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Discursive power in conservation exercised through media

An analysis of WWF's "A Future for All" report and their use of celebrity ambassadors

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Sincerely, Vilde Aardahl Aas

Abstract

Studies on the relationship between conservation and celebrities is still a new field that is still growing and might continue to grow with the changes of new media, and specifically due to the growth of social media. This thesis will add to this field of study, and perhaps contribute to the understanding of how powerful new media is in upholding reputations, and how powerful they can be in the process of changing attitudes towards a topic. I will address how celebrities are used as ambassadors for humanitarian causes, and how the interference of the famous and wealthy can alter and enhance the message of, in this case, conservation organisations. For this paper I chose to focus on the presentation of World Wildlife Fund (WWF), for the organisation's wide reach and contested reputation due to claims of human rights abuse, while maintaining a position in the world as one of the most successful conservation organisations. I found that WWF through their presentation is exercising discursive power, and by using celebrities they are either amplifying their message or shifting focus towards the celebrity. Due to the presentation of outdated views on local communities and indigenous groups as a threat to wildlife and wilderness, and the treatment of said groups, they continue to practice fortress conservation that is closely linked to colonialism.

Keywords: WWF, discursive power, fortress conservation, neo – colonialism, celebrity advocacy, appeals, wilderness

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1. Introduction

Aid is not a new phenomenon and for decades the western part of the world has been encouraged to provide countries in the Global South with necessities or aid during crises. Grand narratives of altruism and global initiatives are written into the history books as successful, while simultaneously capturing the attention of the whole world. From artist Bono's Live Aid in 1985, to actor Leonardo DiCaprio's "*Before the Flood*", and more recently the Climate Live festival with activist Greta Thunberg in the lead. We are constantly being encouraged and reminded of the good we can do for the world. Whether it is through concerts, documentaries or commercials, organisations use appeals in an attempt to reach an audience that can support their cause.

The attention and the pressure that comes from the climate crises calls for environmental organisations now more than ever. Mainstream conservation organisations believe that the answer to preserving life on earth lies within protected areas (Brockington, Duffy, & Igoe, 2012, p. 34). In most of the western part of the world this is an accepted truth, and these organisations continue to receive funding from both wealthy donors and loyal members. One of the most known and influential conservation organisations is World Wildlife Fund (WWF), with over five million members worldwide. Their presentation is strongly relying on a win – win narrative. In their presentation they highlight their continuous work of protecting the planet and the wilderness that defines our survival, while also showing concern for the people who inhabit these unique places, who are at the forefront of wildlife encounters. Their view on wildlife and conservation hasn't gone unnoticed, and it has been contested. Through discoveries of human rights abuse, claims of neo-colonialism and the practice of fortress conservation rather than what they present as a win – win narrative. With such claims it is interesting how an organisation such as WWF can stay relevant and celebrated in a society that heavily relies on social media for information and truth.

I want to answer the question of how WWF communicates their message in their own presentation, and how they use celebrities to amplify this message. I will also discuss whether this can be judged as a form of discursive power, where they attempt to control their win – win narrative to fit a dominant conservation discourse. Further, I will also discuss the impact that such a narrative might have on how a western audience view conservation. An audience

that is often influenced through images on social media, where the representation of wilderness can be obscured to fit a certain presentation. Through the comparison of the presentations of WWF's own conservation initiatives and the accusations of other actors, I will attempt to answer these questions. Lastly, I will attempt to answer whether their practise of conservation can be considered fortress conservation and a form of concealed neo – colonialism.

1.1. Aim of study

This study aims to gather an understanding of the presentation of the work conducted by WWF as a conservation organisation. In relation to conserving vital species, dealing with environmental issues like the climate crisis, their relationship with those who trust and fund the organisation, and lastly their responsibility for local communities and indigenous groups in the areas where they have created protected areas in the name of conservation.

Through this thesis I will present the history of mainstream conservation, and how it has become the leading blueprint for western conservation organisations. Starting with the Yellowstone model, that is still to this day impacting mainstream conservation. The history of conservation dating back to the European colonial era, is vital when attempting to understand the relationship that these organisations have with the Global South. The term wilderness will also be discussed, as it builds on the Yellowstone model, affecting a western view on what is valuable nature, and the discussion of what is to be preserved. This to understand the influence that this idea of wilderness has on mainstream conservation, and the impact it might have on those who both give and receive. This part will also consist of a history of celebrity advocacy and present the idea of compassion fatigue, causing a need for a new way to encourage society to care about the distant 'other' and issues that are geographically and mentally distant from our own reality.

Mainstream conservation is dependent on appeals to achieve funding and to convey their message. I will use Lilie Chouliaraki's definition of appeals to explore the relationship between organisations and their members. Whether it is through beautiful sceneries, presented to us through wildlife documentaries, bringing us closer to "*untouched*" nature, or if it is through speeches held by charismatic celebrities, urging us to act on climate change, we are constantly being put in a position where we are asked to take a stand and have an opinion on issues in countries that are often far from our own reality. Allowing organisations to be our

source of information on these subjects, shaping our views and attitudes towards it. I will attempt to answer how WWF might use this power to control the conservation discourse to their presentation of their own conservation initiatives. Further, I will use this view on appeals to understand how organisations such as WWF might use celebrities to gain support on their initiatives.

This thesis will be divided into two parts. Firstly, I will focus on narratives and different views on the same reality. I will begin by introducing the narrative of World Wildlife Fund (WWF) through the presentation of their 2021 report “A Future for All”. Then I will continue by presenting the view of the opposition to WWF through the view of the organisation Survival International, journalists and researchers. While my second part will be concerned with the media and appeals, where I will present the two WWF celebrity ambassadors Maisie Williams and Leonardo DiCaprio in an attempt to understand how they might amplify and support the narrative that is already presented by WWF

1.2. Research Questions

How is WWF exercising discursive power through media when presenting their conservation initiatives?

With this research question I seek to understand how WWF uses media to reach out to their audience, which is primarily wealthy western societies. What are the results that they bring forward in their reports? Their reports are a result of their success and are open to the public to read about the different projects and protected areas sustained by WWF and their partners. How do they write about their projects and rely on a win-win narrative to present conservation? How do they relate to local communities and indigenous groups in the protected areas created by the organisation? How do they treat human-wildlife conflicts, and who are to blame for these conflicts? I chose WWF as my main objective as I wanted to understand the impact of a big conservation organisations, and due to the attention that WWF gets in the media both good and bad, it is an organisation worth spending time on analysing. Using the theory of discursive power, I will discuss WWF’s presentation of their 2021 report “A Future for All”.

How is WWF using celebrity ambassadors to maintain their narrative and what can the effects of this be?

With this research question I want to explore the importance of the use of celebrity ambassadors. I've decided to use the celebrities Maisie Williams and Leonardo DiCaprio who are both ambassadors for WWF and involved with their work in various degrees. The question I want to ask and attempt to answer, is what influence do these celebrities have on the message they convey to their audience? Is it possible that by conveying a message through celebrities the message gets less important and the focus is shifted towards the celebrity? Or can celebrities be a vital tool in creating awareness of conservation and the importance that WWF claims that it might have? To answer this research question, I will also attempt to compare the two celebrities, and discuss their way of appealing to their audience by using Lilie Chouliaraki's theories on dispassionate and passionate witness. With this I will discuss the influence that these celebrities might have and what effects it might have on their message of conservation and environmentalism. For this research question I will also rely on the celebrity ambassadors' Instagram content as a source to answer it, as I want to explore the picturesque presentation of wilderness and where they apply themselves according to the message.

Can WWF's presentation of their conservation initiatives be explained as concealed neo – colonialism and fortress conservation?

With this research question I will use the information gathered in my analysis of WWF's reports and compare it to other perspectives of the same cases. This comparison can help when addressing the realism of the projects and see if the way WWF presents their cause to their audience is in fact the reality. The claims of WWF conducting concealed neo – colonialism comes partly from the organisation Survival International, along with other organisations focused on the rights of indigenous groups and local communities. By using their statements and applying it to the work of WWF and supporting it by using on the ground research I may attempt to answer the question; can WWF's conservation initiatives be considered concealed neo - colonialism. While also questioning whether this can be fortress conservation rather than a win-win narrative as WWF claims, which would also make it a conservation model similar to that of a colonial era.

1.3. Why World Wildlife Fund (WWF)?

To answer the questions, I had regarding conservation and media, it was relevant for me to find an organisation that had years of experience and an organisation that can be seen as highly influential to the conservation industry, an organisation that can possibly be vital in the

process of altering the conservation discourse. Seeing as WWF has maintained their popularity for such a long period, and their brand, with the panda at the forefront of it, making the organisation instinctively recognisable, and their brand being instantly associated with conservation and environmentalism. The organisation became the most obvious choice for me, due to their very visible position in conservation.

In his book *Nature Unbound*, Brockington (2012, p. 29) criticises large conservation NGOs, and their relationship with corporations and business, that are claimed to be vital for their funding. Further, he argues that large conservation organisations are in a constant competition with each other, to receive more funding from governmental organisations (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 40). This forces organisations to constantly prove progress and successful projects, in order to justify their funding. Brockington (2012, p. 46) also brings forward four NGOs, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Conservation International (CI), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and these are represented as the major organisations in conservation (Brockington et al., 2012). Considering that WWF is viewed as one of the major conservation organisations, I find it relevant to investigate the impact of the organisation. As mentioned in my introduction, WWF is also an organisation with an infamous reputation. Making it an interesting case in terms of a media perspective. The organisation is also very active on social media platforms, they create several wildlife documentaries, and they use celebrities to promote their causes. Overall, it is an organisation with a lot of influence on both conservation and their own presentation in the media.

The organisation Survival International has been very vocal in their disagreement with WWF, and due to the organisations persevering claims of human rights abuse exercised by WWF or by other actors that are connected to the organisation, I find that it is relevant to present this organisation as the opposition to WWF. While Survival International can also be considered an environmental organisation, there is a main difference between the two organisations which makes them useful in comparison. Survival International emphasises that those best equipped to preserve nature are local communities and indigenous groups (Survival International, n.d.-a). Survival International also advocates for the idea that conservation organisations, such as WWF stole the land from ethnic minorities and local communities and continue to abuse the power, they hold over these groups. Survival International claims that this is a new form of colonisation, and that these organisations hide behind the idea of conservation (Survival International, n.d.-a). While Survival International will not be at the

centre of answering my research questions, the vocality of the organisation in their attempt to challenge the message from WWF has caused a lot of media attention, and in the process, they've received a lot of support and attention from other actors, among them journalists and researchers. They've created an avalanche of attention and responses with their claims, and they are worth addressing in this paper.

1.4. Outline of thesis

Chapter two will mainly focus on the background of conservation, primarily mainstream conservation. In this chapter I will attempt to distinguish mainstream conservation from other types of conservation. Introducing the beginning of mainstream conservation, starting with Yellowstone National Park, and how this model has shaped western conservation. Further, I will present the view on wilderness and how it relates to conservation, and the importance of wilderness from a western perspective. Finally, I will focus on how celebrity advocacy may contribute to promote the message of humanitarian organisations, and the merging of celebrity and solidarity drawing on the idea of compassion fatigue.

Chapter three will present my theoretical framework. In this chapter I will present discursive power and how media and especially new media can be an important tool to exercise discursive power. Secondly, I will write about what is meant by concealed neo – colonialism and how fortress conservation is related to colonialism. I will also present the idea of social constructivism and realism. Lastly, I will present appeals and how celebrity advocacy is a large part of this concept.

Chapter four presents my methodology. I will base my thesis on qualitative research methods, mainly document analysis, case studies, digital and social media research. I will also use this chapter to justify my choice of data, as well as presenting possibly challenges that I might encounter during my research. Both limitations to the research and ethical considerations.

Chapter five will present the first part of my empirical content. In this chapter I will present the first part of my analysis, and it will focus on the 2021 report “A Future for All” published by WWF, where they present their conservation initiatives and future goals. With this I will attempt to present WWF's own. Through the case of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and tiger sanctuaries in India, and the relationship between elephant and workers in India, through this presentation I will look at their solutions for human – wildlife conflicts.

Chapter six will be focused on the critique that WWF has received on their conservation initiatives, and I will compare it to the narrative that is presented in their report. This part will also consist of three parts as in the chapter above. Tourism, local communities, and corporations. This in an attempt to compare the presented narratives.

Chapter seven in this chapter I will present the celebrity ambassadors Leonardo DiCaprio and Maisie Williams, both ambassadors for WWF. I will discuss their position as ambassadors for the organisation. By using Lilie Chouliaraki's theories on how celebrity advocates communicate with their audience, I will attempt to categorise the two celebrities. Relying on their media presentation on Instagram, regarding environmentalism.

Chapter eight, in this chapter I will focus on my findings form chapter five, six and seven. Where I will discuss these findings in light of my theoretical framework, in order to find answers to my research questions.

Chapter nine will consist of a summary and a conclusion of my thesis. In this chapter I will present my main findings.

2. Background

To understand the impact of conservation organisations, it is relevant to look at the history of conservation. Using Dan Brockington and Roderick P. Neumann I will gather a picture of the creation of conservation, and the supposed first national park Yellowstone, which is an important milestone in the industry. The change from hunting grounds for royalty and other nobilities, to exotic holidays for the wealthy western societies, are both important aspects to understanding how conservation is conducted today. Understanding the term wilderness is also important when looking at conservation, and how these initiatives are being sold to the market. Explaining compassion fatigue and the need for celebrity advocacy are both important in understanding this, how conservation organisations are appealing to their audience and upholding their parks, selling the idea of wilderness.

2.1. Mainstream Conservation

To understand what is meant by conservation in the context of my paper, I dedicate this sub-chapter to outline the term mainstream conservation. In an attempt to distinguish mainstream conservation from conservation in general. As it is a term that I will continue to use throughout my paper, and when I refer to conservation, I am discussing mainstream conservation.

Brockington (2012, p. 21) explains that conservation is a broad term, and it is relevant to define what is meant by it when used as a part of this thesis. He emphasises that not all conservationists believe that nature should be without human interference, or that only certain species are worth preserving. Mainstream conservation is a term that can be used about western conservation, which as Brockington writes, dominates the conservation. Building on the idea that through cooperation and network building, one can create a strong institution (Brockington et al., 2012).

Mainstream conservation was a movement that first originated in the US. Brockington (2012, p. 27) brings forward conservationist John Muir, who first started to gather elites in order to raise money and support for his conservation programs, where the local communities were ignored, and viewed as an issue. Further, he put emphasis on the relationship between mainstream conservation and business interests in conservation projects. His example being

Yellowstone National Park and how it was sponsored by a railroad company (Brockington et al., 2012).

The concept of mainstream conservation is important for my thesis, as it presents a western perspective of what is worth preserving. It is also a description of the organisations that are dependent on funding from donors, and their way of doing conservation is often based on this relationship. As the example of Yellowstone National Park, other mainstream conservation initiatives can be influenced by donors, and this understanding of conservation might help me answer the question of who mainstream conservation can be profitable for.

2.2. From hunting grounds to exotic holidays

Conservation has not only been important in terms of preserving species for their survival, but for decades, conservation has traditionally been used to preserve areas for hunting (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 60). Brockington (2012) writes that international conservation was a result of this, wealthy hunters wanted to preserve specific areas where they might find exotic species, and these protected areas were created to keep the local communities away, as they were viewed as interfering with the sport (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 60). This is not the only way that wilderness has been used as a concept to preserve areas for wealthy foreigners. Brockington (2012, p. 60) writes that one of the most powerful arguments for the preservation of nature, has been the “need” to protect wilderness from human interference. He takes the concept further, by explaining that nature is viewed to heal people in modern society, a contrast to everyday life, and it is important to keep it untouched (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 60).

Hunting has been important for the creation of national parks, and Neumann (1998, p. 37) elaborates on the importance of hunting for reputation and position in society. Neumann ties hunting to class identity, and emphasises that it was important during European colonial rule, due to the position it put the colonisers in, above the locals (Neumann, 1998, p. 37). This trend started before the Europeans colonised the Global South, and in 11th century England, King William reserved large areas of land for private hunting, only allowing invited people into his grounds (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 34). This still shows a trend in how protected areas have for a long time, been used to preserve nature for the wealthy, and for them to

conduct hunting without the interference from local communities settled around these protected areas.

In the 1930's the first national park was created in India, under British rule. Brockington (2012, p. 46) writes that this was a result of an area previously used as hunting grounds, and that the national park became an extension of this. Further, he writes that before 1960, protected areas were rapidly created by colonial powers, some as an attempt to provide control over colonial land, as the power of colonial countries started to subside (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 46). In his presentation of the history of protected areas, Brockington (2012, p. 54) writes that most protected areas were created before there was an understanding of species extinction and habitat loss, like we are aware of it today (Brockington et al., 2012). Still, we continue to base conversation on a model created during this time. Brockington (2012, p. 54) also acknowledges the roots for the diversity among protected areas, explaining that it is a result of the variety of reasons for the creation of these protected areas. Due to this historic difference, protected areas can be found scattered all over the world, and the duality of these areas are so large that it is difficult to record all of them (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 54).

Brockington (2012, p. 146) argues that from a neoliberal perspective, tourism has been encouraged for development. He uses the example of comparative advantages, and how the Global South is considered to have an economical comparative advantage when it comes to tourism. The Global South is in this view supposed to sell the product that they are 'naturally' best at producing. Brockington (2012, p. 146) writes that tourism has become a solution to development problems, and in the wake of this eco-tourism has become a solution to environmental issues (Brockington et al., 2012).

In order to understand tourism as a solution for development and environmental issues, Brockington (2012) divides tourism into nature - based and ecotourism, as these two have different approaches to the environment. He describes that the nature – based approach to tourism is focused on nature as the main attraction, and that this is often in conflict with preserving the environment. He argues further that it is often difficult to preserve nature while it is simultaneously an attraction for tourism. Further, he describes ecotourism as a more complex form of environmental tourism, where there is a larger focus on the impact this sort of tourism will have on the environment (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 146).

Despite the idea of ecotourism being promising, Brockington (2012) argues that the approach to tourism has received a lot of resistance, and it is a highly debated topic. One of the examples that he puts forward, is that ecotourism presents an idea of countries in the Global South as untouched by western societies, again contributing to an idea of what nature should look like (Brockington et al., 2012). According to Brockington (2012) a definition for ecotourism is difficult to gather, but the one of the one he relies on is presented by the Ecotourism Society, where ecotourism is described as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 151)”. Brockington (2012) takes the discussion further, by presenting the view that ecotourists have on nature and what is called the Other. Especially the Other is in his example presented as an extension of nature, and they live in harmony with the untouched world that these tourists desire (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 151).

Another aspect of ecotourism that is worth mentioning is the relationship that it is supposed to have with local communities where these tourist attractions are located. Brockington (2012) mentions the relationship between ecotourism and local communities, and the promise that many of these initiatives entails for local communities. Involvement in the process and economical improvement for local communities are key aspects that he writes are often promised by ecotourism. Despite this promising outlook on ecotourism, Brockington argues that the relationship between local communities and tourism investors might not be as promised. He makes two main challenging arguments on the subject. The first one being that the way ecotourists view local communities are not representative, assuming that all local communities might welcome these changes as they are in need of western development. The second argument is that some communities might be unable to resist an attractive offer from foreign tourist investment, due to their secluded location and possible difficulties with producing enough workplaces (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 151).

2.3. Brief History of WWF

Following the creation of the organisation in 1961, World Wildlife Fund has contributed to a long list of protected areas. They have a evident focus on preserving vital species and areas, and in their own words, “funding necessary to protect places and species that were threatened by human development.” (WWF, 2020a). With this promise, it is not surprising that over the years, WWF has contributed to the Charles Darwin Foundation Research Station on the Galapagos Islands, the rediscovery of the greater bamboo lemur on Madagascar, creating the

largest the world's largest environmental activism event, Earth Hour (WWF, 2020a). This only further emphasizes the massive impact WWF as a global organization has had on environmental activism.

In his book *Nature Unbound*, Brockington attempts to define the relationship between conservation and capitalism. With this he also writes about the history of conservation, and he brings WWF forward as an example of how this organisation has contributed to shaping conservation to how we know it today. Brockington (2012) presents WWF as one of the big four international environmental NGOs, alongside Conservation International (CI), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). What is interesting is the involvement that WWF has had on the history of conservation. Further, he describes the attention that WWF received in the 1970s, for their willingness to criticise governments, big corporations and how this shaped the environmental debate. Brockington describes a correlation between these big NGOs, and writes that despite their reputation for portraying themselves as independent, they often cooperate with government organisations like the World Bank, in order to reach their goals (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 174).

2.4. Yellowstone National Park

To understand how conservation has become such a big part of environmental organisations like WWF it is relevant to look at how the concept has developed over the years. The western view on the world is dominating the conservation field, and arguably organisations like WWF are sustaining this view. Brockington (2012) put emphasis on the idea of conservation, and how this can be more important than the actual effects of protected areas. As an example, he uses the Yellowstone National Park in the US, which is famously claimed to be the first national park. Brockington explains that Yellowstone has had such an influence on the conservation practice, while the dark history of the park and those who lived there before it became a protected area, has been forgotten (Brockington et al., 2012). The Yellowstone model is described by Brockington (2012) as the blueprint for conservation all over the world, and it is especially important for western conservation (Brockington et al., 2012).

The myth of Yellowstone as the first national park is interesting when attempting to understand the image that mainstream conservation has created, especially the image presented to the western world. The history of mainstream conservation started before the creation of Yellowstone, and Brockington (2012) brings forward the importance of protected

areas for the purpose of hunting for the history of conservation. For decades, large areas of nature have been preserved for the wealthy, protecting the land from local interference so that it can serve as hunting grounds for the rich (Brockington et al., 2012). The process of removing people from protected areas in order to preserve nature is not new, and there are several arguments for it. Initially, as Brockington (2012) presents, there is a need to protect wilderness, and preserve the idea that the western society has of exotic places that are often far away from our own reality (Brockington et al., 2012).

