed, even Prime Minister Stephen Harper has adopted Levant’s “ethical oil”. In an announcement in Welland, Ontario, in January 2012, he specifically emphasized that the reality for the United States, as the biggest consumer of Canadian oil, “is that Canada is a very ethical society and a safe source for the United States in comparison to other sources of energy”.⁵⁸ Likewise, Minister of Environment, Peter Kent, commented that the Obama administration needs to be reminded that, unlike the oil it buys from various foreign suppliers, the revenues deriving from oil sands petroleum “don’t go to fund terrorism”.⁵⁹

Opinions are, however, varied about the relevance of putting such a storyline into the discussion about oil sands. Gerald Bruce, executive director of the Canadian Heavy Oil Association (CHOA), called it “food for thought” as it made people use different metrics in their judgements about the oil sands (Bruce, personal interview, 2011). Paul Stanway from Enbridge Northern Gateway also called

⁵⁸ “Harper’s embrace of “ethical” oil sands reignites “dirty” arguments”. In: *Globe and Mail*. 7. January 2012. Available at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/harpers-embrace-of-ethical-oil-sands-reignites-dirty-arguments/article1862499/> Accessed: 20. April 2012.

⁵⁹ “Peter Kent’s green agenda: Clean up oil sands’ dirty reputation”. In: *Globe and Mail*. 6. January 2012. Available at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/peter-kents-green-agenda-clean-up-oil-sands-dirty-reputation/article1860820/> Accessed: 20. April 2012.

it a “legitimate argument” insofar as it allows the customer to consider the source of oil. He also underlined that Levant had single-handedly broadened the debate (Stanway, personal interview, 2012).

Nevertheless, others, ranging from industry-critics, Alberta Government, and even industry itself, have criticized the concept for being simple advertising or overly simplistic. Andrew Nikiforuk called it “pure, unadulterated propaganda” and said that oil has never been about ethics, but money, a point he expected Norwegians to understand (Nikiforuk, personal interview, 2011). Similarly, Doctor John O’Connor said that “ethical oil” is a contradiction in terms and that the argument ends when discovering that the same companies are involved in the respective countries (O’Connor, personal interview, 2012). Spokesman for the Alberta Government, David Sands, said quite clearly that the ethical oil argument is not one for their government as it had the same sort of weighted values as the slogans used by the other side by just being a “simplistic expression of a complex situation” (Sands, personal interview, 2011). Mayor Melissa Blake, who herself was used in the ethical oil campaign, summarized her position on the concept in a way similar to David Sands; “it is inflated on the other side of the argument just as the environmental critique is inflated on its side.” (Blake, personal interview, 2011).

One of the things both Blake and Sands probably referred to, when they argued that the argument on the other side of the debate is inflated as well is the expression of “dirty oil”. Mike Hudema from Edmonton’s local chapter of Greenpeace pinpointed the expression to the release of Andrew Nikiforuk’s book *Tar Sands – Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent*. He also emphasized that environmental groups deliberately use the term to make people know that this kind of oil extraction is something different, with more implications for the environment than “normal” extraction (Hudema, personal interview, 2012). This is closely connected to the storyline identified in the Norwegian media debate where critics argued that Statoil had to pull out of the oil sands because it is “a particularly dirty source of oil that threatens global climate”. John Bennett from the Sierra Club Canada connected the entrance of “dirty oil” into the debate to Stephen Harper’s election victory in 2006. He also associated it specifically to the climate, like in the Norwegian debate, because until that election, his organization had been focused on getting the Kyoto Protocol ratified, and getting a plan to reduce emissions; “we won that battle, and it was taken away from us by the 2006 election. The oil industry is not prepared to do its share, and that is when the argument about dirty oil started” (Bennett, personal interview, 2012). David Sands, however, lamented the application of the “dirty oil” tag to the Albertan oil sands; “Well, I mean is there such a thing as clean oil? Is any oil, North

Sea or anything like that clean? It is a slogan. It has been attached” (Sands, personal interview, 2011).

The tag “dirty oil” usually combined with some rather horrific illustration of open pit mines, or a tailings pond, arguably demonstrates how the debate quickly becomes polarized, especially when considering the other extreme, the “ethical oil” argument. Media obviously has a role to play in this polarization as they are the arena where this confrontation unfolds. Indeed, conflict and confrontation are, as we have seen, popular themes and news-values in media presentations over not just the oil sands, but other environmental issues as well. According to Miller and Riechert (2000: 51), “conflict among competing interests is a principal driving force of news, as situations involving conflict provide the drama needed to attract audiences.” Likewise, the framing of a story as a conflict, with two clearly polarized parties, brings a desired element of turmoil to the story (Richards and King, 2000). Vincent Saubestre, the executive director of the collaborative network of oil sands companies, OSLI, exemplified his frustrations with the media in a very candid way; “you know how the media works. Before it was the five W’s; who, what, when, where and maybe why. Now, however, it is the five C’s; chaos, controversy, confusion, conflict, and I forgot the last one” (Saubestre, personal interview, 2011).

This presentation of drama and conflict is very coherent with the findings of Ryghaug (2006) in her study on the construction of knowledge about climate change through Norwegian newspapers. Specifically Ryghaug termed two important sense-making devices presented by the media as “nature drama” and “science drama”. It is possible to use these concepts in the oil sands debate as well. The Syncrude ducks certainly symbolized such a nature drama where the ducks perished in the tailings pond as a result of human industrial mismanagement. “Science drama” relates specifically to the disagreement amongst scientists concerning climate change (Ryghaug, 2006). In an oil sands context, there is obviously such disagreement between stakeholders as demonstrated by the polarization between the two extremes; “ethical oil” and “dirty oil”. Nevertheless, what is interesting about this polarization and conflict in the Canadian oil sands debate is that there is little real scientific discussion, at least concerning how it is being portrayed by the media. What is being discussed is more different framings of the oil sands, whether it is important for the economy, covering an energy demand, or detrimental to the environment. Furthermore, very few, even from the industry, deny that there are certain environmental challenges associated with production. That the oil sands represent a very emission-intensive industry is hardly debated nor denied. Statoil, for

example, argues that with the help of their technology plan they will be able to get emissions down to a level similar of conventional production.⁶⁰

Similar to the presentation of climate science in the media as demonstrated by Ryghaug (2006), the subject of oil sands is also presented very much in a dramatized way with much emphasis on news-values like conflict, confrontation, and polarization; hence it becomes a politicized battle more than scientific questions searching specific answers. For example, CBC's *Power and Politics* talk show of January 2012 involved a debate between John Bennett from the Sierra Club Canada, and Kathryn Marshall, a spokeswoman from the "Ethical Oil" foundation. Needless to say, accusations were flying and absolutely no consensus was achieved in what can accurately be termed a "battle" more than a scientifically based discussion.⁶¹ The media also encourages this confrontation by deliberately choosing spokesmen with very opposing views. This refers back to the journalistic norm of balanced reporting (Nelkin, 1995). In both the Canadian and the Norwegian oil sands debate the journalist will usually talk to someone from industry, and someone from an ENGO. Needless to say, their positions are totally opposite, hence cultivating the conflict and confrontation. Professor Andrew Leach at the University of Alberta asked rhetorically about what other issues were debated through such polarized quote positions as a more or less radical environmental organization and industry (Leach, personal interview, 2011).

Through this polarization where the presentation of conflict is more important than the actual scientific issues at stake, quite similar to the politicization of the climate change debate, the academic representatives in the debate usually become marginalized. Actually, Professor Robert Page at the University of Calgary, a recognized expert on several oil sands related issues, complained that he had been talking to several journalists, but that he only rarely saw himself quoted in the newspapers. When confronting a journalist with this, he was told quite candidly that he did not sell newspapers, but that the exaggerations of the arch exponents, the business worlds and the more radical of the environmental groups, those were the people who were selling newspapers (Page, personal interview, 2011).

Coherent with this, Boykoff (2009) has demonstrated how attention was particularly being paid to the more extreme viewpoints, what he termed "alarmists and denialists", in media representations of

⁶⁰ "Increased support for Statoil in oil sands". In: *Stavanger Aftenblad*. 20. May 2011.

⁶¹ "CBC Showdown – Sierra Club vs. "Ethical Oil". 12. January 2012. Can be accessed and watched at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toR3Tt9fS2E>

the climate change issue. Likewise, in the Canadian oil sands debate, space is devoted to those holding very opposing views, hence making the confrontation practically deliberate.

