

## 2 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

In forest communications, forest protection or conservation has become an issue of local (Hamilton and Bensted-Smith, 1989; Bray, 1991), regional (Rakestraw, 1979), and global dimensions (Bowles et al., 1998; Schwartzman et al., 2000). Since the UNCED was staged in 1992, attention to these issues has been rapidly increasing in global politics (Humphrey, 1996). Forest destruction, especially due to biodiversity loss, has led to the need for conservation to be recognized worldwide in all societies. The principles of sustainable forest management have been developed and have led to even more emphasis on conservation. Forests, however, have long been and are still being cleared for timber, agriculture, stock farming, roads, and buildings all over the world, in response to the demands of development-oriented economic growth. The need for conservation fully conflicts with such forest uses. In communicating about forest use and conservation, the claim that forest conservation is needed is expressed through various channels of society. According to Burkart's theory (2002), communication is a process that integrates communicators, messages, and channels. To understand the process of communication, its context must be understood. In this paper, the political and social situation of Korea and the global society are described. Their particular conditions influence environmental policies in Korean and global society. Democratic change in Korea has instigated the birth of many environmental associations and facilitates extensive environmental discourse. Increasing numbers of international organizations and conferences have catalyzed discussion of forest conservation between and within countries, and have helped countries collaborate with each other in solving forest problems practically.

## 2.1 South Korea

The democratization process has affected environmental politics and policy in South Korea. Other newly democratized countries, such as Chile and Poland, have had similar experiences, in that democratization has created opportunities for improved environmental governance (Lim and Tang, 2002). This paper deals with the Korean democratization process, which has led to the establishment of a foundation that enables and facilitates environmental communication in policy-making processes. For more than 30 years (from 1961 to 1993), South Korea was ruled by military-dominated governments. The push to democratize and reform Korean politics and government increased, and resulted in the creation of an anti-dictatorship coalition. This culminated in June 1987 in a pro-democracy protest against the military regime, which involved college students, opposition parties, labor organizations, and lower- and middle-class citizens. The June Struggle against the authoritarian regime can be characterized as a civic revolution from below, in the sense that coordinated efforts of civic groups provided the major impetus for the country's democratic transformation (Oh, 1999). After the revolution of civil society in 1987, civil society was differentiated according to the interests of various groups. In the process, civil associations dedicated to the environment, education, health, human rights, women, and other concerns were organized. This change indicates the development of Korean democracy. A study has pointed out the qualitative levels of Korean democracy. Beetham et al. (2002) carried out a pilot project for the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) to assess the condition of democracy and its progress throughout the world. The democratic systems of eight countries (Bangladesh, El Salvador, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, New Zealand, Peru, and South Korea) were assessed by means of some key democratic indicators for each of the 14 dimensions of democracy.<sup>1</sup> According to the assessment, civil and political rights clearly exist in Korea, and they have been significantly strengthened in recent years. The electoral process itself is generally free and fair, and the election results are widely accepted. In addition, the police and national security services have become quite accountable and have won considerable public confidence.

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<sup>1</sup> The assessment factors were as follows: citizenship, law, and rights; the rule of law and access to justice; civil and political rights; economic and social rights; free and fair elections; the democratic role of political parties; government effectiveness and accountability; civilian control of the military and police; minimization of corruption; the media in a democratic society; political participation; government responsiveness; decentralization; and international dimensions of democracy (Beetham, 2002).

All the existing parties, however, are still centered on a few political leaders and are not mass parties. The Korean party system lacks ideological diversity. Although Korea has made considerable progress with respect to instituting local autonomy, it still has a powerful centralist tradition. While socio-economic development has increased citizens' participation in public life, women's political participation has remained low. This democratic condition is an important deciding factor of civic activity and public communication in society. A high-level democratic system guarantees citizens' freedom to express their opinions and to act in various ways. In Korean society, improvements in democracy have influenced civic participation in the process of decision-making and communication through media. This will be described in the next paragraphs.