Why is the story of Yellowstone important from a conservation perspective and why is it also problematic? These are questions that Brockington attempts to answer in his book *Nature Unbound*. As mentioned above, Yellowstone is falsely considered to be the first ever protected area in the world. The history of protected areas dates to a time before the wealthy claimed areas and used them for hunting grounds. Brockington (2012, p. 36) writes that as far back as in 1778, they found evidence that the Mongolians created a national park to protect the Bogd Khan Mountain, and they have also found that this process could have started back in 1294 (Brockington et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the creation of the park dates to almost 100 years before Yellowstone National Park was created in 1872, which proves that the idea of protecting vital areas for the environment started long before that. Brockington (2012, p. 36) also puts great emphasise on the fact, that most of the findings of earlier protected areas are projects conducted by established societies, because this information was written, but this doesn't mean that conservation was not conducted on a smaller scale. For example, he shows to how small communities often had to use conservation to ensure food security (Brockington et al., 2012, pp. 34-37).

Despite the convincing research proving that Yellowstone National Park was not the first protected area to be created, it is still considered by mainstream conservationists to be the first. It continues to be a symbol for mainstream conservation, and Brockington (2012, p. 37) notes that it is interesting to see why the Yellowstone model is so important when promoting conservation, and why this myth of it being the first national park still stands today (Brockington et al., 2012). To better understand this one must look at what wilderness and protected areas means to the western society, and why this myth is worth preserving.

2.5. How is wilderness presented to the western world?

To understand why the concept of wilderness, has become so important for the western society, we must understand where the idea comes from, and why it is still present today. Neumann (1998) writes in *Imposing Wilderness*, using Africa as an example, that it is supposed to look natural. Which raises the question of what natural looks like? Further, he writes that nature is judged by the western society, based on the images that we have been presented of nature. For this he presents the term *pictorialized*, which he borrows from Gina Crandell (Neumann, 1998, p. 15). Here, Neumann (1998) draws back to the creation of Yellowstone National Park as an example of how *pictorialized* nature is an important aspect in the creation of preserved areas. He implies that Yellowstone was created for the wealthy, to be able to travel out of the cities in order to be closer to nature. Today, Neumann explains that nature is still preserved to fit an image of the wild, where urbanised communities can travel and see nature that fits the standards of what they have been promised through pictures (Neumann, 1998, pp. 16-17).

Neumann (1998) takes the idea of wilderness back to the colonial era in Africa. He writes that Africa at the time was romanticised by the colonial rule, and that it promised the Europeans untouched nature, which was no longer possible to find in Europe (Neumann, 1998, p. 18). In this view Neumann (1998) presents the idea of the noble savage. As the European colonists saw that nature in the colonies needed to be preserved, for the Europeans settlers and those wealthy enough to travel, but the noble savage was allowed to stay within the national parks. Neumann writes that they were allowed to remain, due to the image they created of humanity in touch with nature, the noble savage would remind the colonists of humans before they became civilised (Neumann, 1998, p. 18). This was also the case with Yellowstone National Park, where the Native Americans were supposed to be a part of the creation of the park, further building on the myth of the noble savage (Neumann, 1998, p. 18).

The change in how reality was presented in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, is interesting as it is not much different from how it is presented to us today. Neumann (1998) explains the changes in how labour was presented in paintings, and how this was also an act that changed how society viewed reality. He writes that by allowing nature to become the focus in the paintings, removing humans and the image of labour, the paintings became more aesthetically pleasing (Neumann, 1998, p. 20). Interestingly, Neumann (1998, p. 20) uses the term *consumption*, when describing how people started to appreciate nature through images

that were no longer presenting labour. Again, Neumann ties this to the creation of Yellowstone National Park, the model that the construction of the park created, involved a law against human settlement and activities (Neumann, 1998, p. 24). By removing human labour and history from the equation, they were left with only the picturesque image of untouched nature, to be consumed by an urbanised society.

Neumann's view on a pictorialized society, where we are influenced by our image of what should be, instead of what is, can be compared to the mediatization of our society. Where we no longer base our view of the world on classical paintings, but instead we are constantly being influenced through images on new media, which may shape our image of what "wilderness" is supposed to look like. The idea of "the wild" is presented to us in various ways, and we are often encouraged to travel and explore it through luxurious holidays or through a more down to earth approach through backpacking. Even at a young age as Brockington (2009, p. 133) explains, we are shown what "the wild" is supposed to look like through animated children's movies, with Disney as one of the most influential companies. Movies like *The Lion King*, *Tarzan* and *The Jungle Book*, all Disney movies, targeted to a western audience, shaping our idea of untouched wilderness and the relationship with humans. Interestingly as Brockington (2009, p. 66) writes, "heroes" such as Tarzan are allowed to partake in the image created of untouched wilderness. While 'the other' are either not represented or presented as the enemy (Brockington, 2009). This is for some people the first meeting with nature outside of the western world. Brockington (2009) takes the concept of Tarzan further, when explaining how the character has become an image for conservationists. He writes that the character is very recognisable, and that Tarzan is often used as a symbol for western conservation, representing a man who is in a position to control savage people and animals, a man in touch with the wild (Brockington, 2009, pp. 66-67). It is important to note that Brockington (2009, p. 73) argues that Tarzan also represents the idea of European superiority and a white saviour, which makes it problematic that several conservationists identify with this fictional character (Brockington, 2009).

2.6. Compassion fatigue

To understand the need for celebrity advocacy, I find it necessary to elaborate on the concept of compassion fatigue. Chouliaraki (2013c) explains the relationship between celebrity advocacy and the changes in modern humanitarianism. Her focus is on the need for self-expression, to encourage people to act on their own emotions, rather than the suffering of

those who will receive aid. She takes the discussion further, by arguing that through this self-expression model, those who donate are constantly being confronted with people who are like ‘us’, rather than the ‘other’ (Chouliaraki, 2013c, pp. 17-18). The technologization of aid, is another aspect of modern humanitarianism that Chouliaraki (2013c) describes as contributing to these changes. Organisations are encouraging self-expression through aid, which Chouliaraki argues is profitable for the organisation, and their members loyalty to the organisation (Chouliaraki, 2013c, p. 18). Celebrities are a means to this goal of self-expression among those who donate, where they find celebrities they can mirror themselves in (Chouliaraki, 2013a, p. 103).

2.6.1. Celebrity advocacy and conservation

To understand why celebrities are useful for mainstream conservation organisations it is worth looking into the reasons behind why celebrities hold such a high position in society. To understand why these people are idolised and used to promote important causes, without any qualification other than their fame. Brockington (2009, pp. 7-9) notes that celebrities are a product of the media and in order for them to stay relevant there are dependent on the media for their reputation. In an attempt to describe that fame is an industry, where celebrities are merely products that generates wealth for the industry (Brockington, 2009).

Chouliaraki (2013a) writes about the history of celebrity advocacy, and one of her main points, is that using celebrities for humanitarian causes is still a new concept. Not celebrities such as royalties or wealthy elites, but celebrities such as musicians or actresses, who Chouliaraki writes have previously been “powerless”. Now, she writes that these kind of celebrities have become vital for international humanitarian organisations and their agenda (Chouliaraki, 2013a, p. 78).

As mentioned above, Chouliaraki explains the need for celebrities due to compassion fatigue. Chouliaraki (2013a) takes the argument further, by explaining the appeal with celebrities and how they become important for representing organisations. One of the arguments is that it is difficult to engage a western society with humanitarian causes, but by using celebrities as an image of someone that those who watch can aspire to be, they are encouraged to take action and donate (Chouliaraki, 2013a, p. 80). This is not only an advantage for the cause, but Chouliaraki (2013a) writes that celebrities also represents the organisation, which means that

if those who donate relate to the celebrity, there is a chance they might relate to the organisation as well (Chouliaraki, 2013a, p. 80).

Celebrities have also become important for environmental causes. Brockington (2009, p. 13) writes on this relationship, and he brings forward the changes in how environmentalism is presented, and he mentions that celebrities have only recently started to support environmentalism in relation to climate change. Further, he writes that using celebrities to promote conservation, produce films that shows wildlife and the need to protect it, has a longer history (Brockington, 2009, p. 13). Brockington (2009, p. 22) writes that celebrities are especially important for the promotion of conservation organisations, they are used to reach out to a larger audience than the organisation might cover on their own (Brockington, 2009, p. 22).

This shows that using celebrities to promote humanitarian causes is not a new phenomenon, but due to changes in new media, how celebrities are used has also changed. They have also become more important over the years, as organisations need to reach their members and potential donors, and this can be done by appealing to them through the use of celebrities. They create an intimacy with pressing matters, even if those issues are not happening in the western part of the world. The desire to relate to these celebrities makes it possible for organisations to get loyal members. As Brockington argues, conservation is still only viewed as good, and by using celebrities to sustain this idea, it makes it harder to create an argument against this narrative supporting the conservation discourse.

3. Theoretical framework

My theoretical framework will consist of power related theories, media centred theories as well as theories concerning conservation. Firstly, I want to present theories of social constructivism and realism, and how critical realism as an approach is important for my thesis. Then I will continue by presenting theories related to power revolving around discursive power and how this might be used by conservation organisations to remain in a position of power. For this part I will also present the concept of a win-win discourse. To understand how organisations gain discursive power I want to use media centred theories to explain appeals and celebrity advocacy, and the platforms where these elements are used to maintain discursive power. Lastly, I will present the concept of concealed neo-colonialism and fortress conservation.

3.1. Social constructivism and realism

To answer my research questions, a large part of my paper will revolve around the presentation of certain initiatives from different actors, and I will compare these presentations in an effort to acknowledge that presentations of the same reality can appear different. The concept of social constructivism and realism, and initially critical realism will be important in order to discuss the reality that WWF presents, and the claims against them. Further, I will discuss the idea that some actors might benefit from a specific presentation of reality, while it might be a disadvantage for some. Lastly, I will present the idea that some presentations might hold the truth, while other presentations might only be sustained through powerful actors rather than being sustained through the truth.

According to Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 13) social constructivism and realism are two concepts that long have been viewed as incompatible, but in political ecology, these theories have been connected. Social constructivism can be described as the idea that reality is a social construct, and this view on reality implies that there are multiple truths to the same reality. While realism is described as reality based on scientific evidence of certain natural or social phenomena, and this can be done without the interference of the norms and values of those perceiving this reality. When these two concepts are combined Benjaminsen and Svarstad use the term critical realism. In the concept of critical realism, they accept that the way people view reality is presented differently by actors, such as through the media, politics, or society. It is still worth noting that in a critical realism view, these realities are not

considered to be equally correct. These realities presented by different actors need what Benjaminsen and Svarstad refers to as “reality checks”. In political ecology this means studying how social and environmental initiatives are presented by powerful actors, and to uncover which of these discourses and narratives are true (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, pp. 13-14).

Critical realism is the approach that I will apply to my analysis. I will attempt to explain the reality that WWF presents in their reports, the reality of their cases. This is considered to be the most acceptable truth due to their standing in society, and their use of appeals and celebrity advocacy to gain reliability. The “reality checks” that I will conduct will rely on the view on reality that organisations that Survival International have, and the research done in the field. Research I will not be able to conduct myself, but by relying on observations conducted by research on the conservation initiatives created by WWF. This research can uncover if these socially constructed realities by WWF can be considered to be the truth. While also discussing the impact that the narratives presented by WWF have on the conservation discourse, and why their narrative is dominating the discourse and how it is sustained even when other narratives are presented from other actors.

3.1. Discursive power and the win – win discourse

In this sub-chapter I will present the concept of discursive power and how it can be viewed as negative. While also applying it to the conservation industry in this paper. For this chapter I will also present the concept of a win – win narrative and how conservation organisations such as WWF might use this when presenting their conservation initiatives, while also discussing the disadvantages of such a concept.

Using Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 92), a discourse can be defined as a socially shared perspective on a phenomenon. Further, they explain that discourses are socially constructed ideas, and these constructed views can control how a society view a certain topic. Which as they note, can be positive as it might encourage a society to act on important issues. Still, it can be used by powerful actors to design this view in a certain way that might benefit those who created the discourse. This term is called discursive power (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 92).

Discursive power, as argued by Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 92) can be negative, as some actors may shape the discourse in a way that might serve the purpose of the actors, regardless of what might be the actors own view or knowledge of this discourse (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 92). Svarstad et al. (2018, p. 356) writes that these actors can be corporations, government agencies or NGOs. If these actors have a powerful standing in society, their discourse can be accepted and validated by other social groups, becoming a leading discourse. Svarstad et al. puts this in an environmental setting, and these actors might use their discourse to sustain their work. Further, they write that colonial powers have done just this, by creating discourses that allowed them to legitimatise their use and control of new territories that originally did not belong to them, and their discourse is that it was more sustainable for the environment that it was controlled by colonial powers instead of those who originally inhabited these places (Svarstad et al., 2018). Despite this being a leading discourse during European colonial rule, Svarstad et al. states that today there are two competing discourses (Svarstad et al., 2018).

As mentioned above, NGOs are in a position where they might exercise discursive power in order to maintain a narrative. Win – win narratives are popular among environmental NGOs and WWF is no exception. Their view on conservation as the answer to the climate crisis and the loss of species has become a leading discourse that is shared by the UN (the call for preserving 30% of land). To understand how the win – win discourse has become so dominant in the conservation industry, it is relevant to look at the previously dominant fortress conservation discourse. Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 93) described fortress conservation as protected areas where these areas are defended like fortresses, often by armed guards, and those permitted inside of the protected areas are tourists, scientists or those creating nature documentaries. While those originally inhabiting these areas were not permitted inside. Further, they write that this became a model for most national parks in the colonised parts of the world. These areas were considered to be wild, and an opposition to the western world, the ‘civilised’ world (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 93). This is no longer considered to be the leading discourse for conservation but has been replaced by the win-win discourse. Using Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 94) the win-win discourse in conservation can be described as the idea that people should be let back into protected areas, and that the communities around the parks around the protected areas should benefit from and contribute to the conservation. In this discourse, local communities are viewed as an asset in achieving preservation of biodiversity. They argue that the win-win discourse is a result of

neoliberal theories, where tourism is considered to be helpful for conservation, securing both economic growth and saving the environment (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, pp. 95-96).

Despite the presentation of the win-win discourse as something profitable for the environment and local communities, Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 96) argues that there are some disadvantages to this approach. One of them being that the financial support that the local communities surrounding the protected areas get is usually not enough and is usually not enough to compensate for the eviction of these people from their homes. The process of evicting people from these protected areas is also described as complicated it might even involve violence (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, pp. 96-97).

As mentioned above, and as I will discuss further in my analysis, WWF often uses the term win-win to describe their conservation initiatives. As argued by Benjaminsen and Svarstad, the win – win narrative can be problematic, and it should be studied and discussed. For the instance with WWF, it is relevant to look at what they claim to be a win – win narrative, and the actual effects that this organisation has, and compare it to the narrative that they present and how it might fit the conservation discourse.

3.2. Concealed neo – colonialism and fortress conservation

To answer my research question regarding whether WWF is conducting concealed neo – colonialism or practicing fortress conservation through their conservation initiatives, I will in this sub – chapter present the two concepts. This will be an extension of my chapter on discursive power and a win – win discourse. Where fortress conservation is viewed as a way of conducting conservation prior to that of a win – win discourse. By applying these concepts into a historical perspective, it is possible to compare it to the conservation initiatives that are conducted today by WWF.

Brockington (2012, p. 167) writes on the impact of international conservation, and how one side views conservation as purely good while others compare it to neo - colonialism. His argument being that the ideas and initiatives belonging to the conservation organisations are highly influenced by western models, and that these ideas are often not applicable to nature outside of the western world (Brockington et al., 2012). These initiatives are also, as Brockington (2012) writes, not accepted by the local communities, which creates conflict. These conflicts may result in forced displacement of these communities, in the name of

preserving nature, and they can be replaced with international industries, tourism, scientists, or conservation NGOs (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 167). Further, Brockington (2012) argues that this is difficult to discover as conservation organisations are not willing to present this side of their work, and it is often denied that local communities are evicted, their narrative is that they work closely with local communities in order to achieve the most diplomatic result (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 167).

Neumann (1998, p. 29) adds to this discussion, by addressing the influence that people have had on the creation of specific landscapes, especially through the creation of national parks, and how this has contributed to a Eurocentric view on history. This specific presentation, that Neumann brings forward, can be considered to idealise the effects European colonialism has had on the idea of wilderness. Additionally, in his example, how this presentation has idealised the effects that national parks has had on the American landscape, and the treatment of Native Americans (Neumann, 1998). Further, Neumann (1998, p. 30) argues that, despite the pressure to challenge the dominant narrative where the creation of national parks is considered to be a peaceful affair, and the history of settlers who conquered wilderness, it is complicated to change this perspective. One of the arguments presented being that the narrative is created by what Neumann refers to as society's elites, and this group is in a position where they can shape the narrative, and present history in a way that might benefit them. Neumann writes that those who actively work against this presentation of history might not be in a position where their voices are heard. Their history is being concealed by the history of parks, and Neumann argues that this view on parks as something inheritably good, conceals the colonial history of violence and removal of native groups (Neumann, 1998, pp. 30-31).

With this being such a covert conflict, one might argue that it makes it difficult to discover that it is concealed. It is obvious why conservation organisations do not want to be associated with neo – colonialism. Which makes it even more important to look at the actual effects of these organisations, and with this look to other NGOs that are working with minorities and indigenous groups in and around the protected areas. To compare their view on the relationship with these conservation organisations, and the narrative presented by the organisations themselves. Neumann also shows that it is difficult to discover, not only due to organisations distancing themselves from the term, but also due to the inherent resistance from

associating with colonialism throughout history, despite the argument that national parks are built on a colonial perspective to preserve untouched wilderness.

We will revisit Yellowstone in the background chapter, but the Yellowstone model is significant for the creating of fortress conservation. Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 93) writes that when Yellowstone National Park was created local communities were removed, and the only ones that were allowed inside of the protected area were tourists, mainly white wealthy urban tourists. The indigenous groups that had lived there before were evicted, and any sign of them inhabiting the area was removed, and Yellowstone was presented as untouched wilderness. To keep intruders from entering the park, armed control was set out, which was kept until 1918, but the image of military enforcement was kept up through uniforms and soldier were employed as wardens (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 93). The Yellowstone model as I will discuss in length later, became important in the creation of national parks, especially in colonised parts of the world (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 93). Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021) also explains that the term wilderness, that became widely popular during the creation of Yellowstone, which at the time was a term that was intended as the opposite of civilisation. Wilderness was supposedly unaffected by modernisation. The term is still used frequently in line with conservation, and is one of the two strictest forms of conservation (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 93).

Fortress conservation is a form of conservation that is closely linked to European colonialism. Because a lot of national parks were created during a European colonial era. The Yellowstone model is still relevant today, and parts of the model and the language used during a colonial era are still important for conservation today. While WWF presents their win-win narrative, it is interesting to see how fortress conservation is still influential in the conservation discourse, and how this might affect the conservation conducted by WWF.

3.3. Appeals

To understand how WWF uses celebrities in their process of promoting their conservation initiatives, it is relevant to understand the concept of appeals and how organisations use this concept to gain support from their members and protentional members. In this sub – chapter I will start by introducing the concept of appeals by using the work of Lilie Chouliaraki, and secondly, I will present celebrity advocacy as a part of appeals. This in an attempt to

underline the importance of appeals and specifically celebrity advocacy for in this case, conservation organisations such as WWF.

Appeals are as presented by Chouliaraki (2013b) as a way in which humanitarian organisations communicate with their donors and members to achieve awareness to their cause. Further, she describes the difficulties with capturing people's attention in a competitive market, they are dependent on appeals to inspire people to take part in humanitarian action (Chouliaraki, 2013b, p. 54). I will be focusing on what Chouliaraki (2013b, p. 73) calls post – humanitarian appeals. It differentiates from the traditional way that organisations have used to capture the attention of their givers. Traditionally, organisations have used appeals to evoke emotions, presenting the raw 'reality' of suffering, guilt, and caring and donating money to humanitarian causes (Chouliaraki, 2013b). Further, Chouliaraki (2013b, p. 17) argues that this shift in appeals is a result of compassion fatigue, and a need for a new model that can encourage people to give, in a society that is highly driven by the market, where organisations are forced to apply new marketing techniques to gain funding and members (Chouliaraki, 2013b, p. 17). Through branding and new technology, Chouliaraki (2013b, p. 17) claims that people are called to action in a different way than before. People are encouraged to imagine themselves in the position of those suffering, and Chouliaraki discusses the issues faced with such an approach. This approach might take the focus away from those who are suffering and why it is important to act on injustice, and reinforce the idea of dominant western culture by focusing on the feeling humanitarianism might evoke in each individual (Chouliaraki, 2013b, p. 18).

Appeals are important for my thesis as I will attempt to understand how WWF uses branding and new media to encourage action, especially through celebrity ambassadors. Through an analysis of their report, it will be possible for me to get an understanding of how they communicate with their audience. How they convey their message through their reports will be important in my attempt to answer if they might be conducting discursive power, and what part celebrity ambassadors might play in this process.

3.3.1. Celebrity Advocacy

Celebrities are often used for charitable causes, and it is important to get an understanding of this relationship, and why they are so effective in conveying important messages. Brockington

(2009, p. 6) writes that celebrities are often associated with being good. They have achieved a lifestyle that many can only dream of, and the general public desires to live like these celebrities. He describes celebrities as a product to be bought, belonging to a greater system where someone is earning money on the fame that comes with being a celebrity. In an increasing capitalist world, Brockington argues that celebrities are a tool to cover up for a growing inequality. Through media we are allowed to take part in these glamorous lifestyles, and it creates a fake intimacy with these people we do not know, but imagine that we do (Brockington, 2009, pp. 8-10).

How are these celebrities used to promote environmental causes? Brockington (2009) describes it as creating an image, of famous people, species and places, which creates a relation. These images are circulated to different media platforms and raise money for the cause that they promote. He argues that the mainstream conservation industry is dependent on fame and recognition to uphold their reputation. Further, he mentions the consumption that conservation encourages, such as organic products, eco – friendly energy and ecotourist holidays, all more desirable if supported and advertised for by celebrities (Brockington, 2009, pp. 22-24).

Celebrities are a powerful tool when advertising for organisations, as they represent a desirable lifestyle, which can only be obtained by a few. We are still encouraged to attempt to achieve this lifestyle, and through consumption of the same products as these celebrities, we get a small taste of what it is like to be living like them. Whether it be through purchasing eco-friendly face masks or donate money for the protection of chimpanzees, these are ways for the audience to relate to the lifestyle of celebrities.