5.3: Summary - Making sense of the oil sands through drama, conflict and confrontation

In Norway, just like in Canada, the middle position and the more scientific elements in the oil sands debate is very much hollowed out. The media analysis showed clearly that the issue is very much concentrated on whether to pull Statoil out of the oil sands, or not. Hence, the news presentation usually involves quotes from one or two representatives of the environmental community, perhaps also a politician who wants to use government to pull Statoil out, and a representative from the company itself trying to defend the operations. Academics, for instance, have in the Norwegian context been very quiet in the oil sands discussion. Minister of Oil and Energy, Ola Borten Moe, pointed to their silence when guest lecturing at the University of Bergen in the fall of 2011; “It has been too quiet from the academics. Too few have been allowed for too long time to define the reality of this debate”.⁶² This is coherent with the complaints by professor Robert Page mentioned above, hence that the academic voice loses out in the Canadian context as well.

However, the most important difference between the two national debates is actually the level of conflict, confrontation and polarization. In Norway, Statoil is so much on their own in this discussion, and the debate is almost exclusively debated on environmental terms that it does not make much sense to talk about extensive polarization and conflict. Statoil’s position is defensive in arguing for the continuation of a project that is already there. In Canada, however, the conflict is much more “even” with different groups of stakeholders on both sides. The biggest difference is that politicians, on both the provincial and federal level, actively participate in the Canadian debate on oil sands. Both the Albertan and Federal Government are active supporters of this industry. Furthermore, the contention is focused a lot around projects that are not yet constructed, like the Keystone XL and Northern Gateway pipelines. Those become particularly contentious because they cross into other territories, hence leaving Alberta which is generally more oil sands supportive. When there is more that stake the level of polarization and confrontation arguably increase. How would the Norwegian debate have looked like if the question was whether Statoil should involve

⁶² “Musestille om oljesand ved NTNU. In: *Universitetsavisa*. 26. March 2012. Available at: <http://www.universitetsavisa.no/politikk/article13134.ece>. Accessed: 21. April 2012.

themselves in the oil sands in the first place? Most likely, Statoil would have been joined by other stakeholders emphasizing frames looking at energy demand or the big economic opportunities involved in this project.

Another observation concerning the two debates is that the tar sands/oil sands divide exists in both countries as we saw in the Norwegian media analysis. Furthermore, after visiting Statoil's facilities at Leismer as a member of the parliamentary committee on energy and environment, Per Willy Amundsen from the Progress Party (FRP) commented that "the oil sands was a geopolitical peace project making us less dependent on oil from dictatorships in the Middle East".⁶³ Hence, Amundsen used the ethical oil argument which further illustrates some dynamic between the respective debates.

The media obviously plays a very important role. People abundantly turn to the media in order to learn about environmental issues such as the oil sands (Boykoff, 2009; Nelkin, 1995). The media is also the arena for confrontation where different news sources will fight in order to privilege their version of reality over others (Anderson, 1997). The media does, however, also contribute to this conflict with their own news-values emphasizing exactly elements like conflict, dramatization and confrontation (Bonfadelli, 2010). The mediatized debate over the Albertan oil sands has the images, the symbols, the necessary conflicts and confrontations, and considerable popularization through, for instance, the use of drama and even celebrity endorsements. But the bottom line is also that this is an emission-intensive industry that certainly has implications for the environment. Interestingly, that issue is not so much debated. Neither are more scientific issues related to the oil sands in what certainly has become more than anything else a political debate. Nevertheless, media practitioners and academics will never agree on how to present an issue as their relative constraints in terms of time, objectives, and resources are very different. Indeed, journalists are storytellers. That is always important to keep in mind.

The implications for the audience is that these conflicts, symbols and dramas become important sense-making devices that they use to comprehend the issue, whether it is climate change in general (Ryghaug, 2006), or even more specifically like in this case the oil sands. The real scientific issues at stake might disappear in competition with these more dramatic and conflict-oriented presentations. People will connect climate change with a nature drama like the polar bear struggling on a

⁶³ "Oljesand skaper fred". In: *Romerikes Blad*. 15. March 2011. Available at: <http://www.rb.no/Innenriks/Politikk/article5971814.ece> Accessed: May 15. 2012.

diminishing piece of ice, or the oil sands with the image of an oil-soaked duck from Syncrude's tailings pond. Likewise, they will associate climate change with dramas between scientists that strongly disagree, or the conflicts between opposing views like "ethical oil" and "dirty oil" in the oil sands discussion.

Having looked at the media presentation of the oil sands in both Norway and Canada, now I will switch focus to more geographical matters. This will be done by looking at how the arguments either for, or against, the oil sands actually vary with geographical distance to the sites of production.

6: Reverse NIMBYism? – The oil sands analyzed at different geographical scales

- *The oil-and gas industry has benefitted Alberta for more than 30 years now and the taxes and royalties we are getting from that makes us able to have one of the lowest tax rates for our citizens in America.*

Ron Liepert, Alberta Minister of Energy⁶⁴

Based on both the Norwegian and Canadian media debates the oil sands certainly represent a controversial and contested industry. The Norwegian media debate was rather dominated by environmental implications of the oil sands industry where a number of concerns were regularly expressed by the environmental community and politicians alike. The Canadian debate contained more opposing views making the debate even more polarized, full of conflict, and confrontation.

According to the NIMBY theory mentioned earlier, we should expect considerable local opposition close the actual areas of production (Robinson, 1999). But how does this actually work in Alberta? Similarly, the distinction between publics in general (PIGS), and publics in particular (PIPS) is useful in this context. The former group is of a more general undifferentiated nature, while the latter is specifically tied to a location, hence having a more identifiable stake in the issue being discussed (Michael, 2009). In that context Statoil in Canada certainly act as PIPS by having an identifiable stake in the debate insofar as they would like to continue production. With the help of these theories I will investigate what implications geographical distance have in the oil sands debate, specifically how the arguments both for, and against the industry differ according to distance. To make geographical distinctions I employ an analysis of the oil sands debate based on different scales; the global, the national, and the local. Representatives of Statoil do, for example, evoke the global scale when referring to the need for this energy based on global energy demand assumptions. Indeed, and based on the Norwegian media analysis, the global scale is taking precedence in the Norwegian debate as the global climate concern is also the main storyline against Statoil's involvement in the oil sands. The exception is the concern for the livelihoods of the Aboriginal communities affected by industry. That is an illustrative example of how basically a local concern has evolved into a global news story, thus highlighting the importance of the media as well. I will look particularly at the complex issue of Aboriginals and the oil sands. They can be identified as

⁶⁴ At the time of the interview he was Minister of Energy. A few weeks later, however, he was shifted to Minister of Economy.

PIPS since they are locally connected to the issue of the oil sands with a certain stakes at play in terms of land-rights. Based on the storyline associated with concern for their livelihoods, as we saw in the Norwegian media analysis, do they employ traditional NIMBY – attitudes against development, or is the relationship between Aboriginals and industry perhaps more complicated?

Even though these scales are somewhat intertwined, I will, however, argue that distance plays an important role in the context of the oil sands discussion, especially as most of the more tangible economic benefits deriving from this industry are being experienced either locally or nationally.

6.1: The Global Scale: Energy demand versus climate change

The storyline that the oil sands are necessary to meet a growing demand for energy, as emphasized by different representatives of Statoil in the Norwegian media analysis, is highly relevant also among Canadian stakeholders. Indeed, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA) the global primary energy demand will be 36 percent higher in 2035 compared to the 2008 level (IEA, 2010). Most of this increase in demand will come from non-OECD countries like China and India, which is not surprising considering their rapid economic growth where sufficient reserves of available energy is paramount to their continued development. Jean-Michel Gires, the CEO of Total Canada, the Canadian subsidiary of the French multinational oil company, underlined that it was becoming more and more difficult to find additional energy supplies in the world today, hence making it necessary to develop unconventional resources like the oil sands (Gires, personal interview, 2012). Likewise, when asked about arguments for the continued development of the oil sands, Joel Thompson, the communications manager of the Canadian energy giant Suncor, also highlighted the fact that “there is absolutely no question that global demand for energy continues to rise. It is significant, and it is certainly driven by emerging economies like China and India” (Thompson, personal interview, 2011).

Currently almost all oil from the oil sands is exported directly south of the border to the United States. Although Saudi Arabia has traditionally been the biggest source of foreign oil to the US market, especially since 9/11 the percentage of Saudi oil exports to the US has consistently declined. In 2004, Canada surpassed the Saudis as the number one supplier to the United States (Sweeny, 2010). In recent years, however, there have been efforts to diversify the exports in particular with regards to the rising economies of Asia. The point is, however, and as emphasized by both the IEA (2010) and various industry stakeholders; the oil sands represent a significant energy resource on the

global scale. With reserves standing at 170 billion barrels that can be recovered with current technology and with future technological innovation expected to improve the recovery rate, Canada has indeed become a major player on the global energy scene. Current Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper has on a number of occasions referred to Canada as an “emerging energy superpower”, largely because of the oil sands (Wey, 2011).

