A visit to Conservationland: contextualizing conservation practitioners within global environmental governance

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Abstract

Earth is currently experiencing its sixth wave of mass extinction: loss of biodiversity. The ongoing efforts of global environmental governance bodies to protect, conserve, and sustainably use biodiversity have materialized into diverse bodies of literature within the disciplines of international relations and political science. This body of scholarly work, however, has largely neglected to investigate the role of the conservation practitioners charged with translating abstract global biodiversity targets into practice.

I employ a qualitative approach situated within 'Conservationland' to illuminate the space conservation practitioners occupy within the wider global environmental governance frame. To do so, I present a case study of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) – the overarching biodiversity convention – and explore the personal views of 'Conservationland' citizens, including conservation practitioners across national, regional, and international levels. The case study is supported with empirical data from semi-structured elite interviews and participant observation conducted at two global conferences of the CBD during 2018.

The research investigates two research questions: first, what are some of the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland? And second, to what extent are these themes reflected in the personal views of conservation practitioners? To address the first research question, I highlight and conceptualize three themes which I argue are central aspects to situating the citizens of 'Conservationland' into GEG: international institutionalized norms, depoliticization, and neoliberalization of nature. Then, to address my second research question, I examine and analyze the extent to which these three themes are present in the personal views of conservation practitioners. Key findings from my qualitative thematic analysis highlight that, when given the opportunity, these professionals view working with other people – especially others committed and motivated to the same cause – as a key driver and source of job satisfaction. In the discussion, I argue that the personal and individual aspects and the accompanying views of conservation practitioners ought to be better considered in the literature on global environmental governance, as these actors play a significant role in shaping and implementing global conservation governance ambitions.

Author's note

I have made the conscious choice to use gender-neutral language where possible. Therefore, I use they/them pronouns consistently throughout this thesis.

Acknowledgements

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List of acronyms

CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of Parties
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEG	Global Environmental Governance
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAGCOT	Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania
SBI	Subsidiary Body on Implementation
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SPREP	Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
TEEB	The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED	UN Conference on the Environment and Development
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WCMC	World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WCS	World Conservation Strategy
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

1. Introduction

"If we want to reach our living in harmony with nature by 2050, we have to put this people and planet together because I really do believe that being the dominant species, we have a moral obligation to the rest of the 99.999% of the species. And how do you do that? And on the other hand, if you don't do it, the planet will take care of us as humans and the planet will continue. But, we, as a species will not continue." (International civil servant, ICS17)

This thesis examines the practices of Global Environmental Governance (GEG) within the context of the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The inquiry is focused on a group of stakeholders who work towards meeting the obligations of the CBD, whether as international or regional 'technical' support staff or as national level public servants. In doing so, this thesis seeks to contribute to building a better understanding of the personal motivations and views of the seemingly 'invisible' actors behind biodiversity policy and implementation. I argue that the personal views of conservation practitioners' matter because despite their perceived invisibility, these actors shape how conservation is realized in practice.

Though the themes this thesis examines arise from anthropological research, I explore them using the lens and methodological approaches of political sciences. By focusing on one particular group of people, conservation practitioners, in a particular context, global biodiversity and its governance, at a particular space, the Convention on Biological Diversity's conferences, this thesis materializes clearly as an ethnography in political science, grounded in a case study on biodiversity conservation professionals. This ethnographic research builds on a qualitative approach, operationalized in practice using the methods of elite interviews and participant observation within the case study of the CBD. I conducted interpretive thematic analysis of the interview transcripts and participant observation field notes to provide insight on my two research questions.

'Conservationland' – a land in which people in the conservation sector live – is used metaphorically to encourage viewing conservation professionals as a distinct population (Kiik, 2019). Though Kiik introduces the metaphor of Conservationland, they provide only a shallow description of what Conservationland is, and do not specify the boundaries of the population. As the title suggests, this thesis borrows the headline term of Conservationland from Kiik's article and builds a justification for why viewing this group of conservation practitioners as a distinct population is necessary within the frame of global environmental governance.

While a robust body of research has explored conservation by socio-cultural anthropologists and human geographers (e.g., Larsen & Brockington, 2018), the emphasis has typically been placed on those at the 'receiving end' of conservation projects (i.e., the local communities, their responses, reactions, readjustments to the changes that conservation projects imposed on them from the outside). In anthropological works on global nature conservation, Kiik (2019) asks, "Where are the conservationists?" Scholarly attention has neglected to probe the motivations and personal views of conservation professionals

who are involved in the initiation, development, finding and applying for funding, and to a degree, implementation and evaluation processes of these conservation projects.

As a researcher who also identifies as a conservation practitioner, I have been puzzled by the lack of representation of conservation practitioners and their personal views within the literature. This, I believe, has in and of itself been a source of depoliticization within the industry – which on the surface appears to be dominated by scientific and neutral discourses surrounding biodiversity – and has consequently sparked my interest to further investigate the topic. Thus, the aim of this research is to shed light on the inner workings of mainstream biodiversity governance by focusing on the personal views and motivations of conservation professionals and explore depoliticization in action.

In order to do so, my objective is to first bridge together three independent, yet closely related and relevant literatures that touch on some of the key structural and ideological themes of the conservation industry. The choice of these literatures has been informed by my experiences as a practitioner in the industry as well as by a review of academic and grey literatures at large. The second objective, then, is to explore the views of conservation practitioners about their jobs, to better understand the mindset of those involved in the process of support provision towards international obligations within the frame of national, regional, and international biodiversity governance. I then use these views as a lens through which to learn about the dynamics of biodiversity governance. Each of these objectives has a research question dedicated to help meet the objective. These are elaborated in section 1.3. below.

In this MPhil, I visit 'Conservationland' to examine such conservation practitioners. Contextualizing and analyzing how conservation practitioners' view their work within the theorized structure of global environmental governance helps us to understand the actors who shape and deliver global conservation. In this qualitative study on 'Conservationland', I demonstrate how international civil servant conservation practitioners are motivated by people-centric and anthropogenic reasons rather than by directly "saving nature," as is commonly assumed. While conservation practitioners work in a technical sector, evidence presented in this MPhil demonstrates how people-centric work is a key driver in work motivation.

Though previously misrepresented as homogenous and impersonal (Kiik, 2019), I argue that when examining the personal views of conservation practitioners, a diverse and multifaceted group of individuals is revealed. While working in a sector often deemed depoliticized, managerial and technical (Chua et al., 2020; Toussaint, 2005), it turns out that the practitioners in conservation are anything but. Though their attitudes towards their work at times came across as depoliticized, when interviewing these professionals, it became apparent that in Conservationland, in particular international civil servant type conservationists are driven by a strong sense of purpose and working with people.

1.1. Defining key concepts

A key objective of this thesis is to contextualize Conservationland within the frame of global environmental governance. To achieve this objective, I apply the key concepts of depoliticization and neoliberalization of nature, and use the 'institutionalization-implementation gap' framework developed by Betts and Orchard (2014) in order to zoom into a more defined area of work in Conservationland: the implementation of institutionalized norms. In doing so, this thesis examines how the views of individual Conservationland citizens – conservation practitioners – map against their global environmental governance surroundings, and their personal understanding of the norms these surroundings produce, which in this thesis are theorized as a field dominated neoliberal and depoliticized processes and influences.

This thesis follows Hay's (2004, pp. 507-508) definition of economic neoliberalism in terms of seven traits, which they argue are based on identifying the core precepts and principles of neoliberalism while allowing room to move over time as policy contents may change. These traits vary from confidence in the markets to belief in the desirability of free trade and capital mobility, a limited role for the state to intervene in markets, and a confidence in the use of private finance for public projects, among others (ibid.). These traits also reflect different countries' approach to economic development, which impacts the context in which the conservation practitioners across international, regional and national levels also find themselves in.

Contrarily, economic growth model can be used as an analytical tool to signify the approach to economic development. As this approach is embedded in national institutions and policies, it may also be reflected in the approach a country takes on environmental issues at the domestic sphere but also in their international affairs. As such, it encompasses the primary sources of growth within an economy, as well as the broader social and political configurations embedded in such a system of accumulation (Berry & Lavery, 2017). This approach is not value-neutral or pre-given, but rather is socially constructed. Focus on economic development, therefore, can be used to make visible how depoliticization processes and strategies are rooted within characteristically capitalist forms of social organization, as capitalist expansion relies on a set of institutional setting or conditions to sustain it. It is these institutional settings which the state needs to provide and uphold.

Furthermore, in this research the concept of depoliticization is understood to refer to the denial of political contingency, as well as the transfer of functions and power away from elected politicians (Flinders & Wood, 2014). It also refers to the process of depoliticization – varying from tactics, strategies and tools used to remove or displace the potential for choice, deliberation and collective agency of any given political issue (Hay, 2007). Berry and Lavery (2017) suggest that depoliticization scholars ought to pay more attention to accumulation strategies and their political contingency in order to better understand the institutional set-up with which the strategies both interact and are reflected in. This links with the neoliberalization of nature

literature, which analyses how biodiversity has increasingly become a part of neoliberalist and capitalist accumulation strategy (Brockington & Duffy, 2010; Büscher, Sullivan, Neves, Igoe, & Brockington, 2012). This is particularly the case with international environmental governance, as the institutional mechanisms and the norms they produce are built on neoliberal ideas (Buseth, 2017; Kumi, Arhin, & Yeboah, 2014; Wanner, 2015). Thus, the international environmental norms themselves have underlying neoliberal assumptions about how biodiversity ought to be governed, which also establishes an expectation of conservation practitioners, and Conservationland, on what biodiversity and conservation should be like.

The institutionalization-implementation gap framework emphasizes two sequential signposts which can be used to detect the implementation of new norms (Betts & Orchard, 2014), which help bring the different analytical concepts together. First, the new norms appear in domestic discourse; and second, there are changes in domestic institutions. These two signposts – institutions and discourse – are also identified in much of the depoliticization literature as indicators of the depoliticization process (Fawcett, Flinders, Hay, & Wood, 2017; Flinders & Buller, 2006). In terms of institutions, one way of detecting depoliticization is to examine if decision-making is delegated away from politicians into committees and agencies, thus removing or displacing the potential for choice, deliberation and collective agency of any given political issue (Burnham, 2001). Discourse, on the other hand, is a component of all depoliticization processes, and a key indicator of neoliberalization of nature at work.

By embedding the theorization and contextualization of Conservationland within the frame of global environmental governance with the analysis of empirical interview and participant observation data contextualizing conservation practitioners within Conservationland, this thesis seeks to examine whether the neoliberal, economic and depoliticized themes of global environmental governance are in fact reflected in the personal views of conservation practitioners. In doing so, these results provide an insight into the dynamic between the structure of international environmental norms and the governance and institutional frames they arise from, and the actors who occupy these frames and implement these norms into reality. In order to examine the above themes, the next section will provide a description of the issues Conservationland inhabitants have spent their working lives engaging with, primarily, the loss of biodiversity as a public policy issue.

1.2.   Issues in Conservationland: Biodiversity loss as a public policy issue

Natural and social sciences research has demonstrated the ecological, social, and economic benefits of biodiversity, as well as the detrimental impacts that follow from the loss of biodiversity. The purpose of this section is to briefly provide a systems-level overview of why Conservationland exists and what it aims to achieve: why does biodiversity matter, and why is the loss of it a public policy issue?

Despite the evidence of how imperative biodiversity is to all life on planet, global biodiversity is currently being lost at an unprecedented rate: there is a consensus in environmental sciences that the world is experiencing a sixth wave of mass extinction (Ceballos, Ehrlich, & Dirzo, 2017). Biodiversity loss is often measured using global extinction rates, highlighting the widespread implications of the issue. However, Ceballos et al. (2017) examined population extirpation at national and local level, which precedes extinction and is more frequent than species extinctions. Their data and analysis indicate that the Earth is not only experiencing a sixth wave of mass extinction but rather call the ongoing event "biological annihilation" to highlight the current magnitude of loss of biodiversity – claiming, the mass extinction episode "has proceeded further than most assume" (ibid, p. E6095). In doing so, they note that the local declines and extirpation of populations will have negative cascading effects on ecosystem functioning vital to sustaining humankind and are already damaging the ecosystems upon which civilization relies.

Unlike the five previous mass extinctions, the loss of biodiversity is caused by humans. One quarter of the world's flora and fauna is threatened with extinction (CBD, 2010), whilst forests continue to degrade and genetic diversity to decrease. These are a direct impact from human activity, such as land use change and habitat loss, pollution, and overexploitation (ibid.). While biodiversity is indispensable for the wellbeing of human-nature systems and non-human nature systems (Moore, 2017), it is uncertain what the exact consequences of biodiversity loss will be. Scientific evidence suggests that the effects of biodiversity loss are irreversible and drastic over a long period of time and result in decreased stability and resilience against environmental disturbances. As habitats and species are lost, and ecosystems become degraded and collapse, the environment loses its capacity to recover from changes in seasonal climate patterns, global warming and extreme weather events, thus, significantly influencing the lives of current and future generations (Harrop & Pritchard, 2011).

In addition to evidencing the sixth wave of mass extinction, Ceballos et al. (2017) also discuss the causes behind population extirpation. They highlight that behind the proximate causes of habitat conversion, climate change, overexploitation, pollution, and alien species introduction are indirect drivers such as overpopulation and population growth as well as overconsumption by the rich. They argue that these drivers, which they note to be traceable back to "the fiction that perpetual growth can occur on a finite planet", are in fact increasing rapidly (ibid, p. E6095). The window of opportunity to change the course of the current trajectories is short, "probably two or three decades at most" (ibid.).

As unexpected environmental disturbances and extreme weather events become more common due to climate change, ecosystem stability that relies on biodiversity will be vital across all scales. In considering the tangible effects of biodiversity loss at both national and global level, experiments by Worm et al. (2006) and MacDougall et al. (2013) provide some research examples and evidence of the necessity of biodiversity

common to the environmental sciences. Worm et al. (2006) analyzed local experiments, long-term regional time series and global fisheries data to examine how biodiversity loss affects the provision of marine ecosystem services. They found that a declining biodiversity increased the occurrence of resource collapse. At the same time, recovery potential, stability, and water quality decreased exponentially, while restoration of biodiversity increased productivity fourfold. The collapse of fisheries due to overexploitation, warming of oceans and increased ocean acidity also risk food security (Gliessman & Engles, 2015). As marine biodiversity is vital for food security in many cultural contexts, as well as maintaining water quality, the loss of locally adapted species and populations inhibits the ability of marine ecosystems to provide these benefits as well as to recover and provide stability in rapidly changing marine environments.

Their research found that biodiversity increases robustness against overexploitation and leads to increased stability and productivity, "whereby a more diverse array of species provides a larger number of ecological functions and economic opportunities, leading to a more stable trajectory and better performance over time" (Worm et al., 2006, p. 789). This portfolio effect has been independently confirmed by economic studies of multispecies harvesting relationships (e.g., Finnoff & Tschirhart, 2003; Wacker, 1999). Hence, Worm et al. (2006, p. 790) suggest that "the buffering impact of species diversity on the resistance and recovery of ecosystem services generates insurance value that must be incorporated into future economic valuations and management decisions".

This point extends far beyond marine systems alone - ecosystem resilience in the globalized food system, in particular, is inexorably dependent upon biodiversity (Frison, 2016). At the national level, continued biodiversity loss may lead to increased flood risk and loss of food production, as natural barriers and flood preventions are removed from the ecosystem to support specialized industrial agriculture (Gliessman & Engles, 2015). Such monocultures enable multi-year losses of crops due to unexpected disturbance, as the environment lacks the diversity to support ecosystem resilience.

MacDougall et al. (2013) researched the relationship between biodiversity and environmental stability in grassland environments, comparable to a managed high-yield low-diversity agricultural system. Their research demonstrates how biodiversity can be critical for grassland ecosystem stability, even if it appears functionally insignificant prior to environmental change. In losing diversity via persistent extractionist human activity, the structures and functions of ecological systems become homogenized, which in the short-term can lead to higher yields, but increase vulnerability to sudden environmental change (MacDougall et al., 2013).

This relationship applies to many ecosystems across the world as the combination of intensive long-term land management and species loss is very widespread (MacDougall et al., 2013). As a whole, sustainable marine and terrestrial systems management, in combination with pollution control, maintenance of essential

habitats and reserves, is a long-term investment in the productivity and reliability of essential human goods and services. The hegemonic 'business as usual' model, however, is a serious threat to global and local food security and ecosystem stability (Worm et al., 2006).

Though many countries have long histories of engagement with some form of biodiversity policy through natural resource management practices, the term 'biodiversity' was only coined in the 1980s (Vadrot, 2014). Confusion around the term persists, as the term has been labelled a "scientized synonym for nature" (Takacs, 1996, p. 106) and buzzword (Oksanen, 2004, p. 4), while others have suggested that the term may come to replace older terms such as conservation, nature, and wilderness (Reaka-Kudla, Wilson, & Wilson, 1996). This thesis uses the CBD's understanding of biodiversity, which defines biodiversity as "the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems" (CBD, 1992, Article 2). There is more to biodiversity policy than just nature preservation, as the CBD (1992) considers sustainable use to be compatible with biodiversity conservation. The difficulty of appreciating biodiversity is that its importance is often understood only once it has been lost, not least because there is often uncertainty over the specific functions that different species and ecosystems play in the provision of ecosystem services.

Uncertainty plays a key role in the process of addressing biodiversity loss; a comparison between biodiversity loss and climate change demonstrates the complexity of uncertainty. Climate change is well-known for being a highly complex issue, ranging from energy and food production, to transportation and mobility, to the everyday choices made by individuals. Despite these mainstream narratives, practical indicators and processes in the measurement of climate change have been established and operationalized by the scientific community: air and ocean temperatures, as well as various other standardized indicators, are used. Future projection models remain contests, however, there is consensus about the safe operating limits, what is going on now, and what will happen in the future.

Scientific endeavors to operationalize the loss of biodiversity presents a contrasting narrative. Biodiversity loss encompasses dynamic products and processes which pose difficult to measure, as new species are discovered whilst some known species become extinct. The way different ecosystems function, as well as the role individual species play in maintaining ecosystem services, remain largely unknown. One particularly hindering unknowns is tipping points: there is no certainty of how much biodiversity can be lost safely, or when and where the tipping point is for ecosystems or the planet, after which there is no return to the previous state of affairs. As a whole, the volume of unknowns and unknowables in biodiversity is vast and presents a steep barrier to operationalizing measurement indicators.

Despite these challenges, Conservationland and its citizens are working hard to face the existential threat that biodiversity loss presents. To say that Conservationland exists to try and save not *just* nature and animal kingdom, but also *all* of humankind, is becoming an increasingly factual statement: no longer is Conservationland just about charismatic species of tigers and lions (Moore, 2017). Though many of these challenges and their manifestations as public policy issues become matters for national level politics to decide upon, in the next chapter I contextualize Conservationland first and foremost within the frame of global environmental governance because nature knows no boundaries.

1.3. Research questions

In this thesis, I shed light on biodiversity governance and clarify the role of conservation practitioners in translating abstract biodiversity governance and its commitments into practice by focusing on how individuals' view their own roles in this process. Though these actors are viewed as depoliticized technical experts, their role in implementation has a significant impact on how conservation takes shape, which is why their personal views of themselves and their work matter. In doing so, this thesis offers an empirical contribution to conservation governance and policy literatures as well as depoliticization scholarship.

I focus my enquiry via two research questions:

1) What are some of the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland?

2) To what extent are these themes reflected in the personal views of conservation practitioners?

My research design combines desk-based research and qualitative empirical data, which allows me to present a picture of one small section of what may be termed mainstream Conservationland. I focus on official and formal conservation governance and arrangements which are led by governmental organizations and nation states. I approach the first research question through a review of secondary and grey literature, the key search words and scope of which have been informed by my experiences as a conservation practitioner. To answer the second research question, I draw on empirical qualitative data gathered at CBD conferences during 2018, which the fourth chapter on methodology elaborates upon in length. Furthermore, within this mainstream Conservationland, I focus on the Pacific region as my empirical data gathering targeted Pacific regional and national officials due to my existing interest in island biogeography and governance.

1.4. Roadmap

In order to answer these research questions, it is necessary to first discuss the broader frame and context of this MPhil. Thus, the next chapter situates Conservationland within the literature of Global Environmental Governance. In this chapter, I discuss the main developments, focusing on sustainable development, biodiversity governance and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the setting of goals and targets as a

means of policy-making. In doing so, this chapter provides a historical account behind the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland.

The third chapter develops the conceptual framework of this thesis. I have chosen three concepts to reflect these themes based on the themes from the context-setting chapter: international institutionalized norms, depoliticization, and neoliberalization of nature. I first examine each individually before discussing them in conjunction with central aspects of Conservationland: biodiversity, governance, and economic development.

The fourth chapter provides the methodology of the thesis. In doing so, I present why I deemed a qualitative research frame and a case study approach most appropriate to conduct research into Conservationland, and elaborate on my fieldwork and methods of interviews and participant observation. The chapter also provides a discussion on my method of data analysis, limitations and access, as well as ethics and positionality.

