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Green Colonialism: A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)
of conservation practices in the context of *Simien* Mountains
National Park, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Since its establishment in 1969, external actors have been significantly involved in the implementation of nature conservation in Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP). As climate change becomes increasingly tangible, conservation activities are frequently being deployed to protect ecosystems across the globe. Albeit an emphasis on community-participation, the philosophy of exclusionary protectionism appears intact and on several occasions, conservationist efforts result in the eviction of local communities, all in the name of the environment. This study attempts to investigate the potentialities of green colonialist features within competing discourses, underpinning conservation efforts in the context of SMNP, produced by UNESCO. The analysis targets discursive practices and linguistic representations of UNESCO, and the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), through Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In addition, the theoretical framework of Orientalism, positioned within the postcolonial school of thought was applied. The results indicated colonial characteristics within the material, reproducing green colonialism through the discursive practices underpinning environmental protection. Notwithstanding pledges to include local inhabitants, the discursive aspects of conservation continue to reflect structures of profound inequality.

Keywords: Green colonialism, Conservation, Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Discourse, Orientalism, Postcolonialism, UNESCO, EWCA

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1. Introduction

“The story of the Simien mountains shows us in practical terms how, even today, the management of the African natural parks involves two opposing sides: the local people who want to live in a natural site and the conservationists who are determined to protect it.” (Blanc, 2022, p.169).

The objective of this study is to inquire whether or not characteristics of green colonialism can be identified within communicative events underpinning nature conservation. The notion of stripping nature of its people in order to protect it has been a recurring theme in the creation of national parks throughout history, and it appears as if the protection of the environment is notably intertwined with the exercise of power (Alyou, 2018, p.141).

Following its establishment in 1969, Simien Mountains National Park has been the target of multiple conservation efforts, frequently advised by external actors. Henceforth, the assessment of the park has remained consistent; it continuously deteriorates largely due to local agricultural practices and human settlement within its borders. Consequently, tighter regulation is needed to salvage nature (Blanc, 2022). As climate change becomes increasingly palpable, threatening nature and people across the globe, geographical regions with rich biodiversity continue to be objects of an increasing amount of conservation activities, aiming to maintain the cultural and physical characteristics of sites (UNESCO, 2023a). Nonetheless, many regions holding high rates of biodiversity, simultaneously hold high rates of socio-economic poverty (Himmelfarb, 2006, p.7). Occasionally, the restructuring of access and rule concerning the use of resources have profoundly alienating effects, realized at the expense of local communities (Fairhead et al. 2012, p.239).

The pledge to include local communities, within the implementation of conservation measures is actively emphasized by contemporary actors aiming to protect ecosystems across the globe. Consequently, joint collaboration on the protection of natural areas has increased significantly (Alyou, 2018, p. 155). Yet, conservation practices result in the criminalisation and eviction of local inhabitants in some cases, pointing to the potential enduring maintenance of an ideally human-free nature. Although green colonialism takes divergent forms in different settings, it is generally realized at the expense of local communities.

This study seeks to investigate the role of language, adopting a critical approach in the examination of whether and how UNESCO, in their evaluation of the conservation outlook of Simien Mountains, reproduces colonial continuities in the name of the environment.

1.1 Background

Simien Mountains National Park (SMNP) is situated in the Gondar region of northern Ethiopia. In 1978, SMNP was inscribed to the list of World Heritage Sites, adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972. Founded in 1945, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) aims to promote security and world peace through international cooperation within arts, culture, science and education. The institution seeks to encourage the identification and preservation of natural and cultural heritage. The World Heritage Convention was created to protect places of *Outstanding Universal Value* and presently, there are 1157 locations inscribed on the list (UNESCO, 2023b).

UNESCO describes SMNP as “ *one of the most spectacular landscapes in the world with jagged mountain peaks, deep valleys and sharp precipices dropping some 1,500 m.*” (UNESCO, 2023c). The criteria for the inscription of SMNP stressed the spectacular landscape and exceptional natural beauty of the park. In addition, the park is globally significant in terms of biodiversity conservation, being home to a notable number of endemic and globally threatened species including *inter alia*; the Walia Ibex (ibid). The primary responsibility of SMNP lies with the Ethiopian State. Following an inscription to the convention, the corresponding State Party is obliged to honor the monitoring programme. Assuming that issues arise, the Committee holds the power to appoint staff evaluating the scene, which could potentially result in the removal of a site from the convention, or the identification of a property as a World Heritage in Danger Site (Deacon, 2014, p.6-8).

As for the political system of the Ethiopian government, its authoritarian characteristics alongside the colonial past of western actors, brings the possibility of exercising power over its population (Nelson, 2003, p.84). In 2021, The Federal Republic of Ethiopia was given a score of 22 out of 100 on the *Freedom House Index* (Freedom House, 2021). Due to the international recognition stemming from an inscription to the convention, there appears to be a complexity behind the role of power that the Ethiopian Government holds in the implementation of conservation activities, as it creates opportunities of power play. The local inhabitants, directly impacted by the creation of national parks, generally hold small amounts

of political influence, both in international arenas and their own national governments (Nelson, 2003, p.84).

The issue of human occupation has been present within SMNP since 1969, and the property's World Heritage nomination explicitly targeted human settlement as an issue. The park has been home to settlers, immigrants and cultivators, of divergent ethnicities, for over 2000 years. A vast number of the first people recorded in the area were Ethiopian jews. At present, the majority of the population are either long-term resident Muslim communities or Orthodox Christians. Predominantly, people within and around the boundaries of the park live by agriculture and livestock (EWCA, 2013). Endeavors to relocate villages have generated severe tensions between the managers and inhabitants of the park. SMNP states that the increasing human population exceeds the carrying capacity of the area, mainly through traditional agricultural methods of the land. Consequently, numerous households in the area face food insecurity (ibid).

Since 1978, SMNP has been the target of several conservation efforts, aiming to alleviate pressure on natural areas, commonly advised by external expertise through international organizations. In 1996, UNESCO transferred the park to the list of World Heritage in Danger, due to environmental degradation generated by increased human activity (UNESCO, 2017b). Prior to 1996, the notion of local inhabitants spawning environmental degradation, stood at the center of the conflictual nature between international institutions and local agro-pastoralists. During colonial times, the environmental degradation caused by trade, hunting and resource extraction was severe. Notwithstanding, various reports associated the environmental deterioration of the area with local peasants. In 1970, the EWCA implemented a law, making it illegal to cultivate, hunt and graze livestock within the park (Blanc, 2022, p.94-98).