The actual size of this resource, and its relevance for the global energy market, is perhaps something that has not appeared frequently in the Norwegian media debate. Some representatives of Statoil have rather vaguely referred to global demand when arguing for Statoil’s participation in this industry, but it would come as no surprise if the sheer size of the resource was rather unknown among sections of the Norwegian public where, as we have seen, the debate is conducted on principally environmental terms. Nevertheless, the fact that the size of this resource is very large also implies that potential environmental risks associated with substantial development are larger accordingly, perhaps making it even more controversial.

Travis Davies, the media spokesman from CAPP, also argued for the oil sands based on global energy demand. Interestingly, however, he also referred to one of the main storylines that I identified in an earlier chapter, the one emphasizing how Statoil should do renewables, not oilsands;

In the grand scheme of things this is not about let’s not use oil, let’s use renewables. It is about let’s use renewables, more renewables, and more oil because we are going to need to do all those things to meet demand (Davies, personal interview, 2011).

Having seen how proponents of oil sands publicly argue for the issue related to global energy demand, similarly, the most globally-oriented issue against the continued development of this resource is related to global warming and climate change. The higher emissions associated with oil sands extraction was something repeatedly mentioned among representatives of the Norwegian enviro-political discourse coalition. The issue is not surprisingly also highly relevant in the Canadian context. Indeed, the oil sands have been mentioned on a number of occasions in the context of climate change and global warming. Journalist William Marsden wrote in his highly critical book that Canada’s greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise at an alarming rate, and that much of this is directly related to the expansion of the oil sands production (Marsden, 2008). Similarly, oil sands critic Andrew Nikiforuk wrote in his book on the subject that bitumen not only required fossil fuels to produce, but also that the extraction itself leads to higher levels of pollution and carbon emissions (Nikiforuk, 2010).

Several of the people interviewed also expressed concerns about the implications of oil sands development and climate change. Bill McKibben, one of the leading US environmentalists and campaigners against the Keystone XL pipeline, referred to climatologist James Hansen when saying that the oil sands is the second-largest pool of carbon on the earth, and that developing it will mean essentially “game over for the climate” (McKibben, personal communication, 2011). Aaron Sanger from US-based Forest Ethics pointed to the oil sands as the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada, and the reason why Canada could not comply with its commitments and chose to withdraw from the Kyoto Protocol (Sanger, personal interview, 2012). Likewise, John Bennett, the Executive Director of the Sierra Club Canada, also looked at the oil sands mainly from a climate perspective when saying that “unless the oil industry is prepared to reduce GHG emissions to a realistic level, the tar sands have to be stopped” (Bennett, personal interview, 2012). Mike Hudema from Greenpeace Canada emphasized the fear even further when arguing that the oil sands really represent the gateway to unconventional oil development, and that such greenhouse gas-intensive oil can be spread to other places around the world because of the technological development currently being done in Alberta. “If we are going to replicate this model to different countries around the world, it will pose a very serious threat to the global climate” (Hudema, personal interview, 2012).

Former Albertan Minister of Environment, Rob Renner, did, however, counter these claims about the oil sands and climate change;

Clearly we need to do something about global CO₂-emissions, but let's put this into perspective. The Albertan oil sands contribute with just a fraction of emissions compared to for instance the US coal industry and China. We are not going to solve the global CO₂-problem here in Alberta (Renner, personal interview, 2011).

This argument was later supported by a study of respected Canadian climate scientists, Andrew Weaver and Neil Swart, who showed how coal was the main culprit with 79 percent of the total potential for global carbon emissions, whereas the oil sands stood at about 3 percent (Swart and Weaver, 2012). Nevertheless, the issue of emissions and climate change related to oil sands production is highly relevant. There seem to be little scientific disagreement regarding the fact that the oil sands industry has consequences in terms of emissions. Even the Alberta Government has admitted that they face “significant challenges to reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions” (Alberta Government, 2008: 3). The conflict among different stakeholders is more related to how grave, or relevant, these are for the climate.

What is interesting, however, is the fact that while some Norwegian environmentalists argue that Statoil should pull out of the oil sands entirely based on these climate change-concerns, several Canadian critics of the industry argue more about delaying the current pace of extraction or putting a moratorium on new development. Even John Bennett of the Sierra Club said that he is not trying to shut down the oil sands, but that he would like exactly such a moratorium until Canada has a concrete plan for climate change (Bennett, personal interview, 2012). Nathan Lempers of the local environmental organization, the Pembina Institute, argued in a similar manner when claiming that they were pro-responsible development of the oil sands, but that the current pace and scale of development had outstripped the ability for government to adequately manage the environmental impacts (Lempers, personal interview, 2011). In that sense, the Norwegian opposition to oil sands based on these climate concerns might qualify as publics in general (PIGS) because they are far removed geographically, and oppose the oil sands on principal grounds based on the climate. Those who live in the actual location, Alberta, might in a similar way be publics in particular (PIPS) as they are more specifically affected by the local development. Perhaps the economic and energy benefits of oil sands development make it less realistic for the latter group to advocate for a complete closing down of the industry. For the former group, however, where these benefits are less tangible, concerns for the climate seem to override potential benefits, hence proposing a shut-down of the industry.

Having seen that the question about energy demand and the connection to climate change are the main issues on the global scale, it is time to look at the issues related to the national Canadian scale.

6.2 The National Scale – Harper’s emerging energy superpower

Daily production from Alberta’s oil sands is now approaching 1, 7 million barrels, exceeding Canada’s conventional oil production and contributing significantly to its gross domestic product. According to the economic projections done by the Canadian Energy Research Institute (CERI), new oil sands development is expected to contribute over 2,1 trillion 2010 dollars to the Canadian economy over the next 25 years. Although the province of Alberta will enjoy the bulk of royalties, taxes, and job creation, it is also expected that a very high number of jobs will be created outside the province. Actually, the same projections by CERI estimate that within 2035 126,000 jobs will be sourced in provinces outside of Alberta, especially in terms of goods, materials, and services used to construct and operate different oil sands projects, where for instance components like tires, trucks,

gauges, and pumps are likely to be produced in central or eastern Canada (CERI, 2011). Although these numbers should be considered as quite preliminary, and surely quite uncertain, the important element to emphasize is that oil sands development has significant economic benefits for both Alberta as a province and the National Canadian scale.

Map 1: The oil sands deposits, including Statoil's lease (CERI, 2011)



Indeed, vice-president of sustainable development at Suncor, Gord Lambert, commented that the oil sands constitute a resource of national significance to Canada's economy;

If you were to paint a picture where Canada didn't have the oil sands resource, that we either shut it down, or chose not to develop it, there would be a dramatically different fiscal situation for the country and our ability to afford our social systems and our social safety net as well as the caliber of our educational system (Lambert, personal interview, 2011).

Similarly, journalist on energy issues for the *Vancouver Sun*, Barbara Yaffe, remarked the high standard of living in Canada depended to some degree of a continued development of the oil sands; "it would be a great luxury to not develop any of our mines, and still have our great schools and hospitals" (Yaffe, personal interview, 2011). Kyle Harrietha, from the local multi-stakeholder group

CEMA in Fort McMurray, highlighted that nowhere in the world would this resource not be developed; “if the oil sands were in France, it would be developed. If the oil sands were in Germany, it would be developed. It will be developed because it is in the national interest to do so” (Harrietha, personal interview, 2011). Likewise, the mayor of Wood Buffalo Municipality in the heart of the oil sands region, Melissa Blake, said that she refuses to see this isolated as a Fort McMurray thing, or an Alberta thing, but really a Canadian thing (Blake, personal interview, 2011).

Canada is a federal state which is characterized by an elaborate set of financial transfers from the federal government to the respective provincial or territorial governments, and to individual Canadians. A considerable part of this money is being used to “equalize” the fiscal capacity of different provincial and territorial governments so that all Canadians, no matter where they live, can expect to receive approximately the same quality of public services for roughly the same level of taxation (CWF, 2010). This equalization program has since 1957 basically divided the federation into “have” and “have not” provinces or territories where the former contribute to the federal treasury, while the latter are more on the receiving end of this program. In recent years, and to a large degree, because of the prosperity derived from the oil-and gas industry, Alberta, has become the biggest net per capita contributor to this program. Indeed, the think tank Canada West Foundation (CWF) concluded that the strength of the western economy in general, and Alberta in particular, plays a vital role in supporting federal programs to the benefit of all Canadians. Moreover, as Ontario’s traditional manufacturing base continues to feel the implications of globalization through increased competition and the pinch from an oil-inflated Canadian dollar, the success of western Canada will be even more important as Ontario’s role as the fiscal cornerstone of the federation becomes difficult to sustain (CWF, 2010).