4. Methodology

This chapter will focus on the methodological choices that I have made throughout my research. I will start by presenting my research questions and the choices I made while writing them. I will mainly rely on document analysis as my methodology and in this chapter present the reasons for why I chose this. I will further discuss the importance of case studies for my research and how I will use the concept of narratives and discourses as a methodological tool. When justifying my choices of methodology, I will discuss the disadvantages on relying on document analysis as a method. Since I will conduct a media analysis as an extension of my document analysis, I will also discuss the reliability of such an approach, especially considering my use of social media. Further, I will also discuss the limitations and difficulties related to my choices of methods. Lastly, I will consider any ethical issues that might arise from my research, and in this part, I will also discuss my biases.

4.1. Research questions

In this sub-chapter I will present my research questions. Firstly, I will start by discussing the importance of a good research question. Further, I will present my research questions individually and explain the choices that I made in making them. I will present my choice of research questions in light of these categories descriptive-, explanatory- and normative research questions.

Flick (2018, p. 83) writes that a good research question should be precise, and it should be possible to answer the research questions within the timeframe and with the sources at hand. Emphasising that the research question(s) will be a guideline for the whole thesis (Flick, 2018, p. 84). Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 23) divides research questions into three categories, descriptive, explanatory and normative. Explaining that a descriptive question is supposed to identify the details of the topic to be studied, while an explanatory question might be asked in an effort to explain the situation presented in a descriptive question (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 23). *“Is WWF exercising discursive power through media when presenting their conservation initiatives?”* This research question can be both be a descriptive question as it attempts to describe what conservation initiatives that WWF presents. While also being explanatory, as it attempts to ask how these initiatives could be considered discursive power. *“How is WWF using celebrity ambassadors to maintain their narrative and*

what can the effects of this be?” This research question can also be considered a descriptive one as it attempts to understand the effect of using celebrities to appeal to an audience. Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 24) argues that normative questions can be used in social science research, and they distinguish between two forms of it. The first being a normative question where the researcher compare the situation they study to a certain standard. While the second type applies to a question that asks what can be done to improve a problematic situation (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 24). *“Can conservation initiatives conducted by WWF be considered concealed neo - colonialism and fortress conservation?”* This is a normative question as it attempts to investigate the conservation initiatives done by WWF and question the ethical aspect with their approach to conservation, and it is questioning whether the organisation is conducting fortress conservation rather than a win – win conservation as they claim.

4.2. Research strategy

Considering the current situation, with an uncertain time caused by the pandemic, I found document analysis to be the most realistic and suitable methodical approach in my attempt to answer my research questions. In order to answer my research questions, I have chosen to divide my analysis into two parts, and with this using different methodology approaches to answer these questions. To answer my first part *“Is WWF exercising discursive power through media when presenting their conservation initiatives?”* I will focus on the cases and how their narrative is presented through WWF’s own report, and for this part I will rely on using document analysis. To answer, *“How is WWF using celebrity ambassadors to maintain their narrative and what can the effects of this be?”* I will rely on a media analysis to gather an understanding of how celebrities are used in an attempt to receive attention for WWF and the cause. For my last research question *““Can conservation initiatives conducted by WWF be considered concealed neo - colonialism and fortress conservation?”* I will again rely on document analysis, to find research in the field regarding the cases that I have presented with the WWF’s narrative by comparing these cases presented by different actors, I can answer my question. This part of my thesis will also be important in a historic perspective, where document analysis is important to place this research in the right context.

4.3. Data collection and choices of cases

In order for me to present WWF and their narrative, I had to choose a way for me to represent their current initiatives and goals. By analysing the “A Future for All” report from 2021 I was able to gather an understanding of the issues that WWF found to be the most important. It also offered me an opportunity to see how WWF wants to present their initiatives, and how they want to appear for their audience. At the time when I started my thesis the 2021 was the newest report from the organisation. I wanted to look at their newest report as this would give me an opportunity to present it without having read criticism of the report before I had read and analysed it. Which gives me the opportunity to present their work without my perception being shaped by criticism, as it was important for me to present their work as it was, considering I wanted to see how they appealed to their audience.

Considering the length of the “A Future for All” report, it was sufficient for me to create a system when collecting data for my analysis. Flick (2018) writes that there are several definitions to the term coding, but using his description it is a way of categorising data when conducting an analysis. Further, he writes that it can be useful when attempting to understand empirical content, and by dividing it into different categories it makes it easier to interoperate the meaning of the data when analysing (Flick, 2018, p. 423). As already mentioned, it was useful when I started analysing the WWF report, as it gave me an overview over the most important topics of the report, which again made it easier to apply my empirical content to my analysis. The first category that I found important to include in my coding was that of a win-win narrative, to determine what WWF means by this term, and how they apply it in their report. Here, I also including sub-categories for this category, to see who they believed these initiatives were profitable for. The second category of my coding was human – wildlife conflict, a term that WWF continuously uses through their report and given a lot of attention. This category was chosen to establish who WWF gives the “blame” for these conflicts, to determine whether there was a pattern. For this category I was also interested in seeing how they proposed to resolve these conflicts. The third category was tourism, where I wanted to see how WWF presents the idea of tourism, and how it relates to their projects. I had two separate coding guides, and my second coding guide was used for my analysis of social media content, primarily Instagram. My coding guides were helpful in sorting and categorising the data that I collected in the beginning of my thesis.

The cases I chose to focus on were based on the media coverage that these two protected areas had because it was essential for me to find research on the subject due to me being unable to conduct my own field work. Due to this, I chose Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and Tiger Sanctuaries in India, and lastly the relationship between elephants and workers in India. The first two cases have received a lot of attention, both in form of criticism and praise. I also decided to investigate their presentation of the relationship between workers and elephants in India, as it adds a perspective of companies. It also gave me an opportunity to analyse how WWF address corporations and companies when addressing wildlife.

The celebrities I chose were also based on media coverage and popularity. Both celebrities are western actors as the thesis largely focuses on the strong relationship WWF got with their western audience. The first celebrity I chose was actress Maisie Williams, who at the time when I started writing my paper had just recently been announced as WWF's first Global Ambassador for Climate and Nature. Due to William's popularity after her appearance on the show 'Game of Thrones', the actress has become a widely popular celebrity. My second celebrity being Leonardo DiCaprio was a choice based on his very public dedication to the environment, to the point where he is now also considered an environmentalist. His presence in the environmental discourse is also not something new, while William's presence is fairly recent.

4.4. Presentation of methods

4.4.1. Document Analysis

My research is going to be highly dependent on document analysis. Not only because it will be the most sufficient way for me to gather information, as I will explain later, it is also the most realistic way for me to conduct my research considering the obstacles faced due to the current pandemic. According to Bowen (2009, p. 27) document analysis can be described as collecting and analysing documents. It is a qualitative research method where the goal is to broaden the understanding of the subject that is to be studied (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Document analysis is as Bowen (2009, p. 28) writes, important when attempting to create a case, the documents collected will be used for further analysis (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). While Flick (2018) argues that it is possible to use document analysis as a way to complement other forms of research, but also as way to study how reality is presented in the documents used as data (Flick, 2018, p. 376).

Considering the historical aspect of my thesis, document analysis will be necessary for my background chapter. Bowen (2009, p. 29) writes that document analysis can be useful when attempting to gather a historical view on a subject or theme. It is important when trying to understand the current condition for the subject one is researching, by looking at the events that led up to today (Bowen, 2009, pp. 29-30). For example, for my thesis the history of conservation and the ties to colonialism and colonial rule, will be important when attempting to access how conservation is conducted today and whether it can be categorised as neo – colonialism. Further, Bowen (2009, p. 30) argues that documents can also be used to identify changes, to see if there has been noticeable development or changes on the subject that is being analysed (Bowen, 2009, p. 30). Documenting changes is also relevant for my analysis, as I will attempt to identify the development of conservation, or the lack thereof.

Despite the arguments about document analysis as a method alone being insufficient for research, it is worth mentioning the advantages of such an approach. Bowen (2009, p. 30) writes that documents are useful to create a context for the research, and this makes it easier to create questions that could possibly bring the research further. It could also verify findings, with the possibility to validate the findings by comparing it to other sources through document analysis (Bowen, 2009, pp. 30-31). As mentioned above, I'm unable to conduct my own research abroad, which makes me dependent on observations made by other researchers. This type of documents based on observations of the cases that I have chosen, will be important when attempting to compare them to the narrative presented on the same cases by WWF. By using already conducted research I am able to question the report presented by WWF.

There are disadvantages to relying on document analysis as a research method, but some of the limitations can be avoided if considered during the research. Flick (2018) writes on these disadvantages and presents solutions to them. One of the disadvantages being the intension of the document, and how one is to understand the meaning of it. Further, he argues that it is possible to use documents for a larger purpose than intended, by analysing it and applying it to other aspects. Documents might be specific and limited for a specific phenomenon, but Flick writes that it is possible to have a broader view on the document. This can be done by addressing the purpose, context and use of the document (Flick, 2018, pp. 382- 383).

4.4.1.1. The internet as a source of information

When conducting document analysis, the internet can be an important source when gathering information. Another aspect of my research will be focused mainly on narratives and media representation, which are both two topics that are easier found through document analysis than through any other research method. Mawdsley (2011, p. 6) writes on the range of the internet as a source, and argues that it can be useful when attempting to access formal and informal information for qualitative and quantitative data. One of her examples being websites that belong to NGOs, where reports and programmes are fully accessible for the public (Mawdsley, 2011, pp. 6-7). Flick (2018) also writes on the use of the internet as a source of information, not only in terms of finding documents, but also when using a webpage as a document. He writes that the breadth of the internet as a source can make it more complicated to find sources that are useful, but it also can be an advantage as it offers a broad selection of documents to analyse. Not having a physical copy of the document that is to be analysed can also complicate the process, as the internet is unreliable in the sense that sources can be removed for various reasons, and he emphasises the importance of saving important pages in case it was to disappear. Webpages can be useful when attempting to, as Flick writes, when analysing the social construction of a specific topic and compare it to reality (Flick, 2018, pp. 384-385). Analysing a webpage might give an opportunity to gather information about the organisation that created it, and for what purpose it was created. A large part of my analysis will focus on the “A Future for All” report, which will be an important source for my document analysis. This will allow me to create an image of their narrative, using their own platform as a source.

4.4.1.2. Limitations of document analysis

Bowen (2009, pp. 32-33) presents several limitations to relying on document analysis as a primary source for a research project. One of the limitations presented being that he argues that documents are insufficient in detail and created for a different purpose than being data for a research (Bowen, 2009). Using Flick (2018), it is possible to view this limitation in a different perspective. He writes that it is important to understand that a document is more than the information it provides, that the purpose of the document and who it was created by and for should be considered when analysing it (Flick, 2018, p. 378). Another limitation presented by Bowen (2009) is the issue with biased selectivity. He writes that, often documents are formed by the organisation it represents, and the available documents from a specific organisation will most likely be representative for their perspective (Bowen, 2009, p. 23). In

the case of my thesis this will not present itself as a limitation, as a part of my research will be concerned around the documents that are produced by WWF, and my analysis will be based on their bias around their own representation. It is also worth mentioning that Bowen argues that the advantages of a document analysis clearly outweighs the limitations, but it is important to acknowledge these limitations when conducting document analysis (Bowen, 2009, p. 33).

4.4.2. *Case studies*

Case studies are widely discussed, and as Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 142) presents, it is argued whether this type of research can be useful when looking at cases beyond the one where the research was gathered. A case study, as described by Benjaminsen and Svarstad is an in – depth study of a specific phenomenon or a category. Further, they argue that case studies can be valuable when attempting to understand larger topics. This is especially important for case studies where one is looking at narratives that are dominant and presented by a powerful discourse (T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad, 2021, p. 142). Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 143) takes the argument further by highlighting the mechanisms that might be uncovered during an in – depth case study and knowing about these mechanisms might make it easier to discover them in other cases. The knowledge gathered during a case study can be useful when attempting to understand a phenomenon, as it can be used to compare it to other cases (T. A. Benjaminsen & H. Svarstad, 2021, p. 143).

The strong win-win narrative presented by WWF makes the organisation interesting to conduct a case study on. Also, as a leading conservation organisation, WWF holds a lot of power in their position, shaping the picture of conservation. When such a popular organisation is accused of serious human rights violations, and when these accusations seem to leave the organisation unharmed, it is worth spending time looking into the actual accusations, and the success that WWF claims to have with their conservation projects.

Flick (2018, p. 109) writes on the limitations of case studies, Further, he writes that one of the main issues is generalisation, which he writes can be solved by doing a series of case studies (Flick, 2018). Despite my research not being able to be applied to conservation in general, it can be applied to the way WWF presents their projects. By focusing on their report and specifically three of their projects which I'll present as case studies, I might be able to avoid

generalisation of their work. Rather attempt to gather an insight in their way of conducting conservation, at least in a sense of what they are currently doing.

4.4.3. Narratives and discourses

To better understand how narratives and discourses are important for my paper it is relevant to distinguish the two, and how it might be applied to my analysis of WWF. While a discourse according to Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 64) is a concept that has a socially shared perspective on a topic. Further, they write that a narrative is considered to be a story, presented by one or more actors, about certain topics (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 69). In my attempt to answer the question of WWF and their discursive power it is important to both understand what a discourse is and the influence of narratives on discourses, considering the strong win-win narrative presented by WWF.

While as I have already presented, a discourse is a socially accepted and shared view on a certain topic. Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 64) explains that some discourses are leading discourses, and the actors who control and shape these discourses can be said to exercise discursive power, because these leading discourses are important in shaping policies, laws and practices (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 64). Further, Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 65) argues that studying discourses can be important when attempting to understand the influence that certain dominant discourses can influence our views on certain topics, and specifically what role powerful actors might have in the process of altering a discourse and what power they wield over it (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021). Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 66) also writes on hegemonic discourses where there are no other dominant discourses in the same field, and argues that actors who contribute to hegemonic discourses are exercising discursive power (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021). In my paper I will discuss the influence that WWF got on the conservation discourse, as the organisation is presented as one of the leading and founding organisations of conservation. This already makes their inclusion in the conservation discourse very dominant.

To sustain a discourse, narratives are important in the process of telling successful stories of conservation. As I have already presented, WWF is leaning solely on win – win narratives of their conservation initiatives. Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 66) explains that narratives can be pure fiction, while other narratives can hold a presentation of reality. Further, they write on discursive narratives, which can be described as a story of a certain topic, where the

narrative is understood through the perspective of the discourse. Discursive narratives might also be used to sustain a discourse. Arguably, discursive narratives can both be understood through a certain discourse and used to sustain a discourse (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, pp. 69-70). The way actors use discursive narratives, Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 70) writes can be either unintentional, or it can be fully intentional, with the agenda of contributing to a specific discourse to maintain it, which they argue is also an attempt at exercising discursive power (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 70).

It is relevant to acknowledge the importance of discourses for conservation, and how these dominant discourses and the organisations that contribute with leading narratives might influence conservation. Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 41) writes on the importance of powerful actors in shaping a discourse. They argue that when analysing the environmental discourse, it is understood that the dominant environmental discourse shapes our view on the world and reality regarding environmentalism. While studying images in the environmental discourse has been done to a lesser degree, they write on the importance of it to strengthen the conservation discourse. Using the example of the use of social media by environmental organisations, in painting an image of nature and changing the relationship humans have with nature (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 41).

Further, Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 41) explains the effect that these images might have for conservation and the people affected by it. Drawing on Igoe they write that human alienation from nature can happen through images of pristine wilderness and wildlife used to promote tourism. Tourism which can be related to conservation initiatives (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 41). There is also a narrative behind these images, and Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 42) explains that these stories often include actors such as heroes, villains and victims. In these stories, local communities and often marginalised groups are portrayed as both the villains and victims of their own misfortune, where they are unable to take sufficient care of the nature surrounding them. Meanwhile, the hero of this narrative is those who interfere and propose solutions, states, and powerful actors such as conservation organisations. This narrative justifies their control over land (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 42).

It is relevant to look at where this idea comes from, and why it is still allowing conservation organisations to continue taking control over land, why they are seen as heroes. Benjaminsen

and Svarstad (2021, p. 42) writes on the understanding of myths to justify a historically grounded ideology that is confirmed through an image that fits the myth. This encourages a study of what the actual 'truth' is and what is a justification of a myth. Using the example of how an image of cracked clay may represent dry landscape, while it also might give an idea of overexploitation of the land. This is a myth they explain comes from the European colonial era, where Europeans claimed that environmental degradation was due to African mismanagement (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 43). Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 43) explains that myths are mainly uncontested, which makes them powerful, because narratives that do not fit their story are not accepted as truths. Because of this they argue that it conceals ideologies, such as a neo-colonial ideology on African landscape, and the justification of allowing conservation organisations to take control over land through eviction, even it is conducted violently (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021, p. 43).

4.4.4. Media analysis

This sub-chapter will present my use of media as both a source and an object of research. Firstly, I will present the internet as an object of research, and then I will present social media as a part of my media analysis. I will primarily rely on Instagram as the platform of observation. I will in this chapter discuss the advantages and disadvantages of media analysis.

Mawdsley (2011, p. 2) writes on the growing importance of using the internet when doing development research, and the opportunities that this platform presents us with. This is especially useful for researchers who are unable, for various reasons, to travel abroad to conduct fieldwork (Mawdsley, 2011). This makes internet a valuable source and as an object for my research. Research that has been highly affected by the current pandemic and restrictions that followed.

4.4.4.1. The internet as an object of research

In her attempt to describe the internet as a source, Mawdsley (2011, p. 5) argues that the internet has become an environment which makes it a field to be studied by researchers (Mawdsley, 2011). Flick (2018) supports this by arguing that there has been a significant growth in different social groups' access to the Internet and social media, and there is room for studying who is online and contributing to this community, and who is not (Flick, 2018, pp. 103-104). Mawdsley (2011, p. 5) explains the role that organisations play when creating

content that is posted online. When looking at it as an object of research, Mawdsley writes that it is important to look at what they write, what language they use to convey the message, and the agenda behind their content. Their content might influence those who consume it (Mawdsley, 2011, p. 5). The internet becomes an object to research due to the relationship between those who interact online.

4.4.4.2. *Limitations and advantages of media research*

Flick (2018) writes on the positive aspects of conducting qualitative research online, arguing that it makes research, in several ways, easier. For example, you are not limited by time or funds for traveling, and accessing documents can be done online (Flick, 2018, p. 105).

Despite the positive aspects of using the internet for research, there are limitations due to the accessibility. Mawdsley (2011, p. 8) writes that it is important to be aware when looking for sources on the internet, that they are academically verified, as these sources go through a longer process of validation. This will ultimately strengthen the research conducted. It is possible for anyone to publish an article online, which not only creates a broader perspective of a subject, but it makes it even more vital to be critical of the quality of the source (Mawdsley, 2011, pp. 8-9).

4.4.4.3. *Social media*

Flick (2018) explains that social media research has become important when attempting to study a social phenomenon and that social media can be used as a way to analyse how certain groups present themselves online, and social media as a platform to encourage action and participation, and evidently who benefits from the online exposure that social media accumulates (Flick, 2018, p. 392)?

The selection of social media for a research, is something Flick (2018) writes on as something that should be reflected upon. What should be reflected on is who got access to this platform and why the phenomenon to be studied is best studied on this platform (Flick, 2018, p. 393). For my research I chose Instagram as my social media platform. It was a decision based on the initial purpose of the app, which is to share images. For my research, creating images of a specific reality has been prominent, and the romanticisation of reality is something that the platform has been criticised for in the past. Due to this, I assumed that the topics that I wanted to explore, such as wilderness and environmentalism could be presented in the same manner.

Using Instagram as a source also includes another aspect to the analysis despite there being a function which allows the user to include a text to their image, the purpose of the app is to share images. This makes it useful to understand how images can be analysed as a form of visual data. Flick (2018, p. 360) writes that images can be analysed in a certain context, and that there are several ways of looking at an image, which makes it difficult to apply one way of analysing images. He argues that the interest the researcher has of the image, and the research questions that might be applied to it, will determine the understanding of the image (Flick, 2018).

Flick (2018) argues that there are several limitations to using social media research as a method alone. One of the issues being that there can be changes to the platform, which can change the access to the data already collected (Flick, 2018, p. 411). This was an issue that I faced while writing my paper, where a post on Instagram was removed by the user, but it was resolved as I found the content on another platform. This is something Flick (2018) writes can be avoided by relying on other traditional approaches along with social media research. Another aspect of this is also that the information found on these social media platforms are scarce, which makes it necessary to find supplements, to make the information more fruitful (Flick, 2018, pp. 411- 413). Flick (2018) also writes on another aspect of the limitations of using social media and generally online documents is that often the content found online is not created to be used for research purposes, such as many academic documents are. Still, social media content can contribute to the presentation of people, enterprises and institutions, which can be very useful for my research (Flick, 2018, p. 385).

4.5. Possible difficulties and limitations with choice of research methods

4.5.1. Validity

Malterud (2001, p. 484) writes on the difference between internal and external validity, both which are important for qualitative research. She distinguishes between the two and explains that internal validity is concerned with whether the researcher is studying what they intended to. Meanwhile, external validity is concerned with whether what has been studied can be applied to other contexts (Malterud, 2001, p. 484). Further, Malterud (2001, p. 485) argues that a researcher should aim to create a study that can be applied to context

outside of one particular study, while acknowledging that it is impossible to create a study that is universally transferable (Malterud, 2001, p. 485).

4.5.2. Reliability

Flick (2018, p. 542) explains that one can increase the reliability when interpreting data through the process of coding. He writes that when analysing with the use of coding, it is possible to test the hypothesis against one's findings. Which makes it possible to determine whether the same answer occurs more than once, when comparing it to the categories created through the coding process. Still, Flick argues that it is important to stay critical to one's findings, even when confronted with the same results (Flick, 2018, p. 543).

Using Cohen (2017, p. 268), reliability in research can be described as the ability of a study to be contested, and to have the results be similar to the original outcome. While Cohen (2017, p. 270) also argues that there is a difference between qualitative and quantitative research, when attempting to determine the reliability of a research. He writes that when attempting to prove the reliability of quantitative research it should be possible to reconstruct it using the same methods as in the original research and find the same results. When conducting qualitative research, it is more difficult to determine the reliability of the research, arguing that qualitative research shouldn't strive for replication (Cohen, 2017). Instead, Cohen (2017, p. 270) presents other methods to access the reliability of qualitative research. Further arguing that reliability can be measured when comparing the research and the data collected by the researcher, with the original source, to access how accurate the data collected is (Cohen, 2017, p. 207). I have attempted to make my research as reliable as possible, by using different cases to prove that they have occurring similarities. While I have also relied on scientific research conducted by other researchers, in an attempt to prove that my own findings can be found by other researchers when studying the same phenomenon or a similar phenomenon.