1.2 Research question

This research paper seeks to analyze the potentialities of green colonialism within UNESCO's reports underpinning nature conservation. More specifically, it aims to interrogate the dialectical relationship between discourse and social practices, in the context of SMNP, aiming to gain insight into whether these encompass traits of green colonialism, how it materializes linguistically and what the social implications are. As environmental challenges become increasingly tangible, the societal relevance of the study is motivated by the exigency

of raising awareness concerning the consequences of conservation efforts and the role of language in the construction of social phenomena. This is crucial if methods of conservation, aiming to protect the planet, are to be continued. As for the scientific relevance of the study, the discursive aspects of the phenomenon are fairly unexamined. Accordingly, this study attempts to investigate the use of language within contemporary methods of nature conservation, in order to examine how structures of power and inequality may be reproduced, or challenged, through communicative events.

The contextual focus of the study; SMNP, is motivated by its significance in terms of biodiversity conservation, alongside its inscription to the World Heritage List in 1978, conditionalized with the relocation of local inhabitants. To investigate the competing discourses around nature conservation, and how certain activities might be justified through the use of language, this study aims to respond to the following research question:

To what extent does UNESCO's perspective on Simien Mountains National Park reproduce green colonialism?

Additionally, sub-questions that will help to answer this includes: How are statements articulated? Which different types of discursive patterns do they constitute? Which of these patterns are dominant and in what way? Which actors produce and reproduce certain discourses? What are the implications of this constellation of discourse for local communities in SMNP?

2. Setting the stage

2.1 Previous research

In *The Invention of Green Colonialism* (2022), Blanc argues that colonialism continues to exert influence on the worldwide ecology, and in particular Africa. He points to a glaring connection between contemporary policies of international organizations and colonial geography. With the contextual focus of SMNP, he contends that the historical injustices of green colonialism continue to permeate the lives of people within the park, stemming from a narrative underpinned by an imaginary Africa, constructed by European colonizers. For over a century, various types of media coverage, including wildlife documentaries, have portrayed Western representations of African nature as something supremely natural, impaired by

human settlement. Blanc argues that this has resulted in the criminalisation of local inhabitants, accused of degrading the land, and on a plurality of occasions, local communities have been evicted in favor of green ends. Altogether, roughly a million people have been driven out of protected zones in Africa during the 20th century (Blanc, 2022). Historically, Ethiopian state leaders have employed ecological ethics, advised by Western actors, to increase their power over the national territory and to gain international recognition. This governance of nature has generated both symbolic and material violence, targeting resident inhabitants accused of degrading a World Heritage Site (Blanc, 2018, p. 137).

As one particular type of green colonialism, “green-grabbing”, a term coined by the Vidal in 2008, refers to “*the appropriation of land and resources for environmental ends*” (Fairhead et al., 2012). Fairhead et al. (2012) argue that green-grabbing, as a process of burgeoning occurrence, is driven by contemporary global discourses around the repair of ecosystems and expanding green market economies. Green-grabbing occurs in a plurality of contexts, including; biocarbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation. Environmental agendas are the core drivers of these processes, entailing changes in the access and management of natural resources. Occasionally, green-grabbing entails the wholesale alienation of land from its existing claimants to *inter alia*; halt allegedly destructive local practices or create national parks. Green-grabbing risks generating profoundly isolating consequences, in which the poverty of already marginalized resource- and land users aggravates. Additionally, despite novel actors and conceptualizations, the material consequences point to historical continuities. Green-grabbing builds on colonial characteristics of resource alienation with green ends (Fairhead et al., 2012).

The philosophy of exclusionary protectionism, in which human use of protected resources is forbidden, is central to many conservation efforts. Over the past decades, protectionist policies have exacerbated conflict and poverty, generating various kinds of environmental degradation. As national governments implement environmental policies generating similar consequences as those implemented by European powers during colonial times, contemporary biodiversity protection largely resembles early conservation initiatives (Himmelfarb, 2006, p.1-3).

This thesis explicitly targets discourses underpinning conservation activities. It emphasizes the urgency of looking back at history in order to understand contemporary challenges, while placing the main analytical attention to present-day events. Ethiopia has never been

colonized, and yet, external actors have played a significant role in the creation of SMNP, in which local inhabitants have been evicted on several occasions. Contrasting the previous literature, pointing to the operating and complex nature of green colonialism, this study will be centered around the examination of discursive practices, and in particular; what may be unconsciously produced. The diversified literature points to the social implications and historical characteristics of conservation efforts. However, it does not thoroughly explore the connections between the contexts of investigation and the use of language. Consequently, this study will deploy a critical discourse analysis to draw conclusions regarding the role of discourse in the sustenance or transformation of relations of power through communicative events. Hence, this study intends to draw on previous conclusions, aiming to add an in-depth analysis of, whether or not, the competing discourses on the conservation outlook of SMNP, reproduces green colonialism.

2.2 Conceptualisations

This study will build on the definition coined by Vidal (2008) and following him; Fairhead et al. (2012) when touching upon green-grabbing, also referred to as green colonialism; “*the appropriation of land and resources for environmental ends.*” (Fairhead et al, 2012, p. 238). Another significant aspect of green colonialism, is the notion of a “*derogatory epithet alluding to what is perceived as a Western strategy to influence the internal affairs of mostly developing nations in the name of environmentalism.*” (UIA, 2023).

The conceptualisation of conservation will be based upon the definition designated by UNESCO, due to their central part in the creation of SMNP, and their prominent position within contemporary conservation projects. UNESCO defines conservation practices as; “*measures taken to extend the life of cultural heritage while strengthening transmission of its significant heritage messages and values.*” (UNESCO, 1988). Additionally, critical methodological and theoretical concepts, including; ideology and hegemony, will be conceptualized in section 5.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Postcolonial theory

Resting on the fundamental claim that the world we inhabit cannot be understood without taking the history of colonial rule into account, postcolonial thought emanates from the notion that the social, historical, economical and political impacts of European colonial rule continue to permeate the world, constructing contemporary academia (Jazeel, 2019, p.1-2). Consequently, perspectives within the postcolonial strand seek to critically interrogate what may be taken for granted, aiming to explore the historical production of knowledge (ibid). The rigid colonial system created structures of profound inequity, ideologically justified by the doctrine of race. By recognising the dynamic power of cultures underpinning knowledge and discourses, postcolonial theory names political activism, contesting the disparities caused by colonialism. Western powers continue to retain substantial power, controlling the normative framework of global structures and institutions. Consequently, the contemporary organizational structure of the international society operates according to the norms of European powers. The assumption that the Western way of doing things is the right way, is a legacy of the Western economic and military power, largely formed by colonialism (ibid, p.6).

Postcolonial theory is based on the premise that knowledge is constructed and perceived in the context of colonial legacies, primarily of the 19th and early 20th century (Said, 2003, p.2). Thus, it intervenes into “green humanities” to investigate the potentialities of a dominating EuroAmericanism within political discourses. The constructive role of language, used to legitimize and consolidate the exercise of power, is a central aspect of the postcolonial study of discourses. By linguistically categorizing areas being in need of protection, or portraying people as responsible for the degradation of the environment, while incapable of governing the issue themselves, colonial conquerors have constructed a dualism, which has created a “good” and a “bad”, justifying certain actions above others (Jazeel, 2019, p.117).