In my fifth chapter, I answer the second research question via the analysis of my primary empirical data. I focus on showcasing the views of the individual conservation practitioners on what they find interesting in their jobs. In doing so, I discuss and analyze the results of the research by reflecting the personal views of the practitioners against the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland arising from the previous chapters.

The sixth and final chapter concludes this thesis. I summarize all the chapters and reflect on the research questions and their answers. I also provide suggestions for further research.

2. Carving out Conservationland in Global Environmental Governance

This chapter examines the key events and developments in global environmental governance (GEG) in order to contextualize Conservationland within the wider environmental policy world. In doing so, emphasis is placed on the tensions present in Conservationland as borders are crossed between the global and the national levels in an effort to manage the world's environment. As a whole, this chapter establishes a picture in which Conservationland is contextualized within the broader themes of global environmental governance of sustainable development and the co-opting of economic thinking and language.

In order to begin to answer my research questions and explore the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland, it is necessary to first provide some historical context. The key events and developments explored in this chapter have shaped Conservationland to be what it is today. Thus, subsections on sustainable development, biodiversity governance, and global environmental initiatives complete my framing of the global environmental governance context as I move from the broader to the narrower, first outlining the influences behind today's Conservationland and working towards what the citizens of that land are working on presently. I begin this discussion, however, by briefly outlining the definitions for key concepts in global environmental governance needed to critically engage with this discussion.

2.1. Key concepts in Global Environmental Governance: Definitions

In social sciences research, 'governance' has not been uniformly defined (van Kersbergen & van Waarden, 2004). Typically, it is usually used to refer to such forms of regulation which differ from those of the traditional hierarchical state, and suggests 1) some type of multilevel policy, 2) inclusion of non-state actors (e.g., networks of experts) in decision-making, 3) creation of new agencies (e.g. intergovernmental bureaucracies), and 4) cooperation between public and private sectors in overcoming societal problems (Biermann, 2007; Biermann et al., 2010; Biermann & Pattberg, 2008). In this thesis, governance is viewed as a social function which aims to steer human groups toward preferred outcomes away from unwanted ones, as agreed by those who have access to the systems and processes within which such decisions are made. As a function, governance does not necessarily need a government to be fulfilled, as more commonly in the international sphere a set of global organizations and institutions play this role of governing (Young, 2013).

Global governance, equally, does not have a universally agreed definition but rather a number of different definitions employed to meet different ends (Biermann & Pattberg, 2012; Overbeek, Dingwerth, Pattberg, & Compagnon, 2010). It is often used to describe modern world politics (Rosenau, 1995), while at times it is used as a proposed solution, method or means via which to counter the negative effects of globalization (Commission on Global Governance, 1995). A common characteristic of global governance is participation by

multiple, and often a variety of, different types of stakeholders and institutions, while composed of these different organizations and regimes, which host and produce norms, principles and regulations (Biermann, Davies, & van der Grijp, 2009; Bäckstrand, 2006; Risse, 2004).

According to Rosenau and Czempiel (1992), governance is the exercise of power 'without government', thus referring to leadership in the absence of a sovereign state to enforce laws. Understood in such a way, multilateral environmental decision-making can be seen as global governance due to the absence of global police force (Risse, 2004). Such a definition has been criticized for being too broad, as it may refer to most phenomena under international relations or world politics (Biermann et al., 2009). Similarly, the Commission on Global Governance (1995) states their definition very broadly as "the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs, a process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken". Though ambiguous and lacking in analytical precision, these types of definitions leave room to examine global governance for all its complexity, as, I believe, is fit for GEG.

International environmental governance, on the other hand, is tasked with addressing ethical dilemmas for which there is no one solution, such as thresholds for natural resource usage, and thus, the direct and indirect impacts of human activity upon bio-geophysical systems. Ultimately, global environmental governance provides an architecture within which actors work toward pursuing environmental sustainability and resilience, while simultaneously considering social and economic issues such as equity, effectiveness and development. Typically, progress in global environmental governance is pursued and advanced through international treaties, agreements and conventions (Young, 2013), such as the CBD, which is investigated as the case-study convention of this research.

In recent decades, Biermann and Pattberg (2008, p. 280) have considered there to be three new broad developments at the core of GEG: "first, the emergence of new types of agency and of actors in addition to national governments, the traditional core actors in international environmental politics; second, the emergence of new mechanisms and institutions of global environmental governance that go beyond traditional forms of state-led, treaty-based regimes; and third, increasing segmentation and fragmentation of the overall governance system across levels and functional spheres". Similar to global environmental governance, Biermann puts forth the alternative phrase, earth system governance (2007), which dominates GEG literature in the field of political science, to emphasize these developments. In defining earth system governance, Biermann (2007) argues that this form of governance must intentionally and systematically engage a range of transdisciplinary stakeholders in addition to states and governments. In doing so, this form of governance places three new burdens on the core functions of the state: the increased dependence on other states contributes to decreased autonomy, while the need for legitimacy increases, and finally, the

changes in the natural environment cause there to be new stressors to which the state must quickly adapt (Biermann, 2007).

Understanding these definitions of governance, global governance and global environmental governance is key for understanding Conservationland; Conservationland represents the population of actors working within the scaffolding of global environmental governance. There is no one ruling government but rather a collection of governments, organizations, institutions, and other entities working together – and at times against one another – under the umbrella of conservation. The next section will situate Conservationland further within a historical account of the key events and developments of global environmental governance up to the present day.

2.2. Global environmental governance: A background

Economic and social development have coincided with the use of natural resources for thousands of years, though, only since the industrial revolution have humans had the means to negatively alter the natural environment on a global scale (Clapp & Dauvergne, 2011). The origins of contemporary western environmental concern and consequent attempts at conservationist intervention, however, can be traced further back, to the writings of Theophrastus of Erasia in classical Greece (Grove, 1996). Grove (1996, p. 1) argues that as early as in the mid-18th century, "scientists were able to manipulate state policy by their capacity to play on fears of environmental cataclysm, just as they are today".

Environmentalism itself has roots in colonialism and imperialism, as the extraction of raw materials from the periphery led to major environmental consequences (Crosby, 1986). Conservationist ideas were largely Western in their origin, with the colonialized countries providing the testing grounds for such ideas. It is the development of these Western conservationist ideas imposed on the colonies, and the feedback of ideas and experiences from the colonies to the colonizers, which created the first steps towards a global environmental discourse (Clapp & Dauvergne, 2011). Scientists had a particularly significant role as it was their input from the island tropics on the destructive social and ecological consequences of colonial rule. These observations led to the establishment of modern environmentalism in order to tackle the risk of social instability in the colonies, due to environmental degradation (Grove, 1996).

Rapid industrialization during and after the two world wars, and the booming of the global economy, fueled the environmental movement in the industrialized countries, as much of this economic development had resulted in environmental destruction (Clapp & Dauvergne, 2011; Mosley, 2010). As the economy became globalized through trade, so too did the governing structures regulating trade and the economy: the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) were all established following the Second World War. The popular literature of the 1960s and 1970s such as *Silent Spring*, *Limits to Growth*, and *Small is beautiful: Economics as if people mattered*, highlighted the

worsening state of the environment and its links to unsustainable economic growth. These works and the accompanying social movements they fueled created momentum for the establishment of formal global environmental governance and saw a wave of multilateral environmental treaties being negotiated and agreed in the 1970s[1].

The first of many global environmental conferences, the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, established many of the parameters of global environmental governance still in practice today. Aside from establishing the primary global environmental institution – the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) – this body further recognized that despite the increased influence of non-governmental organizations, private sector, and civil society organizations, states remained the key actor in international politics. The conference outcome document (UN, 1972) nods in the direction of the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648, pointing out that,

> States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction (Principle 21).

There is an inherent paradox at the heart of the recognition of state sovereignty within global environmental governance. Many environmental issues are global, ranging from climate change to pollution to biodiversity loss. Yet, global environmental governance has to admit defeat in the face of the lack of a global government: if global environmental problems are to be solved, the responsibility to take action is shifted to the state level. As such, global environmental governance would have the necessary reach to solve environmental issues if it had the power to do so, whilst sovereign states have the power but can only act within their limited sphere of influence.

This phenomenon is particularly relevant when applied to the politics of biodiversity loss, as biodiversity has a strong spatial element: biodiversity is always situated in a specific place at any given time. As unsustainable production, consumption and use of natural resources have been identified as major drivers of biodiversity loss, unavoidably, the structures of the global economy reinforce biodiversity loss in some places over others unequally. However, individual states have limited opportunities to bring about structural change in the global economy, whereas the global environmental governance lacks the power. The discussion of who should pay the costs of addressing environmental problems is on-going, ranging from Common But Differentiated Responsibility, protecting developing countries' right to development; to various financing

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[1] Such as Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (1971); World Heritage Convention (1972); Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) (1975); and Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) (1979).

mechanisms for development. These debates reflect the power asymmetries of the global system and the global economy, as funding mechanisms for biodiversity exist within these structures.

Tension also lies in the way the interests of the planet and the actions to realize these interests may conflict with individual states' interests, which is why one of the key tasks of global environmental governance is to increase ambition and willingness of stakeholders and states to take action. This is related to the paradox of power, as a relatively powerless global actor – usually UNEP – has to mediate global environmental action and long-term thinking with states who often operate in a shorter-term, and more outcome-oriented, manner. This is not an easy task, as environmental issues tend to accumulate over long periods of time, with uncertain effects.

Considering the lack of certainty and long-term thinking, the contrast between the global and the national is stark. National level politics is very different from that of global for a variety of reasons. For one, in democracies, domestic actors have to take into account national elections and voter opinions. The leadership can find itself in a position where adopting costly, long-term environmental policies is simply "bad politics" in the domestic sphere. Yet, at times, global environmental agreements can be useful as they can do the 'dirty work' and be used as scapegoats for such costly policies, whilst the leadership maintains their popularity (Clapp & Dauvergne, 2011; Wangler, Altamirano-Cabrera, & Weikard, 2013).

Moreover, as countries come to the arena of global environmental governance, they each represent and defend and advance a rather unified set of interests of their governments against the potentially conflicting interests of other states, ideally coming to a compromise and an agreement as a result. Gauging ambition to act with only some interests represented around the negotiation table may be easier than with the multiple pressures from domestic politics and stakeholders as well as the closer proximity to voters. Hence, examining the actions of states only at the global level can present a very simplified picture of states and their interests, whereas at the national level – where the adoption and implementation of these agreements take place – a diversity of interests and clashes of interests exist, alongside a variety of ideas and actions on what the environmental problems are, and what should be done to address them.

To begin, reaching an agreement at the global level is neither easy nor fast. However, it is implementation which is often blamed for the failure of environmental agreements and initiatives. The wider and the vaguer the agreement – such as the Convention on Biological Diversity discussed below – the more stakeholders have an interest in either advancing or blocking the agreement or policy. Conservationland is no different, as biodiversity loss is an umbrella issue, with a wealth of policy problems falling under its shade. Each stakeholder has their own interests, ambitions, and ideas about what the problem is (or whether there is a problem in the first place), and what to do about it. This makes adopting and translating global environmental

agreements and commitments – particularly biodiversity related – complicated. Often conservation practitioners are at the center of negotiating between conflicting interests.

Despite the tensions within global environmental governance and between the global and the national levels, many developments can be attributed to global environmental governance. The subsection below elaborates some of the key issues and achievements in reference to the concept of sustainable development.

2.3. Sustainable development

Aside from formal conferences, governance frameworks, and agreements, global environmental governance has created, shaped, and promoted new ideas. One of the most significant and influential ideas which has been promoted within the global environmental governance sphere is the concept of sustainable development. Due to its hegemonic position within global environmental governance, understanding the origins and context of sustainable development is vital for understanding Conservationland and the underlying conflicts in biodiversity conservation and governance more broadly, as they sit within the wider framework of sustainable development.

The concept was first formed in the World Conservation Strategy (WCS) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), UNEP, and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (1980). IUCN was commissioned by UNEP to produce a document to provide, "a global perspective on the myriad conservation problems that beset the world and a means of identifying the most effective solutions to the priority problems" (Munro, 1978, quoted in Adams, 2009, p. 65). The WCS is based on the concept of ecodevelopment of the 1970s, which draws on the "awareness of the intrinsic complexity and dynamic properties of ecosystems and the ways they respond to human intervention, and the need to ensure the 'environmental soundness' of development projects" (Ambio, 1979, p. 115). In doing so, the WCS and its ecodevelopment concept were seeking to establish the frame in order to improve the economic wellbeing of people without impairing the ecological systems of the planet (Dasmann, 1980, p. 1331).

The aim of the WCS was to demonstrate the relevance of biodiversity conservation to development objectives, and its key audience was government policy-makers, conservationists and development practitioners. Two main arguments are presented in the WCS. First, all truly environmentally sustainable development depends on environmental conservation, specifically when it comes to the use of living organisms and ecosystems. Second, development could be reconfigured to promote conservation. Using the concept of sustainable development, conservationists began claims that conservation and development objectives could be achieved together across different scales (Adams, 2009). However, the WCS was widely criticized at the time for not considering the political and economic contexts of the era. Despite the criticism, it laid some of the foundation for the Brundtland Report of the late 1980s, which has come to be seen as a key point in the development of environmentalism.

The Brundtland Report (also known as Our Common Future, 1987) is the most influential work of the Brundtland Commission[2]. The Commission was established by the UN General Assembly in 1984 with the aim of examining the relationship between the environment and global economic development. The Brundtland Commission and the analysis of its report reflect the context of the global political economy, as it argued that further economic growth and industrialization are not automatically harmful to the environment; hence, there are no necessary limits to growth. At the center of the report was the argument that poverty causes environmental destruction, and sustainable growth is needed to overcome it. This compromise between the environment and economic growth reflects the neoliberal economic agenda of the era (Bernstein, 2001). The significance of the Brundtland Report cannot be emphasized enough, as it changed the discourse of global environmentalism. The concept has dominated the global environmental governance field ever since, and the definition is still commonly used, largely, in its original wording: "sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (ibid, p. 54).

A more elaborated definition from the Brundtland Report (1987, p. 51) showcases the ideas and assumptions behind the concept:

> Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future. Far from requiring the cessation of economic growth, it recognizes that the problems of poverty and underdevelopment cannot be solved unless we have a new era of growth in which developing countries play a large role and reap large benefits.

This definition continues to be at the center of global environmental governance, and further, is prevalent in Conservationland. It is part and parcel of international and national policies and rhetoric, not least as it does not alter or challenge the fundamental dominance of neoliberal economics. The definition's first line is particularly well-known as it introduces the principle of intergenerational equity: the idea that sustainability now is dependent on ability to meet the needs of generations yet to come.

While the concept of sustainable development may have been developed in good faith, the "rhetorical vagueness … has made it too easy for hard questions to be ignored, stifled in a quilt of smoothly crafted and well-meaning platitudes" (Adams, 2009, p. xvii). According to Adams (2009, p. xvii), if the debate on sustainable development is to provide value, "it must address the challenge of relationships between people in their use of nature, and between humans and the rest of the biosphere", while Beckerman (1994, p. 194) has criticized the concept of intergenerational equity as "totally useless since 'needs' are a subjective concept", as needs depend on such a variety of factors. Thus, by merely referring to the needs of future

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[2] Originally the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), but better known by the name of its leader, Gro Harlem Brundtland.

generations does not suggest what ought to be preserved in order for such needs to be met (Beckerman, 1994).

Campagna et al. (2017) argue that this discourse on sustainable development is one to blame for mass biodiversity loss – the 'Crisis of Life' – as in the discourse are rooted values which justify development and downplay the moral responsibility of human-caused extinction: "the language of [sustainable development] does not convey the loss – worse, it masks or rationalizes it as blameless or necessary" (Campagna, Guevara, & Le Boeuf, 2017, p. 54). As such, the concept "obstructs alternative views by constraining our thinking, monopolizing funds for research, and making it impossible to articulate a compelling moral imperative against wanton species extinctions" (Campagna et al., 2017, p. 54).

These critiques are not without merit. The Brundtland Report is significant in its treatment of (or lack of) biodiversity conservation. In the years following the WCS of 1980, conservationists tried to flesh out the compatibility of conservation and development, but the emphasis of Brundtland Report on poverty alleviation and economic growth saw biodiversity conservation move to the margins. Some went as far as to say that conservation had "fallen off the bandwagon" due to the new emphasis placed in the development discourse on poverty alleviation (Sanderson, 2005, p. 326). Conservationland had been pushed to the margins of the map.

The ideological climate of the 1980s, of rolling back the state and further emphasis on market-based instruments, continued though many environmental movements had challenged the growth-oriented focus of sustainable development and expressed that a restructuring of the global economy would be necessary to address inequalities between the North and the South (Bernstein, 2001; Böhm, Misoczky, & Moog, 2012). Though there has been significant growth in 'green' ideas, thinking, and statements across international agencies, countries and businesses since the Brundtland Report, in the 1990s the environment began to become a significant growth industry in its own right (Adams, 2009, p. xvi). The Brundtland Report's influence can also be seen in the concept of Green Economy, discussed later in the chapter.

The Brundtland Commission was followed by the UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED, also known as the Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil in 1992. This meeting has been seen as a turning point in creating international environmental treaty regimes, which have evolved into a systemic part of global environmental governance and governance architecture (Chasek & Wagner, 2012). Sustainable development dominated the discussions and followed the recommendations of the Brundtland Report. The conference promoted more economic growth as well as more protection of the environment – the two considered mutually compatible – as it reaffirmed the views of the Brundtland Report that more growth will result in a better environment (Clapp & Dauvergne, 2011; Steinberg & VanDeveer, 2012).

The conference's primary outcome document, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, set out 20 principles outlining the rights and responsibilities of states on the promotion of environment and development. The principles institutionalized neoliberal approaches to sustainable development (Bernstein, 2001; Böhm et al., 2012). These approaches have ever since continued to dominate environmental governance and are based on two assumptions. Firstly, that free trade and high economic growth rates are imperative preconditions for environmental sustainability, and secondly, that market-based instruments are most appropriate tools for achieving those preconditions (Bernstein, 2001).

The first Rio Conference was a host to many breaking developments in the global environmental governance field. Among other significant outcomes of the conference were Agenda 21, an action program aimed at the national level to promote sustainable development; the opening of two legally binding conventions for signature: the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); and the establishment of a third: the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Hence, though Conservationland had existed as a fragmented network of actors prior to the Rio Conference, the launch of the CBD gave it a central focal point: finally, conservation had its own overarching convention.

With mainstream sustainable development placing little emphasis on biodiversity, the importance of the biodiversity convention has risen significantly. The following section zooms into the developments of biodiversity as a concern of global environmental governance, and the actors its comprised of.

2.4. Biodiversity governance: The Convention on Biological Diversity

The CBD is one of the key outcomes of the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit. Since coming into force in 1993, the CBD has been the main international organization to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (CBD, n.d.; Le Prestre, 2002). It enjoys the biggest membership of any UN agreement with over 190 parties. The Conferences of Parties (COP) are typically held biennially, at which Parties review progress and agree on future steps to progress towards meeting the obligations of the CBD. In between the COPs are held the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) and the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI), which provide advice on matters under negotiation and work as platforms to advance the negotiations.

As an international treaty, the CBD has a Secretariat which coordinates the convention's activities and organizes the meetings and conferences providing an arena and a framework within which countries can discuss and agree on what the problem is and what needs to be done to solve the problem. These discussions welcome input from scientists, civil society, and the private sector, though the CBD Convention Text emphasizes that the responsibility to act is on the sovereign states (CBD, 1992). Governments are required to periodically report back on how they have sought to meet their obligations under the CBD in order to track progress in meeting the broader targets of the convention. These reports together with the international

biennial Conferences of Parties and preparatory meetings form the basis of sharing information about common challenges and setting further targets and indicators against which to measure progress. The COPs also form the primary governing and decision-making body of the CBD.

The justification for the need for a biodiversity convention can be traced to the 1980s. There was a prevalent understanding that biodiversity loss was becoming a global concern, going beyond the scope of individual states. However, in the negotiations leading up to the launch of the CBD, there was a divide between developed countries seeking an instrument with an emphasis on conservation strategy, while developing countries had a more anthropocentric and utilitarian approach and sought to frame biodiversity as a prerequisite for meeting basic human needs (Neßhöver, Prip, & Wittmer, 2015).

The convention sets out "a shared responsibility for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity as well as respecting the sovereign rights of states for the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources within their jurisdiction" (Harrop & Pritchard, 2011, p. 475). Rather than simply focus on conserving biodiversity, the CBD recognizes that biodiversity needs to be leveraged for the benefit of humans. The challenge, however, is that it "should be done in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of biological diversity" (CBD, 2000, p. 8).