4.5.3. Objectivity

It is difficult to obtain objectivity on a paper where I've asked a normative research question where my intentions are quite clear. While Flick (2018, p. 547) explains that it is important that a researcher make their position clear in relation to their presentation of their

epistemology, and through this it is possible for the reader to evaluate the paper regarding the researchers position, and understand the results accordingly (Flick, 2018, p. 547).

4.5.4. Issues with media representation

Due to the vast variety of data that can be collected online it is difficult to locate the most relevant sources. Another issue that might arise from relying on media outlets as sources is the trustworthiness of the source. As several of the sources I apply to my analysis are based on narratives and media coverage of stories, and I have no opportunity to confirm the findings of these sources, it is worth discussing the trustworthiness of narratives in the media. This is also a part of my research question, but it is something I take into consideration when I attempt to compare the work of WWF with their opponents.

4.6. Ethical considerations

Ethics as presented by Flick (2018, p. 134) regards protecting the interests of those participating in your research, where the emphasis is on avoiding harm to those that participate in research or the people or groups you research (Flick, 2018, p. 137). Since I have chosen to base my research on document analysis there is less concern for ethical considerations. As I have not had direct contact with any people or groups that I have studied and relied my research on already conducted research, there is no need to discuss ethical considerations. Lastly, I will discuss my biases going into my research.

4.6.1. Biases

As I will argue later in my writing, the audience of conservation organisations are constantly under the influence of the narrative they present. Through the expansion of new media, and the constant exposure to opinions on topics related to conservation, it is difficult to view this topic completely without biases. Having grown up in the western part of the world, I am aware of the influence that this will have on my view of the topic. Because I have been taught this view on wilderness and “the other” through the media and my formal education, this is a view that I must constantly challenge through my thesis.

5. Presentation of WWF's report "A Future for All"

In this chapter, as a part of my analysis, I will go through the "A Future for All" report from 2021 presented by WWF. I will be doing this in order to create an idea of what their current work is, and what kind of projects that they view as urgent for the environment. I have divided this analysis into several sub-chapters this as an attempt to highlight some prominent parts of their report. WWF is a global organisation, but their target audience is in the western part of the world, while their projects are mainly conducted in the southern part of the world. As WWF is a leading organisation in the field of conservation, they also present a general understanding of the subject in the western part of the world. They are known for their win-win narrative, where both local communities and endangered species are preserved in the process, and where local communities benefit from their initiatives.

5.1. Analysis of the WWF report "A Future for All" 2021

WWF presents several cases of their work that are spread across the world, with endangered species in the centre of the report. I've chosen to gather a general view of the work conducted and presented by the organisation. For their 2021 report named "A Future for All", WWF tries to address the issues that are faced when the needs of people and the need to preserve endangered species collide. Their goal, as presented in the 2021 report, is to decrease human-wildlife conflict, as they view this as the leading cause for failed conservation initiatives. They describe a changing world where the competition for resources and land is growing, and that some communities and species are more affected than others. The interactions between these groups and the effects of them are what they attempt to outline with this report, and the efforts that are made to minimise the negative effects (WWF, 2021b). I will attempt to analyse the initiatives that WWF have conducted to improve the livelihoods of those directly affected by the measures done to preserve wildlife. By dividing the analysis into four sub-chapters, human – wildlife conflict, tourism, local communities, and corporations, where human – wildlife conflict will be a topic that will be leading for the other three sub-chapters.

5.2. Human – Wildlife Conflict

In this sub-chapter I will present the concept of human – wildlife conflicts as explained by WWF. I will attempt to understand who WWF blames for human – wildlife conflicts for a further understanding of how WWF might be conducting discursive power in the presentation

of their report. As I have already presented their “A Future for All” report attempts to answer how coexistence might be possible.

The main objective of the “A Future for All” report is human – wildlife conflict and coexistence. Throughout the report they present issues caused by human – wildlife conflicts, and they offer solutions, arguing that their projects are not in fact a failure due to conflicts, conflicts are merely obstacles to be resolved. In their report WWF stresses the need to resolve issues between humans and endangered species, before the situation escalates and puts more pressure on species that are at the brink of extinction. When WWF presents the issue of human - wildlife conflict they are acknowledging that it is a complex issue, but they are primarily blaming those people who share space with wildlife and their strained relationship. The title “What Drives Human - Wildlife Conflict?” is an important part of their report because they present several causes that leads to conflict with humans and wildlife, and it sets an expectation of what the rest of the report will be concerning. What are the drivers of human – wildlife conflict? According to WWF (2021b) it is nearly impossible to find one singular source, because the different drivers are constantly influencing each other. Still, there are some drivers that WWF brings forward as important, like ecological drivers and anthropogenic drivers (WWF, 2021b).

The first chapter of the report is fittingly called *Setting the Scene*, where WWF attempt to paint a picture of the relationship that wildlife and humans have had for centuries, and they address the conflict and coexistence of these parts. Interestingly, they mention urbanisation, and the withdrawal from nature. While they also emphasise that some groups, especially indigenous ones, are still closely linked to wildlife, are affected by industries that results in their loss of habitat. They also present that the human-wildlife conflict not only affects wildlife and humans entitled to these landscapes, they also write on the effect that these conflicts can cause for the economic landscape (WWF, 2021b, p. 12).

In this first chapter, WWF (2021b) presents us with an outline of the rest of the report. Firstly, the complexity of human-wildlife Conflict, and in their own words, the underlying factors to these conflicts. Secondly, the effects of these conflicts, aiming to illustrate the various levels of damage. Thirdly, they write that they will present solutions to the human-wildlife conflicts, with emphasis on coexistence. Lastly, the report will explain the organisations goals for a future where human-wildlife conflicts are resolved (WWF, 2021b, p. 12).

For my analysis, my focus will be on the presentation of the solutions to human – wildlife conflict that WWF presents in their report. Firstly, I will look at tourism, and how it is related to conservation and how it might be a solution. In order to do this, I will present the case of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park as an example. Secondly, I will focus on local communities, and how WWF approaches this group in relation to conservation and human – wildlife conflicts. For this part I will present the case of tiger sanctuaries in India. Lastly, my analysis of the “A Future for All” will touch upon the topic of corporations, and their part in human – wildlife conflicts. To highlight this, I will present the case of elephants and workers in India, and generally WWF’s investment of wildlife. By dividing the report into these categories, I hope to present it in such a way that it is possible to gather an understanding of the work that WWF focuses on and their goals regarding this.

5.3. Tourism

In this sub-chapter I will write about tourism as it is presented by WWF. Where I present Bwindi Impenetrable National Park as an example of a WWF conservation initiative where tourism is highly involved. The question I will attempt to answer for this part is the views that WWF has on tourism, and how it is related to conservation, according to the organisation.

Throughout the report WWF is promoting tourism as one of the solutions to the human-wildlife conflict. They are solely positive towards tourism, and the report lacks a nuanced view of the effects on local communities and areas from tourism. As one of the main issues faced with conservation is the loss of resources for the local communities that need to adapt to living in the same areas as wild animals. Since several communities are affected by these changes, WWF (2021b) highlights the importance of tourism, in order to ensure income for those who are no longer able to earn their wages from their usual labour. A compensation for their loss, and often presented as a part of the agreement for relocation. National parks are one of the contributors to these incomes, and WWF has several examples of successful stories where the local communities around the parks have earned from tourism (WWF, 2021b). To highlight this solution, I will use the case of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, where WWF claims to have resolved the wildlife conflict in the area, and where tourism has been presented as the solution.

5.3.1. *Bwindi Impenetrable National Park*

Before presenting the case Bwindi Impenetrable National Park in their report, WWF (2021b, p. 35) addresses the issue with wildlife conservation as a opposition to protecting the rights of local communities, often indigenous. Further, they write that this opposition is one of the reasons why governments experience conflict with local communities when they attempt to apply wildlife policies. This has resulted in an escalation of human-wildlife conflict, and they use the example of more engaged government action when an elephant is killed, than when a human is killed by an elephant (WWF, 2021b, p. 35).

One of the more infamous works conducted by WWF is the case of the mountain gorillas in Bwindi, Uganda. With an estimate of 459 mountain gorillas, and being one of the two populations of the species, the park has become vital for the protection of the endangered species (WWF, 2021b, p. 36). This initiative was started in 1991, by the government in Uganda, and today the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park can be found on UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites. Under this protection, the biodiverse landscape is opened for a permanent research facility, and support for ecotourism, which has argued by UNESCO, is the provider for the local economy and the reason for the strong support from the local communities (UNESCO).

In WWF's (2021b, p. 36) presentation of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park they acknowledge the issues that arose when the park was first initiated by the government. Here there is mention of displacement from the area, which excluded the local communities from resources. Further, they mention the effects that tourism had on the situation. Tourism caused the gorillas to be accustomed to people, which led them to spend time closer to humans outside of the habitat, feeding on the crops of the local communities (WWF, 2021b, p. 36). The conflict is presented as one that belongs to the past, as it is presented by WWF as an effort that was conducted by governments and conservation organisations to regain the trust of those local communities affected by the gorilla habitat (WWF, 2021b, p. 36).

The solution for the human - wildlife conflict regard the park, was generating income from the tourism that the park attracted. The resolution was to take 20% of the income from the park's entrance fee, and some from the tourist lodges, and use this money to pay for the damage that the wildlife might inflict on the crops surrounding the park (WWF, 2021b, p. 36). WWF (2021b, p. 36) writes in their report that this initiative wasn't enough, on the contrary it

escalated the conflicts. This called for a deeper understanding behind the human-wildlife conflicts, and that this is an issue that is currently being resolved through local participation and fairer share of the benefits that the park generates (WWF, 2021b, p. 36).

WWF (2021b, p. 75) sees human-wildlife conflicts as a concern for both sustainable development and conservation, and they propose efforts that regard both conservation and sustainable development. Where ecotourism is presented as one of the projects that can bring both parts together (WWF, 2021b, p. 75). The human-wildlife conflicts that I have already presented, between the local communities and mountain gorillas, are one of the issues that WWF claims to have been resolved by ecotourism. These initiatives, as described by WWF (2021b, p. 79), are created to benefit the local communities that are living closely to wildlife, and often paying a high price for it through damage of livelihoods. Sustainable ecotourism is presented as an option to pay for these expenses (WWF, 2021b, p. 79). These new initiatives to sustainably support the local communities have some similarities to the previous initiatives that used tourism as a source of income for compensation. In their report, WWF (2021b, p. 80) writes that 20% of the income from park fees are going towards community projects, while also ensuring that when the Ugandan Wildlife Authority sell gorilla viewing permits, they give an additional US\$10 to these development projects (WWF, 2021b, p. 80).

Beyond the economical aspect of income that comes from the park alone, there are several other initiatives directly targeting the development of local communities. WWF (2021b, p. 80) writes that the Ugandan Wildlife Authority is distributing more grants towards those communities that are the most affected by wildlife, and those households that are closest to the park boundary. Including the support of projects that are beneficial for local communities, such as schools, health care and road repair. They also emphasise that in 2019 Uganda passed the Wildlife Act of 2019, which means that stakeholders are forced under law to contribute to the community, and that the communities are also promised access under law to the funds it authorises (WWF, 2021b, p. 80). WWF (2021b, p. 80) also writes that these changes are not enough to make permanent changes, which is why they highlight programmes that are targeting understanding and involvement in these sustainable development changes. Through the International Institute for Environment and Development, Uganda has created projects that aims to give the people who live in the local communities around the park to see how they might benefit from the tourists that visit. Another aspect of this program is the

encouragement for local communities to create certified products, that can be sold to tourists (WWF, 2021b, p. 80).

This presentation of initiatives through their report shows that tourism has become more integrated in the everyday lives of the local communities that surround the Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Tourism, according to WWF, has become vital for sustaining the livelihoods of those affected by relocation from protected areas. Additionally, they promote tourism to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park on their webpage, with the promise of a eco-friendly holiday where the tourists are directly contributing to the protection of the mountain gorillas and their payment will contribute to local communities (WWF, n.d.). As already presented, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park is an area closed off for human interference, but it is open for tourists who are willing to pay the price, with a promise to spend an hour in the enclosure, witnessing the mountain gorillas in their natural habitat, undisturbed by human interaction (WWF, n.d.).

Further, WWF (n.d.) writes that it is also possible to interact with the mountain gorillas from afar, you don't even need to leave your own couch to take part in the protection of this endangered species. Another option when entering this page to read about the mountain gorillas, is to adopt a gorilla. Pressing this button will lead you to an informative page, where there are several options where you can choose how much you would like to donate. Depending on how much you donate you will receive a gift, as proof of the altruistic action. Some of the items one might choose from are fuzzy soft toy, that looks like the mountain gorilla, a personalised adoption certificate, as well as a background for your electronic devices, showing your support for WWF's work. Mountain gorillas are not the only animal that you can adopt on the WWF webpage. There are several options, among them snow leopards, tigers, elephants, polar bears, and several others. They all come with the promise of a gift, representing the cause you've chosen to support (WWF, n.d.).

5.4. Local Communities

Local communities are continuously mentioned throughout the report, and as already highlighted, in correlation to human – wildlife conflicts. WWF acknowledges the strain on local communities in encounters with wildlife, and that there needs to be taken measures to ensure that the costs of such an encounter is minimal. Especially when it comes to damages to properties and crops, as well as more severe cases where lives are at stake. This sub-chapter

will explore one of WWF's initiatives where local communities have been involved in the process of solving human-wildlife conflicts. I will start by presenting a chapter of their report called "Voices of the People", and then continue by presenting their conservation initiatives in India regarding tiger sanctuaries.

5.4.1. Voices of the people

In their report, WWF (2021b, p. 66) presents what they call "Voices of the People", in their attempt to create an image of how it is for local communities to live with wildlife. This presentation is presented under the chapter in the report that revolves around the benefits to local communities, as a result of successful human wildlife management initiatives created by WWF. In the introduction to the chapter 'Benefits to local communities', WWF (2021b, p. 61) explains that they attempt to encourage human wildlife management governed by local communities. They continue by writing that many local communities have the same history as the local wildlife, and they write that by "Encouraging people to reconnect with traditions, tales, and beliefs concerning their history with wildlife opens opportunities for communities to develop pride in living with a species." (WWF, 2021b, p. 61).

After this introduction and the presentation of specific human wildlife management initiatives, presented as successful. WWF (2021b, p. 66) gives a brief presentation of local people who have participated in their human wildlife management initiatives. These local people from different parts of the world where WWF conduct work, praise these initiatives and the opportunities it has created for them, and the changes in their attitudes towards wildlife. The local people they present are mainly farmers, and how wildlife has previously threatened their livestock. There is a general consensus between those interviewed and presented in this report, expressing their gratitude towards wildlife and the initiatives that create coexistence. They speak of less damage to their crops and livestock, and efforts that also contribute to the existence of wildlife. Several of these farmers express that they previously had a negative relationship with wildlife, and they believed they were the source of the damage to their crops and livestock, while through the work of WWF they now value wildlife and they notice their importance of the environment (WWF, 2021b, p. 66).

It is worth mentioning the presentation of monitoring of human-wildlife conflicts, in their report WWF (2021b, p. 47) writes that it is important to both track the damage caused by wildlife and the damage inflicted on wildlife, and conflicts arising from wildlife encounters.

They bring forward an example of a system in Namibia, where the local communities oversee monitoring of endangered wildlife species and addressing wildlife – conflicts and how local farmers might avoid or prevent incidents. This initiative is as mentioned driven by local communities, alongside hiring game guards who are responsible for protecting areas against poaching, and assisting the local communities in their tracking of human – wildlife conflicts and damage caused by wildlife (WWF, 2021b, p. 48). This is the only mention of game guards in the “A Future for All” report.

5.4.2. Tiger Sanctuaries in India

While addressing direct impacts on local communities in WWF’s (2021b, p. 31) report, such as damage to crops, housing, and more severe, deaths and injuries caused by encounters with wildlife. These are as described by WWF as obvious reasons for human – wildlife conflict, and that these conflicts particularly affect communities that are marginalised and often without other options for income, relying on their crops and the family’s primary breadwinners for survival (WWF, 2021b, p. 31). Further, WWF (2021b, p. 32) writes about the hidden costs to a community when facing wildlife, and factors that can increase the human – wildlife conflict, and make communities more negative towards conservation initiatives and preservation of endangered species. One of the aspects they emphasise is the psychological effects that communities living closely to wildlife experience, such as fear and stress. They mention a study conducted in India where they found that over 50% of widows, where their partners had been attacked by tigers or crocodiles, suffered from poor physical and mental health (WWF, 2021b, p. 32).

In an attempt to address these factors contributing to human – wildlife conflicts, WWF (2021b, p. 33) writes that one of the ways that can lead to coexistence is through changing the attitudes of those affected, and their tolerance towards wildlife. They attempt to explain through their report that communities’ approach towards wildlife is affected by several factors, such as previous encounters and geography plays a huge part as often urban communities are less likely to have negative encounters with wildlife, while rural communities are more likely to have negative encounters. Further, they write that rural populations’ exposure to wildlife, and they often rely on natural resources that can be disturbed by wildlife, may leave them with a negative view on wildlife. They also emphasise the relationship that indigenous communities have with wildlife and nature, explaining that it

is generally more complex, and that traditionally their livelihoods have depended on wildlife and nature (WWF, 2021b, p. 33).

In the Future for All report, WWF (2021b) puts great emphasis on the issues that India faces with human-wildlife conflict, and the measures necessary to avoid these conflicts. Again, the issue is the growth of human populations, and the fight over resources and living spaces. This creates a conflict between humans and animals that inhabit the same space (WWF, 2021b, p. 52). Further, WWF (2021b) celebrates India's government for their involvement to reduce human-wildlife conflict, one of the examples being that India have included coexistence as part of their laws (WWF, 2021b, p. 52). As with the other example, local communities are presented as vital for the change in human-wildlife conflict, they are also presented as included in the decision making in India, as a part of the National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-2035 (WWF, 2021b, p. 53).

An example of this is the Pilibhit Tiger Reserve in India. Despite presenting cases of violence against tigers and the destruction of agricultural land and even death by tigers, WWF present this as a difficult but successful case (WWF, 2021b, p. 34). They describe that it seems like the violence is not targeted at the animals, especially not towards those who do not cause any harm, but their anger is directed at the law enforcement. Another promise that WWF presents in this report, is that tigers that kill humans are tracked down and put down, which is something WWF presents as an effort that is done to keep peace with the local communities. As a conclusion, WWF writes that the management of Pilibhit Tiger Reserve, and the efforts to keep those living around the area satisfied, is an example of successful conservation, and it should be looked to as an example for future projects (WWF, 2021b, p. 34).

WWF (2021b, p. 53) writes that The National Wildlife Action Plan 2017-2035 isn't only created in an attempt to target human – wildlife conflict through responsive initiatives when humans encounter wildlife, as in the example above. They also focus on the attitudes that local communities have towards wildlife, such as providing those affected when encountered with wildlife, the relief necessary afterwards. They also emphasise the need to involve the local community in the process of conservation, such as providing them with the training and education necessary to be able to protect their land from wildlife. They write that it is supposed to be an empowering process (WWF, 2021b, p. 53).

India isn't the only country where WWF has tiger sanctuaries with presentations of successful collaborations with local communities and governments. In Chitwan National Park, in Nepal, WWF (2021b) measures their success in the growth of the tiger population, with numbers from 2019 the amount is 92 tigers. With this introduction to the park, WWF continues to celebrate the efforts done to please the local communities around the park. An example is that 30% of the entry fees are used on the communities affected by the animals around the park. They also bring forward the efforts made to have a response team, responsible for the conflicts that might arise, and their main job is to prevent these conflicts from escalating. This is also an effort that WWF claims to have been successful (WWF, 2021b, p. 57).

5.5. Corporations

In their report there is a large focus on how corporations can be useful in tackling human-wildlife conflicts. Their influence reaches beyond tourism and can provide local communities with opportunities when their traditional livelihoods have been compromised. This sub-chapter attempts to explore the opportunities that corporations offer and how they resolve human – wildlife conflicts, according to WWF. WWF also includes branding in their report, which is also an important aspect in offering local communities other options to sustain their livelihoods. This sub-chapter will explore the role corporations play in the process of solving human – wildlife conflicts, according to WWF. I will use the example presented by WWF of the conflict between elephants and workers in India.

5.5.1. Elephants and workers in India

When addressing human – wildlife conflict, WWF (2021b, p. 81) also writes on the impact that tackling these issues can have on the local economy. They write that developing businesses that can be beneficial for wildlife, and also that these business can bring the money back to those directly affected by living closely with wildlife (WWF, 2021b, p. 81). This, as I have already presented, is something that WWF attempts to do through tourism. Additionally, WWF (2021b, p. 81) brings forward other initiatives in their report, such as successful human – wildlife conflict management, certification and consumer choice. I'll discuss all aspects, but firstly focus on human – wildlife conflict, and present the latter two in my chapter discussing WWF's use of branding.

In their report, WWF (2021b, p. 82) presents one of their projects in Southern India where they have successfully increased the safety for workers that work at plantations, producing tea and coffee. The human – wildlife conflict that has presented itself here is described by WWF as a risk for the workers. The example used is from the Valparai plateau in India, a place that is described as dominated by tea plantations and surrounded by protected areas, with 120 elephants and sustaining 70.000 people with work. Close to Valparai, the Hassan region can be found, and WWF writes this area is dominated by coffee plantations and is the home for over 100.000 people and 45 elephants (WWF, 2021b, p. 82). Through investigation by the Nature Conservation Foundation, they found that there were several deaths in these areas caused by wildlife encounters. Between 2002 and 2020, 47 people died in Valparai and from 2010 to 2020, 40 people died in the Hassan region (WWF, 2021b, p. 83). This is something that WWF (2021b, p. 82) writes has been the cause for several human – wildlife conflicts, and led to communities fearing the impact that elephants pose to their lives and livelihoods (WWF, 2021b, p. 82).

By including companies and local communities in the process, WWF (2021b, p. 83) writes that there has been a significant decrease in the number of people killed by encounters with elephants. They write that this drastic change comes from the understanding of elephant behaviour and their ecological requirements. After they had conducted research on the causes behind the encounters and finding that the encounters usually happened when the workers were travelling to and from work. They saw the need for a system that made it possible to warn plantation workers about the location of elephants, and when they could interfere with their paths. Warnings that the workers could receive on their phones, display boards or tv messages, this message was also sent out to those living in these areas, not only the workers (WWF, 2021b, p. 83). Again WWF (2021b, p. 83), writes that this was an empowering process for the local communities in the process of deescalating the Human – Wildlife Conflict, and the humans regained a sense of power through the involvement. Further, they also use this as an example of how a conflict in an agricultural area also inhabited by an endangered species can be resolved. They present an idea that conflicts can be solved through the involvement of local communities and companies (WWF, 2021b, p. 83).