While the Korean political system was undergoing democratization, the environmental movement was also gathering steam (Lim and Tang, 2002). In particular, two types of freedom had promoted the emergence of environmental movements in Korea: freedom of the press and freedom of association. With regard to the first, in contemporary society, the media contributes to democracy. Free and open media in democratic settings help disseminate information on the adverse environmental effects of development projects (Payne, 1995). During the authoritarian era in Korea, however, the government had a tight control over the media. Under the press guidelines of the regime, newspapers, presses, and broadcasting companies could report only stories that supported and justified government policies (Lim and Tang, 2002). They rarely had opportunities to report critically on environmental problems. Despite these restrictions, an alternative public sphere emerged. The terminology of these media reflects their character; "resistance media" and "liberty media" in the 1970s, and "counter media" in the 1980s (Kim, 2006). After the democratic transition in 1987, the media gained their independence from the government. *Hankyoreh* was established in 1988 as an independent newspaper in the category of alternative media (Atton, 2002; Vatikiotis, 2005). It tried new ways of capital, managerial, and editorial direction that differed from those of other media outlets. First, it was formed by a collection of citizens' stocks to keep heavy stockholders from controlling the press. This structure enables the *Hankyoreh* to be independent in terms of power and capital (Lim, 1996). Until now, *Hankyoreh* is recognized as a progressive newspaper. Since the late 1980s, most government media controls have been gradually lifted. The liberalized mass media now reports

many environmental issues. The media has raised public concerns on the environment, has cooperated with environmental associations, and has helped the public present their opinions on the government's environmental policies. With the expansion of civil society and social movements, different civil movements have been using their own media--citizen's media (Rodriguez, 2001; Vatikiotis, 2005)--to inform others of their values and to communicate systemically. The civic media dealt with new issues that the mainstream media did not (Kim, 2006).

Second, freedom of association facilitates the formation of civic organizations that seek to represent the environmental interests of dispersed citizens (Payne, 1995). After the democratic transition in 1987, prominent environmental organizations were established in Korea, such as Green Korea United (GKU) in 1991, Citizens' Movement for Environmental Justice (CMEJ) in 1992, and the Korean Federation of Environmental Movements (KFEM) in 1993. Some forest-related associations were also established, such as Green Cause in 1989, the National Park Conservation Network in 1993, Forest for Life and the Northeast Asian Forest Forum in 1998, Forest for Peace in 1999, the Forest Interpreters' Association in 2000, and Seoul Green Trust and the Korea Forest Foundation in 2003 (Table 2.1-1). Especially, Forest for Life led a professional movement for tending forests. Through the promotion of forest care, it created forest-related jobs to ease the economic crisis of 1997. It began the idea of the "forest school," whereby school walls were broken down and trees were planted in their place. Forest schools play an important role as environmental education venues. They also provide the public with various forest events and educational programs, and promote a forest culture not only in urban areas but also in forest villages. They likewise suggest some models of sustainable forest management to the Korea Forest Service. *Forest for Peace* helps in the restoration of destroyed forest areas in North Korea. The *Northeast Asian Forest Forum* promotes environmentally sound and sustainable management of forest ecosystems in Northeast Asian regions by strengthening their inter-country networks. The *Forest Interpreters' Association* supplies the public and experts with forest education programs. *Seoul Green Trust* aims to extend and manage forest areas in Seoul through partnerships among individuals, associations, enterprises, and the government. The *Korea Forest Foundation* gives back profits from green lotteries to support forest projects. Other forest-related

associations prevent the construction of golf courses, ski resorts, and residential facilities in areas that where forests will be destroyed.

Korea’s forest conservation movements have changed with the country’s political environment. At first, the conservation movement was a pan-national campaign of the government. In 1977, the Nature Protection Campaign (in Korean, *Jayon-Boho Undong*) was initiated (Lim and Tang, 2002). It aimed to prevent hikers from throwing trash in mountains. Through the campaign, the idea of cleaning mountains by picking up waste, not throwing waste just anywhere, and bringing waste home (Lee, 1995) was regarded as another form of nature protection. As the movement for nature protection led by civil associations gained momentum, the activities of forest-related associations also increased beginning in the late 1990s (Table 2.1-1). The associations strived most to protect or conserve forests that are threatened with conversion.

**Table 2.1-1. Forest associations in Korea.**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Year Founded</b>	<b>Main Activities</b>
Green Cause	1989	Training of green forest guides
National Park Conservation Network	1993	Conservation of national parks
Forest for Life	1998	Tending of forests, establishment of schools for forests, etc.
Northeast Asian Forest Forum	1998	International cooperation on forests in Northeast Asia
Forests for Peace	1999	Rehabilitation of forest areas in North Korea
Forest Interpreters’ Association	2000	Forest education
Seoul Green Trust	2003	Extension of urban forests
Korea Forest Foundation	2003	Fostering of a forest culture