3.2 Orientalism

Considered to have laid the cornerstone of postcolonialism, Said published *Orientalism* (1978), seeking to uncover the grave oppression practiced against previously colonized states.

Said seeks to unravel the discourses underpinning the colonial discourse, investigating the enduring effects of inequities and stereotyped racialized attitudes (Young, 2020, p.34).

Orientalism is a Western worldview, based on epistemological and ontological distinctions between the West and the Orient (Said, 2003, p.2). It alludes to “*the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient*” (ibid, p.3) including ideological mechanisms of racist, imagined and stereotypical constructions of the non-Western world. Based on this fabrication of the East, referred to as the *Orient*, people in the Orient have been portrayed as primitive “others” in contrast to the depiction of an advanced West, referred to as the *Occident*. According to Said, this narrative has created a binary thinking, in which a contrast is created between the rational and strong Occident and the weak and irrational Orient (ibid, p.50-52).

Said emphasizes how Western actors play a part in the construction and reproduction of a hostile image of the people and associated cultures of the Orient. Thus, Orientalism is the development of the Orient as something different and a subordinate to the West, reproduced through the use of language (ibid, p.12-13). The expressions and imaginative demonology of an “enigmatic Orient” continues to influence the production of texts. Accordingly, reality is expressed, and made comprehensible by the fact that the image of the Orient, which is a Western construction, is not solely generated by facts, but by imagined and dual constructions, reinforced by relations of power (ibid, p.54). Said's theory seeks to decolonize the discourse and the way in which Western actors have created this perceived contrast, in order to account for historical continuities within the discourses. Power is what ultimately decides the production of a discourse, making it impossible, even unconsciously, to perceive the Orient in a different manner (Young, 2020, p.2-4).

Orientalism will serve as a critical analytical lens whereby the phenomenon under study will be investigated. The selected material will be investigated based on to what extent it sustains ideologically motivated claims, and to what degree the use of power, as a Westernly fabricated superiority over the Orient, could work as an ideological tool to reproduce Oriental people in terms of “otherness”, contributing to the perpetuation of established structures of power and inequality (Said, 2003, p.301).

Thus, the analytical focus will be placed on whether texts of communication subvert or uphold colonial discourses in which non-western people might be portrayed in derogatory terms. Possible power relations and hegemonic discourse might make some actions appear

more legitimate than others. Consequently, the investigation aims to analyze the relationship between language and power, to detect whether Western writers reproduce a hostile and pervasive image of the Orient as stagnant and irresponsible, exemplifying Said's theory on how western ideas about the Orient are reproduced through discursive practices.

4. Method

Said's theory is an analytical tool for the study of the discursive aspects of colonialism. However, it does not offer particular methodological tools to examine the discursive aspects of conservation activities. Consequently; this chapter will introduce the method of this study, including a set of methodological techniques and guidelines, aiming to demonstrate the employment of a comprehensible research design, merged with the tenets of Orientalism.

4.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

This study will apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), more specifically Fairclough's (1995) *Three dimensional model*. CDA is an interdisciplinary field approaching the empirical study of the relationship between discursive practices and social development within different contexts. Based on the assumption that social and linguistic practices constitute one another in a dialectical relationship, CDA combines critique of discourses with the explanation of how figures within a discourse contribute to social realities. Not only does discourses contribute to the construction of social structures, it also reflects them. Language-as-discourse is thus, a form of historically situated action, through which people change or sustain social phenomena (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008, p.60-64).

Based on the premise that discourses hold ideological dimensions, a particular discourse may contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal relations of power between social groups. This aligns with another premise of CDA; it is critical aiming to chart how discursive practices maintain unequal social relationships. CDA is committed to social change and approaches the side of oppressed groups within society (ibid, p.64).

The postcolonial school of thought shares this critical feature with CDA, seeking to change the way people think in order to produce equitable relations. It emphasizes subjectively lived experiences with the aim to intervene into the structures of powers of the West and non-Western parts of the world (Young, 2020, p.10). Furthermore, Said emphasizes that

Orientalism ought to be understood in terms of discourse in order to understand the intricate ideological and complex implications of Orientalist scholarship. Accordingly, a significant focus is placed on how claims are constructed within specific discourses, and how individuals taking part in these may reproduce an Orientalist discourse (Said, 2003, p.20). CDA, seeking to intervene into the linkage between language use and society, aims to explain such relationships while looking at how discourse works as a constitutive force of power. Therefore, it aligns with the theoretical features of postcolonial theory, making the two compatible. Hence, this study takes on a theory development approach, in which Said's theoretical insights will be merged with CDA.

4.2 Fairclough's Model

Fairclough's model rests on three properties; it is dialectical, transdisciplinary and relational. The latter entails that it is primarily concerned with social relations, rather than individuals. A discourse entails a “ *complex set of relations including relations of communication between people who talk, write and in other ways communicate with each other.*” (Fairclough, 2010, p.3). The model seeks to account for how social change, or continuation, occurs through the use of discourse, and the objective is to investigate discourses and non-discursive elements of social contexts in order to identify how social reproduction, or change, occurs. This is accomplished by analyzing particular semiotic, interdiscursive and linguistic features of texts, all part of the social construction, reproduction or change taking place (ibid, p.1).

Fairclough applies the concept of discourse as; “ *language use as a social practice, (..), the kind of language used within a specific field and, (..) a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective.*” (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008, p. 66).

The relations underpinning discourses and social life are dialectical. Hence, actors employing specific discourses draw on a system, and simultaneously, constitutes it (ibid, p.71). It is necessary to analyze the sets of relations within a particular discourse, and accordingly, a communicative event needs to be interrogated in relation to the social context of which it is part (Fairclough, 2010, p.3).

The notion of hegemony and ideology forms the backbone of Fairclough's model. Ideology, based on social structures, alludes to the “ meaning of service of power”, contributing to the transformation, creation or reproduction of relations of domination. Discourses can be more or less ideologically situated. Additionally, Fairclough's conceptualization of hegemony,

refers not solely to dominance, but negotiation, through which a consensus concerning meaning emerges. Discursive practices make one aspect of a hegemonic struggle, contributing to either change or reproduction of a given order of discourse. If discursive elements are articulated in novel ways, discursive change may take place (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008, p.75-76). Fairclough makes analytical distinctions between the dimensions of his model, presented below.