Nevertheless, other voices have claimed that the very same success of Western Canada and the oil sands in particular, is actually hollowing out the national economy of Canada, especially because of the petro-charged Canadian dollar and the implications that has for the economy as a whole. Newly elected leader of the Canadian New Democratic Party (NDP), Thomas Mulcair has even described the pro-oil sands policy of current Prime Minister Stephen Harper as “immoral” and has criticized the industry not only on environmental terms but also for inflating the dollar and thereby hurting the

manufacturing industry in Central Canada.⁶⁵ Similarly, there have been some tensions between Alberta Premier Alison Redford and her Ontario counterpart with respect to the benefits of the oil sands. Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty has very much in the same way as Mulcair claimed that the harm caused by the high Canadian dollar relative to the U.S. dollar prevails over any potential spin-off destined for Ontario. According to McGuinty this has “knocked the wind out of Ontario exporters and manufacturing in particular”.⁶⁶ Redford, however, rebuffed this claim and said that it is not about what is in Alberta’s best interest, but that it is about what is in Canada’s best interest when advocating for her vision of a national Canadian energy strategy. She was supported by Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall who said that “if any of us in this country are pinning our hopes for being competitive from a trade standpoint on a cheap dollar, then boy, we’ve got that wrong”.⁶⁷

Another argument that has a tendency of being seen as both a benefit and a curse deriving from the oil sands industry is the case of temporary workers coming to Alberta from other provinces. The eastern province of New Brunswick is for example estimated to have about 3,000 commuters that work in Alberta with the vast majority in the oil sands.⁶⁸ Indeed, a closer look at license plates in Fort McMurray will show that a very high number of cars are actually registered in the Eastern Maritime provinces like New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, or Newfoundland. One Newfoundlander that I met in Fort McMurray did call the opportunity the oil sands represented a “godsend for Newfoundlanders because of our declining fisheries”.⁶⁹ Rebecca Penty, a journalist with the Calgary Herald who used to live in New Brunswick, commented that the economy of some places on the East Coast depend to a large degree on Alberta;

⁶⁵ “Mulcair’s stance puts him at odds with Alberta”. In: *National Post*. 19th March 2012. Accessed 27th March 2012 at: <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/03/19/analysis-mulcairs-oilsands-stance-puts-him-at-odds-with-alberta-despite-assurances-of-support/>

⁶⁶ “Redford’s energy vision clashes with McGuinty’s view of oil sands benefits”. In: *The Globe and Mail*. 27th February 2012. Accessed 27th March 2012 at: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/mcguinty-rebuffs-redfords-oil-sands-plea/article2351145/>

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ “How the oil sands stretch all the way to New Brunswick”. In: *The Globe and Mail*. 18th January 2012. Accessed 27th March 2012 at: <http://m.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/economy/economy-lab/daily-mix/how-the-oil-sands-stretch-all-the-way-to-new-brunswick/article2306613/?service=mobile>

⁶⁹ Part of a series of very short anonymous interviews done in Fort McMurray.

If you go to places like Miramichi in the winter, you know, you won't see many men. You see women with strollers and babies because their men are working in Fort McMurray. So you have fishermen who work throughout the summer fishing and then come up here during the winter (Penty, personal interview, 2012).

Nevertheless, John Bennett from the Sierra Club concluded differently by saying that the industry is actually creating ghost towns out of many places in particularly Nova Scotia and Newfoundland with the men leaving and the women staying back (Bennett, personal interview, 2012). This might be another example of the difference between PIPS and PIGS, and how they see things differently when it comes to the oil sands. For unemployed people coming from Eastern Canada the oil sands represent in this case a much welcome unemployment opportunity, hence they have a direct stake in the discussion and become publics in particular. On the other side, the situations described above arguably have the potential to become a demographic problem both for the East Coast and places like Fort McMurray. The former will get a surplus of women and children, while the latter will get a huge surplus of men. This is, however, more a problem for the publics in general as the importance of getting a job will outweigh such demographic concerns for the different individual groups.

Depending on one's point of view, there are obviously many different perceptions of how the oil sands contribute to Canada as a whole. Now, however, I will look into some of the prevailing local arguments or concerns related to this industry. It is here that the NIMBY-theory will be applied.

6.3: The Local Scale – Not just all hell for a basement?

According to the NIMBY-theory we would expect considerable local opposition to oil sands development in Alberta where this controversial extraction is geographically located. Indeed, the theory concerning NIMBYism is related to awareness of risk, hence not wanting to have developments that could imply that in their proximity. How does this work in Alberta? Is there considerable opposition to the oil sands based on such perceptions of risk?

English writer Rudyard Kipling visited Alberta in the beginning of the 20th century and commented specifically about the enormous gas reserves found near the town of Medicine Hat that they were having “all hell for a basement” (Brennan, 2003). Although it was originally meant as some sort of a compliment, critics of the oil sands industry would perhaps extend that description to

the whole province of Alberta nowadays. Nevertheless, there are other elements to this story as the economy of the province is largely predicated on resource extraction.

The economic history of Alberta forever changed in 1947 with the discovery of massive conventional oil deposits in Leduc south of Edmonton. The next year saw an even larger discovery at Redwater, and within three years the *Financial Post* estimated that Alberta's reserves stood at well over a billion barrels, thus making the province a national supplier of energy. This did bring immediate benefits as total personal income in Alberta more than doubled between 1945 and 1951. Moreover, the out-migration trend stopped, and the number of people migrating to Alberta because of the new opportunities increased dramatically (Weatherell et. al, 2005). Alberta's conventional oil reserves are, however, as mentioned earlier rapidly declining. Nevertheless, the new oil sands-generated boom has brought a variety of economic benefits on the local or provincial level, but has also generated some problems according to critics. Joel Thompson from Suncor mentioned that having two cities with the size of Calgary and Edmonton in Alberta does not really make sense; "you would not have two cities of this size without significant oil and gas development" (Thompson, personal interview, 2011).

CERI has estimated that the provincial Albertan Government will collect approximately 350 billion dollars in cumulative royalties from the oil industry over the next 25 years (CERI, 2011). The ownership of this massive resource is provincial in the sense that it belongs to the people of Alberta. Former Alberta Minister of Energy, now Minister of Economy, Ron Liepert, commented that the oil-and gas industry has benefitted Alberta for several decades now and that the taxes and royalties have made the province able to have one of the lowest personal tax rates in North-America. He also emphasized that one in every six Albertan is directly tied to the oil and gas industry, and that these revenues are very important for the standard of living enjoyed by the average Albertan (Liepert, personal interview, 2011). Likewise, professor of business at the University of Alberta, Andrew Leach, further emphasized the importance of this resource for Alberta in a very candid and illustrative way;

It is owned by Albertans. It is not owned by the Government. Depending on how you value it, it's give or take, just in terms of the reserves it's over a million dollars for every single man, woman and child in the province. So when you say shut down the oil sands, when you say just stop it, what you are asking Albertans to do is basically; I have a bank account that contains a million dollars, but I am not going to touch it. If you are going to shut it down you need a very compelling argument. You

have to say that you are giving up a million dollars, but here is what you get in return. But what would we get in return? (Leach, personal interview, 2011)

Furthermore, Leach underlined that even if we stop extracting oil sands because it does not fit into the optimal global carbon policy, then somebody will develop an alternative. Contrary to the storyline about replacing this resource with renewables, however, Leach argued that there is no reason why this should be a low carbon alternative. “If we shut down the oil sands and the US goes gangbusters on shale and other sources that have marginal differences in environmental impacts, then Albertans have given up their million without getting anything in return” (Leach, personal interview, 2011).

Fort McMurray is in the heart of the oil sands expansion. Situated by the Athabasca River, the city has regularly been referred to as a *boomtown* because of the rapid expansion of the oil sands industry. Mayor Melissa Blake pointed to the fact that the economic opportunities of Canada have largely been predicated on resource extraction from one end of the country to the other, with the oil sands of this generation being no exception to that. Commenting specifically on the significance of the resource to Fort McMurray she said that about 50 percent of the community is either employed directly, or is a contractor to the industry, and that everybody else are largely working in services catering to the same industry. “Our economy is largely predicated on this resource development”, she concluded (Blake, personal interview, 2011). Similarly, reporter for the local newspaper *Fort McMurray Today*, Carol Christian, commented that the municipality probably gets around 85 percent of its tax base from the oil sands industry and that there are enormous opportunities for any entrepreneur with good ideas in terms of businesses or services (Christian, personal interview, 2011). Interestingly, this boomtown-tag that has been applied to Fort McMurray might be seen as something negative for those looking at it from the outside, the publics in general living far away, perhaps in other provinces. For people who have benefited economically because of this rapid expansion, publics in particular, this development will surely be reviewed on more positive terms.