This is just one example that WWF presents in their report, where companies have been brought forward as prime examples for sustainable solutions for the protection of both humans and wildlife. In their report they do not mention specific companies, just that they

produce tea and coffee. Meanwhile, in their report WWF explains that protecting workers against wildlife are costly processes, and that small – scale producers often can't afford the expenses of these changes (WWF, 2021b, p. 81). Which might encourage a discussion about whether these initiatives can be damaging for local companies, making them lose in a competition against global companies that are the reason behind the loss of land to begin with, which has significantly pressured the human – wildlife conflicts.

5.6. Alternative solutions for sustaining local communities

When human-wildlife conflict is mentioned with specific cases, humans are generally blamed for the damage. It is also explained through ignorance or lack of education on the importance of conservation. Throughout the report they continuously mention that local communities and endangered animals are living in crowded areas, and they are forced to share land, but they fail to mention the causes for these changes. Surely, they mention the environmental crises, deforestation, extreme weather causing people to move due to damage of crops and land, but they fail to see the biggest issue behind climate change. There is little mention of the biggest drivers behind these changes, such as the oil industry or the clothing industry which contributes to extreme emissions each year. One of the chapters in the report is called “Benefits to Commodity Production, Businesses, and Supply Chains”, which I find to be an interesting headline for a report which is concerned for the endangerment of species. Another chapter is “Opportunities to Financial Investment”, which is also in line with the previous chapter. Both chapters are presented as an advantage for the local communities. In this sub-chapter I seek to explore the mention of other solutions for sustaining local communities.

5.6.1. Certification

Certification is one of the strategies that WWF (2021b) presents as both an advantage for conservation, as well as those affected by their projects. According to WWF this is an initiative that tries to target areas where human-wildlife conflict has created tense situations between wildlife and people. There are several criteria for products to be approved by The Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network, such as the profit must directly affect conservation of species that are in danger of extinction (WWF, 2021b). It is interesting to look at the goal for organisations like Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network, and what they want to achieve with their certification program. WWF (2021b) writes in their report that Wildlife Friendly Enterprise Network want their certification to become a tool that can shape the conservation

practice, and introduce it to the global market (WWF, 2021b). This initiative has also been rewarded several environmental awards, giving their brand a strong reputation, which speaks to the conscious consumer. Certification of products is associated with being environmental, which makes it desirable for companies and the consumer.

5.6.2. Investing in wildlife

As mentioned above, one of the chapters in the report is called “Opportunities to Financial Investment”. This is interesting considering this is a report concerning wildlife, and the relation humans have with wildlife. WWF (2021b) sees the opportunity for investment in wildlife, to prevent human-wildlife conflict. They encourage international companies to invest in wildlife, and one of the initiatives presented is investment through Wildlife Credits. In their report, WWF explains that Wildlife Credits are given when conservation projects are successful, and the communities affected by wildlife are rewarded accordingly. Further, WWF is presenting a narrative of these investments as important for the local understanding of conservation. The companies who invest are viewing wildlife as something worth preserving, and as they write they are “willing” to pay for wildlife where they can profit from a reputation of being environmental. The companies are providing communities affected by wildlife with a reward, which according to WWF will increase their tolerance for damage caused by wildlife, and will eventually lead to the understanding of the importance of wildlife (WWF, 2021b).

5.7. An overall view on the “A Future for All” report

The “A Future for All” report is firstly an overview of the projects that WWF claim to have been successful, both for the environment and those affected by the projects conducted by WWF. It also proposes attempts to deal with human-wildlife conflict but fails to see the bigger picture and solutions that might demand that companies that support WWF need to change in order to preserve areas that local communities and endangered species share. Tourism and branding seem to be two main contributors to financing several of WWF’s conservation projects. It is worth looking at the negative effects that both tourism and branding can have on conservation and the people that are supposedly getting compensation through tourism and certified products. Is it ethical to prohibit local communities from entering national parks, while allowing foreign investors and tourists to enter it because they have the money for it and offer an opportunity to profit from these initiatives? Is the

compensation that these local groups receive enough to make up for the land that they have lost in the name of conservation? In the next chapter I will discuss the different initiatives presented by WWF, considering criticism that the organisation has received for their conservation work. While also discuss the impact that these initiatives might have on especially local communities and indigenous groups.

6. WWF's initiatives as interpreted by other actors

The presentation of conservation initiatives by WWF in their "A Future for All" report is solely positive. When presented with obstacles, they present solutions rather than discussing the sources for the conflicts. Due to this presentation, I will use this chapter to discuss some of their conservation initiatives presented by other actors. I will start by presenting the myth of local support in conservation and continue by discussing the relationship between conservation and capitalism. Further, I will rely on the claims presented by Survival International as a guideline throughout this chapter, and apply research conducted by others to support and discuss the claims presented by Survival International. Lastly, I will present some research on indirect consequences of conservation.

6.1.1. The myth of local support

To explain the misleading concept of the local support, Brockington (2009, p. 136) uses the idea that the good always wins over the bad. That in conservation, local support is needed for a conservation project to succeed. Further, he writes that it is unrealistic that local communities in opposition to conservation, often disorganised and unarmed, can pose a serious threat to armed rangers and a global organisation with unlimited funds, in his opinion proving that parks can be successful without the support of local communities. In taking the argument further, Brockington explains that this narrative of the good always triumphing in the end gives the western audience the idea that if something bad happened in the creation of conservation initiatives, those in opposition would eventually win (Brockington, 2009, p. 136). The narrative of local support and continuous communication between WWF and local communities is very dominant in their 2020 report. They proudly present initiatives where they offer alternative labour to compensate for their traditional livelihoods, and health and education services. They also present the education of local communities on the importance of conservation as a successful and necessary initiative. Brockington (2009, p. 137) argues that this is a way of turning nature into a commodity, which often is seen as a solution to the conservation problems that might arise when interacting with local communities in opposition to conservation. He writes that this makes room for positive stories of local communities adjusting to these changes and becoming conservationists. While conservation organisations are presented as heroes who offer education and health services, a win – win solution (Brockington, 2009, pp. 138-139).

6.2. Survival International

The organisation Survival International (n.d.-a) is a global organisation that works for indigenous rights. A lot of their work is targeted at WWF and other big conservation organisation, and especially their work concerning protected areas. Survival International claims that mainstream conservation is an extension of colonialism and should be considered neo-colonialism. They call for a change in environmental conservation, and with the slogan of their newest campaign “Decolonize Conservation: indigenous people are the best conservationists” (as of 2021), they bring attention to their work and call for action upon reputable organisations such as WWF (Survival International, n.d.-a). Alongside organisations such as Survival International, several journalists have taken it upon themselves to investigate these protected areas to discover the truth behind these protected areas and the effects that may be harmful to indigenous groups and local communities. Groups who are often unable to voice their opinions against reputable conservation organisations and governments who are gaining from the tourism that these protected areas cultivate. Survival International has also been important in the process of applying pressure to organisations such as the UN, calling for attention to the claims that they have presented and voicing the distress of various indigenous groups.

6.2.1. *Claims of forceful eviction and abuse*

As already mentioned, the Survival International (n.d.-a) campaign ‘Decolonize Conservation’ focuses on the injustice that local communities and especially indigenous groups receive due to conservation initiatives. Often through the creation of national parks and protected areas. The campaign focused on the injustice that several indigenous groups faced in the name of conservation. Not only did the campaign highlight the illegal activities connected to evicting indigenous groups, but the injustice and violence they face when entering their previous homes while tourists are encouraged to travel to these protected areas. These groups are fined for using these areas due to the supposed threat they are to the wilderness and the endangered animals, while tourists can and are encouraged to pay to hunt the same animals (Survival International, n.d.-a).

In 2017 Survival International (2017) wrote an article concerning the imprisonment of a man belonging to the Batwa people, who reside around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. The allegation came after the man was caught hunting an antelope inside of the protected area. Survival International writes that this was an area that previously used to belong to the Batwa

people, but they were forcefully and illegally evicted from it in the name of conservation. Further, they write that Batwa people are often accused of poaching, and as a result imprisoned and forced to work in construction or with waste disposal. They report abuse against Batwa people in connection to the park as far back as to 2001. In 2013, the Batwa people filed a report to Uganda's Constitutional Court, where they asked for recognition and compensation for their loss of land. Survival International writes that in 2017 it was still an ongoing case (Survival International, 2017).

The case of the Batwa people in Uganda is not one of a kind, and Survival International (n.d.-b) presents several cases of reported abuse towards indigenous groups in Africa, and especially towards pastoral groups and what they call forest dwellers, who has traditionally relied on the forest for a livelihood. In a more recent report, Survival International brings attention to the Baka people, and their struggle for their land and how they are faced with human rights abuse connected to conservation that WWF is a part of (Survival International, n.d.-b).

In an official statement to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Survival International (2018) gathered seven complaints from community members of the Baka people in the Republic of Congo and Cameroon. In this statement they addressed the illegal eviction of Baka people and the resistance to the creation of a new protected area in Congo on land that belongs to the Baka people. In these reports there are mentions of physical abuse from rangers outside of the protected areas and frustration due not being heard when contacting WWF about the mistreatment they have faced in meeting with the authority of the protected areas. Further, they write of the treatment they have received from WWF in their search for new protected areas and the boundaries of the park have been set up without the consent of the Baka people. In these letters they ask the UNDP to investigate the mistreatment and alienation from their own land, asking them to address the issue (Survival International, 2018).

The case created by UNDP (2020) is still ongoing, but they published a report in 2020, and it is set to be finalised in 2023. The key findings represented in the report from 2020 was concerning the indigenous groups in the Messok-Dja protected area were treated according to human rights. UNDP conducted fieldwork involving representatives from the Baka community, and governmental and non-governmental representatives. Through this group of

representatives, UNDP found that eco-guards connected to this park had exercised violence against the Baka people, which had naturally caused fear among this group in encounters with guards. These guards are as stated by UNDP funded by them, in collaboration through the Government of the Republic of Congo and WWF. In this report, they presented that WWF emphasised that it was a collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Congo, who oversees employment of these guards. Further, UNDP found that this threat and the abuse the Baka people have faced has prevented them from their traditional livelihood, which again is further marginalising (UNDP, 2020).

While the UNDP (2020) found that there had been evidence of abuse against the Baka people and recommended that there should be a zero tolerance of abuse against this community, they further promoted a plan for the future of the park. This plan involves full participation of the communities that are going to be affected by the park's activities, in all aspects of the planning. They also wrote that there would maintaining contact between UNDP and the local communities. This is just a summary of the findings that UNDP collected while doing their fieldwork on the claimed abuse. They also present a more detailed collection of WWF's response to the findings of abuse. UNDP argues that it is not the first time that records of abuse have been evident in protected areas, and that similar cases have been brought forward by international media, which again has raised the question of a need for a review of WWF. WWF in return responded that this incident was not a reoccurring issue, but rather an unfortunate event caused by a few difficult guards, and they claimed that the rest of the conservation initiative should be considered successful. They also responded to these claims with a promise to create a Code of Conduct (in 2018), which would include teaching eco-guards about respect for human rights, and especially the rights of indigenous groups. UNDP writes that as of 2019 this Code of Conduct had not been signed by all of the involved parties (UNDP, 2020).

6.2.2. Eviction or relocation?

While WWF is promising an inclusive community around their tiger sanctuaries, focusing on the involvement of local communities for the success of their programs, Survival International presents another story. According to Survival International (2019a, p. 2), several people around tiger sanctuaries are accused of harming wildlife, and their homes are being destroyed in order for organisations to create these sanctuaries. They bring forward indigenous groups in India, Adivasis, who are forcefully being removed from their homes. This is happening

despite the laws in the country that is created to protect indigenous groups, and their right to stay in the land that historically belongs to them (Survival International, 2019a, p. 2).

The argument presented by Survival International (2019a, p. 2) is that indigenous groups, the Adivasis, have lived alongside tigers for centuries, and that they are natural protectors of this endangered species. They take it further, by claiming that tiger reserves, where indigenous groups have been allowed to stay in the area, the number of animals has increased, above the national level (Survival International, 2019a, p. 3).

“India’s indigenous evictions – the dark side of the Jungle Book” is an article published by Tom Linton (2015) for *The Ecologist*, which was published as a part of Survival International’s ‘Parks Need Peoples’ campaign. This article also raises the issues faced when indigenous groups are evicted from their homes in order for the Indian government to create tiger sanctuaries (Linton, 2015). Linton (2015) presents the story while comparing it to the famous children’s book *The Jungle Book* and writes that there are similarities between the human child Mowgli and his enemy, the tiger Shere Khan, and the perspective that is presented by conservation organisations. He claims that conservation organisations use the conflict between humans and tigers as the reason for the decline in the tiger population (Linton, 2015).

Survival International (2019a, p. 2) conducted research on evicted groups from tiger sanctuaries, and in 2019 they released a report with the claim that several of the reported ‘voluntary relocations’ should be considered illegal. In the name of conservation, over 100.000 people have been evicted, and that the number is steadily increasing, as Survival International writes that the National Tiger Conservation Authority has announced that they will expand their protected areas. In this report they also elaborate that while local communities and indigenous groups are evicted for the sake of conservation, tourists are welcomed in exchange for a fee, and industries such as plantations and mining companies are still allowed to continue their work inside of these sanctuaries. While acknowledging that some groups may accept the offer to relocate, Survival International writes that most people are not fully informed on the subject of relocation, and unaware of the choices they have, and there are records of false claims of agreement and harassment to achieve compliance (Survival International, 2019a, pp. 2-3).

While addressing this concern for illegal evictions, Survival International (2019a, p. 4) refers to the national law, in an attempt to uncover whether these recorded relocations can be considered illegal. Writing that in 2006, India created an act regarding recognition and forest rights, which involved the rights of indigenous groups and other traditional forest dwellers right to their traditional land. In this act there are a set of conditions that are needed to be met, should these communities be relocated, in order for it to be legal (Survival International, 2019a). These are as following as presented in the Survival International report¹:

*Section 4(2) states that forest rights holders can only be resettled from “critical wildlife habitats” if **all** the following conditions are met;*

- *Their rights must first be recognized and recorded;*
- *The government has established that the community is irreversibly harming wildlife and coexistence is not possible;*
- *A resettlement and rehabilitation package must have been prepared which offers a secure livelihood for the community;*
- *The community must give its free and informed consent, in writing, both to the resettlement and the proposed rehabilitation package. This must be done by the council of all adults in the village, known as the Gram Sabha.*
- *The rehabilitation facilities and land allocation must be complete.*

(Survival International, 2019a, p. 4)

According to the findings collected by Survival International (2019a, pp. 6-9), several of these steps have been ignored, which makes the relocations illegal. In the interviews conducted by Survival International, they report that they found that several people were not properly informed on their rights to their land. Further, the government in India is also failing to prove that those evicted from the protected areas should be considered a threat to the wildlife, on such a scale that coexistence is not an option. The resettlement packages, which are supposed to make up for the livelihoods lost when relocated, are often proven to be inadequate and less than originally promised. With all of these aspects to consider, Survival International claims that most relocations that find place for tiger sanctuaries are illegal, despite the conservation

¹ These are the laws as presented by Survival International in their report. The writing is slightly different in the original document created by the Government of India. The original can be found in the Forest Rights Act from 2006, on pages 5 and 6 under section 4(2). <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/FRA/FRAActnRulesBook.pdf>

organisations claims of successful communication between organisation and local communities (Survival International, 2019a, pp. 6-9).

These evictions are enforced by India's Forest Department, but Survival International (2019a, p. 17) emphasise that reputable conservation organisations are often contributors, such as WWF. Survival International writes that their involvement makes them responsible for what is happening towards local communities, regardless of whether it is indirect or direct involvement. WWF is responsible for the training of forest guards, as well as equipping them with weapons. Survival International have recorded that local communities feel threatened by forest guards placed by WWF and the Forest Department, viewing the two as the same. Further, they write that WWF's Indian CEO called for drafting what they call a draconian amendment, which would have militarised Indian forests, and allowed guards to kill on sight, and allowed the government to remove forest rights in the name of conservation (Survival International, 2019a, p. 17).

An undercover investigation conducted by BBC (2017) in 2017 found similar shocking findings. This investigation found place in Kaziranga National Park, which is claimed to be a successful conservation initiative. The park has received widespread fame, and among one of the contributors to this, is Sir David Attenborough, whose team filmed Planet Earth II here. In a video captured by the BBC there are graphic images of animals destroying homes without interference. In an interview with the eco-guards of this park, it comes forward that they are ordered to shoot intruders in the park. Further, they also found that there are little consequences of the actions done by these eco-guards, as the Government in India have set up protections for the guards, which protects them if they injure or kill intruders. In conversation with the director of the park, Dr. Singh, the local communities are not presented as the poachers, but they are described as contributors to the crime, employed by poachers. Further, he explains that through conversation with the local communities he found that there are major concerns about their safety and explains that there are several innocent villagers who are shot and killed. The surrounding communities also mention the lack of perimeters showing the park limits, which makes it increasingly difficult to be aware of when they are trespassing. The BBC journalist also contacted WWF in question about the violence exercised by the eco-guards, who are trained and funded by the organisation. Their response from WWF is focused on ending poaching, and that they are not comfortable with killing people, it is

something they call ground protection. They also claim that close communication with local people is important for ending poaching (Rowlatt, 2017).

6.2.3. *Conservation refugees*

The American network channel PBS (2021) posted an article in October 2021, the article revolving around the Batwa people, living in Uganda, and their position as conservation refugees. Explaining that the Batwa people are one of the oldest surviving Indigenous groups in Africa, inhabiting the Eastern African countries. Their new position as conservation refugees being forced onto them due to the Ugandan government's lack of control over population growth, and the pressure from climate change (Lazaro & Hartman, 2021). The correspondent Lazaro delivered a report from his visit to Western Uganda, where he observed and met with Batwa people faced with these issues. Lazaro (2021) writes in his transcription, that Batwa men are now offering tourists a glimpse of the traditional lifestyle that they had previously lived. Explaining the relationship between the Batwa people, and the famous mountain gorillas, whose habitat is now turned into a national park. Further, he writes that the Batwa people were evicted in 1991, from these grounds, when the mountain gorillas became an icon for environmental conservation (Lazaro & Hartman, 2021).

In an interview with sixty-year-old Stephen Serutokye, Lazaro (2021) is told that the man remembers the eviction clearly, and explains that they were threatened with guns, evicted by force. This has severely changed the lifestyle of the Batwa people, and Lazaro writes that today there are an estimated of 6.000 Ugandan Batwa living in the outskirts of this now protected forest area. Further, Lazaro writes that this group of people are among the poorest communities, in one of the poorest countries in the world. Their labour consists of working on farms or entertaining tourists, with their payment they can pay park entry fees, but they are dependent on tourists for payment. Which Lazaro writes has been particularly difficult during the pandemic (Lazaro & Hartman, 2021).

Not only has the eviction from the park caused a decline in traditional livelihood, but it has significantly affected the Batwa people's health and education. Lazaro (2021) in an interview with Dr. David Bakunzi, gives an insight in the health situation of the Batwa people. Explaining that the life expectancy for the Batwa is 28 years old, compared to a global average of 72.6 years as of 2019. Four in 10 children also don't make it to the age of 5. These

numbers are explained by Lazaro as caused by the discrimination that Batwa people face and trouble accessing healthcare is a result of that. He further explains that the medical assistance available is usually church-based, which only offers basic healthcare (Lazaro & Hartman, 2021). The education situation is said to be no better. In an interview with Alice Nyamihanda, in 2010, the first member of the Batwa people to achieve a university degree, Lazaro (2021) uncovers the lack of education for the Batwa people, and the necessity for it. Only a 10 percent of Batwa people are enrolled in school. Lazaro writes that the case of the Batwa people is taken to court in Uganda and it has been decided that they are entitled to compensation, but little has been done with compensating for the loss of land and Lazaro explains that out of the people he talked to, few of them believe they will receive much. Nyamihanda explains that it is due to the little political power that the Batwa people hold (Lazaro & Hartman, 2021).

In his conclusion, Lazaro (2021) writes that since 1991 the population of mountain gorillas has increased from 400 to about 460, which is a stark contrast to the decline in Batwa people. Despite the success of the park housing these mountain gorillas, the Batwa people have not been compensated for their eviction and change in livelihoods. He emphasises that the Ugandan government earns tens of million dollars for their tourism (Lazaro & Hartman, 2021).

6.3. Response from WWF on claims of abuse and illegal evictions

In 2020, WWF (2020b) also released a statement addressing the human rights violations in the parks that receive their funding. The statement is called *Embedding human rights in conservation*. In this statement they refer to the rangers as belonging to the government, and that the human rights abuse that they have exercised is never acceptable. The responsibility that they claim to have been theirs is to pressure governments to address their obligations to protect human rights. After these allegations, WWF asked for an evaluation, in an effort to improve their work. Where WWF present that they were not accountable for the human rights abuse that had found place in the parks, they work in. The responsibility that WWF takes upon them is to ensure the voices of the local communities are heard, to continue to influence governments obligations to protect human rights, and to deescalate conflicts between communities and the government (WWF, 2020b).

This was also just a year after the question of whether to change the current law in India regarding conservation, which would have had a huge impact on the rights of indigenous groups, and other communities that have traditionally relied on nature for survival. As mentioned above, it was a change that would initially militarise conservation, and allow eviction in the name of conservation. Survival International (2019b) informed that the changes to the law, which would have evicted millions of people, was supported by the Indian Minister of Environment and Forests, and would include a shoot on sight policy. Emphasising that these changes would have made the law resemble those of the British colonial-era. The draft was leaked to the media, where WWF India was proven to be involved in the making of the act (Survival International, 2019b).