4.2.1 Textual analysis

The first dimension is concerned with the detailed analysis of the linguistic characteristics of a communicative event. By employing specific analytical tools, this provides insight into how discourses might provide backing for particular interpretations. This includes the analysis of *inter alia*; grammar, interactional control and the ethos of the material. These tools aim to underline how text treats social events, constructing particular versions of identities, relations and perceived realities (ibid, p.83).

Concerning the grammatical structure of communication, *transitivity* refers to the ways in which processes are connected with objects and subjects, generating ideological consequences. Transitivity creates agency and thus, may reproduce a narrative which connects certain subjects to particular events or, alternatively, portrays something to occur naturally. Furthermore, the analysis of *modalities* aims to investigate what level of affinity producers express themselves with. By using categorical and objective modalities, rather than subjective ones, producers reinforce and reflect authority over a particular event (ibid, p.83-84). According to Fairclough, truth stands “*in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces, and which extend it.*” (Fairclough, 1992, p.49). Authors might articulate statements with a certain degree of inclination, expressing claims as indisputable facts, whereas hold less certainty (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008, p.83). Orientalism can be seen in relation to, and materializes in, textual features expressing certain behaviors of non-western actors as abnormal or subordinate to the Western view, presented as objective and common knowledge.

4.2.2 Discursive practices

The second dimension targets the process in which a text is produced and consumed, operating as a mediator between the linguistic and social dimension. With a particular interest in the relationship between interaction and text, it focuses on how authors of communication draw upon historical events, pre-existing genres and discourses when producing a particular text. Texts are shaped by, and shape, social practices, through the production and consumption of texts (ibid, p.68).

The primary analytical tool for this is *interdiscursivity*, concerned with the ways discourses and genres are articulated together. This points to whether discursive practices incorporate a mixture of genres and discourses in novel or conventional, and normative, ways. By investigating the level of interdiscursivity, one can analyze the level of change or reproduction. These tools aim to account for how texts may draw on existing orders of discourse, reproducing oppressive structures of power. Additionally, *intertextuality* refers to the way in which a communicative event draws on earlier events, by e.g; citing previous texts. Intertextuality indicates the level of historical influence, and generally, high levels of intertextuality indicates limited possibilities for change within a discursive, and social, order (ibid, p.73-74).

In relation to Orientalism, the degree of interdiscursivity and intertextuality hold the possibility of playing a significant role in the reproduction of a stereotypical and demeaning image, associating the Orient with cruelty, or in this case; environmentally destructive practices (Said, 2003, p.317). Conversely, interdiscursivity may point to tendencies of change, identifying contrasting patterns of green colonialism.

4.2.3 Social practices

The third dimension accounts for the social context of which the discursive is part, including an investigation of the relationship between discursive practices and the order of discourse, as well as what socioeconomic and institutional conditions the discourse is contingent on. This is referred to as the *social matrix*. Does the discursive practice change or reproduce an existing order of discourse and what are the implications for the social practice? Through the analysis of the relationship between the wider sociocultural and discursive practices, CDA reaches its terminating conclusions, which requires the transdisciplinary integration of

additional theories. Consequently, the analysis will draw on Orientalist theory, aiming to unravel questions surrounding relations of power, ideology and opportunities for change (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008, p.86-88). The employment of macro-sociological tradition adds considerations about how structures of power may shape social practices without people's awareness, creating an understanding of how a rule-bound world in everyday practices is created actively, by people (ibid, p.66).

Orientalism fills its most significant purpose in the third dimension, based on a Foucauldian conceptualization of power-knowledge, in which orientalist expertise and the colonial West is significantly attached. Orientalism risks serving the maintenance of asymmetrical relations of power between the subject Orient and the West (Said, 2003, p.19-20).

Departing from Orientalist theory, a colonial discourse would present Western expertise as "common knowledge," contrasting it with alternative claims and perpetuating an unequal relationship between Western and non-Western actors (Said, 2003). While a text may appear inclusive, social practices may continue to reflect deep inequalities rooted in the social reality. A green colonialist discourse, would focus on repairing ecosystems but often excludes local populations from resources under the guise of environmental protection. Both discourses may share similarities, but the difference would lie in the environmental objectives of the latter, aiming to change resource access to expand protected areas and halt destructive practices. Green colonialism mirrors colonial resource alienation, portraying local peasants as environmental destroyers (Fairhead et al., 2012). Furthermore, the analysis will examine how local inhabitants and the Ethiopian Authorities are represented in derogatory ways (UIA, 2023), seeking to identify these characteristics and their extent. The following research design will be applied;

<p>1) Textual features</p>	<p>Modality; Are statements presented as indisputable facts or with a sense of uncertainty?</p> <p>Transitivity; What or whom is linked to the degradation of the park? Who is portrayed to hold the solution?</p> <p>Does the text involve language aligning with <i>Orientalism</i>, portraying certain people in a subordinate position to Western expertise?</p>
<p>2) Discursive practices</p>	<p>Intertextuality; Does the material draw on previous discourses, articulated in conventional ways or not?</p> <p>Interdiscursivity; What does the interdiscursive mixture look like? To what extent can alternative patterns be identified that are neither conventional nor green colonialist?</p> <p>Discourse representation; Whose description is predominantly portrayed? How are utterances contextualized?</p>
<p>3) Social practices</p>	<p>Order of discourse; Do the counter-discourses challenge the current order of discourse or do the texts reproduce green colonialist or alternative discourses?</p> <p>The social matrix; What are the ideological effects?</p> <p><i>Voluntary</i> resettlement; How is this portrayed? What are the social implications?</p>

4.3 Material

The material underpinning the analysis, will be collected from official documents of the World Heritage Committee. More specifically, the analysis will interrogate particular sections of the conservation outlook of SMNP during the 41st (2017) and 42nd (2018) convention concerning the protection of World Heritage Sites. The reports by UNESCO include annual reviews from the Committee on the state of conservation of World Heritage properties. The reviews concern monitoring procedures and expert missions, requested by the Committee. Accordingly, language use and discourses, used by official staff members, will be investigated to provide the reader with a summarized view of the texts as a whole. The use of quotations aims to exemplify the contexts in which the material has been written. Additionally, it aims to highlight the underlying discursive dimensions of each text, exemplifying particular positions. Moreover, an external source; the Ethiopian Wildlife

Conservation Authority's (EWCA) report on the state of the property (2018), will be investigated. The text is a response to the Committee's decision in 2017. The document, and actors, have been chosen due to UNESCO's involvement in the creation of the SMNP, alongside their influence within present-day environmental protection. The relevance of bringing in an external source is motivated by the need to investigate events of communication in which UNESCO is not the consignor, and the responsibility held by the EWCA in the implementation of conservation activities in Ethiopia.