Although local support in Alberta is generally high for oil sands extraction⁷⁰, there are nevertheless some locally based concerns associated with the current development. These are mainly related to the pace and scale of development, a somewhat uneven distribution of benefits, the close

⁷⁰ Survey highlights east-west divide on oil sands”. In: *Calgary Herald*. 3. May 2012. Available at: <http://blogs.calgaryherald.com/2012/05/03/survey-highlights-east-west-divide-on-oilsands/#print> Accessed: 3. May 2012. (80 percent of Albertans responded that “oil sands development is more positive than negative”)

association between government and industry, and local environmental impacts on water, wildlife and land.

There is no doubt that Fort McMurray has been growing at a tremendous rate because of the oil sands industry. That is, however, also one of the major concerns among both Fort McMurrayites and Albertans generally, that the pace of development is going too fast and that it is outstripping the ability of government to keep up with it in terms of not just environmental monitoring, but also the maintenance of basic infrastructure, housing, and social services. Don Reimer worked as the general manager of communications at the Wood Buffalo Municipality in Fort McMurray for two and a half years. With Fort McMurray having an annual growth rate of 9 percent between 2000 and 2007 that brought considerable challenges to the municipality, according to Reimer;

Now in planner terms they will tell you that 1-2 percent is manageable and even desirable. 3-4 percent is getting aggressive. 5-6 percent is getting overheated. 7-8 percent is red hot and anything above 8 percent is just plain stupid. There is no way you can keep up with that in planning terms. You go from 30,000 to 60,000 people in no time and it puts you behind in all the things that are important for the quality of life in the community; all infrastructures are either at, or exceeding capacity, we are behind in recreation and we are behind in all the social structure you need (Reimer, personal interview, 2011).

Although the high disposable incomes being made by people connected to the industry can be seen as a benefit, Professor Andrew Leach mentioned that if you work in a regular service industry and rent an apartment in Edmonton, you might have trouble seeing that particular benefit because the salaries being made by those in the industry also inflate the prices for everybody else (Leach, personal interview, 2011). Specifically mentioning the high incomes for people in the oil patch, Aaron Sanger from the US based ENGO Forest Ethics commented that “when you have someone with a high school diploma who can go to Fort McMurray and earn 100,000 dollars a year, then you have converted someone into a lifelong industry supporter” (Sanger, personal interview, 2012).

Nathan Lempers from the Pembina Institute also highlighted that to say that the oil sands have benefitted all Albertans across the board is somewhat exaggerated;

The rates of homelessness in Calgary has skyrocketed, the amount of substance abuse and addiction issues in Fort McMurray is out of control. What’s more, the oil sands represent about 25-30 percent of the provincial government’s revenues. That is more than they get from taxes. Normally taxes are a

way in which, besides elections, that democracy holds itself accountable to the people (Lempers, personal interview, 2011).

Andrew Nikiforuk has repeatedly expressed that particular concern when calling Alberta an emerging “petrostate” arguing that Alberta has chosen to live directly on the resource revenues, whereas Norway has chosen a model living of taxes, and putting most of the revenues coming from oil and gas away in a savings fund (Nikiforuk, personal interview, 2011).

Notwithstanding the issue of emissions related to the more global concern of climate change, there has also been raised a number of concerns based on more local environmental implications of the industry. One of this is the high amount of water being used for the production of one barrel of bitumen. This is especially the case in production involving SAGD. Mel Teghtmeyer, from the Council of Canadians, a country wide NGO, referred to the amount of water and natural gas when arguing that “it is almost as if we use gold to get oil. We use one valuable resource to get another” (Teghtmeyer, personal interview, 2011). Robert Page from the University of Calgary did, however, indicate that industry is making huge progress nowadays to particularly reduce the amount of water needed for production (Page, personal interview, 2011). Ecologist David Schindler from the University of Alberta has also on various occasions raised concerns about the level of contamination from the industry directly impacting the Athabasca River. He has called for stringent monitoring as “special attention must be paid to assessing the cumulative effects of so many megaprojects in one watershed” (Schindler, 2010: 501).

There have also been raised concerns about the impacts on wildlife. Foremost of these concerns are perhaps the consequences of industry development for the almost iconic caribou population. Indeed, Carolyn Campbell from the Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) has particularly stressed that heavy industrial activity disrupts the natural habitat of the caribou which is already a threatened species (Campbell, personal interview, 2011). Similarly, Dwayne Jean from the Janvier Chipewyan First Nation also commented that he used to be able to drive down the road and see a moose for every 5-10 kilometers, but that you are lucky if you see one moose in this area now (Jean, personal interview, 2011).

Images are important in the criticism of this industry and perhaps nothing more so than the images of the tailing ponds where the bitumen from mining operations is being separated out from sand, water, and other potentially contaminating residuals. They look horrific and they are huge, thus implicating a considerable land disturbance as well. Andrew Nikiforuk expressed the concern about

what would happen if one of these tailings ponds were to leak into the Athabasca River. Nevertheless, he also emphasized that industry is really trying to finally address this particular problem, as a consortium of companies have gotten together and are currently sharing technology with regards to tailing waste management (Nikiforuk, personal interview, 2011).

All these concerns mentioned here, the pace and scale of development, the uneven distribution of wealth, the close link between government and industry, and the environmental implications in terms of water, wildlife and land, are concerns that are felt locally in Alberta. At the same time, however, the bulk of direct economic benefits are also mostly experienced in Alberta (CERI, 2011). There are indeed very few Albertans who would choose not to develop this resource at all; hence we can largely discard the NIMBY-theory in this case. The concerns associated with oil sands seem to vary according to geographical distance. We have seen how Norwegian industry critics largely point to global climate consequences when criticizing the oil sands. Nevertheless, the controversy that perhaps has received most attention on the local scale is the potential consequences experienced by local Aboriginal communities as a result of the expanding industry development. Interestingly, that is an issue that also has received a lot of attention in the Norwegian debate even though it is a local concern in Alberta.

6.4: Neighbours - the complex relationship between industry and the aboriginal communities

Those Aboriginal communities that live in the immediate vicinity of the oil sands facilities can be characterized as PIPS because they are tied to the issue locally, and because they have an identifiable stake since they have traditional land in the areas of production. How can the relationship between those communities and the oil sands industry be characterized? Based on the concerns for their livelihoods that were mentioned on a number of occasions in the Norwegian debate, we can perhaps expect considerable elements of NIMBYism and resistance towards local oil sands development. Or could the relationship actually be more complex?

Following increasing levels of conflicts between newly arrived settlers and the Aboriginal communities, a number of treaties were signed in the late nineteenth century to ensure certain rights of the latter communities. Treaty 6 covered central Alberta and Saskatchewan, but even more relevant was Treaty 8 that covered the northern areas in the Athabasca district. The terms and conditions of Treaty No. 8 were finalized in 1899 and included basic assurances concerning the

freedom to hunt, trap, fish, and to move freely in their traditional lands. Among the signatories were the Chipewyan and Cree First Nations of Fort McMurray and surrounding areas (Tanner, 2007).

Based on these constitutional rights there have been a number of conflicts between local Aboriginal communities and the proponents of industry development. The Beaver Lake Cree Nation (BLCN) did for instance formally challenge the government in May 2008 over several approved or proposed industrial developments in their traditional lands, near the northern town of Lac La Biche. This was done in order to protect their traditional rights as articulated by the constitutional treaty.⁷¹

Similarly, an Amnesty International report revealed the concerns of the Lubicon Cree First Nation, emphasizing that up until the explosion of oil sands development they had been self-sufficient, relying on traditional hunting, trapping, and fishing. Now, however, the different environmental impacts of oil sands development were making these activities almost impossible (Amnesty International, 2010). Both these cases, from the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, and the Lubicon Cree, fit well into classic NIMBY-theory insofar as they do not want to see this development on their traditional land.

The concern most frequently mentioned, however, is the case involving the cancer incidents occurring amongst Aboriginals in the community of Fort Chipewyan, downstream of the major oil sands projects. Doctor John O'Connor made this concern famous a few years ago when he revealed several cases of a very rare form of cancer occurring in Fort Chipewyan;

I began to notice that there seemed to be a lot of illness in the community of 1200 people, a lot of pathology. The mounting level of concern expressed from community members to me soon provided me with a bit of a backdrop that made me curious about the illness levels and the environmental changes and if there was a connection (O'Connor, personal interview, 2012).

These cases from Fort Chipewyan actually became quite famous in the Norwegian discussion as well. This is mainly because the Norwegian state broadcaster, NRK, has screened a documentary portraying their case on different occasions, although this area is far removed from the areas where Statoil operates.