6.3.1. Investigation of human rights abuse

In 2021, WWF was called in for a meeting regarding human rights and international conservation. Based on the findings from an investigation from 2019 to 2020, where an Independent Expert Panel was commissioned by WWF to investigate the claimed human rights abuse in protected areas in Africa and Asia, and their involvement in this. Professor in international law Henry C. Lauerman, who was one of the people assigned this expert panel, spoke out about WWF's involvement in the human rights abuse, and their lack of change. Further, Lauerman (2021) explained that the panel was not assigned to investigate whether the abuse found place or not, they were merely assigned to investigate the involvement of WWF in these cases. In this they found that WWF was aware of the abuse that had been reported, and that they failed to prevent further human rights violations. They also concluded that WWF failed to meet their own human rights policies, and the policies that any conservation organisation should follow (Lauerman, 2021).

After the Independent Expert Panel had presented their findings, Lauerman (2021) explains that they offered WWF several recommendations on how to improve after the allegations of abuse, seeing as they initially asked for this. Lauerman refers to the November 2020 report, where WWF responded to the recommendations from the panel. He explains that WWF did not apologise or take responsibility for what the panel had presented, even their failures to meet their own human rights commitments were never addressed. Lauerman also writes about how WWF should have responded, by inviting indigenous groups, local communities, and other affected groups, and by involving these groups, they could have created new policies that included the opinions of those directly affected by their conservation (Lauerman, 2021).

Another aspect of their failure to address and change according to the recommendations as presented by Lauerman (2021) involved their failure to implement the mentioned communities in their organisation. One of the recommendations involved hiring people from indigenous groups or local communities, but WWF claimed that it was better to seek partnership with these groups, rather than employing them. Further, the panel also recommended that at least one member of their international board should represent indigenous people, and that at least one member should be an expert of human rights. To this Lauerman explains that WWF misunderstood their intentions, and that they responded to this by claiming that one indigenous person could not represent indigenous people as a whole, which Lauerman agrees with, but their point was that they should be represented. On the recommendation of an expert of human rights, WWF responded to the panel that they already had staff with that expertise. Lauerman also emphasises that the case of WWF is not unique, but that it is a general problem with international conservation (Lauerman, 2021, pp. 25-26).

When comparing the investigation conducted by the UNDP and the report that they presented and the findings from the Independent Expert Panel along with the testimony by Henry C. Lauerman, there is a similiarity. In the first example, presented by UNDP, WWF avoids their responsibility for the abuse that has found place in the parks they represent and have engaged in. Which they also do in response to the findings from the Independent Expert Panel and this is what Lauerman criticised them for. Journalists discover serious human rights abuse in national parks, and organisations such as Survival International continue to pressure big organisations such as UNDP to investigate these findings. Still, when the evidence of abuse reported are acknowledged, and WWF is presented with recommendations for improvement, that they asked for, they continue to ignore it and refuse responsibility.

6.4. Inequality and poverty related to protected areas

In the previous sub-chapters I have presented claims of direct harm to local communities and more specifically indigenous groups, including investigations into these claims. Which I believe it is also important for my paper to discuss the more indirect consequences that protected areas and conservation initiatives might have on local communities and indigenous groups. One of the aspects I will discuss in this chapter is the compensation for relocation, or the lack thereof. Secondly, I will discuss how protected areas might create inequalities among local communities.

6.4.1. Compensation for resettlements and damage from wildlife

The narrative presented by WWF is quite clear in their statement, where they claim that they provide local communities with compensation for their relocation. Not only are local communities compensated for the loss of their livelihoods, but they are also according to WWF provided with education, health services and an increased economy due to the support they receive from the income from tourism. This is the leading narrative, but in a study conducted by Cernea, there are proven to be poverty risks linked to national parks. This builds on the presentation presented earlier, of the interviews with the Batwa people, where they claimed to have not been compensated for their eviction. While the article is from 2006 and changes would have been made since then, there is a significant pattern to the work conducted by WWF addressed in this article.

In this paper, Cernea (2006) attempts to highlight the correlation between displacements due to the creation of national parks, and poverty in the same groups. One of his arguments is that there is not as much evidence of the effects that the creations of national parks have on those being relocated for the creation of it, as there is evidence of the need for national parks for the survival of vital wilderness and wildlife. Cernea argues further that the biological aspect of the discussion has been more successful in testing their findings and with this has gained a lot of funding for the process, while the social aspect of this discussion is lacking the evidence (Cernea, 2006, p. 1809). Further, Cernea (2006, p. 1811) brings attention to how the financing for protected areas is often without a budget for the protection of local communities and compensation for the loss of livelihoods (Cernea, 2006). While there is insufficient evidence of the effect that the creation of national parks have on local communities, Cernea (2006, p. 1813) relies on a large number of case studies to argue for the correlation between resettlement and impoverishment, such as through landlessness, homelessness, food insecurity (Cernea, 2006).

The article also shows record of several protected areas created by WWF, where Cernea (2006, p. 1814) has collected data on different initiatives and the commitment to those who are relocated. The table shows that there are few protected areas that have existing resettlement policies or compensation for the relocation (Cernea, 2006, p. 1814).

Another argument presented by Cernea (2006, p. 1823) is that of the effects of protected areas on the biodiversity. Emphasising several initiatives where hunter – gatherer groups have faced relocation and due to their absence, there has been a change in the biodiversity in the protected area. With this Cernea argues that the relocation of people for the protection of wildlife and wilderness is not only unacceptable due to the injustice and poverty it accumulates, but it can also be unnecessary and at times have the opposite effect of that is desired (Cernea, 2006, p. 1823).

6.4.2. Inequality around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park

In an article from Tumusiime and Sjaastad, addressing justice, inequality and attitudes around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, there are several similarities to the findings conducted by journalists and Survival International. The goal of the study was to assess the opportunity for development around the national park and contributing positively to local communities. According to WWF as presented in their report, they claim that they are dedicated to development in the areas effected by conservation, both through health, education, and economy.

Tumusiime and Sjaastad (2014, p. 204) writes on the argument that the involvement of local communities is essential for sustaining long – term conservation, while also arguing that the debate has changed, due to the lack of evidence of local development as a result of conservation. In their paper they attempt to identify the local livelihoods and general attitudes towards the park. They also ask the question of whether those who profit from the creation of the park are used to justify the park and further initiatives, while those who are at a disadvantage from the creation of the park are discarded (Tumusiime & Sjaastad, 2014, p. 205). Further, Tumusiime and Sjaastad (2014, p. 205) discuss the impact of national parks on the local community. Arguing that even if local communities are not evicted as they are in some cases, the community will still be shaped by the interference of the national park. Due to the impact of wildlife on local communities through damages to housing and crops, and the creation of a protected area changing the access that local communities have to natural resources, these factors could result in the decrease of income (Tumusiime & Sjaastad, 2014, p. 205). Further, Tumusiime and Sjaastad (2014, p. 206) also consider the impact that tourism created for national parks might have on local communities. They argue that a popular national park which generates tourists, will also offer job and business opportunities for the local community. While it might also create further development for the local community in

terms of better roads, communication infrastructure, better transportation and lastly the improvement of environmental services that might also benefit the local agriculture (Tumusiime & Sjaastad, 2014, p. 206).

Tumusiime and Sjaastad (2014, p. 207) also discuss the attitudes of the local communities towards conservation and the protected area, through the assumption that local communities will have changed attitudes due to the allocation of costs and benefits due to the creation of the park. While they acknowledge that there is a variety of responses to the creation of protected areas, depending on different factors, they argue that studies show that local attitudes are often shaped by the protected area's ability to generate benefits for the local community (Tumusiime & Sjaastad, 2014, p. 207).

With the case of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, Tumusiime and Sjaastad (2014, p. 208) writes that a report from 2002 showed that conservation initiatives generally struggled to reach poor households, whereas jobs generated from the park usually favoured those with a higher education level (Tumusiime & Sjaastad, 2014). While Tumusiime and Sjaastad (2014, p. 220) argue that the disposition of the benefits generated from the park is due to location, the households with a more favourable position achieved more benefits, and those households living closer to the park received benefits from transport, infrastructure, jobs and security due to the relation with the park. They argue further that these households received more direct benefits than other households (Tumusiime & Sjaastad, 2014, p. 220). Their conclusion being that the creation of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park and due to the conservation benefits, has caused greater inequality among the local community, as the direct benefits fail to reach the poorest households (Tumusiime & Sjaastad, 2014, p. 220).

6.4.1. Conservation and capitalism

As I have already presented, tourism as a solution for conflicts arising from conservation is very common presentation by WWF in their report. They present an idea that tourism will accumulate for the loss of livelihood due to eviction. Tourism is being presented as a solution, but also as a door opener for other industries that will benefit local communities. Certified products are being advertised and sold to the supposedly conscious consumer, who has been fed the idea of action through consumption by the appeals of celebrities, promoting these alternatives to action. Eco-tourism promises consumers a glimpse of 'authentic and exotic wilderness', where they can minimise their ecological footprint, and enjoy their holiday in

luxurious facilities while also contributing to the local economy and with this support local communities and indigenous groups, that are often an intergraded part of the ‘authentic’ experience. This picturesque idea of ‘the wild’ has been maintained by the mainstream conservation industry’s need to preserve and justify their conservation, and through wildlife documentaries and wildlife photography, creating a relationship between the consumer and unknown and unspoiled wilderness, they can sustain this view on fortress conservation as compelling and just.

Brockington (2012, p. 22) writes specifically of this relationship between conservation and capitalism, and the consequences that this relationship may have on protected areas and those who are affected by this process. In his argument, he proposes that protected areas can be seen as valuable for the global consumer economy, while also strengthening the consumerist ideology (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 22). As I’ve already presented, WWF is continuing to build on this, as they offer an exchange for people’s donations for their causes. Their products are certified, and percentages of their sales will be used to fund conservation or as they argue, go directly to the local communities effected by conservation in negative ways. This is something that should be contested, as several communities claim to have never received any compensation as they were promised. It does not change the way they appeal to their consumers for them to contribute to their cause.

In the case of WWF and their win – win narrative, local communities are forced to make changes to their livelihood for survival. Brockington (2012, p. 22) writes on this relationship between local communities around protected areas and their adaption to conservation and capitalism. He argues that they adapt to contribute to conservation, for example through tourism and the production of products to the global market (Brockington et al., 2012). WWF’s certification program is an example of this, where local communities are involved in the production of a certified product, or arguably, exploited to promote a certified product when they have been deprived of choices to other alternative livelihoods? Further, Brockington (2012, p. 22) writes that this relationship between conservation and capitalism, and the dependency that it makes for local communities, and ties it to the global market, is a powerful alliance. Again, Brockington argues that this makes it possible to overcome local objections and protests (Brockington, 2009, p. 22). With this it is possible to argue that the willingness that local communities according to WWF demonstrate towards their projects, where they offer alternative livelihoods, whether it is through accommodating with tourism,

or through producing certified products, might not be a choice. It could be that due to the lack of other opportunities, local communities are forced to accept the work that is offered to them.

Brockington (2012, p. 27) draws a connection between mainstream conservation and European colonialism. By explaining that the interests and views of a western elite group are more powerful than those of the people who live by protected areas. He argues that the similarity comes in terms of displacement of people, and the belittlement of local communities in meeting with conservation. He also emphasises the relationship between mainstream conservation and business interests in protected areas (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 27). In their report, WWF argues that there is a trade between local communities and the organisation or the state, where they will be compensated for their eviction and offered other alternatives. They are also offered education on the concept of conservation, which gives the impression that understanding the importance of environmental initiatives is the problem that causes conflicts. Instead of addressing the strain that living closely to extreme wildlife could have on local communities. Instead of discussing whether their resistance could be a result of fear and resentment for foreign investors and NGOs, rather than a resistance of the cause. Building on this, Brockington (2012, p. 167) argues that conservation can be seen as imperialistic interference and neo-colonialism. Through conservations other actors can interfere with a country's affairs. Further, Brockington refers to the models that inspired mainstream conservation, and that these models reflect western and northern values, and views on nature, that might be foreign to the countries they implement them on (Brockington et al., 2012, p. 167). This, along with the eviction of local communities to create protected areas where global corporations, tourists, researchers and conservation NGOs can occupy these protected areas, while local communities are punished for entering these areas by law (Brockington et al., 2012, pp. 167-168).

7. Appeals

In this chapter I will start by presenting WWF's celebrity ambassadors Maisie Williams and Leonardo DiCaprio and I will discuss their influence on the work of WWF and how the organisation might use these celebrities to promote their message. Through the use of Instagram, I will address the way these two celebrities approach their audience and by using the theory of Lillie Chouliaraki on dispassionate and passionate witness I will discuss how they approach conservation and present it to their audience. Further, I will discuss how their narrative might influence the conservation discourse, and how their approach to advocacy might influence the message differently. Lastly, I will discuss how conservation and capitalism is intertwined, and what the effects of this might be. In relation to how celebrities are used to promote conservation messages.

7.1. Celebrity Ambassadors:

“Celebrity conservation produces images that are commodities in themselves, sold or used to elicit donors’ support, and which are consumed with little awareness of these images’ origins or conditions of production.”

Brockington (2009, p. 3)

The list of celebrities advocating for WWF is long and continues to grow. It seems like the organisation can attract the attention of a broad spectre of celebrities, everything from royalty, musicians, actors, models, athletes. A part of this broad spectre are celebrities like biologist Sir David Attenborough, singer Sir Elton John, politician Bill Clinton, royalty Queen Noor of Jordan, to name a few. Their celebrity ambassadors are especially important when conveying messages because they hold credibility among their fans. As of 2021 the organisation also started announcing ambassadors specifically for climate and nature. The role of a celebrity in promoting aid is as described by Chouliaraki (2013a); to communicate the message to those who donate. According to Chouliaraki it is easier for the giver to relate to the celebrity that they envy, which automatically makes them believe in the cause that they promote (Chouliaraki, 2013a). Their issues become our own because we identify with these celebrities. Brockington (2009, p. 23) adds to this conversation, by explaining that celebrities can offer their audience a reconnection to nature, by promoting conservation causes and presenting an image of the wild (Brockington, 2009). Further, Brockington (2009, p. 23) argues that

celebrities can be a powerful tool in explaining how ideas that are not always connected to the truth, become dominant, connecting this to symbolic power of wilderness, nature and charismatic animals, celebrities may strengthen these factors (Brockington, 2009). It is relevant to be aware of the credibility that celebrities give a cause, and in my analysis, I will discuss how two of WWF's own ambassadors use their platform to inform and educate their audience.

I will present two different WWF ambassadors and with this I want to show how celebrities can be used in different ways, and that there is a difference between how a celebrity might promote a cause to for an organisation, and how a celebrity devotes their fame to highlight a cause that they are passionate about. Brockington (2009, p. 25) writes that celebrities lend their fame to conservation causes, and with this they bring attention to issues that might not have been in the public eye. Further, he also mentions that there are famous conservationists, who has become famous for their life devoted to conservation (Brockington, 2009, p. 63). Both celebrities that I have chosen both belong to the first category. Brockington (2009) writes on the changes in the influence that celebrities have, and that their work has become highly political, celebrities have entered spaces where change is taking place, and they use this to speak of environmental causes (Brockington, 2009, p. 29). Further, Brockington (2009, p. 39) notes that when celebrities are used for conservation purposes, they are presented with an idea of what the world looks like, and they suggest a solution to what the world should look like, according to them. This message reaches their audience, and it might shape the way these people view the world and the issue they're faced with. Brockington argues that this can often be misleading or harmful (Brockington, 2009, p. 39). Which makes it interesting to look at what message that these celebrities as ambassadors for WWF attempts to convey, and how this might be perceived by their audience, and how it might influence them.

7.1.1. Maisie Williams

Maisie Williams (actress) is best known for her appearance as Arya Stark in the famous TV-show Game of Thrones. The British actress has over 10 million followers on her Instagram page, which makes her a valuable spokesperson for the organisation. She became WWF's first Global Ambassador for Climate and Nature, which was announced ahead of the organisation's 60th birthday. The announcement was presented in form of a short video on Instagram where she encouraged her many followers to adopt an animal from a threatened or endangered species. The video is currently removed from the actors Instagram page but can still be found on WWF UK's YouTube channel. In the video Maisie is seen outdoors in a simple and green attire, where the movie shifts from the actor talking, to and pictures of spectacular nature, a variation of animals, to more devastating pictures of damages caused on nature due to climate change, to uplifting images of climate activists around the world. The short video ends with the actor encouraging those who watch to use their voice to share the message, with a final slogan "Join the Fight for Our World". Not only is the actor an ambassador for WWF, but she is also a Global Sustainability Ambassador for H&M, and is as described by WWF, actively attempting to change the fashion industry through her platform (WWF, 2021a).



Figure 1. Post from Maisie Williams on Instagram. Image of her and Sir David Attenborough at CO26 (Williams, 2021a).

maisie_williams So humbled to be at #COP26 yesterday and meet the world's greatest living naturalist, and a hero of mine for as long as I can remember, Sir David Attenborough, who presented his new documentary The Green Planet. 🌱

It was also fun to meet Archana Soreng and Julieta Marino Tartaglino for a live stream where we all tried to instill some kind of hope into young people as COP26 commences.

Archana belongs to the indigenous Khadia Tribe in Sundergarh District of Odisha, India and works to document, preserve and promote traditional knowledge and Practices of Indigenous Communities. These practices, if protected and shared, could be invaluable in our fight against climate change.

Julieta is from Argentina and works for the UN Climate Change Conference of Youth which serves as a space for capacity building and policy training in order to prepare young people for their participation at COP.

Meeting and chatting with them gave me hope for our sustainable future and I want to pass some of this hope over to you. Keep fighting the good fight 🌱 ✨

Thank you to my @WWF team, the BBC Natural History Unit @bbcearth and the @unitednations for this opportunity. 🙏

Figure 2. Text belonging to the post in Figure 1. (Williams, 2021a)



Figure 3. Picture posted by Maisie Williams of herself on Earth Day (Williams, 2021b)

maisie_williams It's Earth Day 🌍 and I ask you to CHOOSE EARTH!

My friends over at @chooselove have launched a campaign raising desperately-needed funds for the incredible Brazilian indigenous leaders dedicating their lives to protecting the rainforest from destruction. This work is a vital part of the battle against climate change and is essential for the future of our planet.

There's the link in @chooselove bio to donate or you can buy one of these fabulous organic cotton tees (printed to order) and 100% of profits from the merch go to the Choose Earth fund!

Protect our planet 🌱
Choose Love 🤍
CHOOSE EARTH! ✨

Figure 4. Text belonging to the post in Figure 3. (Williams, 2021b)

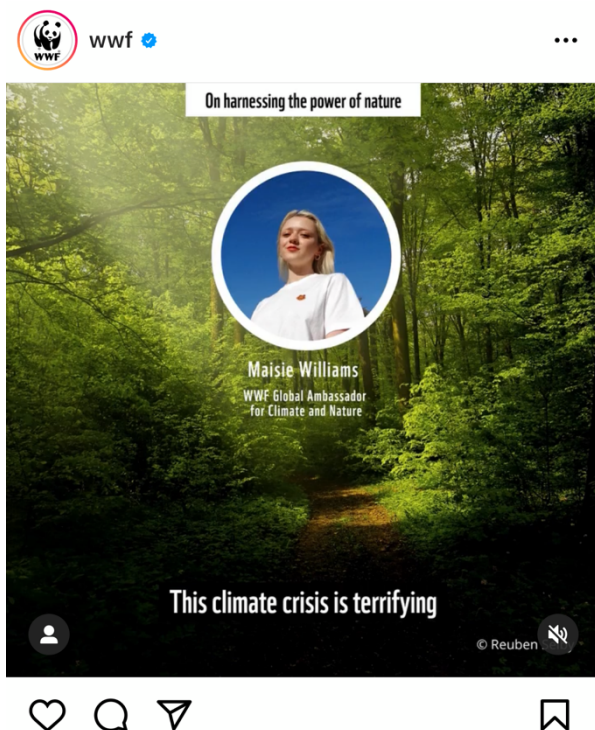


Figure 5. A post from WWF, where Maisie Williams discusses the importance of plants (WWF, 2021c)

wwf "Plants are a huge solution, and we know how to do that, the Earth knows how to do that".

Actor, filmmaker and WWF Global Ambassador for Climate and Nature, @maisie_williams, talks #COP26, climate action and the power of plants as allies in our efforts to combat the #ClimateCrisis. Tap the link in our bio to hear more 🌍 @wwf_uk @celspellman

The nature crisis and #ClimateChange go hand in hand. When we lose nature, we lose vital climate allies that can absorb carbon and protect us from extreme weather. Thankfully, people across the globe care about nature. It will take a joint effort from countries and people to reverse biodiversity loss & secure a sustainable future for people and the planet.

World leaders: it's time to harness the power of nature!

Figure 6. Text belonging to the post in Figure 5. (WWF, 2021c)

In Figure 1 Maisie William is seen at COP26, where she attended and held a presentation before the viewing of the documentary “The Green Planet”. In the picture she can be seen next to Sir David Attenborough, who she also celebrated the work of in her presentation and his success on his documentary. In Figure 2 she is mentioning people she met during COP26 and how these people inspired her to continue her involvement with environmentalism, further encouraging her audience.

Additionally, in a video from COP26 (1. November 2021), Williams gives a brief introduction before the screening of “The Green Planet”. In the five minute video, where Williams is holding a speech before the screening of Sir David Attenborough’s “The Green Planet”, she talks on her own relationship with nature. Starting off by explaining her relationship to wildlife documentaries, and her love for nature, and her passion for the environment. Her presentation is focused on the ‘we’ and including herself in the process of change. Expressing how she became aware of the threat that climate change posed, and how she could contribute. She continues by informing about her relationship with nature, and how she feels connected to it through meditation, as an encouragement for others to try to connect with nature (BBC Studios, 1. November 2021).

In Figure 3 Maisie Williams is seen wearing a “Choose Earth” t-shirt. In Figure 4 with the text belonging to the image, she writes where the product can be purchased. In this post she writes that the profit of the sales will be going to the Choose Earth fund. The focus of the post being preservation of the Brazilian rainforest.

Figure 5 contains an image of a post from WWF International’s Instagram profile. It is a short video, where Maisie talks about the importance of plants for combating the climate crises. This is related to her appearance at the COP26.

7.1.2. Leonardo DiCaprio

Leonardo DiCaprio (actor) is best known for being an actor in several award-winning movies, but in later years he has made a name for himself in the environment discourse. The documentary ‘Before the Flood’ got a record with its impressive 60 million views, making it in 2016, one of the most watched documentaries in history (source). The documentary is focused on the threat that climate change poses, and DiCaprio travels the world to talk to world leaders and their view on the crises, among them Pope Francis and Barack Obama. Not

only is DiCaprio at the forefront of the movement, but he is also on WWF’s board of directors. In WWF’s description these people are from scientific, conservation and business communities.