4.4 Methodological reflections

The principal epistemological tension between Fairclough and Said is that the latter largely follows a constructivist route, while many view Fairclough as a post-structuralist. Both emphasize the interrelation between discursive structures and individual cognition via discursive practices and intersubjective communication. However, they differ in their particular interpretations of agency within discourse. While the Foucauldian conception of discourse, in which Said is positioned, places notable emphasis on how subjects are created by discursive structures, CDA places focus on the possibilities of individual agents of creating discursive structures. CDA is concerned with how discursive mechanisms determine people's perceptions of reality and how this may reinforce, or change, unequal relations of power within social contexts. Thus, while Said emphasizes the constraints on the possibilities of actors to transform a particular discourse, Fairclough, although emphasizing the structural dimension of discourses, is rather concerned with the possibilities of influencing, and, thus, changing the discourse (Leipold & Winkel, 2016, p.7-9).

Postcolonial theory adds to CDA, indicating the clear direction underpinning this study; to critically examine the potential characteristics of green colonialism within reports around nature conservation. Constructivists are interested in the normativity of spoken words, whereas poststructuralists concentrate more intensively on written texts and discourse (Pouliot, 2004). Nonetheless, in spite of their tensions, they complement one another well with the aim of investigating how language might uphold particular structures of power (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips, 2008, p.86).

4.5 Limitations

This study does not aim to contribute to a narrative in which people in the Southern hemisphere are portrayed as victims. Nor does it aim to speak for inhabitants within SMNP. Rather, it seeks to investigate whether UNESCO, as an influential organization, reproduces colonial discourses in their use of language. As an author in a Western context, I run the risk of unwillingly contributing to a narrative in which people in the Southern hemisphere are portrayed as victims. Accordingly, I encourage future researchers to involve those affected by conservation practices and take their experiences into account. Neither does this study aim to belittle the work conducted by UNESCO, playing an active role in the battle of environmental challenges. Environmental issues are urgent and require the protection of endangered areas. I am convinced that these actors are dedicated to do good for the planet, people and future generations. However, conservation activities might build on historical continuities inflicting unequal burdens across the globe. Consequently, there is a need to unravel the underlying tensions in order to achieve improvement for each party involved, whether this be local communities, international organizations or the environment itself.

Finally, this study investigates one contextual setting of potential green colonialism. There are a variety of mechanisms through which the phenomenon operates. However, as this research seeks to thoroughly analyze discourses, a case study will allow for a deeper understanding, which would not have been possible if several cases, and actors, were involved due to the time frame of this study.

5. Empirical Analysis

5.1 Textual analysis

Modalities, referring to how producers commit or distance themselves from particular representations of reality, generates consequences in terms of how knowledge and social relations are constructed through discourse;

“The voluntary resettlement of the Gich community reduces the unsustainable agricultural and grazing pressure on a centrally located and particularly valuable area within the property.” (UNESCO, 2017, p.3).

The quote aims to exemplify the presence of *truth* as a modality within several statements of UNESCO. By articulating claims with a high level of certainty, when referring to the environmental impingement of the park, the linkage between human activity and environmental degradation is presented as an incontestable and causal fact. Furthermore, the wording *voluntary* depicts the scenario as a harmonic one.

Another variety of modality present in the material is the notion of permission, which generates particular constructions of social relations. At intervals, UNESCO presents their advice with a sense of permission and conditionality, in which they grant the EWCA consent to take a particular action, illustrated with the following quote;

“Key objectives of management should continue to focus on effective reduction of overgrazing, while promoting alternative livelihoods and meaningful local participation in management and governance, along with tourism management.”
(UNESCO, 2018, p.193).

Similar tendencies can be identified within the foregoing report, in which UNESCO states that the EWCA holds a “clear opportunity” to address the concerns presented by the institution (UNESCO, 2017, p.3). By stating the desired and *corrective* measures, UNESCO asserts their authority, granting the EWCA permission to act a certain way, rather than another. Partly, UNESCO intervenes into the identity of the Ethiopian State, while simultaneously expressing how local communities ideally should live in order to sympathize with the convention. The EWCA repeatedly confirms their efforts to implement the advice, stated by UNESCO in the foregoing report;

“The Ethiopian government is fully committed to protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. All of the recommendations of the 2017 Reactive Monitoring Mission and requests of the World Heritage Committee are being implemented and considered in the plan of the national park and our development partners working in Simien Mountains National Park.” (EWCA, 2018, Executive summary).

The employment of modalities change slightly when UNESCO is referring to the estimation of wildlife numbers, and more generally; progress stemming from hitherto conservation efforts. While the EWCA utilizes high levels of certainty and assurance when referring to the

estimations of rare species in the park UNESCO does not present the estimations with the equivalent certitude;

“Notes the possible increase in Walia ibex and Ethiopian wolf populations and requests(...) there appears to be an encouraging indication on increasing or at least stable populations(...).” (UNESCO, 2017, p.2-3).

The affluent biodiversity constitutes the backbone of conservation within SMNP, justifying the corresponding measures. Overall, UNESCO deploys a hesitant tone concerning estimations of *inter alia*; the Walia Ibex, whereas the EWCA use ensuring formulations;

“Research and monitoring on the populations of Walia ibex and other endemic species have shown significant increment.” (EWCA, 2018, Executive Summary).

With respect to the *transitivity* of the reports, referring to the linkage between subjects and objects to particular events, UNESCO frequently associates the environmental degradation of the park with agriculture, livestock and human activity;

“The overarching challenge for the relatively small property arises due to the growing human population living in its immediate vicinity and to a lesser extent within it, and relying on the property’s natural resources(...).” (UNESCO, 2017, p.3).

The equivalent tendency can be identified in the responsive report of the EWCA, and on the contrary, the EWCA associates progressive consequences of conservation efforts, including the eviction of human inhabitants, with their own efforts;;

“Although the impacts are not very well known it is evident that the prevailed anthropogenic activities cultivation, heavy domestic grazing is among the threats which affects the population of the gelada in the SMNP. In the recent decades due to the relentless effort made by government and development partners to reduce human activities and further expansion of the SMNP boundaries the situation has become more conducive for the gelada population.” (EWCA, 2018, p.15).

The solid efforts by the EWCA, are similarly conceived, although not as praised, by UNESCO;

“While appreciating progress made, continued efforts are required to secure effective management and conservation of the property’s Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), guided by the Committee’s requests and the recommendations of the 2017 Reactive Monitoring mission.” (UNESCO, 2018, p.193).

Generally, UNESCO articulates their claims in a formal, impersonal and institutional manner. Their perspective is predominantly portrayed and their authority over the event appears to be asserted through the use of high affinity modalities, including instances of subordinate and assistant clauses, such as *“should”* and *“compliance”*. This includes their relationship with the EWCA, alongside the portrayal of local inhabitants. However, advice within the material is not phrased as binding obligations, opening up for a somewhat more equal and conversational relationship.