The many issues of global environmental governance are very much present in biodiversity governance, particularly as biodiversity is always situated spatially and temporally. Global biodiversity decision-making takes place in a context in which the CBD has very limited power despite being the most comprehensive international legal framework as it enjoys a membership of 193 parties (Harrop & Pritchard, 2011; Iwu, 1996). The CBD is often used as an example to examine the debate on hard versus soft law, as the CBD was originally envisioned to be a piece of hard law with penalties and implications for non-compliance (Harrop & Pritchard, 2011; Iwu, 1996). Instead, the focus has been on global biodiversity targets without any obligations backing them up. This suggests that the CBD is more of a policy instrument than a legal one enforcing states to act, as does the lack of practical instruments for national implementation of the convention. This is also something the CBD has been criticized for, as the convention has been lacking evidence of success. For instance, the UN International Year of Biodiversity in 2010 only saw the continuation of unprecedented rates of loss of biodiversity. This caused the CBD to acknowledge its failure to achieve its targets (Harrop & Pritchard, 2011).

The question of how to best overcome the paradox of power has not been solved by the debate on hard and soft law of global environmental agreements. As governing biodiversity requires regulating state sovereignty over the use of natural resources, it affects and limits the realization of states' political, economic and social interests (Harrop & Pritchard, 2011). The need to conserve global biodiversity often clashes with development and social needs which states tend to prioritize at domestic level whilst global concerns only

come second. Thus, there is a tendency to make biodiversity agreements so vague in writing that they are not enforceable, as there are no clear definitions or action plans (Kirton & Trebilcock, 2004; Wangler et al., 2013).

The difficulties in gaining support for biodiversity conservation across scales relate back to the many struggles of global environmental governance. Biodiversity does not exist in a vacuum: broader societal contexts, such as economic development needs to be addressed in line with biodiversity. This has led biodiversity politics to be oriented "towards the creation of a stable political–institutional framework for its commercialization" (Brand & Görg, 2003, p. 221). Consequently, biodiversity agreements contain ideas based on ecological modernization that no conflict between continued capitalist growth and sustainability exists (Keil & Desfor, 2003; Mol, 2002; Mol & Spaargaren, 2000; see also Campbell, Hagerman, & Gray, 2014). Thus, the CBD can be seen to be a part of a broader socio-economic transformation towards the commodification of the environment, even though the convention expresses environmental concerns (Brand & Görg, 2003).

The principal instrument for the implementation of the CBD at the national level is the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) (CBD, 1992, Article 6). The aim of NBSAPs is to ensure that the biodiversity strategy devised by the country is mainstreamed into the planning and activities of all sectors which have an impact on biodiversity. As a policy tool, it is of significant relevance to Conservationland. Many conservation actions either refer to these strategies, or work towards implementing or contributing towards them. The assumption is that if biodiversity is mainstreamed to be of key concern across all relevant sectors with its importance recognized and considered, then policies and actions within these sectors will be revised to conserve and use biodiversity sustainably. However, the responsibility is ultimately placed upon individual countries to define their national targets and priorities and to implement them accordingly. Conservationland practitioners of the international kind are often in central roles in assisting national level actors to apply the global level commitments of the CBD nationally even though it has been argued that "interactions should be identified at the national level in order to reflect the national biodiversity realities and deliver the best strategic set of actions" (Marques et al., 2014, p. 638).

To aid in the mainstreaming of biodiversity, Conservationland has since the early 2000s increasingly been both receiving, and producing, different ways for biodiversity to be mainstreamed. In particular, the emphasis has been on biodiversity's role in the economy. The following subsection reviews the points of main relevance to Conservationland.

2.4.1. Biodiversity and the economy

The mainstream biodiversity governance scene, and thus, Conservationland, has particularly in the 2010s been dominated by a drive to situate biodiversity loss within the economy and contextualize it as a problem for economics to 'solve'. Hence, it is necessary to establish the policy environment and narrative in which

conservation practitioners of Conservationland have spent the past decades. The call for biodiversity loss to be a matter of economics is often coupled with a call to get the matter higher up in the priority list of governments. However, part of the difficulty in mainstreaming biodiversity is that the role of biodiversity remains unclear and poorly understood within the Green Economy (Gasparatos & Stevens, 2015) – let alone in a 'normal' economy. This background section examines the key economy-related concepts and themes global environmental governance pursues and supports countries to adopt, mainly the Green Economy and green growth.

At the global level, the rhetoric of needing to conserve biodiversity has been present since the World Conservation Strategy (1980) but has lacked the means of doing so in political and economic contexts. Green Economy and green growth are attempts to provide these means. However, their approach to biodiversity has been that of a depoliticized technicality: for example, one that needs assessing so land use planning is more environmentally friendly, and accounting so environmental externalities can be internalized. Though perhaps shifting in a direction where biodiversity is more visible and better taken into account, these types of measures fail to address the root causes behind the loss of habitats and overexploitation of natural resources, among other direct drivers of biodiversity loss.

According to UNEP (2010), Green Economy is "one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities" as well as "low-carbon, resource efficient, and socially inclusive. In a green economy, growth in income and employment are driven by public and private investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services" (UNEP, 2011, p. 16). These definitions suggest two points relevant to biodiversity: first, a low or zero carbon economy alone is not enough to guarantee a 'green' economy as biodiversity can and will continue to be lost even in zero carbon settings due to poor land-use decisions. Second, biodiversity's role in the economy is not considered as one of contributing to the economy.

To use the jargon of biodiversity practitioners, biodiversity performs a double role in the economies, as it provides a variety of benefits – both direct and indirect – as well as safeguards and insures against the risks caused by environmental change. This double role links biodiversity conservation to the Green Economy concept. Whilst UNEP is a key driver for supporting countries to transition to a Green Economy, there is recognition that "the concept of a green economy does not replace sustainable development; but there is a growing recognition that achieving sustainability rests almost entirely on getting the economy right" (UNEP, 2011, p. 17). This view has meant that mainstream Conservationland, too, has had to adopt an openly and directly economy and growth positive narrative.

To make biodiversity more visible in decision-making, the Green Economy framework recognizes biodiversity through its direct value as natural capital and ecosystem services via full cost-accounting regime. This is also what The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) aims to showcase by providing the framework and tools how to go about valuing biodiversity and the associated ecosystem goods and services to enable better policy-making and investment in the environment (TEEB, 2010). In doing so, TEEB tackles the "economic invisibility of nature", which is arguably the result of inadequate economic compass at macro level due to the dominance of gross domestic product (GDP) and other related indicators, as well as micro level, as shareholder value and financial profitability are unable or unwilling to consider the companies' external effects on the environment (Aicher, Wittmer, Schröter-Schlaack, Rode, & Hansjurgens, 2015).

The use of these economic compasses results in short-term private gains at the expense of medium- to long-term public losses or damages. In providing tools to overcome the issue of externalities and non-accounting of biodiversity losses, TEEB's logic assumes that if biodiversity is valued appropriately and included in cost/benefit analyses, biodiversity loss will no longer be an externality of insignificance or of little interest to decision-makers. For example, the importance of bees and other pollinators has been demonstrated using biodiversity accounting. In this case, this type of analysis has mobilized a wealth of political support to maintain these species due to the role they play and their value in the economy (Willis & Kirby, 2015). Thus, TEEB has been a tool and a source for Conservationland to 'talk the talk' of (neoliberal) economic language.

In this regime, Green Economy pursues enhanced economic growth – 'green growth' – by investing in natural capital, innovation, and green technologies, thus aiming to create the conditions for growth within environmental limits (UNEP, 2011). Much of the emphasis in the Green Economy literature is on greening sectors with high green growth potential, usually in reference to sectors highly dependent on the environment – agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and tourism, as raw materials form the basis of many industries. For growth to be truly green, it needs to build on sustainable use of renewable resources, as only renewables can be used indefinitely. Indefinite use of renewable resources, however, is sustainable only if used at rates within their capacity for renewal, and in a manner that maintains the greater whole. The difficulty for Conservationland here is the striking of balance between the use of natural resources while halting biodiversity loss. Sustainable economic development ought to refer to the improvement of the quality of human life within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems, which the concept of planetary boundaries, and the biodiversity boundary specifically, suggest (Rockström et al., 2009).

If economic benefits are sought from biodiversity within short timespans, the results are bound to be bleak as biodiversity requires long-term planning and conservation, thus resulting in little justification for further conservation. Therefore, the benefits of biodiversity are poorly acknowledged within the economy, perhaps because many of them are taken for granted. Similarly, it has been difficult to internalize, acknowledge and

understand the "insurance value" biodiversity provides in the form of stability and resilience against extreme weather events, environmental change, and climate warming. Furthermore, there has been push-back against the focus on neoliberal economic policies and tools and the principles of ecological modernization which many global environmental governance policies build on. In particular, debates on valuing nature and ecosystem services as well as commodification of nature have sought to challenge the present status quo of global environmental governance (e.g., Brockington & Duffy, 2010; Brockington, Duffy, & Igoe, 2008; Büscher & Fletcher, 2014; Duffy & Moore, 2010).

Critiquing the landmark UNEP report on Green Economy (UNEP, 2011), Brockington (2012) notes that it at times reads like "a science fiction novel" (Brockington, 2012, p. 410), and criticizes the report for its lack of transparency on sources used for the analysis. In its promotion of the markets and technology to solve the current environmental crisis, the report only reinforces the traditional vision of sustainable development built on ecological modernization (Brockington, 2012). Brand (2012) has called the concept oxymoronic and called in question whether there is any difference between green economy and sustainable development, while in a similar vein, Gómez-Baggethun and Naredo (2015, p. 392) point out how "the technocratic discourse of sustainable development and the green economy reflects a broader process of depoliticization of public debate in liberal democracies, whereby politics are downgraded to the search for technical solutions to pre-framed problems".

Whether further commodification of nature will halt biodiversity loss remains an open question. As many of the namely economic decisions are in fact political, whether on land use, use of natural resources, subsidies to sectors harmful to biodiversity, and so on, reliance on pure economics invites skepticism. At the heart of overcoming biodiversity loss, thus, is what societies and decision-makers value and consider important and why, and how these needs, ideas, interests, and values take shape, thus setting the parameters and the to-do-lists for Conservationland and its citizens. However, inevitably, the language of neoliberal economics and the expectation to relate conservation to the (Green) economy is a fixture of Conservationland for the foreseeable future.

Rather than pondering over the nature of biodiversity governance, the professionals of Conservationland spend a significant portion of their time, both collectively and mainly individually, working on globally set targets and goals. The following section examines two of the best-known recent examples, the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Aichi Targets) of the CBD and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN. These global and universal commitments formed the primary overarching sustainability and biodiversity frameworks of the 2010s, and as such were a focal point of the work conducted in and by Conservationland.

2.5. Global goals and targets

The use of targets and goals as declarations of shared ambition has increased in global environmental governance (Black & White, 2004; Maxwell, 1999) as the emphasis has shifted from regulatory to more neoliberal approaches (Bernstein, 2001). The turn of the century saw the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were launched at the UN Millennium Summit in New York in the United States in 2000. The conference sought to evaluate progress made towards achieving the Rio goals and to develop a strategy to implement them. The outcome document, the Plan of Action, included some more specific goals and targets, including recognizing environment as one of the eight priorities. The MDGs, however, were aimed only at the developing countries.

Though the green economy is not a global commitment per se, the application of the concept at the national level demonstrates how differently global concepts can play out in reality when applied to a national context. Buseth's (2017) work on the transfer of the green economy concept from global discourse into national institutionalization in Tanzania demonstrates how the global discourse and policy have been reshaped and re-interpreted at the national level in order to fit an existing agri-business initiative, the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT). Buseth argues that the leading policy papers from organizations such as UNEP and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emphasize a strong reliance on technological and market-based solutions to environmental problems, thus suggesting that by tweaking economic systems, environmental challenges can be overcome. However, Buseth (2017, p. 42) notes that "what is often lacking in green economy policy strategies is attention to political and institutional implications, as well as issues of power, and social and environmental (in)justice in various 'green' transformations" (see e.g., Brockington & Ponte, 2015; Brown, Cloke, Gent, & Hill, 2014).

In terms of more formal goals and targets, in 2010, the 10th Conference of Parties (COP) of the CBD was held in Nagoya, Japan. At this COP, the Parties (signatory countries to the CBD) agreed on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which coincided with the UN Decade of Biodiversity. A key part of the Strategic Plan was the 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets (Aichi Targets) under a set of five strategic goals. These were to be met by the end of 2020 (CBD, n.d.-a). As with most (if not all) global environmental initiatives, the responsibility to achieve these targets lied at the national level.

However, in 2014 – only three years after the launch of the Aichi Targets – scientists raised their concerns that at the rate of progress, the targets would not be met (Tittensor et al., 2014; Vaughan, 2014a, 2014b). In December 2016, five of the world's largest conservation non-governmental organizations (NGOs) produced an assessment highlighting national and regional progress and ambition to date (Birdlife International, RSPB, WWF, Conservation International, & The Nature Conservancy, 2016; New Scientist, 2016). While finding some positive progress towards the Aichi Targets, the overall picture looked increasingly bleak: the report

concluded that with the current trajectory and with only four years left at the time of publication to achieve the goals, the world would not meet the targets. The ambition expressed in the state-led NBSAPs by and large did not match up to the ambition within global environmental governance. The analysis in the report showed that ambition is higher in poorer countries, though more progress in meeting the targets was achieved in high income countries (Birdlife International et al., 2016).

Another review by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2016) on the NBSAPs revealed that there were many actions included in the NBSAPs which, if fully implemented, would catalyze significant progress on food security, economic growth, and many other of the Aichi Targets. However, many of these actions focused more on planning and research rather than implementation whilst the review also noted that the drivers of biodiversity loss remained inadequately addressed in the biodiversity strategies (UNDP, 2016).

Demonstrating a shift in the global importance of biodiversity since the Brundtland Report, a more ambitious and inclusive global environmental governance initiative was agreed in 2015 as a part of the UN Agenda 2030: the Sustainable Development Goals. They are a set of 17 goals, ranging from poverty alleviation and food security to economic growth, infrastructure and biodiversity conservation. There are 169 targets under these goals providing more specific direction for ambition, such as under Goal 8 on economic growth: "Sustain per capita economic growth in accordance with national circumstances and, in particular, at least 7 per cent gross domestic product growth per annum in the least developed countries" (Global Goals, n.d., Goal 8). The Agenda 2030 demonstrates a resurgence of biodiversity within sustainable development paradigm, as there are significant overlaps between the recently expired Aichi Targets and the SDGs.

Unlike the MDGs, the SDGs are not only aimed at the developing countries, but similarly to the Aichi Targets, the SDGs are a call for action for all countries to promote prosperity while protecting the planet. In doing so, they "recognize that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection" (UN, 2016). The responsibility to achieve these goals lies primarily within the nation states, who are expected to apply and implement the goals, review progress and report back to allow follow-up and further review at the global level.

Countries are encouraged to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of their progress on the SDGs, which form the basis for the regular reviews at the high-level political forum. These voluntary national reviews are state-led, and aim to share experiences and lessons learned, thus accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Also, they seek to strengthen policies and government institutions in order to mobilize support from stakeholders, and facilitate partnerships to implement the Goals (UN, 2017).

The CBD (2016) mapped the links between the Aichi Targets and the SDGs shortly after the launch of the latter. The report demonstrated how biodiversity and ecosystems feature prominently across many of the

SDGs, and how they contribute to human wellbeing and development priorities. In doing so, the report highlighted and framed biodiversity in economic terms, showcasing how biodiversity is central to a plethora of economic activities, in particular, agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. As almost half of the human population is "directly dependent on natural resources for its livelihood, and many of the most vulnerable people depend directly on biodiversity to fulfil their daily subsistence needs" (CBD, 2016, p. 1), inclusion of biodiversity ought to be crucial to the successful realization of the SDGs.

In 2018 at the 14th COP of the CBD, the process for negotiating the next set of biodiversity targets to follow the expiring Aichi Targets began. The targets are supposed to set the scene for the next 10 years of global biodiversity commitments and bring the sustainable development and biodiversity worlds closer to one another via better alignment. The process was meant to conclude towards the end of 2020, however, due to the COVID-19 global pandemic the targets remain on the negotiation table waiting for the process to continue again.

It appears that global target- and goal-setting is here to stay in Conservationland as a way to formulate global commitments. However, these goals and targets are not neutral, and they should not be treated as such. These global targets and goals draw on sustainable development and green economy which arguably depoliticize and mask the inherently social origins of biodiversity loss in exchange for technical solutions to pre-framed problems (Campagna et al., 2017; Gómez-Baggethun & Naredo, 2015). The goals and targets themselves mask debates, thus carrying assumptions and framings which may not be clear to those who apply and translate them outside the global setting where they were originally negotiated (Campbell, Hagerman, & Gray, 2014).

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has established the global environmental governance context within which Conservationland is embedded, broadly spanning from early 1970s to the present day. Considering the close relationship between the developmental strides of science and the origins of environmentalism, it is unsurprising that science and experts play a significant role in the architecture of global environmental governance. Sciences and experts provide and support some of the structures within global environmental governance, and the language of sciences is often used across most if not all biodiversity policy-related structures: technicity is what Conservationland citizens associate their work with (see chapter 5). Aside from the sciences, many of the structures within which the key actors – conservation practitioners across levels – navigate range from the rules and procedures of the global conventions to the funding for implementation.

Despite the increased influence of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and civil society organizations in an increasingly interlinked world, states remain central actors in international environmental politics. Many of global environmental governance's key debates originate or relate to the paradox of state

sovereignty combined with global co-dependency to address global environmental issues. This paradox is marked by how multiple structures intersect, conflict, and coexist. Though environmental thresholds are not characterized by national borders, sovereign states have the power and the right to determine lawful practice within their borders. These dynamics are also present in Conservationland. International and regional conservation practitioners are less involved in direct implementation of global biodiversity commitments, but rather assist the national level to apply, translate and achieve these goals within their domestic spheres.

The use of economic terms such as natural capital and ecosystem services have resulted in lively debates on the commodification of the environment within academia, and the potentially negative effects such commodification may have on the environment. The Green Economy and green growth have not addressed causes and the political choices behind the drivers of biodiversity loss, namely various types of economic activity. However, they have provided language for Conservationland to work with in order to highlight the role biodiversity plays in local to national to global economy. This role is well recognized within the conservation sector which regularly highlights economic activity as the main driver of biodiversity loss but does not go further to interrogate why these well-known drivers of biodiversity loss are not addressed. The Green Economy and green growth have aimed to increase awareness of the environment within economic sectors, but the emphasis has been on the positives: new jobs and industries, and growth opportunities with technological developments. The difficulty with biodiversity governance is that to halt loss, land needs to be used less and natural resources use must slow down. These fit poorly within the growth positive narratives of Green Economy and green growth, which ultimately lead to decision-makers being faced with difficult questions as to what to prioritize. While many actors promote (green) growth centered narratives in Conservationland, these narratives are not always straightforward to negotiate and fit with the on-the-ground realities.

The next chapter builds on this context of global environmental governance and discusses three key concepts – institutionalized norms, depoliticization, and neoliberalization of nature – in developing the conceptual framework of this thesis.

3. Conceptual Framework

This chapter develops the conceptual framework utilized in this MPhil, and in doing so, answers the first research question. International institutionalized norms, depoliticization, and neoliberalization of nature together represent the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland. These core themes stem from the developments and events presented in the previous chapter, and are individually discussed in the following three sub-sections. The fourth sub-section weaves these three themes together into a broader discussion within the context of Conservationland.

Combined, this framework explores how each area plays a key role in biodiversity policy and governance. A second shared feature of these three key themes is a lack of attention paid to the perspectives of individual actors. In linking these three scholarly conversations together under this conceptual framework, this thesis further theoretically contextualizes Conservationland. Given the absence of population boundaries presented in Kiik's 'Conservationland' metaphor, in bridging these three themes together I present the structural scaffolding within which the practitioners of 'Conservationland' are embedded.

Traditionally, the discipline of international relations has been a driving force of environmental politics, by examining how global environmental governance is conducted and investigating why governments come together to cooperate on environmental issues in the absence of a global authority setting the agenda. International relations literature has explored international agenda setting, impact and effectiveness of international treaties, the influence of science on multilateral decision-making and the roles of different actors in responding to global problems (Chasek, Downie, & Brown, 2006; Steinberg & VanDeveer, 2012). During the process of establishing these critical conversations, the discipline has developed understanding on actors, power, ideas, and institutions which shape cooperation and results of international politics. The aim of this thesis is not to examine or measure the effectiveness of the environmental norms or the extent they have been institutionalized, but rather address wider questions about the environment – Conservationland – through which the commitments are realized and translated. As the previous chapter argued, global environmental governance and thus, Conservationland situated within it, have embraced economic thinking and language since the 1980s and sustainable development and increasingly since the 2010s and the Green Economy and green growth concepts. I apply the three above theoretical concepts in this conceptual framework in order to focus on how this thinking is reflected within Conservationland.