South Korea has 6.4 million hectares of forests, which cover about 64.3% of the country’s total land area, but almost 59% of its forests are below 30 years of age (Korea Forest Service, 2006). Due to their youth, Korean forests have low wood productivity. Relatively, the resource demand for the construction of some industrial facilities on forest lands is too high compared with the expected profits. Here, the interests of forest conservation and forest use conflict. In 1990, residents of the metropolitan city of Gwangju resisted the plan to build a road near the city. In 1997, the residents of Gayasan<sup>2</sup> opposed the construction of a golf course in their mountain

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<sup>2</sup> The term of ‘-san’ means a mountain area

area. In 1999, residents of Yongin City, the Ministry of Construction and Transportation, and a public company had a standoff because of housing developments that were proposed for Daejisan, a mountain area (Yoo, 2001 and Kim et. al, 2006a). Most of these conflicts consisted of clashes between the government and/or private enterprises and residents and/or environmental associations. Residents and environmental NGOs co-led forest conservation movements. Media outlets then thematized the conflict of interest between forest use and conservation. In particular, they paid attention to planned events, such as campaigns, petitions, and performances, for forest conservation.

## **2.2 Global society**

Today, modern society is often described as a world society or a global society because of the increasing interconnectedness of people and places under globalization (Giddens, 1990; McGrew, 1992). The proliferation of international or transnational organizations could be explained by the logic of globalization. International organizations are expected to provide a wide range of global public goods that demand deep compliance the world over. These organizations require people in both developed and developing countries to commit to global goals. According to the Human Development Report 2002 (UNDP, 2002), over the past 20 years, there has been an explosion in transnational or global civil society networks. The first registered international non-government organization (NGO), the Anti-slavery Society, was formed in 1839; and by 1874, there were already 32. There was an astonishing increase in the number of international NGOs, however, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from 1,083 in 1914 to more than 37,000 in 2000. Nearly a fifth of today's international NGOs were formed after 1990. Over four decades, the population of global associations that are working for social and political change grew almost six-fold from 110 in 1953 to 631 in 1993 (Union of International Associations, 1996). The fastest organizational growth in more recent years has occurred around environmental issues. Smith (1998) summarized how a growing global social movement sector affects the development of global civil society. According to him, global social movement organizations signal the presence of much broader global social networks and provide new and ongoing opportunities for marginalized groups to seek to influence global political change. They supply structured

opportunities for activism in the form of staff and volunteer activities, as well as internships. They help bring together constituencies that lack natural ties or that have thin infrastructures at the national level, which frustrate collective action. Occasionally, activists within a country appeal to international institutions or states outside the targeted government's boundaries to bring pressure on that government. In addition, they help generate and guide global public discourse and debate around global problems.

Since the mid-19th century, world communication has acquired a prominent status on the agenda of world politics. More than ever before, international publicity has become an essential instrument in the conduct of the business of world politics. World communication is the predominant source of the perceptions that decision-makers and their constituencies hold about events in the world (Hamelink, 1994). Mass media contribute to world communication. The development of communications technologies has made it much more feasible for mass media to distribute its products worldwide as cheaply and as quickly as within its own locality or country (McQuail, 1994). Mass media supplies a global public sphere that is a social space that spans all continents (Thörn, 2007). The concept of the global public sphere will be described in detail in chapter 3.4 ('Public sphere').

Deforestation is an issue that is affecting all regions of the world, because it continues at an alarming rate of about 13 million hectares a year at the global level (FAO, 2007). In particular, the destruction and degradation of tropical forests is now recognized as one of the greatest environmental threats and tragedies of all time. It is becoming an extremely important global issue (Riswan and Hartanti, 1995). Rapid population growth, expansion of croplands, and intensive harvesting of forests for fuel, wood, and wood exports contribute to deforestation in many areas of the world, particularly in developing countries such as Brazil and China (Allen and Barnes, 1985). Constant activities to stop deforestation and conserve forests have progressed in the global dimension. In global forest politics, four rounds of intergovernmental negotiations have taken place since 1990: the *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED) (1990-1992), the *Intergovernmental Panel on Forests* (IPF) (1995-1997), the *Intergovernmental Forum on Forests* (IFF) (1997-2000), and the *United Nations Forum on Forests* (UNFF) (2000 to the present). In 1992, UNCED or the Earth Summit was considered a milestone in global environmental politics. At the conference, the forest issue was dealt with as

one of the most controversial issues in developing and developed countries. The conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil resulted in the 'Forest Principles (Conservation and Sustainable Development of all Types of Forests)' and Chapter 11 of Agenda 21: 'Combating Deforestation.' The Forest Principles emphasize the need for national action and pay special attention to countries' sovereign rights over their forest resources. The document also stresses the importance of international cooperation to implement national policy, and calls for additional technical and financial support for developing countries in their promotion of sustainable forest use (Sizer, 1994). These principles include the concept of sustainable development (SD).