Altogether, the texts portray the local inhabitants of SMNP in a pessimistic manner. The presence of notions of otherness stems from the way in which information on the “other”, including the EWCA and the local inhabitants, is expressed with a sense of power-related classifications, and to some extent; imaginations. While optimistic attributes are associated with either institution, or portrayed to happen objectively, several negative events are attached to the human presence within the park, and in particular; the village of Gich. This risks perpetuating a derogatory representation of the human population as the indisputable assailants of nature, responsible for its urgent state. Consequently, their resettlement appears inescapable.

5.2 Discursive practices

The analysis of *intertextuality* elucidates whether a text draws on genres, events and discourses from pre-existing events. The report of UNESCO repeatedly refers to previous reports and monitoring missions, issued by themselves or adjacent partner organizations. The reports are part of an intertextual chain concerning the conservation outlook of all World Heritage Sites;

“(..) In order to assess the potential impacts on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property as requested by the Committee in Decision 40 COM 7A.43.” (UNESCO, 2017, p.4).

UNESCO refers to previous assessments on several occasions, concerning factors affecting the environmental state of SMNP. This includes risks associated with; declining populations of species, tourism, human wildlife contact and land degradation caused by livestock overgrazing. There are similar instances of latent intertextuality in the 42nd report;

“ Recalling Decision 41 COM 7A.13, and that no new lodges are foreseen in the current GMP and that they are prohibited in national parks according to Regulations No. 163/2008, it is recommended that the Committee request the State Party to ensure that all new lodge developments are located outside the boundary of the National Park and that EIAs for these projects are submitted to the World Heritage Centre for review.” (UNESCO, 2018, p.193).

Due to its responsive character, the report of the EWCA incorporate both manifest and latent intertextuality;

“As noted in the state report of the 40th and 41st sessions of the World Heritage committee long term partnership had already been in place between EWCA and AWF for the management of SMNP.” (EWCA, 2018, p.21).

The historical influence on each text indicates that the producers articulate their statements in conventional ways. Albeit not as evidently, the EWCA repeatedly draws on foregoing reports from UNESCO. However, there are patterns of novel genres and discourses emerging in the texts, possibly transforming the established order of discourse. Apropos interdiscursivity, the 41st report contains a moderate interdiscursive mixture of competing discourses;

“The State Party has made considerable progress in responding to Committee requests but further efforts are needed to reduce overgrazing, better manage tourism and infrastructures and promote alternative livelihoods(...)reports the State Party’s strong commitment and management responses at all governmental levels. Zonation and user agreements defining rights and responsibilities for local subsistence use of natural resources are among the promising instruments in making further progress to address overgrazing while supporting livelihoods, as proposed by the Grazing Pressure Reduction Strategy.” (UNESCO, 2017, p.3).

The reports of UNESCO primarily include institutionalist and environmental management discourses, or patterns thereof. Furthermore, there are characteristics of a technocratic discourse, an environmental justice discourse and lastly; colonial and green colonialist discourses. The employment of an institutionalist discourse stems from the notion that the producers represent the institution, and claims are largely determined by the framework of UNESCO (Mayr, 2015). Additionally, there are tendencies of what can be referred to as a “group quality discourse”, in which UNESCO emphasizes their appreciation towards the dedication of the EWCA;

“The high-level celebration organized to mark the removal of the property from the List of World Heritage in Danger and the anniversary of the national park constitutes an impressive re-affirmation, on the part of the Ethiopian authorities, of the iconic status of the Simien Mountains and the Walia ibex in Ethiopia. “
(UNESCO, 2018, p.193).

The EWCA expresses their consideration of the advice offered by UNESCO, concerning how to manage issues of overgrazing, alternative livelihoods and further. Comparatively, UNESCO states their appreciation for the solid response, pointing to an indication of a discourse built on a collaborative and increasingly equality-based agenda. Simultaneously, they emphasize that further efforts are needed. Yet, UNESCO does not acknowledge the human inhabitants within the park, and their endeavors nor part in the progress on many occasions. Contrarily, the EWCA intermittently mentions local communities, celebrating the re-inscription of SMNP as a World Heritage Site. By including the human population into the salute, the EWCA acknowledges the sacrifices of many people in the salvation of the natural state of the park, as investors of the environment;

“The removal of the SMNP from the World Heritage endangered list is a great reward and message to the local communities who contributed a lot for the natural resources conservation.” (EWCA, 2018, p.7).

Predictably, each report holds characteristics of a technocratic discourse, in which each institution presents claims with an underlying belief that decisions concerning environmental policies benefit from being ushered by technical and scientific expertise (Machin & Smith, 2014). Overall, statements are based on their environmental implications, alongside the notion that external interventions will solve global environmental challenges. Consequently,

UNESCO's expertise is presented as an essential part of the salvation of natural places across the globe, rhyming well with the transboundary nature of environmental challenges and their international recognition. Being part of an environmental management discourse, not exceptional to SMNP, each report ground their claims on ecological considerations. Albeit the presence of more conventional discourse, there are emerging counter-discourses in each report, creating an interdiscursive mixture;

“Acknowledging the challenges surrounding the relocation of the Gich community, the KfW-funded efforts to fulfill all commitments, including implementing the livelihood restoration strategy and programme, should be continued, taking care to apply the highest standards, especially in support of vulnerable households and individuals.” (UNESCO, 2018, p.193).

Each report holds characteristics of an environmental justice discourse, referring to concerns addressing injustices on marginalized groups, brought by environmentalism (Martin et al., 2013, p.122). UNESCO frequently emphasize the importance of ensuring that resettled inhabitants are compensated, aligning with notions of distributive justice, whereas the EWCA, more distinctly stress the inclusion of local stakeholders, into the implementation and design of conservation activities;

“As all the corrective measures addressed in SMNP affects the livelihood of the local communities it was achieved with their full involvement and decisions. Consultation with community leaders and community members in all activities of the national park will be continued as it is also constitutional and supported by the country legal frameworks of development.” (EWCA, 2018, p.25).

An environmental justice discourse aligns with the increasing emphasis on community-based participation. However, an emphasis on compensation places focus on distributive justice rather than justice-as-recognition, crucial for diversity indistinguishably connected to biological diversity. There are lucid tensions arising between social and environmental values, and compensation as a remedy may reinforce structural mechanisms of injustices, rather than adequately addressing them. Without recognition, conservation efforts run the risk of assimilating possible recipients to dominant ways of functioning and valuing nature. Moreover, the notion of conditionality may decrease opportunities for autonomy, perpetuating injustices due to lack of recognition (Martin et al., 2013, p.122-124). Accordingly, while there is a promotion of justice, present in the reports, the inadequacy of

sensitivity in terms of justice-as-recognition appears present. Nonetheless, there are indications of a shift between the two reports of UNESCO, illustrated with the following statement;

“Key objectives of management should continue to focus on effective reduction of overgrazing, while promoting alternative livelihoods and meaningful local participation in management and governance, along with tourism management.”
(UNESCO, 2018, p.193).