Not only is the actor an important member of WWF, but DiCaprio is also a founding board member for the organisation Re:wild, and organisation which aims to protect and restore the wild. Their slogan being: “*We don’t need to reinvent the planet. We need to rewild it—for all wildkind.*” A promise of preserving the already existing wildlife that we may find on our planet today, with the wild in focus as the solution to the climate crises (Re:wild).

The actor is also incredibly active on social media, with over 50 million followers on his Instagram account, DiCaprio reaches a broad audience. His posts are never personal about his life beyond environmentalism, they are only focused on the message that DiCaprio wishes to convey, on the importance of action on the climate crises.

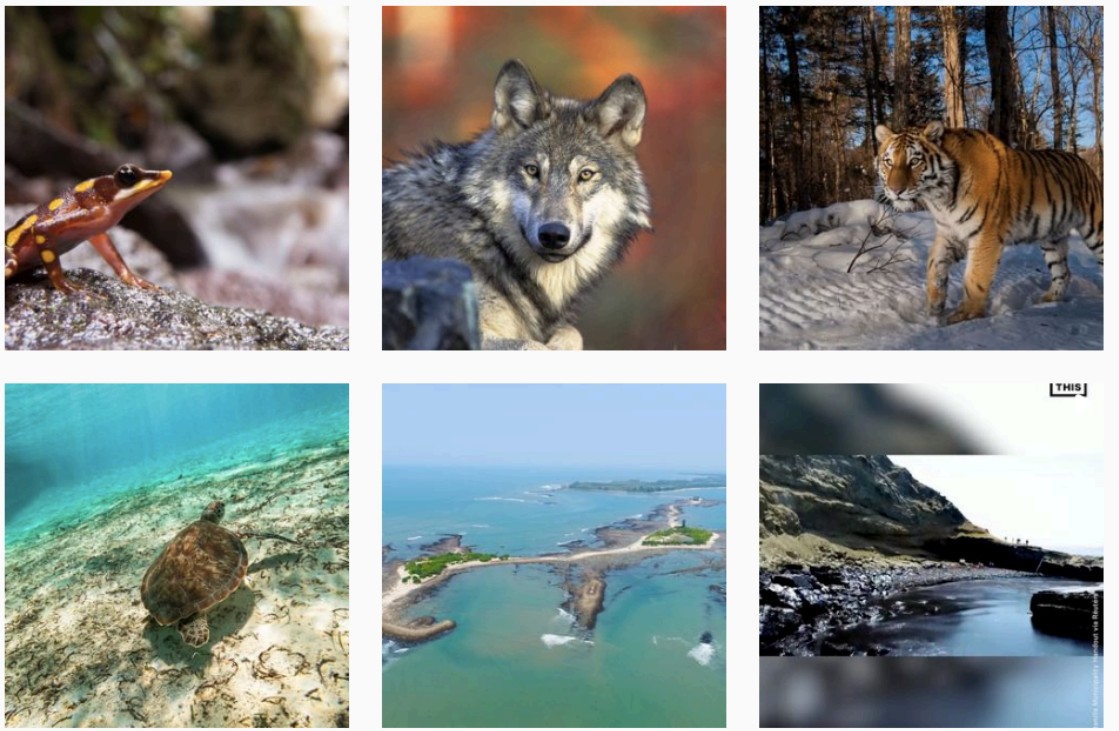


Figure 7. An overview of images taken from Leonardo DiCaprio’s Instagram profile. (DiCaprio, n.d.)



leonardodicaprio



leonardodicaprio On my final day at #COP26 I was honored to meet with the amazing Juma Xipaia, a young indigenous leader, who since childhood, has fought against the construction of the Belo Monte hydroelectric dam in the Xingu river of the Amazon. Her continued fight for the survival of indigenous peoples, the rainforest, the empowerment of women, her dreams and hopes born from her struggles and threats, deeply touched my heart. Juma's words will stay with me forever.

Indigenous peoples are on the very frontlines of this climate emergency. We must hear their voices and join their fight to protect the planet as they are the true guardians of nature. It is time to listen and stand together as one people.

@instituto.juma

#DemarcaçãoJá #MarcoTemporalNão #XinguVivoParaSempre #COP26 #COPindígena #CriseClimática #ClimateCrisis #EssaLutaTambémÉNossa #IndigenousPeoples #AmazonRainforest

Figure 9. Text belonging to the image in Figure 8. (DiCaprio, 2021b)

Figure 8. Picture posted by Leonardo DiCaprio on Instagram, of himself and Juma Xipaia (DiCaprio, 2021b)



leonardodicaprio



Liked by paulnicklen and others

leonardodicaprio Proud to be an executive producer on "Brave Mission: Rewild the Planet," an exploration of the planet's most breathtaking endangered species and the local guardians who sacrifice everything to save them and their ecosystem. Host @realmarkvins investigates how the environmental impact of an illegal coal trade threatens both human and gorilla ways of life and how a new sustainable energy solution could be the answer to saving them all.

Join the premiere of #BraveMission on October 27th at 2PM PT on @YouTube. #UnFckIt

Figure 10. Promotion picture posted by Leonardo DiCaprio on Instagram for a documentary (DiCaprio, 2021a)



leonardodicaprio



Liked by ms.kwangu_ and others

leonardodicaprio Watch our documentary #BraveMission to learn about the rangers of Virunga National Park, who risk their lives to protect gorillas and the environment. We must support these guardians of nature. Link in bio.

#SaveGorillas @rewild @BraveWilderness @realmarkvins

Figure 11. Another promotion for a documentary regarding rangers working in National Parks, posted by Leonardo DiCaprio on Instagram (DiCaprio, 2021c)

Figure 7 is a screenshot taken of Leonardo DiCaprio's Instagram page. The overview shows mainly animals, and landscapes. In this overview there is included a tiger and a grey wolf, both animals are on WWF's list of threatened species and animals involved in current human-wildlife conflict (WWF, 2021b, p. 26).

In Figure 8 DiCaprio can be seen at COP26. In the picture he is seen with Juma Xipaia. In Figure 9 he writes that she is a young indigenous leader, fighting for the Amazon rainforest. Further, he encourages people to listen to indigenous groups in their fight for their land.

In Figure 10 there is another promotion picture for a wildlife documentary, made for DiCaprio's own organisation Re:wild. He writes that the movie is focusing on endangered species and those who are set out to protect these species in protected areas. The poster can be associated with action movies in its appearance.

In Figure 11 there is another promotion picture for a documentary called the "Brave Mission". Where DiCaprio writes that the focus is on the rangers who are stationed in Virunga National Park. This is similar to the topic of the documentary presented in Figure 10.

7.1.3. Dispassionate and passionate witness

Maisie Williams and Leonardo DiCaprio have different ways of appealing to their audience, which can be seen through the way they write about the causes they represent, and how they talk about their involvement in the projects. Using Chouliaraki, these types can be divided into two, the dispassionate witness and the passionate witness. In her attempt to distinguish the two types Chouliaraki uses Audrey Hepburn and Angelina Jolie as examples, which I'll also rely on in an attempt to compare them to the presentations of Williams and DiCaprio.

I find it difficult to categorise Williams and DiCaprio as either a dispassionate or passionate witness, as they both seem to fit into the two different categories, but in different aspects of their environmental work. Firstly, I will outline what makes a dispassionate witness and what makes a passionate witness, according to Chouliaraki. When Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 91) attempts to describe Audrey Hepburn as a humanitarian, she writes on the de-celebrisation of her persona, which involves the distance of her work as a celebrity, and the work that caused her fame, and in her case changing her appearance from the glamorous actress to an elegant activist (Chouliaraki, 2013a, p. 92). Which can be compared to the way that Leonardo

DiCaprio has gone from actor to activist. His work is mainly focused on his environmentalist initiatives, and he is only appearing in a few projects. An example is the the Academy Awards nominated movie, 'Don't Look Up!', which was supposed to reflect how those in charge ignore the climate crisis. His Instagram posts are also a reflection of him stepping away from a glamorous life, as he rarely gives away any information about him as a person or celebrity. His platform is dedicated to the environmental discourse. Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 94) writes on Hepburn as a dispassionate witness, explaining that she verbalises her emotions, rather than acting them out. Where she uses her experience as an actress to communicate on the suffering that she experiences, and convey this message to a western audience (Chouliaraki, 2013a, p. 94). Which can be similar to the way DiCaprio relates to his own projects and uses his experience as an actor to speak on the climate crisis. Through his documentaries, and through his posts on social media. While also encouraging his audience to seek further information about the climate crisis, through advertisement of documentaries, adding links to other environmental organisations and reports on climate change. When Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 92) describes Hepburn's presentation, she writes that she often distances herself from expertise, emphasising that her gift was merely conveying a message, as an actor (Chouliaraki, 2013a). Which I believe can be compared to the way DiCaprio seeks to forward knowledge from people who are experts in their field.

When Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 95) describes Angelina Jolie as a humanitarian, it is quite different from that of Hepburn's, and Chouliaraki calls this the hyper-celebritisaion. She explains that Jolie through her humanitarianism also involves her professional and private life, visible both professional and economical. Using the examples of her appearing in movies that address human rights issues, and through setting up her own foundation, the Jolie-Pitt Foundation (Chouliaraki, 2013a, p. 96). This similarity makes DiCaprio fall under the category of hyper-celebritisaion, but I argue that since he no longer appears in other movies, along with those addressing the climate crisis, I view it as slightly different. Instead of loaning the humanitarian discourse his talent, the only time he will use it is for humanitarianism. His appearance becomes even more important, as his fame and seldom appearance draws an audience. Like Hepburn, as described by Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 95) who kept her private life relatively shielded from the public, her advance to humanitarianism seems more in line with DiCaprio's.

Maisie Williams has a different way of presenting her involvement with humanitarianism. While it in some ways resembles that of DiCaprio's, it has some very distinguished differences. I argue that these differences makes her more a passionate witness, rather than a dispassionate one. As I have presented, in her presentation she adds herself to the narrative and draws on personal experiences to encourage others to follow her example. Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 98) explains Jolie's witnessing a personification of suffering, an appears as a genuine reaction to the humanitarianism that she takes part of and the suffering she is witnessing (Chouliaraki, 2013a). Additionally, Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 97) also writes on the personal self-fulfilment of Jolie's commitment to humanitarianism, she writes of it as a conscious lifestyle choice (Chouliaraki, 2013a). This can be applied to the way Williams address her commitment to the climate, and her journey to understanding of why her position as a celebrity can be used as a voice to encourage others to contribute to change. She is like Jolie, aware of her influence as a famed actor, and she uses this platform and her position for good. She often speaks of her own generation, and the responsibility and power her generation must create change, and she becomes a part of it. In a current Instagram post where she poses with her boyfriend, she promotes an app, and she encourages others to do the same, to reduce our carbon footprint. In detail she writes on her own carbon footprints, inviting her audience to a small look into her private life (Williams, 2021c).

7.1.4. The possible effects of celebrity involvement

To answer my question of the influence that celebrities might have, I will not only compare the two celebrities, and their different ways of addressing environmentalism, and how they use their platform to inform and connect with their audience, but I will also use Chouliaraki in an attempt to discuss what their involvement might mean for their audience, and the organisation that they represent.

It is highly relevant to address DiCaprio's involvement with the wildlife documentaries industry, and his contribution to the production of several known documentaries. *Before the Flood*, *A Plastic Ocean*, *Virunga*, and *Brave Mission* to name some. Brockington (2009, pp. 41-42) argues that wildlife films are important in shaping the relationship between people and nature, by watching others experience it. Ultimately this can change the way people interact with nature and their expectations for it outside of the screen (Brockington, 2009). When discussing the influence of wildlife films, Brockington (2009, pp. 44-45) argues that the intimacy that wildlife films manages to creates between the audience and the animals and the

wildlife that they present, the more successful the film is. He emphasises that several wildlife films attempt to form a bond between the audience and the animal subjects, presenting their feelings as if they think and act like humans (Brockington, 2009, pp. 44-45). Brockington (2009, p. 45) differentiates between wildlife films and conservation films, arguing that they are quite similar, while conservation films also convey a conservation message, which he writes is something wildlife films often ignore. Further, Brockington writes on some of the most common tropes for conservation films. The first being a trope that portray conservationists as saviours, where they are often seen in conflict with ‘ignorant’ local communities, where he also emphasises the lack of representation of people in general. The second trope he presents is that of films that revolve around national parks and protected areas, where local history and local communities are not represented, but removed from the image to serve a conservation narrative, which relies on the idea of nature and wilderness untouched by people (Brockington, 2009, p. 45). Further, Brockington notes that the representation of humans are often either through white men and women in encounter with animals and wildlife, or through the representation of indigenous groups, portrayed as the ‘noble savage’ (Brockington, 2009, pp. 45-46). When looking at some of DiCaprio’s contributions to the wildlife industry, we can see that he partly relies on these tropes. Looking at the examples from his Instagram, advertising for the documentary *Brave Mission*, there is a strong narrative that implies that conservationists are the real heroes of the story. DiCaprio refers to the rangers of the Virunga National Park as guardians of nature. The host in the documentary is Mark Vins, a Western adventurer, contributing to the hero narrative in conservation films that Brockington presented.

This might indicate that different celebrities are contributing to the discourse in different ways, and that means that their influence on their audience might also vary accordingly. Celebrity ambassadors such as Leonardo DiCaprio might have a bigger impact on the discourse, and the image that he creates of wilderness, which contributes to the image that WWF attempts to create. While ambassadors such as Maisie Williams represent another aspect of the discourse. She does not seem to attempt to shape her audience’s view or educate them, but rather encourage them to take action and educate themselves on the subject, she is a powerful tool in the process of encouraging a new generation of environmentalists. Which I argue contrasts with the work that of DiCaprio.

7.1.5. *The hypocrisy of celebrity ambassadors*

Brockington (2009, p. 110) attempts to present a nuanced image of celebrity conservation, where he writes that the problem isn't the concept of celebrities promoting conservation. While he also acknowledges their influence on the conservation movement, he emphasises that it is rather an issue with conservation and environmentalism. Further, he challenges the idea that the involvement of celebrities in promoting conservation is too hypocritical due to their lavish lifestyle is not to be understood as a real influence on the movement (Brockington, 2009). Further, Brockington (2009, p. 111) notes that the famous and wealthy are in a position where they can act on their beliefs, without having to be accountable for their statements due to their privilege in society. Here he uses the example of Prince Philip, who in 1961 shot a tiger, which caused a protest in Britain, and this just a few months before the royalty helped found WWF (Brockington, 2009). Prince Philip was crowned 'a champion for the environment', in a statement from the organisation after his death in 2021 where he was celebrated for his important work for WWF and conservation in general (WWF, 2021d).

In his attempt to discuss the influence of celebrities on conservation causes, Brockington (2009, p. 120) writes on the criticism of the hypocrisy that lies behind the work of celebrities. He argues that celebrities promoting conservation and environmental causes can be a way for them to further promote themselves, meanwhile celebrities might claim that this is a way for them to give back and use their privilege for something good (Brockington, 2009, pp. 120-121). Further, Brockington (2009, pp. 121-122) argues that there is nothing wrong with celebrities promoting conservation, while also gaining good publicity for their work, but there are other more damaging aspects of having celebrities as promoters. He writes that the same celebrities that are promoting conservation and encouraging the protection of the environment, are also vigorously indulging in a lifestyle that is a part of the problem, and they also encourage others to desire such an idolised lifestyle. Both Maisie Williams and Leonardo DiCaprio are great examples of this. As mentioned above, Williams is also an ambassador for H&M, one of the most infamous fast fashion companies. She is also seen walking red carpets at events such as the Met Gala and attending Paris Fashion Week in designer brands. Leonardo DiCaprio lives a life in luxury, with a mansion in Los Angeles, beach house in Malibu, to owning an entire island which he according to the Daily Mail, intends to turn into an *eco-haven* (which has ironically been stalled due to local resistance) (Carpenter, 2021). He is indulging in a lifestyle that only a few will ever experience, while also demanding a change in a system that he is benefitting from. In this argument, Brockington (2009, p. 122) also

notes that most mainstream environmentalists are not against this lifestyle, because they believe in continuing with economic growth. That contemporary environmentalism is about changing the patterns of consumption, not about reducing them. This is one of his arguments for why celebrities are suitable for promoting this change (Brockington, 2009, p. 122).

In his conclusion, Brockington (2009, p. 124) claims that celebrities are a product of the market. Further, he writes that it is understandable why celebrities act according to the demands of their audience, and due to this he explains that they are rarely the cause for problems that are caused by interaction they have with the environmental movement. Further emphasising that it is important to look at the bigger picture of a consumer ideology, that celebrities are used to promote (Brockington, 2009, pp. 124-125). Similarly, Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 103) writes on the relationship between spectators and distant strangers, presented through celebrities. She argues that while celebrities might raise awareness on a humanitarian issue, they might not encourage the audience to act on these issues. Her concern being that it might result in more attention revolving the celebrity, and their involvement in the cause, rather than on the people and the cause they present (Chouliaraki, 2013a, p. 130). With their impact on their audience being something that can be discussed, it is not unthinkable that their influence might not result in anything other than awareness of the issue, but since there is little action because of it, they cannot be the cause of the problem.

7.1.6. Celebrities as symbols

While acknowledging that celebrities are a part of a bigger issue concerning consumption, they can still be considered symbols and icons for the movement, which Brockington (2009, p. 226) argues can be a powerful tool for change, but there is a serious downside to the image that celebrities create. He writes that the images and stories that celebrities are a part of presenting may change the perspective of how their audience view the world, and what is to be true, as well as what we might be able to do to change it (Brockington, 2009, p. 128). To better understand this, Brockington (2009, p. 128) explains the importance of images for the conservation movement. He gives the example of a few iconic places, such as Yosemite and Uluru, that have given the movement an image of what the wild should look like. The places are put on products that can be bought by the consumer, who support the conservation initiative (Brockington, 2009, p. 128). This can be brought back to the way WWF use branding in an attempt to appeal to their audience, giving them an image to consume that represents their connection to conservation.

Using celebrities can also shift the focus away from the cause and misplace the attention so that it is focused on the celebrities. Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 103) writes on this relationship and explains that the performance of the celebrity might be so profound that the feelings they convey on a subject might appear as personal (Chouliaraki, 2013a). In her example, Chouliaraki is speaking on celebrities in relation to conveying the message of distant suffering, and it is slightly different to that of celebrities conveying a message of climate change and extinction of species. I still want to argue that the problem is still the same, not in the alienation of feelings from someone suffering, but in the process of directing the focus towards a celebrities' own feelings regarding climate change, rather than the issue itself. Further, Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 103) explains that celebrities can be considered a tool for self-recognition, where an audience will mirror themselves in the emotions and actions of the celebrity. Instead of diverting the focus towards the actual message presented (Chouliaraki, 2013a). Due to this, Chouliaraki (2013a, p. 103) argues that instead of directing and encouraging focus on the message presented by the celebrities, there is a greater focus on celebrities and rather than action on the subject, the attention is directed at the persona of the celebrity and their life (Chouliaraki, 2013a).

The images that Williams and DiCaprio posts on their Instagram profiles are largely focused on nature and in DiCaprio's case there are several images of exotic animals. Brockington (2009, p. 129) explains that images can be deceiving. The images created for conservation may conceal parts of the big picture that might be unpleasant, such as the violation of local communities' rights and the removal of the local history. Instead creating an idolised image of wilderness. In addition, Brockington also writes on win-win solutions, and that images of successful conservation initiatives of prospering wildlife and happy and satisfied local people, this does not open of for the possibility that there might be another aspect to this image that might not be as positive (Brockington, 2009, p. 130). The argument that Brockington (2009, pp. 130-131) brings forward, is one that discusses the influence these images of successful conservation may have on the way people act towards environmental issues, is shaped by what is seen. As argued above with use of Chouliaraki, celebrities makes it easier to act on issues regarding distant strangers, and Brockington writes that these images shape how we see these distant strangers and how we decide to act upon conservation issues (Brockington, 2009, p. 131).

Brockington (2009, p. 132) takes this argument further, by discussing the impact of creating a mediagenic world. He discusses the problems with desiring wilderness that is completely free from human interference. One of his arguments being that not only is it severely damaging for people who has a long tradition of living in these areas that are considered wild by a Western society, but most of the protected areas are not big enough to sufficiently preserve species that large ranges or migration routes (Brockington, 2009, p. 132). Another aspect of this discussion of the harmfulness of unoccupied wilderness, is the discussion of who belongs to the wilderness, and who are not permitted. Brockington (2009, p. 133) explains that indigenous groups may be allowed into this image of wilderness, writing that they often prove an authenticity that a Western audience are familiar with, and with their exotic lifestyle, make great mediagenic content (Brockington, 2009). One example being the image of Leonardo DiCaprio posing next to a young indigenous leader and writes that indigenous people are at the forefront of the climate emergency. The rest of his Instagram profile lacks presentation of people in general in presenting wilderness. It is not only problematic due to the stereotype it creates, but it excludes several local communities that have traditionally relied on the areas that are created into national parks, and who are evicted due to not being considered indigenous (Brockington, 2009, p. 134).

While Brockington (2009, p. 143) acknowledges that there are some advantages to the presentation of conservation through celebrities. One of the advantages are that the audience may take part in nature, in a way that might have been impossible in real life, but is possible through wildlife films, presented by celebrities, able to connect with the feelings of the audience. Where the audience get to experience nature closely without interfering with it. Which Brockington writes is important for the western society, which has been highly urbanised. Another aspect being that since the audience can experience a closeness to nature without actually having to leave the comfort of their own homes, there is less pressure on vulnerable nature in conservation areas that are favoured by tourists, as some get the same feeling when they are presented by nature through images (Brockington, 2009, pp. 144-145). Still, Brockington (2009, p. 147) notes that there are several dangers with a conservation that is focused on the mediagenic aspect of nature. One of the treats being the alienation from nature, where the audience is fed a glorified image of nature, that it is difficult to imagine that it can have a negative side. Further, he writes that the consumers of these images are often in no position to question these images (Brockington, 2009, p. 147). In an attempt to explain the way audiences uncritically consume these images, Brockington (2009, p. 150) draws on the

criticism of other academics, who claim that unless consumers question the images that they are presented with, and take action upon them, injustice will continue to be found place in conservation. While Brockington argues that consumers might not question these images, as a form of escapism from their own issues in their lives, which he believes won't change (Brockington, 2009, p. 150).