Conservation professionals spend much of their careers working with international institutionalized environmental norms and making them a reality ('institutionalization-implementation gap', Betts & Orchard, 2014), while many of these norms – in this case the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the Sustainable Development Goals – carry technical and neutral-appearing economic (depoliticization and neoliberalization of nature) ideas. I begin by discussing each of the concepts, starting with institutionalized norms, followed

by depoliticization, and ending with the neoliberalization of nature. In my analysis, I address these concepts and the global environmental governance context via an emphasis on economic development. While I examine Conservationland from the perspective of each of these three theoretical concepts, I intentionally emphasize the concepts and developments familiar from the previous chapter. This emphasis supports the argument I present together with empirical evidence in Chapter 5, which stresses the significance of the personal views of conservation practitioners realizing conservation targets.

3.1. International institutionalized norms

International institutionalized norms represent the first key structural and ideological theme of Conservationland discussed in this chapter. Traditionally, international relations literature within the discipline of global environmental governance has tended to emphasize how institutionalized norms are established at the global level (Biermann, Kanie, & Kim, 2017; Bäckstrand, 2006; Chasek et al., 2006; Le Prestre, 2002). While the body of literature of international institutionalized norms is vast (e.g., Bernstein, 2013), little progress has been made in understanding the implementation of biodiversity norms and the global level influence on national biodiversity policy. By incorporating domestic implementation phenomena into this conversation, I create space to examine how these norms come to be realized in practice in and through Conservationland.

The domestic-international divide refers to the pull towards national distinctiveness while there are powerful pressures which produce a push towards convergence, both of which operate alongside and countervail one another. Global environmental commitments promote harmonization of approaches to environmental issues through environmental treaties (Steinberg & VanDeveer, 2012), but concerns have been raised whether global biodiversity objectives can be achieved in a manner respectful to local autonomy (e.g., Brechin, Wilshusen, & Benjamin, 2003).

Each sovereign state has their own traditions and ideas when it comes to political life. These range from values, identities, concepts, to interpretive frameworks, all which work to shape the understanding of what counts (and does not count) as a political problem (Steinberg & VanDeveer, 2012). Regarding environment and biodiversity, many scientists and stakeholders have derided "politics" as a barrier to rational decision-making (Dovers & Hussey, 2013). Davis et al. (1993, p. 257) argue, however, that this is unrealistic, noting that, "politics is the essential ingredient for producing workable policies, which are more publicly accountable and politically justifiable … We are unable to combine values, interests and resources in ways which are not political".

Betts and Orchard (2014) have developed a conceptual framework to analyze the aforementioned 'institutionalization-implementation gap'. This framework is built on the norm life-cycle model developed by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) which makes the analytical distinction between 'institutionalization' and

'implementation'. 'Institutionalization' is seen as an international process in which norms emerge at the global level, and are signed and ratified by individual states, whilst 'implementation' is considered a domestic process. The implementation process itself can provide a new arena for conflict and contestation as the norm gets interpreted by stakeholders at the national level. This can potentially lead various actors to have different understanding of how the norm ought to be implemented, cause the process of implementation to come to a halt, and the norm to eventually be ignored.

Further, focusing on implementation makes it possible to recognize that even once a norm has been formally institutionalized, it continues to be subject to political contestation at the national level as the process of implementation goes forward. Therefore, the norm emergence process should not be expected to be static or linear (Krook & True, 2012; Sundstrom, 2005). The continued contestation may lead to new reinterpretations and redefinitions of the norm, which may feed into and affect how the norm is understood at the international level (Schmidt, 2006). However, in arguing that the implementation process can be(come) an arena of contestation, Betts and Orchard assume that the norm is to be considered a matter of politics. This however is not always applicable, for instance, if the framing of the norm is perceived to be neutral or natural, or alternatively, if powerful actors shift decision-making power outside the political sphere. In order to account for this gap, I introduce depoliticization to this conceptual framework in the next section.

The implementation process may open up new pathways at the national level, thus providing or shifting agency and power to actors which have previously been ignored or not involved (Lutz & Sikkink, 2000). Also, if the implementation of a norm goes against the interests of powerful domestic actors, new opposition movements may be created as a result of the implementation process (Bob, 2010; Jörgens, 2004). Therefore, besides considering who these agents are, it is important to consider the environments they operate in. The manner in which they have (or do not) access to networks, formal and informal, within national policy process can assist in overcoming institutional barriers and silos (Hafner-Burton & Montgomery, 2009).

Besides the structural factors in Conservationland, the role of the agents – conservation practitioners – who introduce and (re)interpret the institutionalized norms is crucial. These actors have the power to bring attention to issues, as well as create issues, as they are responsible for translating the norms into implementable policies at the national level. The idea of who is considered an expert and the type of knowledge considered to be necessary will depend on which epistemic knowledge and which epistemic communities are chosen to have authority over implementation. In part, success of international norms and their implementation will depend to how actors frame the new norm. McAdam et al. (1996, p. 6) consider issue-framing as "the conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action". Conservationland, its norms as well

as its practitioners, thus wields great power in what conservation is understood to mean and how it takes form in reality.

In addition to the norms and practitioners within Conservationland, institutional change is a key area of research of institutionalized norms. Policy-making and implementing institutions can play a significant role in the process of reconciliation of interests, as different institutions have different levels of influence and power. In examining implementation, I draw attention to how national level institutions change and adapt as new international norms are introduced.

National level politics, underlying ideologies, and political cultures all contribute to the highly contextualized nature of institutional settings, and in part, explain variations in how governments divide responsibilities in policy-fields. Though politicians may bear the responsibility of deciding upon institutionalization, it is likely that civil servants within government institutions do much of the groundwork in developing and implementing policy. Though the lines can be blurred between who is a conservation practitioner and who is not, invariably some domestic civil servants fall within Conservationland or come to be in contact within it and its citizens.

Constitutional frameworks may also cause variation in the access points through which institutionalized norms enter the national level (Betts & Orchard, 2014). In this way, certain norms are directed to certain policy-making environments and institutions, thus privileging one set of actors over another. Typically, conservation-related norms and their implementation have fallen on ministries of the environment, which within the domestic administration sphere are typically among the weakest. Thus, when trying to institutionalize international norms and push for institutional change, other more powerful national level institutions can function as policy gatekeepers and either block or advance policies favorable to the interests they represent rather than those of weaker institutions (see e.g., Busby, 2007; Tsebelis, 2002). Therefore, different political and institutional arrangements influence how governments go about implementation and how susceptible they are "to lobbying by domestic interest groups and international actors" (Deere, 2009, p. 15).

Aside from strictly theoretical contributions, institutionalized norms have been applied and further examined in the contexts of sustainable development and the Green Economy. Analyzing the cross-national diffusion of international norms in national implementation of sustainable development, Jörgens (2004, p. 247) has focused on "whether and how the international agenda can influence or determine domestic agendas". These questions are of particular relevance when considering the 'from the outside-in' nature of the international sustainable development agenda, and "how … international norms reach the domestic arena" (ibid.). If the task of global environmental governance is to facilitate cooperation to encourage the achievement of mutual goals, then "the question of domestic implementation of sustainable development

constitutes a crucial touchstone for the effectiveness of global governance in general" (ibid., p. 247-8). Yet, it remains unclear to what extent the institutionalized norm's approach to policy-making has been translated and applied in national level implementation of sustainable development. Jörgens finds, however, that in industrialized countries, the framework for implementing sustainable development is much broader than in transitional and developing countries. This, he argues, is due to two explanatory factors: "(1) the governance mechanism through which the global norm of sustainable development has been transported to the national level; and (2) the domestic political and institutional capacities for its actual implementation" (p. 273). Therefore, "imposition through economic conditionality leaves little choice for the target countries to set their own political priorities based on their national political, administrative and scientific capacities" (ibid.). In countries where domestic capacity for implementation is already limited, "the external imposition of national environmental action plans has absorbed most of these capacities" (ibid.).

There are parallels between the colonial history of conservation and the shape sustainable development assumes when institutionalized in the countries of the Global South. Though many of the citizens of Conservationland are of Western or Global North origin, much of the conservation work remains to be focused on where biodiversity is either considered most diverse (e.g., biodiversity hotspots) or 'intact': the Global South. Hence, international institutionalized norms, even if guised as environmental and 'neutral', may function as vehicles for "economic conditionality" as described by Jörgens (2004) above.

Similar themes of neoliberal economic approaches can be found present in the post-2015 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (Kumi et al., 2014). Kumi et al. (2014) contextualize the post-2015 agenda within the frame of 'green neoliberalism' (under which governance mechanisms such as payments for ecosystem services (PES), carbon markets, and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) fall under (see Bakker, 2003; Goldman, 2005)). Through such a lens, neoliberal policies based on privatization, trade liberalization and decrease in the role of states become visible as part of the ideals about how sustainable development and the accompanying initiatives ought to be understood and implemented (Kumi et al. 2014). In doing so, relying on market mechanisms alone in governing and allocating environmental resources is insufficient and problematic, and the authors call for a new approach which emphasizes equity and addressing power relations in achieving environmental sustainability.

Focusing on Tanzania, Buseth (2017) examines how global discourses of green economy are reinterpreted and re-legitimized at the national level by different sources of authority, from global discourse to practical implementation. They find that "the green economy seems to be interpreted differently in the global North and South" (Buseth, 2017, p. 44), a result consistent with Jörgens (2004). Developed countries have historically placed greater emphasis on technological advancements in energy efficiency and market-based initiatives to manage the environment, whereas in developing countries, green economy implementation

focuses on environmental protection and control over natural resources. Buseth agrees with Death (2015), in that more attention needs to be paid to the national strategies and development programs deployed by developing country governments, as some use the green economy in a manner which is only remotely linked to traditionally green issues, such as conservation and natural resource management.

Literature on institutionalized norms and their implementation has improved knowledge of the issues related to the norms, how they come about and the ways in which they get implemented. However, many gaps remain. Of particular relevance to this thesis, Jörgens (2004) focuses on the mechanisms of transfer but does not discuss is the extent of similarity – and the type of similarity – that the different kinds of countries have in implementation. Understanding not only what is being implemented but also how – not just mechanics of diffusion but approach to implementation – is crucial in understanding the influence that Conservationland as part of global governance may have on national policy-making. Furthermore, Betts and Orchard (2014) do not take their analysis on implementation far enough to discuss where the responsibility of politicians ends, and civil servants or technocrats begins. Therefore, they miss an opportunity to discuss depoliticization, which is the focus of the next section.

3.2. Depoliticization

Depoliticization is the second key structural and ideological theme of Conservationland discussed in this chapter. Applying the concept of depoliticization within the environmental governance sphere and by extension, Conservationland, allows the investigation into the nature of politics over biodiversity.

Though the literature on depoliticization has become increasingly topical in recent years, the debate is not new. For example, in the 1960s, Himmelstrand (1962, p. 83) viewed depoliticization as the process in which politics is transformed "from vivid clashes over ideology to what some people consider a dull, technical discussion about means for promoting goals questioned by none". In doing so, he linked the growing frequency of depoliticization with the End of Ideology of the mid-century (e.g., Bell, 1960; Shils, 1955), as political ideologies were transformed into "a set of more or less distinct administrative technologies based on a widespread consensus as to what kind of goals one should try to attain" (Himmelstrand, 1962, p. 83). Thus, even though ideological differences continued to exist, these differences were de-emphasized in a depoliticized political community.

Himmelstrand's view is just one of many, as depoliticization scholars have sought to understand what depoliticization is, how it takes place, and to what end. Most of the relevant scholarship is based in (British) politics and in a context of advanced liberal democracies, as well as the discipline of geography and political ecology. Thus, to make sense of depoliticization requires overcoming silos and the different languages and conceptualizations these disciplines use.

Several contrasting and at times conflicting definitions of depoliticization are present in the literature. Some broad categorizations may be applied: depoliticization as a comprehensive phenomenon covering the whole of society, and depoliticization as a specific governing strategy. However, the applicability of the concept ranges from micro-trends, such as disengagement of individual citizens; to meso-level institutional mechanisms and modes of governance; and macro-level ideologies and growth models (Fawcett et al., 2017). The depoliticization scholarship is in this framework used as the overarching term for literatures which are concerned with the phenomenon of the changing nature of politics and the sentiment of democratic decision-making becoming less democratic: to question "the degree to which politics is genuinely political" (Beveridge & Naumann, 2014, pp. 276-277).

The three perhaps most commonly used categorizations of depoliticization definitions are:

1. the transfer of functions (and power) away from elected politicians (Burnham, 2001; Flinders & Wood, 2014);
2. the removal or displacement of the potential for political contingency, deliberation and collective agency of any given political issue (Hay, 2007); and
3. consensual governing and policy-making based on technical, managerial and consensual administration, and problem-focused governance (Crouch, 2004; Ferguson, 1990; Swyngedouw, 2000, 2011, 2014).

The view taken in this chapter is that despite their potentially differing underlying (ontological) assumptions, they can all be present in empirically grounded contexts (Bond, Diprose, & Thomas, 2019).

The first of these three definitions is based on a focus on the level of nation-states and their reforms (particularly in British context), which are delegated to actors out of the hands of elected officials (Burnham, 2001). This, however, ought not be taken as an end to politics or a reduction in amount of politics present, as "depoliticization is not about less politics, but about a displaced and submerged politics – a politics occurring elsewhere, typically beyond sites and arenas in which it is visible to nonparticipants and hence amenable to public – perhaps even democratic – scrutiny" (Hay, 2014, pp. 302-303).

Defining depoliticization as a transfer of functions and powers frames the concept as a device which political elites use to distance themselves from criticism. This, thus, also builds in an expectation that the delegation of decision-making to a panel of experts would result in the same decisions as those of the political elites who appointed them. The hypothesis is that the elites would still be able to impose their will upon those who are subject to their power, thus building in an assumption about the nature of elites (Hay, 2014).

Despite these underlying assumptions, the Burnham definition has been very popular. Used to develop a 'tactics and tools' approach which breaks down the mechanisms politicians use to depoliticize issues (Flinders

& Buller, 2006), the delegation device or tactic falls under institutional depoliticization. The other two tactics in this approach are rule-based depoliticization, which aims at controlling policy-makers; and preference-shaping via discursive, ideological or rhetorical claims, which seeks to make policy issues appear non-political.

The second definition on the contingent nature of politics has been developed into a widely used framework for (de)politicization, in which there are three types (Hay, 2007). As the issue is promoted (or demoted), it moves from one type to the next. In Type 1, an issue is politicized as it becomes a subject to public deliberation, for example due to the questioning of a previously unquestionable taboo, or because of technological developments. In Type 2, an issue is further politicized if it has been identified as a matter relevant to the collective or public, rather than merely the individual or private. Type 3, on the other hand, refers to an issue reaching a level in which a response to the issue is seen necessary at the governmental sphere, may that be debating or setting up new regulations.

The framework also works in reverse: Type 3 politicization becomes Type 1 depoliticization, in which a formerly political issue is relocated to be outside the reach of elected politicians. In Type 2, a previously politicized issue becomes privatized – a matter of domestic deliberation or consumer choice. In Type 3, an issue is denied its political nature, and it leaves the political realm altogether, therefore becoming a matter of fate or of necessity where there are no alternatives (Hay, 2007). However, politicizing and depoliticizing discourses are not necessarily exclusive but can coexist. Politicization and depoliticization can take place and be present simultaneously, as the issue at hand goes through different phases of relative politicization in different arenas (Bates, Jenkins, & Amery, 2014).

In a further attempt to expand the scholarship to be more inclusive of repoliticization as a countertrend to depoliticization (as in Hay, 2007, above), a 'three faces' approach focuses on discursive depoliticization strategies seen to complement statecraft dynamics (Wood & Flinders, 2014). The three faces of depoliticization in this approach are governmental, which focuses on the transfer of issues between governmental and public sphere through the delegation of issues away from democratically elected decision-makers; societal, which focuses on transfer of issues from public to private sphere, and the shift towards individualized responses to collective challenges; and finally discursive, which emphasizes the transfer of issues from the private sphere to the 'realm of necessity' in which there is no contingency, therefore focusing on the role of language and ideas (Wood & Flinders, 2014, p. 165). In emphasizing the third face – the discursive – analyses of depoliticization should not focus solely on institutions and a narrow concept of 'the political', but rather to "trace those deeper social and discursive shifts that frequently buttress or underpin institutional reforms and governmental decisions" (ibid. p. 152). However, the operationalization of the 'third face' received criticism as it is possible to see a discursive component in all depoliticization (Hay, 2014).

Therefore, to link it only to a certain type of depoliticization and exclude it from other types does not serve a purpose.

However, when using a more critical political economy approach, there is still further depth for depoliticization to explore. Rather than solely use depoliticization as an analytical concept to examine processes of depoliticization, focus is needed on the "deeper structural context within which (de)politicization processes take place" (Berry & Lavery, 2017, p. 245). There are three broad features of relevance to depoliticization in critical political economy. The first, macro-political scale of capitalist development, is primarily concerned with transformations over time in patterns of production, consumption, exchange and distribution, while the second emphasizes that these processes do not unfold in a vacuum but are "embedded within historically specific institutional complexes that can serve to stabilize and sustain … continued economic expansion" (Berry & Lavery, 2017 p. 247). Finally, these institutional forms are not pre-determined or neutral, but are the result of politics in which different actors seek to have their governing projects and accumulation strategies taken up by the state (Berry & Lavery, 2017).

This lack of depth, arguably, has led the scholarship to overlook "the way in which depoliticization strategies are embedded within distinctively capitalist forms of social organization" (Berry & Lavery, 2017, p. 245). When depoliticization is interrogated within the frame of advanced capitalist development, depoliticization strategies and narratives become visible as an institutional or discursive tool used by policymakers to embed and reproduce dominant models of economic growth.

The above begins to bring the third definition into play, as the approach to the concept is from a different angle and is more grounded in the political ecology literature. The emphasis is more on what the system of governance is or has become and why, rather than how. One example of what might fall under such a definition is the 'politics of expertise', which is "characterized by the use of scientific arguments, the definition of issues in technical, non-political terms and by processes on the bureaucratic arena" (Reitan, 2004, p. 439). Thus, depoliticization is seen as the emergence of managerial consensus, and the disappearance of political conflict and differences of opinion. Rather than seeing depoliticization as a cause of the crisis of the political system, this strand considers the political system itself to be the source of the crisis - the system itself is set up in a manner which is depoliticized, leading political issues to appear apolitical, technical and managerial, which creates limits for real democratic debate and contestability (Mouffe, 2005).

Following this definition of consensual policy-making, stakeholders are "known in advance", "disruption or dissent is reduced to debates over the institutional modalities of governing and the technologies of expert administration or management" (Swyngedouw, 2000, 2014, p. 127). Though disagreement and debate may take place, they "operate within an overall model of elite consensus and agreement" (ibid., Crouch, 2004). The scholars of this literature point out how this kind of resulting depoliticization is not permanent, but rather

special moments of the political exist when the political returns to politics and issues are repoliticized, and when the terms and conditions of 'problems' are renegotiated.

Regardless of whichever of the definitions and approaches one prefers, "however depoliticized and normalized neoliberalism has become, it remains a political and economic choice, not a simple necessity" (Hay, 2004, p. 522). Similar themes are echoed in the neoliberalization of nature literature. The bridging of these literatures is one of the aims of this thesis, and the next section will investigate literature on neoliberalization of nature.

3.3. Neoliberalization of nature

Neoliberalization of nature represents the third and final key structural and ideological theme of Conservationland discussed in this chapter.

One of the most interesting debates in environmental politics is whether capitalist economic growth can be environmentally sustainable. Broadly speaking, there are two opposing views: ecological modernization and neoliberalization of nature. Ecological modernization builds on the idea that there is no clash between continued capitalist growth and sustainability (Keil & Desfor, 2003; Mol, 2002; Mol & Spaargaren, 2000). Ecological modernization ideas have been influential in the mainstream sustainable development discourse. This can be seen in the emphasis on the role of science, technology, and market-based solutions in overcoming environmental issues. Initiatives and tools such as carbon markets, ecosystem service valuation, and biodiversity offsetting are examples of ecological modernization. The principle hence is that the status quo merely needs tweaking, not revolutionizing.

The starting point, however, for neoliberalization of nature scholars on the sustainability of capitalist growth is more critical. The literature seeks to make visible and critique the issues and contradictions of ecological modernization. In their synthesized critique, Büscher et al. (2012) focus on neoliberal conservation as a consolidation of ideology and techniques which build on the idea that nature can only be saved and conserved through its submission to capital. They define neoliberalism as "a political ideology that aims to subject political, social, and ecological affairs to capitalist market dynamics" (Büscher et al., 2012, p. 5). However, Brockington and Duffy (2010) note that a close relationship between conservation and capitalism is not particularly new. Rather, they argue that neoliberal conservation is just the latest stage of this relationship (e.g., Adams, 2004; Brockington et al., 2008; Neumann, 1998). Despite the previous and historical developments linking conservation and capitalism, it has been argued that something new is going on: an increase in the variety and intensity of forms of capitalist conservation. Pro-capitalism conservation is and has been changing the imagery and rhetoric of conservation as well as conservation policies and practices, and currently occupies the mainstream conservation policy-making; hence, Conservationland.