With respect to the interdiscursivity, the reports of UNESCO hold moderate levels of interdiscursivity, conventionally characterized discourses appear dominant, permeating large amounts of the depiction concerning environmental damage within the park, human activity, and the salvation of its natural value. However, there are tendencies towards more equity-oriented discourses. The implications for, and the presence of a potential colonial, and in particular; green colonialist discourse, will be elaborated upon through the lens of Orientalist theory in the following section.

5.3 Sociocultural practices

The third dimension focuses on the generic ramifications of the social matrix, of which the communicative event is part. Accordingly, the material will be discussed in relation to Orientalism with the purpose of accounting for whether the ideological consequences, yielded by discursive practices, sustain or transform characteristics of green colonialism.

The order of discourse, referring to the composition of all discourse types, i.e; genres and discourses used within a social domain, delimits what can be said. The aforementioned analysis pointed to a moderate interdiscursive mixture within the material. Altogether, UNESCO articulates their statements in conventional ways, drawing on an institutionalist and environmentalist management discourse. Similarly, the reports draw on previous events, indicating the historical influence on each text. Nonetheless, the identification of more equity-oriented articulations, including an environmental justice discourse, *vis-a-vis* the dominant discourses, point to a challenge of the established order of discourse. However, discursive relations are scenes of conflict, and although one discourse may not be fully controlling society, this does not entail an equality between all discourses (Winther-Jørgensen & Phillips 2008, p. 74-75).

Notwithstanding this shift, towards an increasingly significant emphasis on compensation and community-participation, UNESCO's portrayal of the property, focused with its conservation outlook, is predominantly portrayed. These contradictions involve tensions stemming from centuries of economic inequalities, divergent ways of valuing nature and colonial exploitation. By portraying advice in terms of general knowledge, UNESCO bolster their authority over the order of discourse. The claims of the institution form departure, informing the EWCA on what *needs* to be done in order to uphold the natural value of the park. Ultimately, a significant amount of power appears to lie with UNESCO and it can be concluded that the established discursive and social order is largely sustained.

The presence of a colonial discourse and subsequently; a green colonialist discourse, stems from the fact that several statements in the material hold Orientalist tendencies. This is particularly the case when the reports maintain the dominant order of discourse and social order, stemming from Western hegemony over the Orient throughout history. Altogether, the characteristics of a colonial discourse in the material stems from the presence of binary, and partly superior, depictions. Occasionally, UNESCO portrays themselves as an antipolar to on the one hand, the EWCA and on the other; local inhabitants within the park. This exemplifies stereotypical representations of the Orient (Said, 2003, p.50-52). An asymmetrical power-dynamic enters the surface in the comparison of the reports. UNESCO dictates the terms of the debates, while the EWCA reassures the institution;

“The Ethiopian government is fully committed to protecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. All of the recommendations of the 2017 Reactive Monitoring Mission and requests of the World Heritage Committee are being implemented and considered in the plan of the national park and our development partners working in Simien Mountains National Park .“ (EWCA, 2018, p.5).

UNESCO's perception of the natural value of SMNP, which is a Western one, appears dominant. The international recognition, and financial aid, following an inscription to the World Heritage list, entails an asymmetry of power in which UNESCO steers the direction of the EWCA, who emphasizes their efforts to implement the requested measures. Thus, the latter express their efforts in a sense of seeking verification, restricted by moral judgments and codes of the Western expert. Occasionally, advisory statements are presented as sole legitimate actions, alongside terms of subjugation, which risks sustaining an already unequal relationship between the parties;

“ (...). *It is therefore recommended that the Committee encourage the State Party to take advantage of these two pending processes in an effort to refine the evolving policy and management framework along with a realistic and fundable implementation plan.*” (UNESCO, 2017, p.4).

The notion of a colonial discourse emerges through the depiction of Western expertise and knowledge standing in contrast to some of the EWCA's efforts and priorities, alongside local inhabitants within the park. This places the Ethiopian authorities in a subordinate position to the expertise of UNESCO. While UNESCO portray themselves as a rational expert, setting the corrective measures of the debate, alternative parties are depicted as counterparts to their “ universal truth”, thus, making an alternative interpretation unreasonable. Furthermore, the notion of a green colonialist discourse stems from the way in which claims are justified by the fact that ecological considerations constitute the core agendas, aiming to repair the natural state of the park. This includes an exclusionary philosophy towards local inhabitants of the park, portrayed to endanger its natural value. Notwithstanding the scientific grounds that several claims rest on, the lack of divergence from tendencies of green colonialism point to the sustenance of inequities of the past.

Equivalently, the EWCA, although emphasizing meaningful local participation, produces linguistic representations of local communities as the indisputable cause of the environmental deterioration, and likewise; their resettlement alongside external efforts, as the solution. UNESCO, and the EWCA repeatedly associate the environmental degradation of the park with human presence, which is one principal characteristic of a green colonialist discourse, in which local peasants are portrayed as environmental destroyers in a derogatory manner. Consequently, the resettlement of local communities, portrayed to be the destructive force of the *Outstanding Universal Value* of the property, appears reasonable. Thus, under the guise of environmental protection, the eviction and sacrifices of local inhabitants are justified, and to some extent, nature is given primacy over the social equality of the inhabitants of the park.

Regarding social implications, both institutions repeatedly use the word *voluntary* linked to the resettlement of the village of Gich, previously located within the park. Commonly, UNESCO is distant from local inhabitants. Additionally, environmental management tends to move dynamically on a local scale, experiencing alternative manifestations of livelihoods commandments and environmental change (Adger et al., 2003). A significant amount of focus is placed on upholding the natural value of the park, excluding practices of people who

have lived there for centuries. The notion of exclusionary conservation rhymes with a fabricated image of a naturalized Africa. Overall, the reports of UNESCO, albeit acknowledging the efforts by people within the park, depict a gloom-ridden image of local agriculture. With the tenets of Orientalism in mind, this may contribute to the perpetuation of otherness, and the natural value of the property is given primacy above the social equality of people who have sacrificed considerably much in favor of a World Heritage property.

Altogether, the dominant discourses appear to reproduce characteristics of green colonialism, albeit challenging forces of more equity-focused discourses. With the stereotypical representations and ideological consequences in mind, the discursive depiction of the phenomenon appear to work hegemonically, in which UNESCO asserts their power over the situation, and the people, by integrating groups of people through “consent”, making the articulation of orders of discourse corresponding to the hegemonic struggle. The characteristics of a green colonialist discourse, generating ideological consequences, may perpetuate an already unequal relationship between, on the one hand; UNESCO and the EWCA, and on the other; each institution and the local population of SMNP. Accordingly, the texts reinforce systems of domination and sustain unequal power relations, through the use of language. By articulating claims with objective modalities, associating negative processes with local inhabitants, UNESCO reproduces stereotypical images of a destructive and irrational other, in contrast to the rational expert, while legitimizing further conservation efforts.