⁷¹ "Beaver Lake Cree challenge government in massive court case". In: *Lac La Biche Post*. Feb 7th 2012. Accessed: March 30th 2012 at: <http://www.laclabichepost.com/article/20120207/LLB0801/302079960/-1/1lb/beaver-lake-cree-challenge-government-in-massive-court-case>

The Royal Society of Canada Expert Panel did a comprehensive study on the environmental and health impacts of Alberta's oil sands industry. When particularly referring to Fort Chipewyan they did conclude, however, that "the evidence to document environmental contaminant exposures sufficient to pose measurable health effects in these communities has yet to be reported" (RSC, 2010: 255). A study by the Alberta Cancer Board, with guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, showed that only two of the suspected cases were actually confirmed to be the relatively rare cancer cholangiocarcinoma, which was considered to be within the expected range. More importantly though, they also concluded that all findings were based on such small numbers of cases and that possible results could be due to chance (RSC, 2010). Nevertheless, this should not underestimate the concerns experienced by the local communities, and as the Royal Society scientists also concluded; further studies and a continued monitoring should be undertaken in order to fully alleviate such concerns. When specifically referring to an upcoming study planned by Alberta Health, they did express the hopes that such a study would not "raise unachievable expectations for what it will be capable of showing in a small population, because very clear black and white answers are unlikely to be found" (RSC, 2010: 255). Nevertheless, the example of Fort Chipewyan illustrates yet another NIMBY-case. While the two Aboriginal communities mentioned earlier worked against development based on the detrimental effects it had on their traditional livelihoods, the community in Fort Chipewyan chose to fight the oil sands industry based on concerns for local health. What they have in common is that they do not want oil sands development near their traditional territories.

However, the issue concerning the impacts of the industry as experienced by the different Aboriginal communities is perhaps somewhat more complicated than what is portrayed in the Norwegian media. One example of particular relevance to Statoil comes from the statements made by Chief Vern Janvier of the Janvier Chipewyan Prairie First Nation, which is nearby the Leismer facility. On a daily Canadian current affairs show called *The Source*, he revealed that Aboriginal companies from his band were doing business worth approximately 50 million dollars a year with the nearby oil and gas industry. Furthermore, he calculated that the business done through a number of joint-venture companies was worth another 100 million a year. He commented; "what this means

to our nation is that over 60 percent of our revenues that we run our nation with actually come from oil-and gas revenues”.⁷²

Chief Jim Boucher is head of one of the most successful First Nation communities in Canada. The Fort McKay First Nation band is situated just north of Fort McMurray and has a cluster of locally owned companies that deliver services to the nearby oil sands industry. Interestingly, the successful anti-fur campaign in Europe brought his band closer to the oil sands industry;

We used to fight the oil sands and to fight the development from coming here. We wanted to protect our way of life and you know trapping was a very lucrative business for my people to be involved with. People were hunters and trappers and then in the 1980's there was an anti-fur campaign in Europe. They made it illegal for Canadian fur to be sold in Europe. So as a result of the anti-fur campaign, overnight our economy was dead, not only here, but across Northern Canada. Then in 1996 after fighting the industry since the 1970's, we decided to change the community. We decided to be more cooperative with industry so that we could obtain some benefits from the resource development that was going on in our neighborhood (Boucher, personal interview, 2011).

Asked about how the strong industry presence has affected the traditional lifestyles of the community, Boucher responded that they still have a strong trapping sector in the community and that they make sure that they are compensated by the industry when being disturbed by their projects (Boucher, personal interview, 2011). Furthermore, he commented that the way the relationship between industry and Aboriginals is portrayed in Europe is somewhat simplistic by emphasizing that although there are some concerns, especially with the pace and scale of development, the industry brings good things for people too; “We have a really good community here from the perspective of housing, education, social services, health services, and so on, better than other First Nation communities because the oil sands provide us with these opportunities” (Boucher, personal interview, 2011). Professor Robert Page from the Institute of Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy (ISEEE) at the University of Calgary also pointed to the more complex relationship between industry and the Aboriginal communities. He particularly asserted that there might be a tension within each community between those who want a more traditional way of life including

⁷² Interview with Chief Vern Janvier on *The Source*. January 25th 2012. Interview can be retrieved on: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ReqBY-dwlfk> Accessed: March 31st. 2012.

hunting and trapping, and those who want to tap more into the wage-economy by exploiting the opportunities provided by local oil sands development (Page, personal interview, 2011).

Dwayne Jean, a member of the Janvier Chipewyan First Nation near Statoil's facilities illustrated this potential divide between traditional and more modern elements within each community; "I have never been a hunter. I have never really been a trapper" (Jean, personal interview, 2011). He specifically indicated that he took advantage of the business opportunities that came along with the arrival of Statoil and other companies in his area. Nevertheless, he also mentioned that some of his friends were still doing hunting and trapping in the traditional way (Jean, personal interview, 2011). Mayor Melissa Blake in Fort McMurray mentioned that they have some 800 million dollars in contracts going to Aboriginal companies in the area (Blake, personal interview, 2011). Furthermore, Patrick Brazeau, a Canadian senator of Aboriginal origin, actually branded Greenpeace's use of Aboriginal people in their campaigns "problematic" insofar as with 1,600 employed directly and numerous business contracts, the oil sands industry is actually one of the largest employers of Aboriginal people in the country.⁷³

Still, there have been numerous manifestations of concerns deriving from Aboriginal communities, especially with the pace and scale of development, and potential impacts on human health, as exemplified by the cases of Fort Chipewyan, Beaver Lake Cree, and the Lubicon Cree First Nation. According to American sociologist Dorothy Nelkin, journalists often cast the problems of technology and environment in the form of social drama, or even a "David versus Goliath" conflict with a specific human interest angle (Nelkin, 1995). Although specifically referring to the controversy surrounding an abandoned waste disposal site in upstate New York, and the potential effects it had on the local community, such a human interest angle of conflict and controversy is also highly relevant in the media portrayal of the relationship between industry and Aboriginal communities.

However, the examples from Janvier and Fort McKay also illustrate a different side of the relationship between industry and the Aboriginal communities, a side characterized by employment opportunities and business contracts. Arguably, the relationship is more complex and complicated than what is currently being portrayed through the Norwegian media. Edward Said (1978) famously

⁷³ "Greenpeace use of aboriginal people problematic". In: *APTN National News* (web). 30th September 2011. Available at: <http://aptn.ca/pages/news/2011/09/30/hypocritical-greenpeace-use-of-aboriginal-people-problematic-senator-brazeau/>. Accessed: 31st March 2012.

referred to western attitudes towards the Middle East as “orientalism”, or Eurocentric prejudice based on assumptions that did not necessarily fit reality. Perhaps there are similar forces at work in the oil sands debate where many Europeans view Canadian Aboriginals as a people in the forefront of issues concerning nature and the environment, while the reality is somewhat more complex. While there surely are examples of local opposition, NIMBY-ism, there are also other examples of economic cooperation and local benefits.

6.5: Putting geography, scale, and place into the equation

This chapter has analyzed different geographical implications in connection with the oil sands debate. Both concerns and different arguments in favor of industry are divided into different geographical scales. The global storylines about climate change and energy demand are highly relevant also in the Canadian context insofar as many ENGOs argue against the oil sands based on climate implications, and industry, on their side, refer to the need for global energy supply. Interestingly, the local ENGOs based in Alberta do not talk first and foremost about the climate concerns of the industry. They refer more to problems related to water, land-use, the pace of development, wildlife, or the close link between government and industry, i.e. concerns that are having a tangible local impact thus evoking more location-specific NIMBY criticism. This demonstrates the relevance of geographical scales in the oil sands discussion. Bigger and more internationally oriented ENGOs, however, like Greenpeace, Forest Ethics, and the Sierra Club, evaluate the oil sands to a larger degree on concerns for the climate. In this case, distance to the sites of production does not have any relevance, hence illustrating a more general NOPE-argumentation (Not on Planet Earth) Furthermore, there can also be made a distinction here in terms of another theoretical perspective that I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter. Climate change can arguably have local consequences, but first and foremost it is a global concern that can, in the worst case scenario, affect anyone, anywhere. Hence, it becomes a concern for the publics in general (Michael, 2009), and in this context the rapidly expanding development of the oil sands can be identified as a culprit, especially because of the challenges associated with high emissions in this particular industry. For the publics in particular, those living in the area, however, more local tangible concerns dominate, like worries about water, land, wildlife, and most importantly the rapid pace of development.