8. Discussion of empirical findings

In this chapter I will discuss my findings considering my research questions and present my conclusion. I will start by answering my first research question: *'Is WWF exercising discursive power through media when presenting their conservation initiatives?'*, I will divide my answer into three parts as with my analysis. I will first answer how they present their conservation initiatives through tourism, local communities and lastly corporations, and generally how they view human-wildlife conflict. The next research question: *'How is WWF using celebrity ambassadors to maintain their narrative and what can the effects of this be?'* will be divided into four parts, first presenting Maisie Williams and then Leonardo DiCaprio as ambassadors, and then how the use of celebrities might influence the view on wilderness, and lastly discuss shifting focus when using celebrities. My last research question: *'Can conservation initiatives conducted by WWF be considered neo – colonialism and fortress conservation?'* will rely on the findings from the first two research questions and I will use them to discuss them in light of the last research question.

8.1. Is WWF exercising discursive power through media when presenting their conservation initiatives?

There is an increased pressure on the organisation and there is a large amount of damaging evidence that proves that the organisation in the past has ignored the rights of local communities and indigenous groups, while outwardly promoting a win – win narrative. Despite this, the organisation keeps receiving funding for their conservation initiatives, despite some resistance as I have presented, from vital donors such as the UN, where they've withdrawn funding for specific projects. The organisation is still considered a major contributor to conservation, and their past mistakes are written off as mere inconveniences and not as a reflection of the organisations, despite the long history of not responding to local resistance through diplomatic sources, but rather with force, and a presentation of agreed relocation and compensation, while there are records of several evictions and no compensation for loss of livelihoods.

8.1.1. Tourism

In their report, WWF presents tourism as one of the answers to solving human – wildlife conflicts. WWF does address the pressure that living close to wildlife might inflict on humans, but they do not take responsibility for this pressure. Neither do they acknowledge the

possibility that their protected areas and conservation initiatives might have elevated the tension between local communities and wildlife, or even created the conflict where there might have been coexistence before WWF and the state in the country intervened. They acknowledge the resistance in local communities, but they blame this on the pressure from wildlife and the danger it might pose on local communities, and the state's inability to respond to the damages. Instead of discussing the resistance that local communities might have towards WWF and their interference.

The idea that tourism is also the answer to compensate for relocation is also a narrative that WWF spends a lot of time in their report to discuss. They don't discuss the negative effects that might come from tourism in protected areas. Their narrative is clear, they argue that tourism is the most sustainable way to compensate for the loss of local communities and indigenous groups. The way WWF presents tourism as solely positive, inviting their audience to contribute to tourism through attending expensive safaris inside protected areas, stay at eco-lodges or contribute from a safe distance through the purchase of an eco-friendly product, often certified and produced by local communities who have been relocated. The narrative is quite clear, and since their audience wants to believe that contributing to conservation conducted by WWF is positive, they accept it without questioning it. They want to believe that their contribution is saving the world.

8.1.2. Local communities

In their report there is a large focus on how the organisation can contribute to educate the local communities on the importance of wildlife and wilderness. There is never a question of whether conservation should find place, or if there is a possibility for coexistence rather than relocation of people. Their way of conducting conservation is never contested in their own presentation. Rather than questioning how it is conducted, they argue how one might solve human – wildlife conflicts, arising from their conservation initiatives. They discuss coexistence only after local communities and indigenous groups have been removed from protected areas, and with this remove the responsibility from the organisation, and instead it pushes the responsibility over on those who are forced to adapt to a new way of living, completely altering their livelihoods. This narrative implies that local communities and indigenous groups are incapable of taking care of their own land and because of their neglect, it calls for interference from conservation organisations such as WWF. In the case of WWF, they have also involved the state of the country they conduct their conservation in. They are

also considered to be able to take care of protected areas more adequately than local communities and indigenous groups, regardless of their knowledge of the area, or lack thereof. One might argue that this is narrative of western organisations such as WWF is necessary in the process of teaching local communities and indigenous groups on conservation can be similar of the narrative of a ‘white saviour’. The idea, as in Tarzan where a white man is the voice of wilderness and protector of nature and wildlife. Similar to one of a European colonial era where Europeans saw the importance of wilderness in the Global South, due to the neglect that they had imposed on their own wilderness. Because of this they deprived local communities and indigenous of their own and turned it into wealthy hunting grounds.

I would argue that the narrative of local support is a myth. As WWF claims to be dependent on local support for their initiatives to be successful, while there is evidence of their protected areas are still functioning even when local communities are in clear opposition. While their protest protected areas are often ignored, even when it is taken to court, WWF continues with their narrative of local support as a necessity.

8.1.3. Corporations

In the narrative presented by WWF in their report, corporations are considered to be useful in the process of solving human – wildlife conflicts. Their involvement is presented as dedicated to support local communities and their workers and their safety, while also making a great effort in protecting wildlife. There is no mention of corporations being drivers to the changes in landscape, and the increased pressure on humans and wildlife, due to the space that corporations take up for their businesses. For example, big plantations as in the example of India. Their inability to hold corporations accountable for this pressure, in a report that is supposed to address how there should be a future for all, is only affirming their dependence on corporations for funding. They protect the interest of corporations and businesses above the interests and livelihoods of local communities and indigenous groups. While corporations are presented in their report as contributing to solutions to solve a problem largely caused by them and organisations such as WWF. Local communities are presented as I have already discussed, as a problem. They need to be taught how to comply and contribute to the changes happening to them, as if these are changes that all communities need to go through. Even when these changes are largely happening in the Global South, and western communities are not affected by these changes.

It is also relevant to discuss the way WWF presents their initiatives that involve local communities and how they contribute to the human-wildlife conflict, and specifically human wildlife management. Even if their personal presentation of local people is brief, they still manage to present them as changed through the human wildlife management initiatives conducted by WWF. While WWF present their goal to educate local communities on the importance of wildlife and coexistence, they argue further for this through the presentation of local farmers who evidently changed their attitudes towards wildlife through the implantation of human wildlife management. Which is a convenient narrative for the win – win discourse, this presentation of local farmers is too narrow to be representable of the initiatives as a whole, it further amplifies the success of the initiatives where there have been restrictions of local communities.

The findings in the report by Tumusiime and Sjaastad implies that some local communities are gaining an advantage for the involvement with national parks and protected areas in general, it creates a larger gap between those living in these local communities. This could be used to argue that the people involved in the human wildlife management programs are in a fortunate position where they are earning a profit from the involvement with WWF, which could explain the narrative that they present of the changes in behaviour towards wildlife and the gratitude towards the initiatives created by WWF. In this report indigenous groups are not represented due to their problematic relationship with the creation of Bwindi Impenetrable Park, which speaks for itself.

8.2. How is WWF using celebrity ambassadors to maintain their narrative and what can the effects of this be?

I have already discussed how WWF might exercise discursive power through their report, by presenting a narrative that fits the dominant discourse on conservation. While this is not often contested due to the powerful position that WWF holds in the dominant conservation discourse, they also rely on other aspects than their reputation to uphold their position. Through celebrities they connect the fame and the position in society the celebrities hold with their message.

8.2.1. Maisie Williams

It is difficult to determine just how much WWF rely on their celebrity ambassadors. It is evident that by using famous and known faces to present a cause, the organisation will naturally receive more attention. They receive attention regardless of whether people believe or even like the celebrity they have chosen to represent them. Whether good or bad, people are drawn to and will discuss celebrities. As I have already argued, Maisie Williams and Leonardo DiCaprio are very different in their presentation, and I believe they have very different impact on the industry and the work of WWF. While I argue that Williams is merely a celebrity who attempts to use her platform to spread awareness on the climate crisis, one that she recognises that she is also a part of. She is not actively influencing a western audience' view on wilderness, she is advocating for changes that are happening and affecting everyone on the planet, including herself. One might argue that in doing so, she draws more attention to herself, than actually making a difference, but I believe that she is fundamental in encouraging a young audience to be aware of the climate crisis and western influence on it. This makes her important in a process of encouraging responsibility for the climate crisis, but the responsibility might be displaced. Instead of calling for system change, she can be considered a part of a marketing system that encourages consumption and adjustment, rather than actual change. Appealing to her audience in a manner than encourages consumption, the same way WWF is marketing.

8.2.2. Leonardo DiCaprio

While Leonardo DiCaprio and his investment to environmentalism has a bigger impact than Williams. Through his production of wildlife documentaries, that got a portrayal of wilderness in cohesion with the message that WWF presents, he actively builds on the narrative presented by WWF. While also being an ambassador and chair member for WWF he also continues with this portrayal through his own organisation Re:wild, and the message is quite clear. The western idea that certain types of places should be preserved, in order to fit an image of untouched wilderness, where the only people who are allowed to be represented in this scenery is indigenous groups, and only those who fit a certain criterion, is damaging. It is damaging because the image presented by a celebrity such as DiCaprio will affirm an outdated and western view on what wilderness should look like. His work gives organisations such as WWF the legitimation to continue their conservation, where they evict local communities to preserve nature. Meanwhile, they allow a certain group of people such as

tourists, corporations, scientists and in this case, wildlife film producers to use these protected areas. Only to reaffirm the idea that wilderness is originally without human interference, and that by allowing local communities inside they will spoil a western scenery of the wild. In his presentation he does not take responsibility in the same way as Williams.

8.2.3. Wilderness

While the influence of celebrities can be discussed, and the effects they might have on conservation, it is still important to discuss the influence that celebrities might have to preserve a discourse, their ability to create believable narratives that are consumed by a western audience. This further approves the conservation discourse that WWF tries to sustain through their discursive power of the win – win narrative. Celebrities contribute to this narrative, even if I don't believe they would have much influence without a strong discourse to rely on.

As I have already argued, what Leonardo DiCaprio brings to this discourse is a narrative that WWF also relies. The idea that a story needs a hero, a victim, and a villain. In his presentation through wildlife films, he is actively reinforcing this view on conservation. Where WWF presents themselves and the state as heroes, and local communities and indigenous groups are both victims of their own incapability to protect their wilderness, they are also presented as villains because of the same reason. In DiCaprio's presentation, he presents eco-guards who are set out to protect these national parks as heroes, while the victim of this narrative is the wildlife they protect, and the villain is in this case unknown. He follows the same narrative as WWF, but in his narrative his focus is shifted towards the wildlife.

8.2.4. Shifting focus

While Maisie Williams is appealing to WWF as a product, that can initially contribute to the organisation's growth, and she is initially selling a product. Williams is using her fame to advocate for a sustainable lifestyle, while still contributing to consumption and actively taking part in this industry. Encouraging a new generation to care about the environment, but also encourages them to consume the products she is promoting, as people admire and want to be like this celebrity. Even if she contradicts her message, it might still encourage her audience to be sustainable, as it is unlikely that they will have such a lifestyle, it is still turning the focus back to the celebrity. Meanwhile, Leonardo DiCaprio attempts to not appear as a

celebrity, but rather an environmentalist, his trustworthiness comes from his fame and the audience that comes with it. By turning the focus on the celebrity, might be a way for organisations such as WWF to divert the attention from their work and their negative critique. BY continuously add new celebrities to their list of ambassadors, they put the organisation back in the limelight, by borrowing the fame from celebrities. Their influence might not be intentional, and I don't believe that celebrities alone can do much damage, but they can be used by organisations such as WWF to contribute to a discourse, by promoting the same narrative. I will argue that celebrities such as Maisie Williams become more of a tool for WWF, to promote and amplify their narrative, while Leonardo DiCaprio systematically contributes to the narrative and his influence is more damaging than that of Maisie Williams'.

8.3. Can conservation initiatives conducted by WWF be considered concealed neo - colonialism and fortress conservation?

8.3.1. Fortress conservation or a win – win discourse?

It is worth discussing whether the conservation that WWF is conducting should continue to be considered a part of the win-win discourse or whether it should still be considered fortress conservation. It is difficult to determine whether the resettlements that have found place, is according to WWF an agreement or whether it is to be considered forceful evictions. While there is evidence that in some of WWF's initiatives there has been forceful evictions, while the organisation acknowledges this, they refuse to take responsibility for these actions. Another aspect of this is that while some of their resettlements have been through an agreement on the premises of compensation, there is also evidence of neglected local communities who with the promise of compensation have relocated and lost their traditional livelihoods. While WWF relies on a strong win – win discourse in their report, other sources present a narrative that is incompatible with this win – win discourse.

While WWF presents a narrative in their report of a mutual understanding of the necessity of protected areas, other sources show resistance in local communities and while some might profit from the protected areas and the work it might accumulate, the profit is not shared equally, and some people are left worse off than when they relied on traditional livelihoods. While WWF present a narrative where these local communities are included in the process and compensated, there is evidence that these groups are marginalised due to the creation of

these protected areas, and there is an effort to keep these groups out of these protected areas as they are viewed as a threat to wildlife and wilderness. The view on humans as a threat to wildlife and wilderness was initially the cause for resettlement.

The idea that humans as individuals or as communities can be the sole reason for climate change and the decrease in wilderness and wildlife, is an idea that is more in line with fortress conservation than with a win – win discourse. The removal of local communities and indigenous groups, and the strict policies to keep them out of these protected areas to the point where violence and force is used, does not reflect a win – win discourse. Especially when there are other groups such as tourists, scientists and corporations who are allowed to use these protected areas and benefit from them.

8.3.2. Idealisation of wilderness

The western idealisation of wilderness is damaging, as it portrays nature without humans, humans who have for generations lived alongside the wilderness that organisations such as WWF is set out to preserve. Instead of showing a western audience that it is possible to coexist with wilderness, and that some local communities have coexisting alongside nature for centuries, and they continue this relationship even through urbanisation and modernisation. This is not to say that an image such as of ‘the noble savage’ is to be accepted, quite on the contrary. It should be the responsibility of conservation organisations to de-colonise conservation, and in the process challenge images of western ideas of wilderness and take local knowledge on nature seriously. Not only those of indigenous groups who fit into a certain criterion from a western gaze, but those who have inhabited these protected areas for generations.

In the process of validating this outdated view on wilderness, WWF legitimates their also outdated view on conservation, and the demand to have local communities evicted. While they claim that their conservation initiatives fit a win – win discourse, there are several factors that makes me question this. Firstly, their presentation of local communities in their report is vague, and the people they interview are employed or benefitting from their projects. They also focus on the damage that humans, specifically local communities, pose to wildlife, when they present their human – wildlife conflicts. While addressing that these conflicts are being resolved, they also turn the focus towards the projects that WWF themselves have started in order to inform local communities about the importance of wildlife. Initially arguing that the

reason why local communities resist these protected areas is because they lack the knowledge and the understanding of wildlife. In discussing human – wildlife conflict they barely touch upon corporations as a driver for the decrease in wilderness, they mention it without questioning it. Instead of acknowledging the cause behind the decrease in wilderness, and the pressure that forces on local communities and wildlife, they only address how these conflicts can be solved, primarily applying the responsibility on local communities. It is also worth mentioning that even though some people might benefit from protected areas, such as through tourism and the job opportunities this might include. The distribution of these benefits is not given fairly to the local communities. While some might become richer, and in that praise such initiatives, others will become poorer due to their lack of traditional livelihoods. Adapting isn't the same as complying. Through their win-win narrative, WWF also promises compensation for local communities that are relocated through consent. While it is evident that compensation is often not received. If consent have even been given to relocate, while there is also evidence of forceful evictions.

The way WWF exercise conservation in the cases that I have explored are not comparative to a win – win discourse. While they claim that they value local communities, and respect their presence, they continue to treat these groups poorly, and deny them access to protected areas, unless they contribute to the conservation initiatives by being a workforce. This makes their conservation similar to fortress conservation, especially considering their excessive use of armed guards. In their report there is little mention of their eco-guards, the only mention of guards is when addressing monitoring of wildlife damages to compensate for the loss local communities might suffer from encounters with wildlife. While WWF refuses to take accountability for the violence exercised by guards around their protected areas, they acknowledge that it is happening, but the blame is on local governments. Despite the discussion about their involvement in armed guards, it is still projects that they financially support, and take credit for when they have successful numbers of increase in threatened animals. Which only proves to show that WWF is only taking responsibility for their successful narratives, while they deny involvement in negative narratives, that might influence their reputation and the dominant win – win discourse. Which again brings us back to their discursive power, shaping the narrative to fit the organisation. They do this successfully, as they already present local communities as primitive, and WWF's involvement is helpful and necessary. This idea is only increased by their presentation of wilderness and communicates to a western audience that it is necessary to preserve this wilderness, a

common goal, without addressing contributing factors to the decrease of this wilderness and wildlife, factors from a western society.

Considering the argument that WWF might be conducting fortress conservation, while simultaneously presenting a win – win discourse, makes it relevant to discuss whether WWF might be conducting concealed neo – colonialism. They present a narrative of the importance of local support, and claim that conservation is not possible without it, but at the same time there are records of forceful evictions, no compensation for relocations, a change of the economic landscape around protected areas and a wide gap between groups who support protected areas and those who don't, and in some cases armed guards in protected areas. This is not an image that is similar to the one that WWF presents in the report, and it does not fit with the win – win discourse, while it does have strong correlations to fortress conservation. Considering the historic relation of fortress conservation and colonialism, and how several protected areas and national parks were created using a model like this, it is possible to assume that the work of WWF is similar to this. While the narrative in their report fits perfectly with the conservation discourse, there are several other narratives that challenge this idea. They make their protected areas available for tourists, scientists, and corporations, clearly making a profit of these conservation initiatives. They reshape wilderness according to a western perspective and make it available for a western audience. Through celebrity advocates they strengthen this relationship and continue the presentation of a narrative of western wilderness that confirms to the conservation discourse. A discourse that has seen little change since the Yellowstone model and the creation of national parks after it, under European colonial rule. WWF doesn't seem to value the history of local communities and indigenous groups and their traditional ties to nature, or question whether these groups might be important for conservation, beyond being a resource to produce certified products for WWF, a cheap workforce for tourism, or a prop to fit an image of certain indigenous groups and their relationship to wilderness. Despite these groups ability to traditionally coexist with wildlife, they are removed in the name of conservation, and blamed for the harm caused on nature. This blame is also an outdated view, formed during a European colonial era. An idea that WWF still allow to be a part of their narrative when discussing local communities.

9. Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to answer my three research questions. The aim has been to present the perspective of WWF on their conservation initiatives through their “A Future for All” report from 2021. This to emphasise how they might write about their own projects. Where I could further compare it to the presentation of other actors, and their view on similar or the same projects conducted by WWF. I have attempted to present various claims of the same reality. Further, I have also presented two of WWF’s celebrity ambassadors, Maisie Williams, and Leonardo DiCaprio. Through pictures collected from their Instagram profiles, I have presented some of their commitment to the WWF and generally their relationship with environmentalism. This as a part of appeals, where the two ambassadors represent WWF and their message. I have used the theory of discourses and narratives to understand how a presentation of a certain topic might confirm a discourse. I have also put it in a perspective of critical realism, where I have discussed two presentations of the same reality, that I have done in order to highlight the differences in the way it has been presented and their claims.

The research questions I have answered in this thesis are:

- How is WWF exercising discursive power through media when presenting their conservation initiatives?
- How is WWF using celebrity ambassadors to maintain their narrative and what can the effects of this be?
- Can WWF’s presentation of their conservation initiatives be explained as concealed neo – colonialism and fortress conservation?

The first main finding relates to the last research question regarding neo – colonialism and fortress conservation. Not only is it proven that conservation initiatives conducted by WWF are faulty, in the sense that they have failed to protect local communities and indigenous groups from violence exercised by guards employed by WWF, guards who have been trained through their programs. While these incidents are concerning and should be addressed and due to the seriousness of the incidents WWF’s initiatives should be investigated further, it is still not evidence enough for a consensus that WWF is exercising concealed neo – colonialism

and fortress conservation. What I found in my analysis of the “A Future for All” report was an outdated view on local communities and indigenous groups. When addressing human – wildlife conflict the source of conflict keeps coming back to local communities and indigenous groups. They are presenting a narrative where the relocation of people to protect wildlife and wilderness is the most effective and only solution to preserve nature. The idea of individual people and specific local groups as the source of damage to wildlife and wilderness is an idea that belongs to a view tied to fortress conservation. These claims of abuse and forceful evictions, or relocations with misleading information and without full consent, can be considered land grabbing. Those who benefit from the creation of protected areas are those conforming to the guidelines set by WWF and other involving parties, which creates a large divide between local communities and especially indigenous groups. While these protected areas are no longer used for hunting grounds for a wealthy western elite, they are used to gain profit from, through tourism, and local communities are used as a workforce on the premises of the park, and indigenous groups are displayed as a natural part of the parks without the profit.

The second main finding builds on the first finding and relates to the first research question regarding the discursive power exercised by WWF in their presentation of their report. Firstly, in their report WWF has already decided that the relocation of local communities and indigenous groups are justified. They heavily rely on tourism as a solution to the human – wildlife conflicts they discuss. They avoid discussing the negative consequences that tourism may have on wildlife, wilderness and the people who live close to the protected areas. Their focus is on the economic benefits that tourism might accumulate. Local communities are presented as the opposition to conservation. In their report corporations are presented as problem solvers, dedicated to the protection of their workers, wildlife, and wilderness.

The third and final main finding in my thesis relates to my second research question regarding the influence of celebrity ambassadors. I have found that the two celebrity ambassadors Maisie Williams and Leonardo DiCaprio influence the narrative presented by WWF in different ways. While Maisie Williams as an ambassador use her fame to draw attention to the conservation discourse it is more directed towards environmentalism. In her presentation she speaks on the behalf of her generation, encouraging people and especially young people to care about their future. The way she involves herself with the issues might shift the focus towards her as a person and the desire to participate in the same initiatives as her. Regardless

of this shift of focus, I believe that Williams can have a positive effect in inspiring a new generation to care about the environment. Meanwhile, Leonardo DiCaprio is more involved with the conservation discourse. Not only is he more involved with WWF as an organisation, but he creates wildlife documentaries that heavily builds on the same principle as WWF. His documentaries are presenting a story of heroes and villains, which is visible through a few images from Instagram. Those protecting the protected areas are the heroes, against those who desire to harm wildlife. His presentation is similar to the narrative presented by WWF in their “A Future for All” report. There is a constant reminder of the fight between good and bad, without a nuanced view on the topic, and there is no room for local communities in this narrative, while indigenous groups are romanticised without any authority over the narrative.

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