6. Main findings

The analysis indicated that UNESCO, in their perception of SMNP, reproduce characteristics of a green colonialist discourse, although challenged by alternative discourses. Generally, they articulate claims in conventional ways, referring to foregoing reports. Primarily, UNESCO employs an institutionalist and environmental management discourse which appear to dominate large portions of the reports. On the contrary, the analysis targeting interdiscursivity indicated the presence of more equity-oriented features, including the notion of an environmental justice discourse. Nevertheless, albeit counter-hegemonic tendencies, the ideological consequences appear to reproduce patterns of otherness and subsequently; green colonialism.

Although neither the Ethiopian State nor local communities are excluded from the reports, they are intermittently associated with negative and stereotypical depictions. Utterances are phrased in a sense which portrays the EWCA, with the involvement of local populations, as less proficient in their management of the property, and thus, in need of the expertise of UNESCO. Throughout history, global environmental politics has hierarchically fashioned Western expertise as a reasonable standard, which continuously appears to be the case, as several statements are presented as “ general knowledge”. UNESCO repeatedly emphasizes that if the corrective measures, set by them, are not implemented, the property risks being degraded to the list of World Heritage in Danger, once again, which is significantly less prestigious.

Notwithstanding the scientific and empirical foundations that several statements are based on, the notion of nature being granted primacy over the social equality of the inhabitants of the park appears problematic. Rather than expressing salient forms of otherization, the language conveys more discrete, or perhaps unconscious, tendencies of colonial depictions, motivated by environmental ends. Orientalism, relying upon the precipitous egoistic power of the European consciousness, portrays the Orient as a vision; a *tableau vivant* (Said, 2003, p.158). The reports repeatedly emphasize *Outstanding Universal Value* of the park, tightly connected to the biodiversity of the property, never the people. This deviates from UNESCO's depiction of several European natural sites, in which they explicitly connect the value of the sites with various traditional agro-pastoral methods (UNESCO, 2023d). These exoticizing features and the portrayal of human inhabitants according to derogatory depictions highlight colonial, discursive, continuities within the material.

Conducting interviews with previous inhabitants of Gich, Blanc (2022) concluded that conservation efforts in SMNP remain significantly authoritarian, despite the pledge to involve local communities. The Ethiopian Government continues to exert power over their local populations, on the advice of UNESCO, and since resettlement, many people have become increasingly poor (Blanc, 2022, p.160-161). The creation of national parks risks aggravating poverty, and regardless of compensation, displacement could bring loss of identity, disappearance of mutual aid networks, increased poverty and further for resettled populations. Additionally, developmental policies may fail to account for non-material consequences. Accordingly, compensation might be structurally inadequate to restore livelihoods to where they would be in the absence of displacement (Cernea, 2003).

The colonialist characteristics within the material, deeply embedded in operations of power, yield significant social consequences, particularly when presented as objective depictions. Notwithstanding novel conceptualizations, the notion of conservation continues to be connected to land being disclosed from its prior users, in favor of nature. As stated, this points to historical continuities, in which green ends are used to justify resource alienation. By constructing local peasants as environmental destroyers, it appears as if scientific claims and a discursive gaze justifies these processes further.

7. Conclusion

This study, aiming to query the discursive aspects of nature conservation, alongside the role of different actors, attempted to respond to the following question; *To what extent does UNESCO's perspective on SMNP reproduce green colonialism?* The objective was to investigate the relationship between discursive and social practices, to interrogate the materialization of potential green colonialist discourses in the context of SMNP.

It can be concluded that there are complex tensions between social equality and environmental protection, permeating the discursive dimension of nature conservation. In all certainty, UNESCO aims to ensure capacities to manage environmental challenges, sustainably and effectively. Additionally, the EWCA performs important tasks in the protection of ecosystems. However, without belittling their work nor the seriousness of issues stemming from environmental deterioration, these processes still occur at the expense of the social equality of local inhabitants occasionally. National governments, alongside expert institutions, may exert their power and influence over their populations, and generally, the people who live through the consequences of conservation efforts hold relatively small opportunities to change the terms of the debate.

The critical examination of the material demonstrated the existence of a wide range of competing discourses. The dominant discourses, employed by UNESCO, included institutionalists and environmental management characteristics, alongside counter-discourses including tendencies of an environmental justice discourse. In addition, it was concluded that the patterns of Otherness and more specifically; colonial features, permeates the reports. Said's framework highlighted how UNESCO, as a Western actor, asserts their positional superiority through various linguistic representations and discursive practices. Western actors

hold large amounts of economic and political power, controlling the normative framework of global institutions.

A green colonialist discourse materializes in the language through the depiction of certain behavior as abnormal or subordinate to the Western view. UNESCO dictates the terms of the debate, and asserts authority over their relationship with the EWCA. Simultaneously, UNESCO and the EWCA maintain authority and power over the local inhabitants of SMNP by pointing to the “blatant” linkage between their practices and the urgent state of the park. Due to the dialectical relationship between discursive and social practices, this risks perpetuating stereotypical representations of local peasants as environmental destroyers, and thus; sustain unequal relationships, motivated by green ends. Although governed by versions of truism, the notion of a human-free nature, remains intact within contemporary discourses underpinning conservation in SMNP. Simultaneously, ecotourism grows in frequency, which brings paradoxical notions of who is losing and who is winning in the conservation of the property (Gilbert, 2004).

To conclude, UNESCO's perspective on SMNP aligns with some tenets of green colonialism. The selected material reproduces green colonialism due to the stereotypical representation of the linkage between human presence and the environmental degradation within the park. Broadly, following the narrative of green colonialism throughout history, a derogatory representation of local peasants legitimize their criminalisation and resettlement in favor of the environment. The notion of Outstanding Universal Value of SMNP is praised due to its biodiversity and landscape, never the people. Simultaneously, the institution asserts their power over the Ethiopian State, dictating the terms of the debate. This does not entail that UNESCO should quit embarking upon a transition to sustainable societies. However, there is a need for increasing attention towards the rights of local communities, currently excluded from resources and land. Local inhabitants probably hold extensive amounts of knowledge regarding areas targeted within conservation efforts, and should be increasingly involved in the sustainable future UNESCO is aiming to create.

The social implications of this constellation of discourse, for the local communities in SMNP, appears to be a reality in which colonial continuities continue to yield alienating consequences, perpetuating the subjugation of non-Western people. Green Colonialism appears more pervasive than people may realize.

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