A systematic understanding and critique of neoliberal conservation is crucial because "the strategies and institutions of conservation can be so varied, while the similarities neoliberal conservation produces are so pervasive" (Büscher et al., 2012, p. 6; Igoe, Neves, & Brockington, 2010; MacDonald, 2010). Following this, there has been a conflation of what is generally referred to in conservation discourses as economics with neoliberalism's ideological assumptions (Büscher et al. 2012). This is also a key problem identified by Brockington and Duffy (2010), as they point out how troublesome neoliberal capitalism's over-positive rhetoric of market solutions, ethically produced goods, saved nature, sustainable development, and 'win-win' solutions, can be. To an extent, some of the criticism towards neoliberal conservation originates from examining the gap between this over-positive rhetoric of neoliberal conservation and its existing, real-life consequences.

Under the influence of neoliberal conservation, biodiversity becomes a part of capitalist accumulation, creating broader economic possibilities for capitalist production and expansion (Büscher et al., 2012). Markets expand because of environmental crises which other market forces have produced. Therefore, neoliberalism succeeds in its purpose of expanding and intensifying capitalism (Harvey, 2005), as capitalism seeks to turn everything into exchange value. Following on how Kovel (2002, pp. 130-131) has shown capitalism to "separate", "split", "alienate" and estrange, it is necessary for neoliberal conservation to "lay bare the various ecosystemic threads and linkages so that they can be further subjected to separation, marketization, and alienation, albeit in the service of conservation rhetoric" (Büscher et al., 2012, p. 8). Therefore, creating and assigning monetary exchange value to nature in order to conserve it (and the services it provides) is not about preservation but about creating new spaces for markets to operate within (Büscher, 2012).

Infusion of conservation policy and practice with the analytical tools of neoliberal economics has taken place without clear recognition what this infusion brings about and thus reinforces "particular ideological positions regarding human relationships with each other as well as with non-human natures" (Büscher et al., 2012, p. 8-9). This, at least in part, is done through using the language of (neoliberal) economics in policy solutions, framing the problems to be solvable through markets and technological innovation, therefor "deflect[ing] understanding away from systemic causes of ecological (and associated socio-economic) crisis" (ibid., p. 9). By not recognizing how conservation is conflated with neoliberal ideology and economics, Büscher et al. highlight their main concern that certain ideologies "are shaping economic thought and producing depoliticized policy discourses in conservation" (ibid., p. 12).

Conservationland is also affected by how the manners and mechanisms of conservation and conservation organizations have become increasingly capitalist in the past decades (MacDonald, 2010). Focusing on the sustainable development agenda and how "biodiversity has never really driven [international] environmental

agendas", MacDonald argues that conservation has served the purpose as an instrument as part of "larger political projects such as nationalism, colonialism and capitalism" (2010, p. 516). Therefore, conservation policy and practice "is structured in relation to broader and longer-term political goals" (ibid.). Building on Prudham (2004), MacDonald argues that capitalist development ought to be taken seriously, as it can be seen as an environmental project which "operates through the restructuring of socionatural relations" (MacDonald, 2010, pp. 540-1). To be able to do so, biodiversity conservation needs to be recognized as an ideological and material project, and "inseparable from larger political projects that define the constitution" (ibid.).

Further supporting evidence is provided by country case studies. For example, 'new' neoliberal biodiversity conservation in a case study on Namibia has shown that this kind of approach constitutes just the other side of the same coin of current conservation practice under neoliberal ideology (Sullivan, 2006). In doing so, the "naturalized presence of neoliberalism … produces the 'business of usual' of contemporary conservation discourse and practice. A presence that is so present it is absent, such that what this frame others become unnoticeable, and thereby silent" (Sullivan, 2006, p. 109). Though it is not explicitly pointed out, these findings speak of another form of depoliticization, as neoliberalism becomes de facto the only approach for conservation.

The literature on neoliberalization of nature has been criticized for failing to discuss and articulate the relationships between the environment and neoliberalization; that different types of neoliberal practices in analyses suffer from conceptual conflation, and that there is a lack of commitment to cross-sectoral and synthetic studies on neoliberal nature in the academia (Castree, 2008a, 2008b). Responding to these critiques, Bakker (2009) argues that the assumption behind the criticism – that the primary drivers behind neoliberal (environmental) policies are those aiming to maximize profits – is too simplified. Rather, Bakker argues that there is a wealth of goals – namely, social, political, cultural, and environmental – which "both drive and mediate the neoliberalization of nature" (2009, p. 1783). Thus, to understand why nature is being neoliberalized, it is necessary to consider a broad array of factors.

The neoliberalization of nature scholars may have perhaps tended to engage in resource-specific case studies, stemming from the recognition that there can be significant differences between those domains of socio-nature what are considered and constructed as 'resources' (Bakker, 2009). The biophysical characteristics have vast implications for how socio-economic projects of resource exploitation turn out, whilst the sociocultural and symbolic dimensions present in resource production and consumption function as factors, too (Bakker, 2009). Büscher et al. (2012, p. 9), on the other hand, emphasize that "ideas in and of economics are historically and geographically diverse and socially constructed, with consequences for both social and ecological realms".

In combination, these views point to the relevance of examining economic development in reference to the implementation of international institutionalized norms to see the extent the inbuilt ideology of neoliberalism is present across different environmental governance and conservation contexts. The following will examine different approaches to economic development and where and how they are of relevance to Conservationland.

3.4.   Discussion: Biodiversity, governance, and economic development

This sub-section weaves the three themes presented in the previous sub-sections together within the context of Conservationland.

Ecological modernization builds on the idea that the historical roots of environmental destruction can be overcome through the use of new strategies of capitalist accumulation (Ervine, 2007). Global environmental governance has increasingly embraced neoliberal capitalism – a powerful ideological and political project – in providing solutions, goals and targets which guide how humans interact with nature as well as with one another (McCarthy & Prudham, 2004). Most notably, a recent UNEP (2011, p. 17) report argued that "achieving sustainability rests almost entirely on getting the economy right".

Even though capitalism forms the context for the majority of the world in responding to global environmental change, it remains "the elephant in the room" (Newell, 2011, p. 4). Different disciplines and their literatures have not been bridged to explain the distinct practices and manifestations embodying capitalism's relationship with nature. This is down to "the fact that capitalism is taken as a background 'given': an irredeemable fact and seemingly irreversible reality of contemporary social and economic life whose implications it hardly seems worth naming, let alone systematically examining in relation to particular (human) ecologies" (Newell, 2011, p. 4). However, "while neoliberalism may pervade conservation, conservation remains a peripheral element of neoliberalism" (Brockington & Duffy, 2010, p. 119). If conservation is of little importance to neoliberalism and the economy in general, more emphasis ought to be on how neoliberalism and economic thinking are appearing to become of more importance to Conservationland.

Among the key reasons why keeping a close eye on neoliberalization of nature in particular in Conservationland is essential is how "the normalization and institutionalization of neoliberalism and its depiction as a largely technical set of devices for managing an open economy has served to depoliticize and de-democratize economic policy-making" (Hay, 2004, pp. 501-502). Though the above was drawn out of using United Kingdom as an example, it still stands that the frameworks of ideas and standards in which policy-makers work within not only influence the policy goals and instruments, but "also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing" (Hall, 1993, p. 279). This power of framing issues forms how different problems are seen and thus how they can be addressed is of crucial importance in understanding

the purpose of depoliticization, as the definition of the 'problem' can lead to differences in how to address the problem, and in who has the knowledge and the knowhow to do so.

Neoliberal conservation proposes to rely on the structures and processes of neoliberal capitalism to solve the ecological crisis which the latter caused. This results in a paradox in which economic growth becomes a prerequisite for ensuring the health of ecosystems, whose conservation then becomes the basis for further economic growth (Büscher et al., 2012). In conflating conservation and economic growth, conservation becomes a neutral, technical and apolitical undertaking to be managed, whilst the underlying and inherently political contradictions present in conservation are unacknowledged (Büscher et al., 2012). However, more remains to be argued about how this shift to conflate conservation with (neoliberal) economics is also depoliticizing, and what the implications of that are.

Within the frame of neoliberal capitalism, together with Green Economy, green growth has become a widely debated concept (Brand, 2012; Brockington, 2012; Dale, Mathai, & de Oliveira, 2016; Lohmann, 2016; Tienhaara, 2014). Critics of green growth argue that the persuasive power of the concept relies on a plea for "sustainable development without tears", and provides a 'quick fix' in incentivizing companies to support sustainable development, as they no longer need to do so at the expense of economic growth (Dale et al., 2016). Others argue that "green growth is not about solving ecological crises but rather reinterpreting them, creating new opportunities to take business advantage of them, and diffusing responsibility for them" (Lohmann, 2016, p. 42), whilst emphasis should be placed on the political situations driving green transformations, especially when considering institutional change and policy, as well as more significant shifts in political power (Scoones, Newell, & Leach, 2015).

The Club of Rome and its Limits to Growth thinking of the early 1970s stand now in stark contrast to the current neoliberal ideologies in Conservationland. When examining "the evolving framing of relations between growth and the environment and the role of markets and states in sustainability policy agenda", three major changes stand out in international sustainability discourse: 1) analytical shift from growth versus the environment to a notion of growth for the environment; 2) shift in focus from public regulation to market-based instruments; and 3) a shift from a political to technocratic discourse (Gómez-Baggethun & Naredo, 2015, p. 385).

Building on the premise that "continued increase in the physical size of the economy cannot be ecologically sustainable" (Gómez-Baggethun & Naredo, 2015, p. 386), key sustainability policy concepts have been framed in relation to economic growth and the planetary boundaries framework (Rockström, 2010; Rockström et al., 2009; Steffen et al., 2015). The Brundtland Report (1987) again is a central turning point having launched 'sustainable development', and turned ideas about the incompatible nature of economic growth and the environment upside down. If environmental problems are framed as the result of poverty,

then the problems can be overcome with growth: the culprit became the solution (e.g., Wanner, 2015). This compromise between the environment and economic growth reflects the neoliberal economic agenda of the time (Bernstein, 2001).

Since the publication of the Brundtland Report, the official forums of global environmental politics and development have viewed economic growth to be good for the environment. The difference between the first Rio Conference in 1992 and the latest in 2012 is the strengthening of the trend in sustainability policy in relation to trade, growth and the environment, as demonstrated by UNEP's Green Economy reports (2010, 2011) and the Rio Conference 2012 outcome document (Gómez-Baggethun & Naredo, 2015). The cause behind environmental degradation, according to UNEP (2011, p. 14), is that so far countries have been incapable of managing correctly the information on environmental externalities. To explain this, Gómez-Baggethun and Naredo argue that "the shift in sustainability policy discourse in regard to growth reflects an adaptation of international environmental governance to prevailing expansionary economic policies" (2015, p. 391-2).

What is revealed is the shift from "the politically committed tone in the early days of sustainability policy … to the technocratic approach where sustainability is presented as an apolitical problem amenable of technical fixes" (Gómez-Baggethun & Naredo, 2015, p. 392). The technocratic language and discourse of sustainable development and its main tool, the Green Economy, reflect "a broader process of depoliticization of public debate in liberal democracies, whereby politics are downgraded to the search for technical solutions to pre-framed problems" (Gómez-Baggethun & Naredo, 2015, p. 392; Kallis, Demaria, & D'Alisa, 2014). Conservationland has not been immune to such thinking. Some (e.g., Brand, 2012) have argued that there is little if any difference between sustainable development and green economy, whereas for others (e.g., Cook & Smith, 2012) the change in discourse "represents a sidelining of the social pillar of sustainable development in favor of greater emphasis on the environmental and economic pillars" (Tienhaara, 2014, p. 192).

The discourse on green economy and green growth has inbuilt conflicts and contradictions (Wanner, 2015). When analyzed through the lens of Gramsci, the discourse becomes a 'passive revolution', "whereby the dominant sustainable development discourse, subsumed by capitalist hegemony, is protected in the context of global environmental, economic and development crises" (Wanner, 2015, p. 21). The depoliticized orthodox economic assumptions behind the green economy/growth discourse are merely "a strategy of passive revolution based on obfuscating contradictions between economic and ecological sustainability" (ibid., p. 23-4). In doing so, the discourse provides a diversion of attention from the social and political dimensions of sustainability. As part of this passive revolution, neoliberalization of nature is to continue as the capitalist society requires nature to provide further arenas for capital accumulation and economic growth.

Ehrenfeld (2008, p. 1092) argues that "the reduction of all conservation problems to economic terms is counter-productive and dangerous. Trusting to market forces and the laws of supply and demand to correct inequities and restore healthy equilibria does not work in economics and certainly does not work in conservation". Discussing "how the environment is developed, or managed, unless this is seen as a political process" is erroneous if not outright dangerous, and thus there is potential in 'green' thinking to examine "questions of control, power and self-determination in the social engagement with nature" as opposed to just being concerned with ecology or environment in isolation (Adams, 2009, pp. xvii-xix). However, Adams et al. (2003) argue that environmentalists continuously fail to identify the ideological burden of ideas and policies, even though the ways in which environmental problems are framed and understood are significant in terms of how equitably and effectively they are then managed. Is this, however, what Conservationland citizens make of their work? That is the question I return to in the analytical chapter.

3.5. Conclusion

Biodiversity is multidimensional in that it is a scientific concept (thus prone to being seen as neutral and outside the political); can be seen to be just another word for 'nature' (by definition natural and apolitical); made something to be used as natural resources (to be managed via technical means); and something to be assessed and accounted as natural capital (economic, and again outside the political). Therefore, to make sense of biodiversity loss and the policies aimed at tackling it, one must embrace complexity. Each of the three key structural and ideological themes – institutionalized norms, depoliticization, and neoliberalization of nature – provide an angle necessary to examine Conservationland.

In discussing the increasing economization of biodiversity, scholars have mentioned how neoliberalization of nature has depoliticizing tendencies but have not explored at lengths the questions of why and how. This gap ought to be filled, as by making such tendencies and processes visible, they can then be countered. Before examining why neoliberalism, its depoliticizing effect and its influence on biodiversity policy take place, it may be necessary to examine how neoliberalism and depoliticization function in the context of Conservationland.

The neoliberalization of nature literature shows how biodiversity has become a part of neoliberalist and capitalist accumulation strategy (Brockington & Duffy, 2010; Büscher et al., 2012). This is even more so in international environmental governance, as the institutional mechanisms and the norms they produce are built on neoliberal ideas (Buseth, 2017; Kumi et al., 2014; Wanner, 2015). Thus, the norms themselves have underlying neoliberal assumptions about how biodiversity ought to be governed.

The institutionalized norms of international environmental governance are universal and to be applied everywhere; yet, not all countries subscribe to neoliberal ideology, or are advanced capitalist economies. As neoliberalism itself has a depoliticizing quality – from a very basic level of advocating the markets over the

state (e.g., Hay, 2004) – this chapter has contextualized Conservationland within the frame of institutionalized norms and their depoliticized and neoliberal nature.

4. Methodology

This methodology chapter elaborates the methodological approaches and choices made in the conducting of this research. Besides building on theoretical and conceptual work as in the previous chapters, this thesis also reports the findings of an empirical investigation. Consequently, several methodological questions have come to the fore over the course of this research project. When operationalizing this research, a range of methodological questions emerged, particularly with regards to fieldwork and people-centered research methods, such as interviews and participant observation, and their accompanying ethical concerns. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to describe how these questions were addressed, detail the methodological decisions made to answer each research question, and provide a justification for these choices.

In order to explore Conservationland and the personal views of conservation practitioners and professionals, I found a qualitative approach to be the most appropriate. Under this qualitative umbrella, two methods were deployed – participant observation and semi-structured elite interviews. This combination of qualitative methods afforded the opportunity to explore a wealth of nuances embedded within the CBD case study – a decision further explored throughout this chapter. These are elaborated as follows: the next section presents the qualitative research frame, providing a discussion of its advantages and disadvantages, and zooms in on the decision to apply a case study design to this research. Following this, the chapter moves directly to a section outlining the methods chosen, first focusing on the challenges of fieldwork, and then providing a closer inspection of the two research methods deployed. Towards the end, I move on to the research design considerations: first discussing limitations and access, and finally, ethics and positionality. The final section summarizes the chapter.

4.1. Research frame

This thesis situates itself within qualitative research. Such a framing is considered the most appropriate in answering the research questions, as qualitative approaches "celebrate richness, depth, nuance, context, multidimensionality and complexity" (Mason, 2002, p. 1). Due to the "unrivalled capacity to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular contexts" (Mason, 2002, p. 1), qualitative research approaches are most appropriate to confront the interpretive depth and diversity required when examining global environmental governance and the views of its actors. Taking a qualitative approach means focusing on a smaller number of cases and data points than in quantitative approaches, and thus my results will not be broadly generalizable findings, nor will I test hypotheses or build models. Though quantitative approaches would generate a certain kind of credibility based on statistics, such results are not what I aim to achieve with this research. Rather, a variety of qualitative methods and sources are used to address issues of credibility (Morgan, 2012), while the qualitative findings target a different facet of research to quantitative:

depth over breadth, discovering and improving our understanding of a phenomenon rather than measuring it.

The decision to engage qualitative methods to address this thesis' research questions is accompanied with the view that the aim of this research is not to uncover some ultimate truth. Rather, as a qualitative researcher situated on the post-positivist end of the research paradigm spectrum, I acknowledge the researcher's role as an instrument within the research: I shape the results as the researcher, as they are products of my experiences - both personal and as a researcher, as it is not possible to separate the two - and the wider society (Berger, 2015; Mason, 2002).

While quantitative approaches have been used within the body of global environmental governance research, qualitative methods and research designs have been more commonly applied (O'Neill et al., 2013). Moreover, in defending the use of a qualitative approach in GEG research, Biermann (2007, p. 328) has argued that scholars "should resist subjecting their governance and institutional analysis of human–nature interactions to computer-modelling, quantification and epistemological uniformism and to methods that are unfeasible to implement and impossible to trust in the social sciences", and rather "follow the internal logic and particular theoretical, epistemological and methodological approaches of the social sciences and the humanities, which are essentially qualitative, case-based, context-dependent, and reflexive". While this view is extreme, it speaks to particular qualities of this research that are particularly well-suited for a qualitative approach: its case study base, emphasis on context, and reflexivity. It is these matters that the following subsection on case study design elaborates on.

4.1.1. Case study design

To better focus the research on the research questions, and to tease out the insight into these phenomena, this thesis draws upon case study design. A case study is an empirics-led inquiry that examines the phenomenon in question within a contextually-bound frame while simultaneously regarding the frame as a porous division (Yin, 1989). As such, case studies are often conducted in order to discover rather than to justify and test theories (Morgan, 2012), which led me to privilege case study design over alternative approaches as I judged it best-fitting in meeting the aims of this research. Moreover, such a design has frequently been used in global environmental governance literatures (e.g., O'Neill et al., 2013, review of methods in GEG), as it is flexible and can be used with a variety of different methods, thus enabling the in-depth processes of analysis necessary in qualitative research. In the case of this thesis, a case study approach enables a focus on lived experience and practice in GEG, while allowing for advancing theory applicable to other contexts.

As a case study approach places great emphasis on the context of the case, the knowledge produced from these kinds of studies has been criticized for being atheoretical and ideographic, and unconnected and

untranslatable (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 1994), as qualitative research does not produce results fit for broad generalizations. Rather, case studies produce analytical generalizations, demonstrating the value of qualitative research as an approach that privileges rigor over replicability, and depth over breadth (George & Bennett, 2005). Further, the case study has been defended on the basis that the studies provide evidential density on a whole unit, thus enabling a full analysis of all the significant factors, and use multiple different observations to justify their results (Morgan, 2012).

Yin (1994) notes that this type of research design ought to be bounded by specific limits signifying the beginning and ending of the case. As the GEG represents a complex web of organizations and actors (elaborated in Methods section below), I ground my analysis within 'Conservationland', which for the purposes of this thesis is explored within the existing frame of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) - as it enables a flexible setting within which such a case study can be developed. As the CBD is the primary global biodiversity conservation agreement and framework, to which other significant global and regional conservation actors are also drawn, this thesis utilizes the established network as a contextually bound frame within which to investigate the research questions. This is where my understanding of a case study design departs from how such a design is conventionally understood, as the CBD does not pose explicit or physical borders within which to limit my case study. This has impacted how I understand "fieldwork", which is further discussed in the Fieldwork subsection.

As such, this research sheds light on the personal views and practices of GEG actors who are involved in the work towards the realization of global biodiversity commitments. Rather than look at on-the-ground implementation of the CBD, this thesis is interested in the people who work in the gap between commitments and their implementation: policy. Whether a national level civil servant developing domestic policy or international support staff assisting in this process, the views and experiences of these actors have not been a focus of attention in academia.