On the local scale, the NIMBY-theory can largely be abandoned insofar as very few Albertans, none of those I spoke to, actually argue in favor of a complete shut-down of industry. Those that were concerned do rather prefer more monitoring, slower development, or even a preliminary

moratorium. Apart from the environmental concerns, by looking at the national and local scale, it has been demonstrated that this particular resource actually plays an important economic role for Canada, Alberta, and different local communities. Furthermore, these benefits are arguably more “visible” in Alberta itself in terms of specific job opportunities, royalties, investments etc. Both Mayor Blake and Minister of Energy Liepert revealed the very direct importance of oil sands related to benefits for the economy of Fort McMurray, and the province of Alberta respectively. Indeed, it can even be argued that some politicians in Alberta actually advocated a “PIMBY-policy” (Please in My Backyard) when they strived to attract foreign investors and companies to the oil sands before development really took off. Nevertheless, when the oil sands “left Alberta” through TransCanada’s planned expansion of the Keystone XL pipeline, arguably a NIMBY/NOPE coalition could be identified that eventually forced President Obama to put the pipeline on hold. In these circumstances, what can be termed different NOPE-groups consisting of various US ENGOs primarily opposed to the oil sands on grounds of its climate record aligned themselves with more location specific opposition in Nebraska, where there was widespread concerns of a potential leak deriving from the planned pipeline.⁷⁴ Arguably, it is the former group that is most heard in the Norwegian media context as the enviro-political discourse coalition advocate a complete shutdown of the industry based on climate concerns that are not location specific. All these examples imply that geography, scale, and place play an important role in both the perceptions of the oil sands and in terms of what specific issues are relevant. Indeed, the most vocal critics of the oil sands on a national scale are usually based outside of Alberta in what can almost be labelled “reverse NIMBY-ism” where opposition actually increases with distance. That could also be why many ENGOs have adopted an “octopus” strategy, where they attack the construction of pipelines that cross into other territories, i.e. “the tentacles” instead of trying to generate opposition in the province itself (Stanway, personal interview, 2012). The rationale behind such a strategy derives from the recognition that local opposition, NIMBYism, is not strong enough on the provincial scale.

The storyline concerning Aboriginal communities, that the extraction of oil sands comes at the expense of their constitutional rights, is discussed by making the relationship between industry and these communities more complex, and not so clear cut as portrayed briefly in the Norwegian media.

⁷⁴ See for instance: “Keystone XL Pipeline – New Route Sparks Complaints in Nebraska that Old Concerns not Addressed”. In: *Montreal Gazette*. 19. April 2012. Available at: <http://www.montrealgazette.com/technology/route+Keystone+pipeline+proposed+through+Nebraska/6486974/story.html> Accessed: 25. April 2012

There are indeed those who are directly employed by the industry, and who have their livelihood depending on it, exemplified by the Fort McKay First Nation. While the publics in general, exemplified by the Norwegian opposition to the oil sands, might perceive this as a straightforward exploitative relationship where industry impairs the constitutional rights of the Aboriginal population, the publics in particular, the Aboriginals actually living in the areas might experience it differently as it also represents a major economic possibility. Nevertheless, there are also Aboriginal groups and individuals who have aligned themselves with different ENGOs in resisting oil sands development. While these groups do not want to see industrial expansion on their specific land, the ENGOs like Greenpeace do not want to see development because of wider climate/environmental implications – again the workings of a NIMBY/NOPE coalition.

7: Conclusion – The dilemma of balancing two conflicting roles

- “*You are more motivated to understand an industry that is contributing in a significant way to your own well-being.*”

Paul Stanway, head of communications for Enbridge Northern Gateway

The Norwegian debate about oil sands was, contrary to expectations, less polarized than what I had expected beforehand. This because Statoil was to a large extent left alone in defending this controversial industry while the opposition was much bigger, consisting mainly of a broad coalition of environmental organizations and politicians advocating their withdrawal from Alberta. This discourse coalition was held together with the consistent use of similar storylines (Hajer, 1995) criticizing Statoil’s oil sands for its climate implications, concerns for the Aboriginal communities, for prioritizing this resource and not renewables, and for destroying the reputation of Norway as a country addressing climate concerns. Although Statoil tried to respond to this criticism through the use of their own set of storylines emphasizing technological innovation and global energy demand, they were outnumbered in terms of both the number of citations and contributions with regards to opinion pieces. Greenpeace, WWF, and other Norwegian ENGOs have arguably acted as the *primary definers* (Hall, et al., 1978) of the oil sands issue in the Norwegian mediatised debate.

On a deeper level, the understanding of the oil sands as an issue in Norway is largely predicated on the dominance of an environmental frame. In most cases journalists craft their reporting on Statoil and the oil sands framing it mainly as an environmental issue where the specific articles are about protests against Statoil’s participation at the annual meeting, the water trial, emission-numbers, a proposed EU fuel directive, or the comments made by minister Ola Borten Moe. Those are just a few important examples. Less attention is given to competing frames like the already mentioned energy supply and the economic opportunities associated with this industry.

When switching to the Canadian media context the debate is even more polarized with considerable levels of conflict between opposing stakeholders. It is here that the resources are situated, and it is here that both the biggest potential winners, and losers, are located as well, hence making the discussion more polarized with considerable levels of conflict. One of the major differences compared to the Norwegian debate is the active and pro-industry participation of all levels of government in the debate as well. The federal government headed by Prime Minister

Stephen Harper, the Alberta provincial government, and even local municipalities like Wood Buffalo, headed by outspoken mayor Melissa Blake, are all actively engaged in the oil sands debate. The debate is more polarized and more is at stake, especially when it comes to future development like the Keystone XL and Northern Gateway pipelines. Indeed, those advocating the oil sands industry do not want a situation where there is a lot of bitumen, but no way to transport it and sell it to the markets. There is a high level of conflict between different participants in the debate because there is a lot at stake. The media, however, plays into this with its own presentations where conflict and dramatization are important news values in their own right (Bonfadelli, 2010). That has arguably led to a situation where the conflict has gotten further exacerbated with even more polarization, exemplified with proponents even trying to reframe the whole debate with the “ethical oil” argument. Nevertheless, one of the consequences for the wider public might be that they interpret and understand the oil sands based largely on these mediated presentations, hence using them as specific sense-making devices (Ryghaug, 2006). That is an effect that probably happens in both countries. Norwegians might understand the oil sands mainly as something their company, Statoil, should not do based on for example protests at the annual general assembly. Canadians might associate the oil sands with high levels of conflicts between arch-exponents like Greenpeace who calls it “dirty oil”, or other groups labelling it friendly “ethical oil” compared to the oil coming from dictatorships in the Middle East. What happens in both countries is that the middle ground, for instance the more sober scientific or academic viewpoints, gets completely hollowed out. It is easy to draw parallels to the climate discussion that started out as a scientific debate, but progressed into a highly politicized battle with higher levels of conflict and polarization. Furthermore, according to the dependency-theory by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1982), the relative importance of these media presentations increase with distance insofar as people with less possibility of making their own personal experiences with the issue at stake will depend more on the media for their understanding of in this case the oil sands. In that context Norwegians who are far removed from the sites of production will depend on media’s presentations of the oil sands. That brings me to the relevance of geography in the oil sands debate.

In Alberta itself there are very few who would permanently stop oil sands development, hence the NIMBY-argument can largely be dismissed. As I have shown in this thesis there are compelling arguments in terms of economy, jobs, and provincial revenues that certainly facilitate support for the industry. Nonetheless, while very few in the province argue for such a complete shut down, they do raise a different set of concerns illustrating how geography at different scales is important in terms of

what issues and arguments are relevant in the oil sands discussion. In particular there have been raised local concerns about the pace and scale of development, the close connection between industry and government, and localized environmental problems affecting water, land and wildlife. While the PIGS (publics in general), in Norway, might view the globalized issue of climate change as the biggest problem associated with oil sands production, the PIPS (publics in particular), those living in Alberta, give more importance to other more locally based concerns. Their opinions are, however, quite differentiated as also at least some local stakeholders act as the exception to the rule by stressing more global concerns associated with this industry. Carolyn Campbell from the Alberta Wilderness Association did, for example, highlight both implications for local wildlife and global climate when asked about major concerns with current oil sands development (Campbell, personal interview, 2011). Hence, the usefulness of a strict divide between PIPS and PIGS might be questioned.

With regards to the dismissal of the NIMBY-argument there are a couple of exceptions where theory might be said to hold some ground. First, some Aboriginal groups have explicitly resisted development on their land because of the consequences that has for their livelihoods and their traditional way of living. Second, when the industry “leaves” Alberta in the form of pipelines crossing into other territories, local resistance concerned with risks of oil leakage becomes more apparent. This was particularly visible in the discussion over Keystone XL and the route through Nebraska. In both cases, these NIMBY-opposition groups aligned themselves with groups that are more opposed to the oil sands on more principal grounds and not that location-specific. These can be classified as NOPE-groups and examples are Greenpeace and the founder of the 350 organization, Bill McKibben. The latter was instrumental in the opposition against the Keystone XL pipeline. The Keystone XL was arguably, at one level, a struggle against a specific pipeline. On a higher level it was a struggle against the Albertan oil sands in general, and ultimately it was a struggle against the oil industry itself, to a large extent fuelled by worries for the climate. In truth, that specific pipeline quickly became a symbol for those wider concerns. This NOPE/NIMBY coalition is even visible in the Norwegian context. Leading up to the annual general assembly of Statoil in 2012, Greenpeace and WWF, who were opposed to the oil sands on grounds of NOPE-arguments, did actually invite a member of the Aboriginal community from Alberta, Francois Paulette, to campaign with them advocating for a withdrawal of Statoil from Canada. Thus, we see interesting alliances created between NOPE and NIMBY groups, between PIGs and PIPs.