*States have the sovereign and inalienable right to utilize, manage and develop their forests in accordance with their development needs and level of socio-economic development and on the basis of national policies consistent with sustainable development and legislation, including the conversion of such areas for other uses within the overall socio-economic development plan and based on rational land-use policies. Forest resources and forest lands should be sustainably managed to meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual needs of present and future generations (UN, 1992).*

UNCED has led negotiations between governments in the North and the South. Northern countries urged that a Global Forest Convention (GFC) be opened for signature at UNCED to complement the climate change and biodiversity conventions. Southern governments resisted a GFC that could lead to the erosion of their sovereignty over their forest resources (Humphreys, 1996). Despite the positional bargaining, the states agreed upon the non-legally-binding Forest Principles. Similar to this, UNCED played the role of a prominent catalyst of international discussions of environmental issues. After UNCED, several new initiatives on forest conservation have been launched. Under the auspices of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, the IPF and the IFF were founded consecutively as sub-groups of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Both of them represented five years of international forest policy dialogue. One of the most important legacies of the IPF/IFF process is the wide-ranging set of approximately 270 proposals for action, known collectively as the IPF/ IFF Proposals for Action (Humphreys, 2001). The panel urged countries to establish protected areas to safeguard forests, and to expand protected areas, buffer zones, and ecological corridors, so as to conserve forest biodiversity. It closely liaised with the parties in the Convention on Biological Diversity and other relevant international environmental agreements. These proposals provide



governments, international organizations, private-sector entities, and all other major groups with guidance on how to further develop, implement, and coordinate national and international policies on sustainable forest management. In 2000, the UN Economic and Social Council established UNFF as part of a new international arrangement on forests, to continue its work of building on the IPF and IFF processes. UNFF formed a resolution on a ‘multi-year program of work for UNFF for the period 2007-2015 (UN, 2007)’ that reflects the new principal functions of the international arrangement on forests, and which strengthens political commitment at all levels to effectively implement sustainable management for all types of forests.

As the Forest Principles show, the concept of sustainable development (SD) has influenced forest management; and accordingly, the term *Sustainable Forest Management* (SFM) has become widely used. SFM entails certain recommended practices in forests--specifically, the need to consider certain environmental, social, and economic matters. Therefore, it focuses on achieving a balance between society's increasing demands for forest products and benefits, and the preservation of forest health and diversity. To maintain this balance, efforts to protect or conserve forests ranged from conferences and workshops to international agreements and projects in dozens of countries around the world. In Europe, the Conference on the Protection of Forests was held in Strasbourg, France (1990), Helsinki, Finland (1993), Lisbon, Portugal (1998), Vienna, Austria (2003), and Warsaw, Poland (2007) (MCPFE, 2008). Recognizing the need for cross-border protection of forests in Europe, the European countries agreed to cooperate to conserve biological diversity in forests and to promote sustainable forest management in Europe.

Not only intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the UN but also international non-government organizations (INGOs) such as Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) influence forest conservation in several ways. According to the study by Shandra (2007) that empirically evaluated the relationship between INGOs and deforestation, INGOs reduce deforestation. INGOs put pressure on governments by shaping the language of international treaties, and they practically fund conservation efforts. In particular, they have strived to promote conservation of tropical forests through outright protection of high-priority areas (Rice et al., 2001). They take part in forest discourse through various international conferences and fora, and discuss forest issues with administrative representatives of various countries. INGOs especially

focus on studies such as those of the Center for International Forestry Research and the European Forest Institute, which contribute to communicating the issue of forest conservation with a global perspective. Through research reports and practical projects, they help diagnose forest situations or problems and suggest solutions. In particular, international environmental associations are significant participants in media discourse. Many associations are successful in getting media coverage. Their campaigns, actions, and statements are prominently considered in the media (Hansen, 1993). Interestingly, prominent environmental associations such as Greenpeace and Friends of Earth take on the role of *definers*; they act to define and explicate issues or situations in media coverages. In this way, they influence not only the agenda of media but also of policy-making in forest communication. They are able to apply pressure on governments in forest-related decision-making.