Though this thesis examines the practitioners working in support and capacity-building provided by the international and regional levels, it also showcases the views of some end-users to contrast the different points of view of these actors. I have made conscious choices to narrow down my focus, and therefore do not provide an overarching or universal descriptions or analyses on what Conservationland is as a whole. Rather, I focus on one specific and small part of a much bigger whole. I only focus on what may be termed 'mainstream' conservation, by which I mean the efforts of the official and nation-state kind to conserve biodiversity. This choice means that marginal and on-the-ground grassroots voices, realities, and views are excluded, among others, from the scope of this thesis.

Within this mainstream Conservationland, I zoom the focus of my research upon the small island states of the Pacific, as they represent one of the most diverse groups of countries in the world. Though forming a

region in its own right, Pacific countries are diverse in culture, governance, biodiversity, geography, politics and social relations. I have chosen to focus on the Pacific region in my national and regional interviews because of my experiences as a conservation practitioner and my longstanding interest in island biodiversity and biogeography. Their experiences shed some light on what they make of their roles in the web of global environmental governance and the CBD.

However, no single country or even region can be considered to be ultimately representative, and as such, representativeness is not sought in this research. Rather, emphasis is placed primarily on the international actors. The views from some of the Pacific country representatives, together with those of the Pacific regional environmental intergovernmental organization – the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP[3]) – provide a contrasting perspective to those of their colleagues in international governmental bodies providing the support.

4.2. On methods

4.2.1. Fieldwork

I attended two major conferences of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2018. The first was held in Montreal, Canada (where the CBD headquarters are located) in July while the second was held in Sharm El-Sheikh in Egypt in November.

International events and conferences are central to global governance (Corson, Campbell, & MacDonald, 2014). Large meetings under the GEG umbrella bring together key stakeholders, organizations and institutions across all levels, allowing time and space for networking, negotiations and holding of side-events (Campbell, Corson, Gray, MacDonald, & Brosius, 2014; Corson et al., 2014; Silver, Gray, Campbell, Fairbanks, & Gruby, 2015). Brosius and Campbell (2010) have argued that utilizing qualitative research methods at large international meetings makes it possible to research relationships between policies, discourses and practices, as well as examining the changes in governance institutions. At these meetings discourses evolve and develop, while terms, problems and solutions see their definitions take their shape (Suarez & Corson, 2013).

As major global biodiversity governance events, conferences of the CBD have presented such an environment to conduct my research in. These events provided me with a formal setting for the configuring of positions, social relations, and structures and the opportunity to observe interactions between actors and see presentations by different entities at side-events. Many conference participants knew one another, and many had met before at previous CBD conferences. It did not take me long to find myself a 'conference

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[3] Provision of support to member countries in the Pacific on translation and implementation of global biodiversity commitments is one of their key areas of responsibility.

buddy' – someone I had not met before and who was also a first time CBD-participant. I shared much of my conference experience with her in both Montreal and Sharm El-Sheikh.

The aim of the research design was not to only follow the formal negotiations of the CBD, but also examine what goes on in the margins of the meetings, whether it be the corridors, cafes, exhibition stands or lunch venues. Contrary to formal negotiations in isolation, the margins revealed a close-knit web of stakeholders, many of whom knew one another from attending these types of GEG events, which proved central to the development and delivery of biodiversity commitments.

As the CBD conferences gather a wealth of engaged stakeholders together in one place, it also enabled a central location for interviewing a wide range of actors. At the two conferences of the CBD I attended, I gathered primary data via participant observation and semi-structured elite interviews. Though the conferences were some time apart (July and November 2018) and held in different countries (Canada and Egypt, respectively), I consider both events to be part of the same "field". Rather than viewing ethnographic fieldwork conventionally as a time and place bound occasion, I agree with Corson et al.'s (2014) understanding that the field is constituted by relations across time and space, which come together at such sites like these CBD meetings (see also in Corson & MacDonald, 2012).

The more time I spent at the conference venues, the stronger the peculiar feeling of going to a big family gathering became. Perhaps like at Thanksgiving: you have family getting together from all corners of the country (or in this case, the globe!), you know your aunties will inquire when will you get married and have children, your drunk uncle will not stop bringing up politics, and your mother, perhaps, will have secretly invited your ex. The men of the family are watching football and the women are in the kitchen prepping the food. And there you are, hungry, trying to wait for the main course but filling up on snacks. Just like the Thanksgiving meal and the roles of its participants are essentially the same irrespective of whose house it is held, so it is with the CBD events and the 'sameness' of the field and Conservationland despite different locations.

I draw parallels between a Thanksgiving 'get-together' and a CBD conference falling within the scope of Conservationland because both gather actors which to an extent know one another, some of which very well (say, national level civil servants from the same region, such as the Nordic countries or regional small island state representatives; colleagues in different locations of the same United Nations section) and some less well, from attending the same conferences and side-events from one year to the next and recognizing familiar faces. These actors have a role to play and to me, as an observer, it had a choreographed feel to it. Certain countries are expected to say and do certain things: push for more ambition or pull back from strides made before. Certain groups are expected to be vocal and to an extent disruptive, while others remain quiet and "in their lane" (personal communication during fieldwork).

Despite this diversity, Redford (2011) has pointed out that social scientists have a tendency to over-generalize and view conservation professionals as a homogenous group, and with this in mind, it has required careful consideration into who are the key actors this research is interested in. Placing an emphasis on 'public' sector actors, national level civil servants are commonly viewed as public servants working for a state (or sub-national) agency – and as such derive their authority and legitimacy from the state. So do the regional and global level civil servants, too, as even though the chain for authority and legitimacy is more indirect for these "civil servants", international organizations and their respective bureaucracies derive their legitimacy from the consent of sovereign states who have signed up to these organizations (Bernstein & Cashore, 2007; Biermann, 2007). Moreover, by emphasizing the role of these actors as civil servants, the focus in this thesis has been on 'desk-based conservation', rather than on-the-ground implementation.

Reflecting on my fieldwork experiences, I find it difficult to describe the conflict between a certain kind of situatedness which is combined with an element of irrelevancy when it comes to the physical or geographical location of the specific field site. As a field site, a global conference is neither neutral territory nor home ground. The specific location of the conference matters less but it is not irrelevant either. Though the host countries of the larger COP-gatherings use the conference events as promotional opportunities, for the most part the typical 'rules' of being situated in a place in the Global North or South seem not to apply as the Conservationland bubble remains intact regardless of the physical or geographical surroundings.

This brings me to the following section on Observation: As my field sites function as venues for mixing people from all corners of the world, across all different kinds of stakeholder groups, what types of strategies are most appropriate to make the most of fieldwork?

4.2.2. Observation

Participant observation is the first of two methods utilized in this research that I describe in this chapter. In the case of this research, participant observation is taken to mean "deep hanging out" as suggested by Geertz (1998). As a research method, it requires a level of participation causing the researcher to become the research tool (Evans, 2012). As a participant observer, the researcher will inevitably influence what they observe due to being embedded in the process under observation. The broad aim of observation in the context of this case study is to describe actions conducted by different actors in their everyday work, what they take for granted, and the variety of issues they question.

Due to the nature of participant observation, analysis of observation data and observation itself overlap in an integrated manner rather than as a distinct stage, as the ongoing analysis of data feeds into the observation and further data collection (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Considering that the fieldwork consisted of multiple conferences, there was time for me to reflect in between the events. In practice, the CBD events

provided a research site at which official statements by different stakeholders could be observed, as well as the interactions between stakeholders (Berg, 2009; Campbell, Corson, et al., 2014).

The first phase of observations took place at a CBD "mid-term" conference[4] in Montreal, Canada in July 2018. This two-week conference worked as an introduction to the scene of GEG and as a scoping exercise. It helped establish who (what type of actors) attend these types of meetings and in what capacity. The second phase followed in November 2018 at the CBD COP in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. As the COPs are much bigger in size by volume of events and numbers of participants, I shifted my observation and research style from a distant observer into a participant and sought out more actively the views of others at the conference. This was largely the result of my growing confidence and feeling of ease at the scene of GEG, as I began to recognize more and more key figures by their appearances and got a feeling of understanding what was happening and where, and who were involved.

Participant observation at these conferences was conducted in an organic and opportunistic manner (Newing, Eagle, Puri, & Watson, 2011). Prior to the conferences, I had examined the agenda of the negotiations as well as the program of side-events. Side-events at times ran at the same time as negotiations, but primarily in-between the negotiation sessions. As such, I had a schedule of events which I had judged to be fruitful to attend, either because of the topics or regions they were addressing (e.g., ocean biodiversity, financing of biodiversity measures, post-2020 process, NBSAPs, 6th National Report process, the Pacific, issues closely related to island states such as invasive alien species, etc.). In doing so, I sought to find potential participants, such as those who were speaking or presenting, as well as asking relevant questions at these side-events.

I engaged with the interview method of snowballing (Pierce, 2008) to reveal additional actors whose perspective had yet to be represented in the research. I asked interview participants and others, too, whom I talked about my research within the margins of these conference events, in the case they knew anybody who they thought relevant to my research. There were many people who were mentioned who I had already marked as potential participants, but there were also a handful of times when someone relevant was brought to my attention whom I had not considered before. Often these led to interviews, though I did not manage to contact all. Throughout, thorough field notes were taken at side-events and of discussions held in the margins of the conferences with myriad stakeholders, in addition to general feelings and reflections on the atmosphere of the conference setting (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). These field notes were later drawn upon in my analysis to define the architecture of theme and sub-theme nodes in my coding scheme, as described

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[4] The primary decision-making conferences of the CBD are the Conferences of Parties (COPs). By "mid-term", reference is made to those conferences which can be viewed to perform a preparatory function to the COPs, e.g., SBSTTAs and SBIs.

further in the analytical section that follows. The next section, however, will further elaborate on interviews as standalone method within the frame of participant observation.

4.2.3. Interviews

This research uses semi-structured elite interviews. Rather than seek to find facts, semi-structured interviews are a useful method to gather data about an individual's perceptions, experiences and interpretations (Mason, 2002). Interviews were deemed a necessary method as it enabled access to the personal accounts of many central actors (Mason, 2002; Pierce, 2008). Interviews were central to addressing the research questions of this thesis as it was key to hear directly from the Conservationland inhabitants how they perceived their jobs themselves.

In terms of elite interviewing, 'elite' implies an individual who has held a position of privilege in society, and thus has been better able to influence political outcomes and policy than the general public (Pierce, 2008; Richards, 1996). The aim of these targeted interviews was to access the participants' perceptions, beliefs and knowledge which they possess due to their professional position; in this case of how they consider their role in GEG and its national level translation and implementation[5] (Flick, 2014; Richards, 1996). The participants were chosen on the basis of their job roles and past work experience. Most interviewees in this project are civil servants across different governance levels and can be categorized into three groups (number of interviewees in brackets): international civil servants (e.g., UNDP, UNEP, UNEP-WCMC, CBD: 14); regional civil servants (SPREP: 3); and national civil servants (Pacific representatives of different nationalities: 9).

Seldon (1988, p. 10) has argued that civil servants often make the best interviewees as they store information and observe action while remaining "dispassionate" in their position. Though very able to explain and trace past and ongoing events, in interviewing civil servants they did not come across as 'dispassionate', but eager to reflect on their actions and the effects thereof. As the aim was not to establish 'the truth' or find facts but rather, the method sought to record the interviewee's subjective analysis and insights of the phenomena in question, in doing so providing a rich and colorful source of data (Richards, 1996).

The employees of the implementing partner organizations of Global Environment Facility (GEF) have been prioritized over other intergovernmental organizations, as GEF is the official funding mechanism for the implementation of the CBD. As such, these partner organizations provide the umbrella framework for the key biodiversity-related commitments. Though identifying most of the relevant organizations and departments has been relatively straightforward, it would not have been possible to point out the most relevant individuals without insider knowledge (Berg, 2009; Newing et al., 2011). Thus, the snowball sampling

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[5] Though international and regional civil servant interviewees were asked to reflect on their role in supporting countries translate international biodiversity obligations at the national level, many understood this more broadly to include implementation as well.

method was integrated into the research design to include actors and perspectives which would have otherwise been underrepresented.

The majority of participants[6] were willing to be interviewed, and were happy to reflect on their job roles, projects and the conservation field at large. This experience of a positive reception of researchers among conservationists has also been shared by Kiik (2019) and Wahlén (2013). Considering that the interview questions were very open ended, participants often took the opportunity to explain their views as opposed to a more structured interview, allowing the conversation to be fluid and flexible and to take its course. During many of the interviews, participants ended up staying much longer than originally requested or agreed, which contributed to the depth of data.

Many interviewees were approached at the first CBD event I attended, SBSTTA22/SBI2 in July 2018, in an informal manner, with email follow-up requesting an interview at the CBD COP14 in November 2018. In this way, I was known to the potential participant, and the number of declines remained very low. This was particularly the case with international civil servants. With the Pacific country representatives attending these CBD events, a similar approach was deployed. First, informal contact was made at the SBSTTA22/SBI2, which consequently led to a more formal introduction to the whole group of Pacific representatives at the COP14. This facilitated access and increased the willingness of the representatives to talk to me despite the time constraints of these interviewees.

All interviews began with free, prior and informed consent. I provided each participant with a project information sheet to read, followed by a consent form. The length of interviews varied considerably, from 15 minutes to 1,5 hours. This is due to accommodating very busy actors with whom even a brief interview was considered valuable, whereas some others found much longer breaks within their schedule. These were often organized ad hoc in the margins of the CBD SBSTTA22/SBI2 and COP14: the cafes, meeting rooms and corridors. Often, the most fruitful discussions took place in quiet meeting rooms or over lunch, while corridors and the exits by meeting rooms were often both noisiest and had the most interruptions. In quiet meeting rooms or lobbies participants often took the time to ponder over their answers and focus, while it seemed that participants were better able to relax when interviewed over lunch.

All interviews were recorded with participants' consent and were consequently transcribed, and participants were asked about their willingness for follow-up for further questions and clarifications post-interview. This enabled an opportunity for any misrepresentations and -interpretations to be addressed (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

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[6] Of all the potential interview participants whom I approached in person, one declined, referring to a busy schedule and a lack of time – otherwise they, too, expressed an interest to participate in an interview.

4.3. Method of data analysis: Interpretive qualitative thematic analysis

This research uses thematic analysis and coding in order to make sense of transcribed interview data and field notes. To this end, guidance by Braun and Clarke (2006) was useful. Though originally developed for psychology, their method can be applied to other qualitative social sciences and is particularly well-suited for this exploration, as it enables the identification, categorization, and reporting of themes and patterns within rich textual data. I use Brown and Clarke's (2006) differentiation between 'inductive thematic analysis' (themes arising from the empirical data) and 'theoretical thematic analysis' (themes present in the literature) in order to use an abductive approach to identify patterns in the data. As such, I acknowledged my theoretical interests with reflexivity and engaged them in conversation with the codes that emerged from the data. Furthermore, my abductive approach to pattern-seeking was strengthened by an emphasis upon semantic and latent themes during my iterative process of code scheme development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In doing so, clusters of theme and sub-theme codes solidified within my coding scheme.

In practice, early iterations of my coding scheme were developed using code clusters that emerged directly from the data. Later iterations were then further refined by the context of ongoing GEG debates. Ultimately, my coding scheme worked to categorize themes that arose from the interview and observation data, while remaining receptive to the ways in which the key stakeholders felt and situated themselves in the context of Conservationland. This is where the Braun and Clarke's distinctions come into play, as coding needs to assign values not only based on what is said (e.g., defining biodiversity loss as a strictly technical matter) but also what the underlying assumptions, causes and effects. Discourse is also the means through which experiences, feelings and personal views become visible.

In preparation for coding, the interviews were transcribed, and all empirical material collated into written format and gathered in one place. The data were evaluated systematically through iterative phases of analysis, which sought common themes. There are significant overlaps between the different themes. The use of theme and sub-theme codes in the coding scheme facilitated my process of mapping, visualizing, and separating the themes into the arguments I present in the upcoming analytical chapter. The relationships between these different themes and analytical chapter are drawn together in the discussion section of the next chapter.

4.4. Limitations and access

The central limitations of this research are linked to methodological choices involving the case study approach and research methods. The case study approach carries with it a selection bias and it has also been criticized for both under- and overstating an observed connection between phenomena (George & Bennett, 2005). As the aim of this research is to better understand the mindset and views of the staff involved in the process of support provision towards international obligations within the frame of national, regional, and

international biodiversity governance, there cannot be strict hypotheses against which to link variables and seek quantitatively robust causal links. Instead, I rely upon multiple sources and methods in order to overcome issues of credibility and improve the validity of the results (Morgan, 2012).

This research is not without limitations. In calling for further studies into mid- to high-level conservation professionals, Kiik (2019, p. 411) argues that researching conservation experts in multiple locations or over brief periods of time means that "some of the richness and depth of one-sited and more sharply focused fieldwork is bound to be compromised on". In saying so, Kiik runs the risk of misunderstanding what the aim of such an ethnography on conservation professionals entails, or misrepresenting what the majority of these conservation professionals' working lives are like: a collection of shorter and longer projects, which overlap with one another, and for some, brief "field trips" to conferences and workshop venues across the globe. Matching academic fieldwork with the "field trips" of conservation professionals, as I have done during my data collection sprints in Egypt and Canada, inevitably involves the missing out on the usual office environment in which most of these professionals spend their working lives in. However, I argue that, equally, to only observe a one-sited office environment would not result in the same shortcoming Kiik considers compromised via a sole emphasis on the conference environment as a location of data collection.

Given the affordances of additional resources, this research would benefit from the exploring the practices of mid-to-high range conservation experts across a range of routine working environments. Furthermore, as a sole researcher without the backing of a research group, potentially important events and people were inevitably excluded from the scope of this research (Campbell et al., 2014), thus limiting the perspectives included in my analysis. However, the wealth of conservation actors and perspectives that were included made the development of 'thick' ethnographic accounts unfeasible within constraints of the research design (Cepek, 2010). Lastly, chance encounters and personal relations have played a proportionately bigger role in the execution and success of fieldwork. In order to examine these issues, my positionality as a researcher is interrogated further down the section.

4.5. Ethics and positionality

Questions of ethics are central to all research. This has also been the case with this project as people-centered research involves observing and interacting with people (Flick, 2014). The ethics guidelines of the University of Sheffield provided an ethical baseline for data collection, as data gathering was conducted after receiving ethical approval according to the University of Sheffield's processes and protocols. The University's processes were most stringent in terms of the interviews, as they required the provision of information materials to participants as well as consent forms. Such forms were helpful in addressing one of the key ethical dilemmas I came across in conducting research, as the consent forms allowed participants to indicate whether they wished to be anonymized. This often required a thorough discussion with interview participants. The

language embedded within the consent form prompted, and guided, such a discussion before commencing the interview. Rather than a tick-box exercise, it was discussed with the participant what anonymization means and how – if so indicated – that would be achieved in practice.

Anonymization was not always a simple matter of using pseudonyms (Wiles, Crow, Heath, & Charles, 2008): there were participants whom I acknowledged could potentially be identified even if only referring to them with a pseudonym, if also indicating the organization or country they represent. In such cases, I made sure the participants understood this, and reminded them that they were free to withdraw their participation in this research. The option to have their direct quotes used in this research approved before publication assisted in mediating the concerns of such participants. I found that conducting these discussions at the beginning of my interaction with interviewees assisted in building rapport and confidence, as confidentiality is more than just a matter of anonymization of participants (Wiles et al., 2008), and includes ensuring and reassuring participants that the contents of the interviews will not be shared with other interviewees.

Another significant ethics question is what often presided or overlapped with interviews: participant observation. As a participant observer – as opposed to observation without participation – I place an emphasis in my role as an active participant in the field. With participation in the events that I am researching comes the potential effect of influencing them. However, in attending major and formal policy conferences, my influence on what goes on around me will arguably have been insignificant, as I will not have changed the course of the events unfolding at these conferences. This does not, however, cancel out or diminish the fact that I have been a participant in the conferences I have attended: I have actively sought people to speak to, asked questions in side-events, and to use Geertz's (1998) term, spent time hanging out. I reflect on my interactions with individuals further below.

Throughout the course of this research, I have reflected on the researcher (myself) as one can never truly be neutral in their position - as personal characteristics such as gender, age, race, sexual orientation, beliefs, as well as theoretical, political and ideological stances influence the biases of the researcher (Berger, 2015). I approach the ethical dilemmas I have come across during my research journey using Berger's (2015) three categories of positions which can influence the research in three significant manners:

1. Access to the 'field' as participants may be more inclined to share their experiences to a researcher who they consider to be sympathetic, while the researcher may also be more knowledgeable about potentially useful resources;
2. Shaping the relationship between the researcher and the research participant, also affecting the willingness of participants to share their information and experiences with the researcher; and
3. The researcher's worldview and background are inevitably instrumental in how the researcher constructs the world, whether reflected through the use of language and the framing of questions,

or via the choice of lens through which to analyze and filter the data gathered from participants, therefore shaping the findings of the research.