Nevertheless, the chapter elaborating the issue from the Canadian point of view has also shown how the Aboriginal storyline mentioned in the media analysis is somewhat simplified. What is portrayed as an outright exploitative relationship is actually more complex as many Aboriginal groups derive a significant part of their livelihoods from oil sands development, exemplified by both the Janvier Prairie Chipewyan First Nation and the Fort McKay First Nation. More research could definitely have been conducted on whether there is a cultural conflict between more traditional and modern segments within each Aboriginal community related to oil sands development. This complexity however, is not reflected in the Norwegian debate where the counterargument that many Aboriginal groups actually depend on this industry for their livelihoods is not apparent at all. It seems like the dominant media representations, and the publics in general, in this case the Norwegian opposition, understand this relationship as very one-sided with industry exploiting the constitutional rights of the Aboriginal people. This might resonate with widely held cultural beliefs in the Aboriginals as a people in the forefront of issues like the environment and conservation. Parallels might be drawn to the reductions in complexity that Said (1978) accused Europeans of doing in his book *Orientalism*. The publics in particular, those affected and situated locally, the various Aboriginal communities living in the oil sands areas, might view the situation differently in what certainly is a complex relationship.

Globalization has made the media discussion of oil sands truly international. At least it made the opposition to the project more global through the fast spreading of images and gathering of protest as we have seen related to Keystone XL, the EU Fuel Directive, or the annual protests at Statoil. Although oil and petroleum-products are global commodities, the oil sands industry however, is locally based, and it is there that the economic spinoffs are mostly experienced. Geography matters both in how media presents the oil sands and in how the general public perceives the industry. Journalists influence, but also respond to the “public mood” over certain issues (Lindahl, 1983; Schudson, 1989; Gamson, 1988). Hence, such “audience assumptions” are important, as issues are usually crafted in terms that resonate with the wider public (Nelkin, 1995).

The interviews, but also sheer data of petroleum production, have to a large extent exhibited how Alberta is a province that depends on the oil and gas industry where the oil sands is the latest development. Norway, however, is in a similar situation, with oil and gas revenues constituting 25

percent of Norwegian Gross Domestic Product and a staggering 52 percent of exports.⁷⁵ Why then are public perceptions generally more positive about such development in Alberta than in Norway? Some explanation might be found in the fact that the industry is more “tangible” in economic terms for the general public in Alberta than in Norway. Ministers make no hesitations in connecting the lower tax rates to these revenues. In 2006, former Alberta Premier, Ralph Klein, even gave every Albertan a check for 400 dollars from the revenue surplus, and in a recent provincial election, the Wildrose Alliance Party promised to do the same.⁷⁶ Norway, however, has to a larger degree chosen to live off taxes by setting apart oil revenues in their Petroleum Fund. Indeed, Alberta originally had a similar arrangement with the Heritage Fund, but later governments have not put aside much money for that purpose (Sweeny, 2010). Thus, Norwegians are to a larger extent “removed” from such tangible economic benefits of oil and gas development. The arguments coming from Statoil about the importance of oil sands, in terms of global energy demand, will then not resonate as most people will not feel how this is contributing to their own well-being. Indeed, while many Albertans will act as PIPS because they have tangible stakes in the debate, in the Norwegian debate, however, more or less only Statoil acts as PIPS because they have a considerable stake as they would like to continue with this development.

When it comes to the oil sands, and Statoil’s involvement in Alberta, Norway faces a dilemma in juggling two different roles alternating between being a country addressing climate concerns, and being an important producer of oil. Statoil will claim that they have the technological solutions to mitigate most of the environmental impacts, hence combining the two roles. The Norwegian media presentation does not, however, seem to indicate that those two roles can be combined insofar as the oil sands is presented mainly as an environmental liability for Norway.

⁷⁵ See: “Economywatch – Norway Trade, Exports and Imports”. Available at: http://www.economywatch.com/world_economy/norway/export-import.html Accessed: 27. April 2012.

⁷⁶ “Smith Pledges “Ralph Bucks” Style Royalty Rebates”. In: *Edmonton Journal*. 2. April 2012. Available at: <http://www.edmontonjournal.com/news/alberta-politics/6398163/story.html> Accessed: 27. April 2012.

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Interviews

Industry:

Paul Stanway – Director of communications, Enbridge Northern Gateway (pipeline company)

Vincent Saubestre – Executive director of the Oil Sands Leadership Initiative (OSLI)

Travis Davies - manager of media relations at the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP)

Gerald Bruce – Executive Director of the Canadian Heavy Oil Association (CHOA)

Joel Thompson - Manager of Communications at Suncor Energy

Pius Rolheiser – Manager of Media Relations at Imperial Oil

Jean-Michel Gires – Chief Executive Officer of Total Canada Inc.

Gord Lambert - Vice President of Sustainable Development at Suncor Energy

Politicians:

David Sands – Head of the Public Affairs Bureau at the Government of Alberta

Rob Renner – Former Minister of Environment in Alberta

Ron Liepert – Former Minister of Energy, now Minister of Economy Alberta

Melissa Blake - Mayor of Wood Buffalo Municipality (Fort McMurray)

Don Reimer, CEO of Seventh Haven Group, former head of communications at Wood Buffalo Municipality, Fort McMurray

Kyle Harrietha – Local politician from the Liberal Party in Fort McMurray and member of local stakeholder group CEMA

Environmental organizations and spokesmen:

John Bennett – Executive Director of the Sierra Club Canada

Mike Hudema – Oil Sands campaigner at Greenpeace Canada, Edmonton

Carolyn Campbell – Policy Analyst at the Alberta Wilderness Association

Aaron Sanger - Director US Campaigns of Forest Ethics

Nathan Lempers – Researcher at the Pembina Institute

Andrew Nikiforuk – Well-known oil sands critic and author of “Tar Sands – Dirty Oil and the Future of a Continent”

Ruth Kleinbub - Local environmentalist based in Fort McMurray

Dr. John O’Connor – The local doctor who revealed the cases of cancer downstream in Fort Chipewyan

Bart Robinson – Media spokesman for the Alberta Ecotrust

Mel Teghtmeyer – leader of the Council of Canadians, Prairie chapter

Academics:

Bob Page – Professor at the Institute of sustainable energy, environment and economy (ISEEE) at the University of Calgary

Peter Silverstone – Professor at the University of Alberta and author of “Greenest Oil”

Andrew Leach – Professor in economy, energy and the environment at the University of Alberta

Media:

Barbara Yaffe – Journalist from the *Vancouver Sun* writing about energy issues

Mike de Souza - Postmedia, writing mostly for the *National Post* about energy issues

Matt Palmer - Documentarist at *Intentional Film* and photographer.

Rebecca Penty - Energy journalist at the *Calgary Herald*

Deborah Jaremko – Journalist at the *Oil Sands Review*

Carol Christian - Journalist at *Fort McMurray Today*

Ezra Levant - Author of “Ethical Oil” and talkshow-host at *The Source*

First Nations Representatives:

Dwayne Jean - Chipewyan Prairie First Nation band member, Janvier

Jim Boucher - Chief Fort McKay First Nation, north of Fort McMurray

Appendix – Example of an interview guide

Master thesis preliminary title:

“Between environmental concerns, energy needs and business opportunity”

-The public perception of Statoil’s oil sands production in Canada

Semi-structured interview:

Industry perspective – Travis Davies, CAPP

- 1) Background** – Education and Media background? Position?
- 2) Oil Sands in general** – In light of heavy criticism give me some good reasons why this resource should be exploited anyway? Importance to Alberta and Canada? Is enough being done to satisfy local stakeholders, like the various indigenous communities? What about Fort Chipewyan?
- 3) The illusive general public** – What do you think the average Canadian thinks about the industry? Differing opinions with geographical distance? Alberta and the rest of the country? Any surveys available?
- 4) Media** – What are your thoughts about how the media portrays the oil sands? Local/National differences? (Alberta vs The rest of Canada?) What importance do you give to the media in the construction of “public perception” of the oil sands? Comments on the Tar/Oil sands dispute? Written media, TV-advertisements, what about social media? Is the oil sands industry on the losing side in a PR-war?
- 5) The Future** – What are your predictions for the future of the Albertan oil sands? A complete shutdown as advocated by some ENGOs? Some critics say it is being developed too fast, comments on that?
- 6) Statoil and Norway** – I have seen some critics pointing to Norway as a yardstick for Alberta in how to manage oil resources, any comments on that? Do you in any way view Statoil differently than other oil companies participating in the oil sands?
- 7) Anyone else I should talk too? Recommended material for my research?**