In the following paragraphs, I reflect and describe how my intersectionalities and ideological stances have influenced this research in each of Berger's (2015) three significant manners.

Firstly, I believe my personal stance of pro-conservation is one I share with my participants. Though many promote a certain type of conservation (e.g. market-based, or more broadly neoliberal), I have been primarily led by curiosity and a healthy skepticism and criticism to all different approaches to conservation. I maintain that no conservation approach, project, tool or program is perfect, and everything ought to be fair game for constructive criticism. However, as Berger (2015) above notes, my worldview and background will have played an instrumental role not only in how my research has been operationalized, but also in shaping what I consider worthy of researching and how I have come to construct the world around me in and through my research.

Secondly, there are multiple aspects I have had to take into account in how I come across with my research participants as a researcher, not least as many interviewees were my former colleagues. This meant that I have had to navigate personal relations. There have been questions surrounding how to interview former superiors, colleagues, some of whom I would consider friends, as well as those interviewees who I was referred to via such personal connections. Because of these personal connections and my previous work experience, I often felt that I was considered by my interviewees as one of "the insiders" – a conservation professional rather than a purely academic researcher from the outside of the scene ('going native', e.g., in Busby, 2011; O'Reilly, 2009). It is my firm belief that these personal connections made my research considerably easier to conduct, both by granting me access to the field and participants, as well as via the often enthusiastic sharing of experiences in interviews (Berger, 2015). I am very thankful to all my interviewees and others who assisted me along the way in making new connections.

Additionally, as an "insider" I had the advantage of knowing some of the key actors personally and having easier and perhaps better access to the field via these connections (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006; Padgett, 2008). On the other hand, at times the participants' assumed that as we both shared experiences in the conservation field that I must be familiar with what they mean, thereby not completing their sentences or withholding information that they considered obvious to me (Berger, 2015). I had to be careful in making sure that I probed participants to expand and elaborate on what they meant when I noticed that such assumptions of my knowledge may be taking place.

Being an "insider" meant that I knew what kind of language to use (Berger, 2015). I directed participants to explore their work in GEG, namely their participation in capacity-building activities. Most often, the participants' views and understandings of capacity-building was that it was a good and worthy activity. Non-

national level civil servants, in particular, came across as enthusiastic and passionate in terms of the work that they do.

In terms of fieldwork, there are unavoidable unknowables when engaging in organic and opportunistic observation matched with fast paced snowball-style interviewing. At times, I found myself in situations in which I was directly pointed in the direction of a potential interviewee following an interview, with a recommendation to "go talk to them now". In such instances it is inevitable to be relatively poorly prepared as there is no time to investigate who it is you are walking towards to ask them for an interview. Furthermore, it is not possible to be prepared to face the multiplicity of cultures and backgrounds you encounter at such a fast pace: it is not possible to know the cultural expectations of the people you encounter at international conferences. Neither is it possible to know, or make assumptions about, the culture, background, socio-economic status, education, etc. based on interviewees name, position or place of work.

I am not proposing that one should draft a strict interview schedule with only known stakeholders prior to going to the field at global conferences. Quite the opposite: to not take advantage of such spontaneous opportunities even if it means you are not as prepared as would be ideal is not to make the most of such events. I found that a key to facilitating meaningful discussions, generating rich data, and conducting successful interviews was to go with the flow. The base to this flow came from having agreed and preliminarily set up several interviews and compiled a list of stakeholders whom I would be interested in seeking out at the conference. Regardless of whether the interview I had was with someone I had prepared to interview or not, the key was to have as little assumptions about who you are talking with. Knowing my own positionality and reflecting on it constantly has and had tremendous value.

There is one particularly personal matter I came to reflect on during fieldwork, specifically when interacting with people I did not know beforehand, and one which I am sure is familiar to fellow LGBTQ+ researchers. Since I had first entered Conservationland via interning and working at a UK-based and very international and outward-facing conservation organization, I had been met with and warmly greeted as well as surrounded by a group of highly educated colleagues and a very liberal atmosphere. Unconsciously, this is also how I had come to associate Conservationland: intelligent and well-educated people with primarily liberal values.

This view of mine, based on previous experiences, came to be challenged during my fieldwork. Having been an out and proud LGBTQ+ member for many years, I found myself debating how openly can I present myself. I vividly remember an occasion at which I was taking a conference bus back to my hotel in Egypt at the CBD COP. There happened to be just one other person on the bus, so we engaged in discussion for the duration of the 20 min bus ride. When the person on the bus introduced themselves and I found which country they were from – a very high-up civil servant and a powerful careerwoman in a country which imposes life imprisonment for LGBTQ+ members and effectively does not investigate violence committed against such

people – I froze for about a second. My immediate instinct was not to make her feel uncomfortable and go back to the closet, quickly. I engaged on the surface a pleasant discussion with this person as she – a woman maybe 10 years older than me – gave me career and family planning advice. Briefly: I should find myself a husband and have many children as soon as I had finished my research studies, focus on the children and then maybe if I really wanted to, I could seek a career but really a woman's place was at home with her children. There was a conflict in her message as she told me how she had four children and yet she was without a doubt a very well performing careerwoman in a particularly powerful ministry even on a global scale, but that as a woman, having a career was not a necessity and at most a hobby. A woman's job was to be at home, produce lots of children and be a mother.

The ethical question that I want to finish with, therefore, is one that I am left reflecting perhaps for some time to come. Research ethics is not just about doing no harm to others, but also doing no harm to oneself. As an LGBTQ+ researcher, denying myself and who I am carries trauma. I had known to expect these kinds of encounters as I had beforehand pondered over the diversity of cultures, backgrounds and values gathering at these global conferences, so in theory I was prepared. However, though this encounter in the bus was of limited time and the discussion itself was of friendly nature, it remains one of the encounters and discussions I recall most vividly.

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodology of the thesis. I have chosen to approach this research via an empirical query focused around the CBD and examine the personal views of those who are central to the workings of the practices of GEG. In doing so, a number of methodological questions needed to be addressed. In this chapter I have demonstrated how my qualitative approach with a mix of two methods has been a fitting and a successful combination for the purposes of operationalizing this research.

Seeking to achieve depth over breadth, I established how the choice of case study design was made. As my aim was to produce analytical generalizations rather than statistical generalizations, case study design was an appropriate choice within which to develop my empirics-based inquiry. Fitting with the case study, I used a mix of two qualitative methods: interviews and observations. The methods were primarily embedded within my fieldwork. Specifically, my fieldwork was unconventional in that it consisted of multiple stages and trips and was not geographically based in one location. However, such a fieldwork was necessary for this research as GEG and the CBD as field sites are not physically bound. Therefore, I demonstrated how my case study design facilitated my fieldwork.

Since the collection of data for this thesis has relied on interactions with people – in particular, in terms of fieldwork, interviews, and participant observation – there has been a wealth of methodological questions to

carefully consider. Highlighting the critical role of ethics and such considerations in research, the last two sections prior to this conclusion discussed matters of limitations and access, and ethics and positionality.

The next chapter draws on the empirical data as described in this chapter. The analysis will bind the data and results together with the earlier context setting and conceptual chapters.

5. Analysis: Conservationland and its citizens

My aim in this chapter is to shed light on the personal views of a particular group in a much bigger whole, Conservationland. In the previous chapters, I have contextualized this land within the surroundings and structures of global environmental governance. In this chapter, and going forward, I shift my focus to the individual actors within Conservationland. In doing so, I answer the second research question, 'To what extent are the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland reflected in the personal views of conservation practitioners?' The findings presented in this chapter describe a heterogenous range of incentives and motivators which drive work within Conservationland, whereby many conservation practitioners included in the sample were reportedly less driven by the substance of the conservation work itself, but rather, by the human element of working in conservation. This element, and its significance to the actors themselves, has been underappreciated in the literature.

The first section of this chapter expands on the actor-side of Conservationland and provides a simplified typology for conservation practitioners. The second section presents the results of my qualitative data analysis, as described in Chapter 4. I have categorized the key findings under three overarching themes: people-centeredness; politics; and job satisfaction. Primarily, these three themes illustrate that while acknowledging and considering themselves as technical agents, a sense of observing politics rather than being a part of it comes through in particular with international civil servants. Moreover, international and regional civil servants came across as overwhelmingly satisfied and thoroughly interested in their work, even though it involves overcoming different kinds of challenges. Perhaps as national level civil servants are closer to the strains placed on them by national level politics, there is less of a sense of positive energy and job satisfaction as with those at the international and regional levels.

These results showcase the rich data from my interviews and participant observations as elaborated in the methodology chapter above. In the third section I discuss the results in reference to the previous Chapters, thus answering my second research question. Finally, the fourth section of this chapter provides a conclusion.

5.1. On the agents of the industry

In this chapter I visit 'Conservationland' to expand and elaborate on the groundwork established by Kiik (2019). My focus on the actors in Conservationland builds on the growing interest in the lives of various kinds of scientists, experts, and elites (Carr, 2010), as well as ethnographies of organizations and institutions (Larsen, 2016) across the last few decades. Considering the colonial origins of conservation, the anthropology of development is particularly relevant. Development-oriented literature has been on the forefront of examining the lives and views of development and aid workers in the Global South. Rather than solely placing the emphasis on the local experience of development projects, exploring 'Aidland' has led to analyses of the

expat communities and the semi-nomadic culture which international aid and development workers experience (Fechter & Hindman, 2011; Nouvet & Jakimow, 2016). First described by Apthorpe (2005, p. 1):

> Aidland […] is the trail (to use a word that usefully is both verb and noun, and about both process and place) of where foreign aid comes from, where it goes, and what then. Stepping into Aidland is like stepping off one planet into another, a virtual another, not that this means that it is any the less real to those who work in or depend on or are affected by it in other ways.

The kind of '-land' literature has been applied to the peace-building and conflict resolution industry by Autesserre (2014), and further to the world of conservation by Kiik (2019). This increase in anthropological work into the conservation sphere has revealed how the conservation sector is not solely about natural sciences and technical solutions, but unavoidably and undeniably social; a view which my data and analysis support.

Harrison (2013) has presented a critique over focusing on 'the personal' in Aidland rather than analyzing institutional processes. This critique is also of relevance to this research. The reason for Harrison's (2013) concern is two-fold: first, that the picture presented in Aidland through the eyes of 'traditional' aid workers become dated as new actors and discourses emerge and the relationship between aid and development moves forward. Second, they point to a potential danger that a focus on development professionals could serve to shift the attention from the politics and material effects of development interventions, thus reinforcing dichotomy of 'developers' and 'recipients'.

Conservation – like international development and aid – is a sector and an industry with many facets. Though I appreciate Harrison's critique, I argue that the 'personal' inadvertently has implications to the manner in which conservation (or aid) unfolds. Hence, understanding the personal better is important to understanding why conservation takes the shape that it does. In focusing on a particular section of the conservation industry ('civil servants'), I make a conscious choice to paint a picture of some of the most traditional conservation actors. This ought to not be taken as a signal that other actors and conservation practitioners are of any less value or significance, but limits and scope require lines to be drawn.

The conservation industry, and thus Conservationland, is vast and diverse. There are no straightforward or simple answers to address what exactly counts or qualifies as conservation. For instance, does running workshops about market-based conservation measures count? How about an online forum focused on how to revise a national biodiversity policy? Consequently, there is no one right or wrong answer as to what makes a conservationist or a conservation professional. My focus in this research has been primarily on those whom I refer to as international and regional civil servants and secondly on national civil servants. What these different kinds of civil servants have in common is an affiliation to serve 'the public' – whether international, regional or national – and public funding to match.

To emphasize that Conservationland is much more than just these specific kinds of civil servants, I outline a simplified typology of conservation practitioners:

- ➤ Level: sub-national; national; regional; international
- ➤ Sector: public; private; third sector/non-governmental; academic
- ➤ Type: hands-on/blue collar; office-based/white collar
- ➤ Positionality: external (domestic); external (foreign); internal (local)

These categories are not meant to be taken to give a complete and full picture of Conservationland but rather as a guide and a reminder of the wealth of diversity that such a wonderful land may be home to. Significant overlaps between the categories are likely.

Conservationland is filled with encounters or "contact zones", in which people of different cultural backgrounds and histories come together to interact and intertwine (Barua, 2015; Pratt, 2008). Some of these encounters are choreographed, such as global conferences. Encounters at the global conferences and more generally between civil servants of different levels are perhaps less about (overt) conflict as presented in previous studies on local versus global actor where worldviews collide. The values of conservationists have been examined to some extent (e.g., Toussaint, 2005 on scientific values), with Foale (2001) noting how the naturalist view placing inherent value on biodiversity garnered via thousands of years of evolution clashes with those of indigenous, drawing on values rising from non-scientific reasons.

Typically, only the on-the-ground conservation project and the local people there have had their conservation encounters explored in depth via nuanced stories, while those conservation practitioners coming from the outside – let alone remaining on the outside – have been neglected (Kiik, 2019). Little if any research examines the offices of conservation organizations or other workspaces, therefore leaving a blurred image of who these people are. Hence, my research is not about the encounters between the local conservation practitioners on the ground with jet-setting international conservationists but between different (and similar) kinds of civil servants (with an element of consultancy): encounters between global, regional, and national public officials.

In practical terms, it is challenging to embark on in-depth, immersive ethnographic research to Conservationland (Kiik, 2019; Cepek, 2010). The work of these conservation civil servants takes place in so many different places (including virtual spaces) that tracking it systematically poses a range of logistical challenges. I caught a glimpse of a fraction of it at global conferences – an arena of significant importance where conservationists of different kind come to perform – therefore only witnessing one aspect out of multiple (normal, home office; working remotely on the road, at home; working on online forums; in workshops and seminars; etc.). Because of this complexity, I have narrowed my focus to one aspect of (global) conservation professionals and examine how they reflected on what they find interesting in their jobs.

5.2. Results

Like Aidland, where international aid workers are faced with 'moral labor' and facing commitments impossible to deliver on (Fechter, 2011), so do these conservation practitioners with mounting evidence that international conservation norms are not being institutionalized to the point of being met. However, the interview and participant observation data touches on what these conservation professionals feel makes their jobs worthwhile, what challenges they come across, and what they find rewarding. The question of what one finds interesting at one's job was open to interpretation, which the results reflect.

Following the coding of transcribed interview and participant observation data and the ensuing abductive analysis, three clear themes arose. I have grouped these results[7] into three sub-sections: 1) people-centered work; 2) politics; and 3) job satisfaction. The sub-sections showcase the voices of individual conservation practitioners to illustrate larger themes embedded within the overall data set. Section 5.3. provides a discussion of these results.

5.2.1. People-centered work

The stereotype of a conservationist is that they are motivated by "a desire to help not people but animals and other nonhumans" (Kiik, 2019, p. 393).

> My job? I like my job. First of all, I like the fish, itself, but in order to protect the fish, I also need to be in these kind of meetings [the CBD Conference of Parties], to know what other ways, to eat the fish, and to support the fish. If you know what I mean? (NCS15)

Though for some, the assumption that conservationists are indeed very directly motivated by nature, like for the national representative above, nature was not frequently mentioned in the interviews. Rather, working with people was the single most common thing mentioned and discussed as to what one found most interesting about one's work.

> KJP: What do you find interesting about what you do?
>
> ICS21: People. … I love working with the people.

The prevalence and multifaceted nature of this theme between participants within the sample, suggests that bringing people together, building bridges, networks and connections is a significant part of their job, and one they find thoroughly interesting and meaningful. In terms of content, building synergies between

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[7] Interviewee types are identifiable by three letter codes following quotes: ICS, RCS and NCS. The first letter indicates level (international, regional or national) and CS is short for civil servant. The number following this is randomly assigned so it is possible to differentiate between the individual participants. Comments by KJP refer to myself.

different multilateral environmental agreements, across the biodiversity conventions' architecture and their reporting frameworks has been a top agenda item for the past decades.

> It's technical, right? But on the other side, it's very human and a lot of people deeply care about what they do. (ICS07)

This brings me to the following point: conservation encounters in the case of civil servants are much more about human-human than about human-nature encounters. The data provides an insight into what these practitioners consider conservation to be about, what lies at the heart of their work.

Within the larger theme of people centered work, two related sub-themes emerged: the call of the small family, and the bringing together of people and countries. These two themes are described and illustrated in the following two sub-sections.

Small family

> I think it's amazing to work in an international organization [United Nations Environment Programme], people from all around the world and trying to get stuff done and many people are really really very good so you can learn a lot from their experience and I think it's also great to work on a global scale and to really try to drive policies and I mean you know what that is amazing is that the organization it's really pretty small. (ICS08)

This feeling of a 'small family' and a tightknit group of people came through in the interviews as well as in participant observations. Multiple interviews were briefly interrupted as people familiar with either the interviewee or myself went by and wanted to say hi. In the discussions I had with conference participants on the margins, many agreed that informal chats, networks and knowing people is absolutely crucial, as knowing and trusting other countries' representatives can make solving problems radically easier.

Summarizing the sentiment of many international civil servants:

> It's not just technical, it's also very exciting and human. And it's so nice to meet colleagues when you go to big conferences like that, and everyone. It's a small family in the end. So that's great. That's really great. (ICS07)

While another noted the following about the United Nations Environment Programme:

> In headquarters they're not so many people and especially if you exclude the generous support staff, then professional staff is really a small number and still they're in charge of the environment of the whole world which we're supposed to contribute. And so, then you imagine they're smaller than even a medium sized company and you should you're supposed to really change and drive policies worthwhile. (ICS08)

What I found interesting and surprising was that some of the national level civil servants highlighted their foreign counterparts as particularly helpful in showing the ropes in Conservationland. I had by chance had a discussion with one of these seasoned professionals who were often named. I could wholeheartedly agree that it had been a very useful, even if brief, discussion. Often, I was pointed in fruitful directions as a result of lunchtime networking, with suggestions that I should seek out so-and-so.

However, there was another side to this small family-ness which one interviewee pointed to:

> Of course, when we work with the focal points and Ministries of Environments, they are a part of the converted. So, we don't have to convince them. (ICS14)

Working with those you know and those who are already part of the 'converted' may make working with them easier, but at the same time speaks to a much wider (and well-acknowledged) problem facing Conservationland: it is harder to have an impact if your circle of influence is smaller.

Bringing people and countries together

A central aspect of this people-centered work is bringing people and countries together.

> Bringing them [national civil servants] to the same table to hold a discussion, and for them to learn from each other. We saw it as a good initiative to ensure that all countries receive the same information, but also broaden the discussion for countries to learn from each other within the same region. (ICS06)

> If you can make it through the synergies in between all of these important focal points, I think that would be a real success. And I think we are working to achieve that to be honest. And so yeah, to me that's most interesting. (ICS07)

In order to build these relationships and collaborations, a practical aspect of the job was the necessity for some to do a lot travelling, spending time in countries in face-to-face contact (RCS13).

Though for the most part the national level civil servants were distinctly different in their views to those of regional and international, enjoying working with people and bringing people together – working together towards a common goal – was a shared feature.

> I actually find where, like for the tourism [policy], involved also a lot of the local communities. I think those are the most fascinating projects for me because sometimes the ideas that come out of the local communities are just like, "why didn't we think of that" kind of a moment, so. And unfortunately, it had a lot of those moments during that. So, to me the most fascinating is working with the local communities. They're not exactly the easiest people to work with,

but once you gain their trust, then they're more open to you. It's really fascinating to work with them. (NCS16)

Reflecting on a national level policy development project, this civil servant also discussed their experience of working with the private sector:

It was interesting to me that the private sector was much more gung-ho about this tourism policy and we were actually trying to catch up with the private sector because they knew that doing this policy about protecting our environment meant that they were sustaining their tourism. So, they actually had a lot more awareness about, you know, the importance of discharge and policy and they were prepared. So, when we announced that we were doing the tourism policy, the private sector was saying they were prepared and they were actually toe to toe with the government and what should be done. (NCS16)

A similar sentiment of partnerships was echoed through the governance levels. The first quote is from an international perspective and the latter regional.

We're always coming in as partnership, you know, and the national level ownership is also really important, again, because we... It's often through the ministry of the environment, parks service, something like that. That is actually, you know, that has a real value to me in... If we're trying to make kind of long-term systemic change. (ICS05)

So, working with communities all the way up to, yeah, the government officers. They're just an inspiring group, the Pacific Islanders are really well educated and motivated. Very impressive. And then right through, I like working with the regional partners in the [Pacific] round table that we have ... So, I think just working with other partners and people similar to yourself, but you have also slightly different mandates or focuses, NGOs, our center government, other regional agencies, pulling them all together is good. (RCS13)

Though on the surface, a significant portion of the work in Conservationland is very data oriented, it does not dominate when asked about meaningfulness of work:

Yeah, at the end of the day, it's about how do you facilitate collaboration between different organizations, between different people, and understand their needs in order to get the outcomes you want or that they want. It's more relationships. It isn't just there are relationships between data. They're relationships between people that need to be identified and strengthened. (ICS21)

Besides a general sense of enjoying work centered around working with other people, often it was made explicit that it is particularly rewarding to work with others who share your commitment and drive to make a change.

> I still feel committed to the … project and countries will still reach out to me in as much as I'm not the one who's responsible for that project. But, of course, I try to link them to who's responsible. But to see that kind of connection with the countries, that for me is interesting, and keeps me feeling that my support then, was as important as it is right now. (ICS06)

> You get new ideas right through to every second year attending these big UN meetings, which I remember the first time I attended is just like the giggling that you're here at this huge meeting with all these countries somewhere you never thought you'd end up. Yeah, working across the whole scale in seeing how it all links and works together. It keeps the job very interesting. (RCS13)

The sense of shared commitments and working together translates to a shared sense of dedication, which I will examine in more detail in the third sub-section on job satisfaction. The next section, however, focuses on some of the more hidden aspects of their work: politics.

5.2.2. Politics

Politics underlies all of Conservationland. However, when going through the data for more explicit mentions of politics, interesting themes and variation between national versus regional and international civil servants rose. Sub-sections of positions and technicality are further elaborated below.

Positions

The positions and the view on politics differed significantly between the different kinds of civil servants. At the national level, emphasis was more on the struggles and 'making do':

> I realize I really don't like a lot of politics. (NCS16)

> I'm really pushing my staff, actually, to do this [global biodiversity commitments]. We have so much to achieve and so very little workforce, and so many demands on us. We have so many limited resources they give us to work, and yet, the population is going up every year, and the resources stands still, but the demands on our work delivery, outputs, is so high or so, on us… … I think the staff are relaxed when I'm here [away at a global conference]. I say, no, seriously [laughs]. (NCS18)

On the ground at the conferences, I found myself surprised by how keen and openly the different country delegates were willing to talk – at least off the record. For example, when I asked a country delegate what

their take on cooperation in their region was, they said that their country can juggle between wearing different 'hats' and always come out looking saintly. I found this view quite thought-provoking, as they were clearly critically aware that they were able to swap positions so that they always looked good and were able to protect national interests as opposed to always doing the 'right' thing and sticking to their regional cooperative line if it went against them.

At the international and regional level, on the other hand, there was more of an element of freedom while also pointing to the national level as the one where the decision-making power lies:

> Being in both sides [speaking with experience representing national and international actors] I realized that the only way to have impact in capital letters is actually being at the government. Yeah? However, being in this [international civil servant] role now really helps me to understand much better the range of positions, if it makes sense? So, to try to really ... because you need to support any country. You are not only defending one. I think it really helped me to actually try to understand why certain countries are really interested in something. I was doing that before, as well, because of course that's something that you need to do when you are in the government, as well. I think you are a little bit more constrained [at the national level].

> Now I feel like I gained some kind of freedom in really being able to really try to understand and to really try to help, not only my country, but also others. That they might have different agendas definitely to what I was believing at the time, but it doesn't matter because now my role is to try and help everyone in their needs, and their priories, and their ... I don't know, areas of work. Yeah, I think that's ... but I still think that if you can help them, but in the end the one that makes the decision is the person sitting under the flag. (ICS09)

However, the freedom at the international level is paired with bureaucracy, according to this international civil servant:

> It's an incredible task [global environmental governance and conservation] and I found it really quite... I have a lot of respect to my colleagues who really managed to make a change despite all the odds and all the difficulties, plus we have also very bureaucratic system ... It's just very cumbersome to get something done. It's really difficult, but still people know how to do it, and people do it and we have amazing projects, very, very good. (ICS08)

At the regional level, actors noted how:

> And having 21 other countries as your boss, that's kind of not just working for one government. You're actually supporting many. (RCS13)

Well, what's interesting in my work is it's quite challenging. It's challenging because of the very diverse issues and capacity issues that exist in our countries. You have to tailor your support to meet the specific needs and the capacity constraints within the country. You have to be mindful of that. (RCS12)

The theme of people-centeredness of conservation carried through when connections and relationships between institutions came up also in reference to the positions of different actors and stakeholders:

Successes are also around relationship building. Because like [ICS02] said, this team has been working for five years. Building relationships with UNDP country offices, with specialized within various, usually it's ministry of environment where you work with, in some countries it's different but related, because there's such institutional barriers between even among ministries in the same country, between UNDP headquarters and country offices, governments have been able to build those personal relationships and build trust, and to be able to have that group that's working together to meet with the country where they're at. I think is one of the bigger things, because people continue to come out with new data, new tools, all of these various things to try to solve the biodiversity crisis but new tools and new technology only works if you just have the ability to translate it into applications on the grounds that are customized for where the country is. (ICS03)

Speaking of international commitments, regional level actors reflected on some of the challenges working with the national level.

We know that it links to the global targets and the global commitments, but then we always talk about it as national priorities and so putting them to meet them, we don't necessarily go in promoting that you're helping them achieve their global targets, which is true, but it's more about what they want and helping them achieve that. (RCS13)

But the interesting thing to me is also the challenges that I face with the project. And how you communicate and try to be creative. You know because the issue involved... It's sensitive because it involves ownership and you know, benefit sharing. So. Those are the challenges, but I think they're quite interesting having to see how can really fold out a framework that caters for the interests of the parties [countries] involved. (RCS10)

Speaking to a national level delegate provided a more contrasting position to these global commitments. They made it clear that they were skeptical about the 'real' impact of the CBD and argued that the convention is pointless, because countries do what they want irrespective of the CBD, but if the country actions match with the CBD they are then reported as related. They also added that this was common knowledge among

the Parties, most of which according to them think that the current 'system' is not fit for purpose but still engage with it and do not try to change it as it is the best one available at the moment.

An alternative but equally compelling take on positionality came from a senior international civil servant. In interviewing them, they reflected on the intergenerational aspect of having to overcome biodiversity loss:

> I think that [the ecological crisis we are experiencing] is something that is so complex. Again, it's a word. But, it is. And I don't know how we're going to solve it. Or, your generation has to solve it because I don't know if our generation is able to solve it. I hope we put a good 2020 process together, I hope we are able to bend the curve by 2030. That is with what our generation can do.
>
> If we have been, breaching ethical boundaries, I don't know. That is for your generation to fix. The generation before us left us this mess. The generation after us, hopefully we have given you enough tools and guidance to make it better and change behavior you know? Because, our generation inherited this [conspicuous] consumption habits and that's what's led us to where we are. (ICS17)

These views were delivered at the end of an interview with a senior international civil servant. They took their time to reflect on the matter of biodiversity loss, and there was a shift in the interview from a more business-like feel to a personal one. What came through was genuine worry and concern – a sense that this is bigger than us as individuals, and that we are all in it together.

Depoliticized agents or agents of depoliticization?

Conservation is often viewed as a managerial and technical – depoliticized – undertaking, and international or external practitioners in conservation are seen as "abstract, homogenous, and faceless representatives of global ideological regimes" (Kiik, 2019, p. 396). The narrative is that conservation is data and evidence-driven, with little emphasis on the human side of the story. This cognitive narrative contradicts the tangible feel at the global biodiversity conferences that so much of the work relies on human networks.

> I like networks. I like connections. I like understanding cause and effect and how all of the things can be brought together in sort of a compatible way and, then, move upwards. And if you think about different priorities. Better understanding of those priorities. That's where you actually meet that need. Data is only as good as how it is serviced and how it can supply of answers. Now, data in and of themselves are just data. But it's the bigger question. So that's where it becomes interesting. (ICS21)

Reflecting on this balance between technicality and managerial job description and the actual content, one participant noted how:

> I think it's the diversity that you work from anywhere from being in country and supporting them with technical aspects of doing a biodiversity survey and mobilizing, like, scientists from around the world with these expertise to come in and you have this team assisting do a survey and you're out there working with the community. It's always going to be about capacity building and ensuring that the local community's involved plus the local government, environment officers. So, it's never just about going in with outsiders to come up with the data. It's about always capacity building. So that sort of work. That's really great. Hands on technical stuff. (RCS13)

Another, on the other hand, pointed out how:

> One of the things I really enjoy in this project is, it's as human as technical. So, we do provide very specific guidance, I think the most technical tool that we have at this stage would be maybe the UN biodiversity lab, which is ... I mean, to build it from our side, it can be very challenging to get all those data layers from all the partners, and politically challenging also to cooperate with so many big agencies. And it's very technical, it takes a lot of energy to get there. And then countries preparing maps and using spatial data. After that, you really need to make relevant decisions based on what you see, and how you can put quantitative data on it. (ICS07)

Though at the conferences themselves there were many biodiversity and economic valuation related events and presentations, only one interviewee brought it up as an interest:

> The other thing which I find very interesting is all the debate about the value of biodiversity and how we can use these projects working with the governments to stress the importance of communication around the value of biodiversity. (ICS14)

Perhaps in contrast to the predominantly technical, data but also people-centric views of international and regional civil servants, a country representative had a more holistic look on why to do their job.

> It's not just because we care for the environment, for the environment itself, but knowing that we're interlinked with the environment. We are dependent on it. And our safety and security is dependent on its well-being. (NCS19)

This national level civil servant really summarized the bigger picture of Conservationland, the existential crisis I discussed in the introduction chapter. Though many others, too, spoke about the importance of nature, this statement was the most direct. It is also interesting in its treatment of humans as part of nature rather than the binary which underlies the managerial manner of depoliticization and neoliberalization of nature.

5.2.3. Job satisfaction

A third reoccurring theme which emerged in the interviews was job satisfaction. Though the interviewees often noted how busy they were – at the conference and otherwise – they also spoke very fondly of what they do. Many emphasized a sense of privilege in being able to work in conservation:

> I get to get up in the morning and come to work in what is most people's hobby. I get to work on nature, I get to work with species, I get to work with all kinds of biological diversity, with people, with different nationalities, with everything. I am very lucky to be able to do that. And I am happy to wake up every morning to come to this. (ICS17)

Being able to work in conservation is no simple feat as entering the sector can be difficult: many are interested to enter Conservationland but especially entry level positions are hard to come by. I have personally experienced what my peers described a traditional conservation career story: I entered a conservation organization as an unpaid intern, which afterwards resulted in getting hired in an entry level position within the organization. In particular, in office-based conservation jobs this has led to a 'privilege' problem: either only those who can afford to commit to long and unpaid internships (mine was over 6 months) or those with the capacity to work enough hours in paid work alongside such an internship make it in conservation.

This section is divided up into two sub-sections based on the most frequently mentioned topics. These were a sense of making a difference, and positive feedback from peers and customers. There are significant overlaps with the first section on people-centered work, as it was often at least an aspect which really motivated conservation practitioners or functioned as a source of job satisfaction in its own right.

What is notable in this section is that the voices of national level actors are absent. Though only one of the quotes below are from a regional civil servant, they, too, shared a similar mindset and positive experiences and job satisfaction as the international civil servants (whose views dominate this section) as opposed to national level civil servants. Though in the interview data international civil servants are best represented in comparison to regional and national level actors, the difference in openly manifested positivity of international and regional versus the skeptical and more critical views of the national level are in stark opposition.

Making a difference

In thinking of -land literature as discussed previously in this chapter, it is perhaps here in this sub-section where the parallels are the most significant across these different '-lands'. To drive change and improve the world around us, a commitment to 'making a difference' truly is at the heart of Conservationland.

It makes it challenging in a good way and what's interesting is for me that really I enjoy a lot is really to see that there is that level of commitment and interest to make a difference and working towards achieving some, you know, a difference at the local and national level. That gets me going in my job. This has always been my ... My whole career has been on environment. (RCS12)

Okay, so [what is] interesting about my job, I mean, I love it. For me it's super interesting that you can actually have the opportunity to help governments in advancing their agendas. I think that's one, from my perspective, you either work in a government or with a government if you really want to make a difference and have an impact of some sort. Yeah, I think that's the huge highlight. (ICS09)

However, making a difference is not an easy feat to succeed in.

It's about having the opportunity of making something as useful as you think and also pushing for the process of developing whatever output you are doing in consultation with the governments that would be the ones that need to actually take this and do something with it. I think that's ... yeah, it's quite a good opportunity of doing something meaningful. (ICS09)

This translated as a sense of passion and dedication, best expressed using the words of the practitioners themselves.

My personal mandate or as an organization? Personal passion. It's a big question. I adore what I do. I love this. I love working with the people. I love figuring out, like I said, the connections. I love the diversity of the questions and the topics that we addressed. I like the tangible outcomes. I like being able to see where we are going and how we're pressing towards things. And I'm perfectly fine with the long game. I don't mind the... I realize it's not going to be solved within like a week. (ICS21)

Nature, it was my passion, all through school, I started nature clubs, I did a whole bunch of things and that translated into a job for me, so I couldn't be happier or luckier than that. That's what makes me happy. (ICS17)

It's [conservation] very human and a lot of people deeply care about what they do. (ICS06)

It's interesting that we work with people ... Just the global coordination team from across different parts of the world, and being able to look for times, specific times within their schedule, to have meeting and actually to discuss the project. That for me shows the level of commitment. And it gives me the motivation that there's a purpose in this. (ICS06)

And so that's exciting, ... You do actually have an impact on something much bigger. (ICS07)

As a researcher and an interviewer, it was remarkable to see the exuberance expressed. When I asked these practitioners to talk about what they found interesting in their jobs and gave them the opportunity to reflect on the things they care and are passionate about, there was a very visual change in their presence. It is difficult to precisely describe all the small changes in one's appearance when enthusiastic about something, but generally many shifted in their seats and sat more upright or leaned over a little. None of my interview participants seemed indifferent about the work they do, quite the opposite. This made conducting research really pleasurable as their enthusiasm was infectious.

Feedback

In particular among the international civil servants, feedback from the countries and sometimes from peers was considered a rewarding aspect of the job. Direct feedback how you had done a good job and helped the national level counterparts in doing their job was particularly highlighted. The below quotes are from two ICS reflecting on the feedback they have received in their jobs.

I think the best reward we can have is when countries we've helped come to us, for instance, and say, "Oh, this was very helpful." For either technical review and actually the feedback we get from countries shows that each of the technical tools can be really relevant. And some of them will prefer the review framework, for instance, to be guided and check-listing everything in reports. Some others [a South American country], we just saw them in the corridor and they said, "The data tracking tool, the Excel spreadsheet was so useful. We loved it, we were able to engage stakeholders." Others were more on gender and say, "Oh, thanks for providing guidance, we didn't know how to focus on gender and making gender responsive." So this is to me the best reward. And that happens, actually, when we see people face to face because our project is virtual. And so, it's very rewarding when we're in-person workshops. And you have our colleagues that come up to us and say, "Thanks for organizing that, and now I understood much better, I understand how I should report on this. That was really helpful." To me that's definitely the best success. (ICS07)

The kind of feedback we are getting from countries right now, positive feedback, when they probably attend one of the workshops that we've held, and they leave the room more satisfied about the support that they've been given and more aware of how they're going to actually prepare their national report, that encourages me. Just by the fact that you will be told "thank you so much". (ICS06)

We did end of workshops surveys. And the kind of feedback I got is motivating, and it's encouraging for me to proceed with this work. And feel more encouraged to continue creating

more, doing more innovative strategies to ensure that they have access to all the information they require. And all the resources they require. I might not have all the information but I can link them to people who can do that. So yeah, and it's a global project by all means. It makes me feel good about it, about myself and doing what I'm doing. (ICS06)

For some, what counted as feedback and a show of appreciation was being acknowledged in a national level report. For others, a less direct feedback but a source of joy nonetheless was to see a final national level report feature an area of work the ICS had been actively nursing with their national level peer, often with a strong technical aspect. Thus, when this technical aspect was included in the report and done very well, it was a source of pride and success: your work had had an impact.

5.3. Discussion of results

My three results indicate what conservation practitioners find interesting about their jobs:

1) it is people-centered work in which there is a sense of a small family, that they are able to bring people and countries together to work towards common goals;

2) there are different positions at play, which the international and regional national civil servants are able to observe from the sidelines as outsiders to formal national level government actors; and

3) these international civil servants enjoy high job satisfaction as they feel they are making a difference and are getting rewarding feedback in doing so.

On the surface, these results are not easily mapped against the themes of institutionalized norms, depoliticization, or neoliberalization of nature. This is in itself a finding and adds a discussion point to the literature. Thus, the short answer to my second research question is that the extent that these themes are reflected in the views of conservation practitioners cannot be particularly large. However, it is worth digging in a little deeper, which this discussion proceeds to do.

While the perspective of the individual is not directly discussed at length within the themes of Chapters 2 and 3, elements of each can be detected. Against the conceptualization of Conservationland in previous chapters, the term 'technical' is often used by the practitioners when they reflect on their work. However, results from the empirical analysis indicate it is not solely what drives them. Though the conference settings provided a wealth of information on different themes that fall under neoliberalization of nature, only one participant mentioned valuing environment as a topic they were interested in. Moreover, as institutionalized norms and their implementation is what most of these international and regional civil servants' workloads are comprised of, the norms themselves, or even their processes of implementation, were not referred to often. Rather, it was working with people that was repeatedly highlighted as a key driver of motivation.

In terms of technicity, as a scientific concept – often prone to neutral and apolitical connotations – biodiversity is sometimes reduced to economics, and simply accounted for as natural capital. The tendency to strip biodiversity loss from political contingencies has rippling implications into how it is governed within Conservationland. The second key ideological theme presented in Chapter 3, depoliticization, provides a necessary angle in understanding these implications upon this thesis' findings. For example, the green growth centered narratives occasionally promoted in Conservationland do not confront the political decisions which drive biodiversity loss across regional, state, and global scales – and neither do the different types of civil servants, either. While these narratives have established a platform for illustrating the role biodiversity plays in local, national, and global economies, they are unsuccessful in interrogating the political mechanisms driving biodiversity loss.

Together these results demonstrate that international and regional civil servants see themselves first and foremost as technical actors who observe politics rather than take part in it. They are also highly interested and passionate about their jobs. These views align with the understanding presented in Chapter 2 that despite the increased influence of NGOs, the private sector and civil society organizations, states remain central actors in global environmental governance. Though most likely there is also a politics of kind at play at the international and regional levels, these actors perceived it as something different from the national level which they 'observe'. In opposition, their national level counterparts are more critical and skeptical about institutionalized norms and their implementation, having to keep an eye on the politics at home. Also, though many of the national level actors, too, were highly passionate about their work, it came with a pinch of salt.

This is where a thin line can be drawn: Conservationland is about working with environmental thresholds which do not honor state borders; however, only sovereign states have the power and the right to determine lawful practice within their borders. As international and regional civil servants are 'removed' from the politics that takes place at the national level, they also enjoy an element of freedom by not being constrained by this politics. Rather than having to concern themselves with the direct implementation of global biodiversity commitments – international institutionalized norms – within the borders of one country, they are tasked with bringing people together across these borders.

There are some contentious points with this line-drawing. One point of difficulty is the universal applicability of the institutionalized norms, as they carry underlying depoliticized ideological assumptions about neoliberalization of nature, and the managerial nature of governing biodiversity as explored in Chapter 3. Yet, these assumptions are not universally accepted everywhere; neither are all countries advanced capitalist economies. In such cases, can the international and regional level 'technical' support from Conservationland in the national level implementation of the institutionalized norms ever be neutral and apolitical? Is it

possible for the non-national level actors to just 'observe' politics from the sidelines without being or becoming political actors themselves?

As such reflections are not very visible in the data, a question which springs to mind is whether the depoliticizing quality of biodiversity governance and its institutionalized norms discourages reflection on the potentially contentious nature of the substance of the work and of Conservationland. Challenging neoliberalization of nature is not encouraged or does not even come to mind as it is the norm itself. More overt neoliberal tools to commodify biodiversity (such as TEEB) are only viewed as helpful new tools to communicate the value and importance of biodiversity to others outside this small family of Conservationland.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has explored and showcased the personal views of international, regional and national civil servants in Conservationland. I began by providing a typology of conservation practitioners and a more actor focused view on Conservationland before presenting the results of the qualitative analysis. My analysis has highlighted three prominent themes that conservation practitioners within the sample found interesting in their work: how people-centered their work is; the underlying role politics and positions play; and finally, how positively particularly international civil servants view their work and appear to have high job satisfaction.

My discussion linked the results from my empirical interview and participant observation data to the wider context of Conservationland and its key themes of international institutionalized norms, depoliticization and neoliberalization of nature. By situating the personal insights of conservation practitioners within their surrounding context of Conservationland, I have answered my second research question of the extent the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland are reflected in the personal views of conservation practitioners: though institutionalized norms, depoliticization and neoliberalization of nature are present to some extent, these themes are not very prominently reflected in the personal views of conservation practitioners. Rather, my results and discussion showed how important and central the human element is to these professionals. Though these actors are often viewed as technical experts and view themselves as such, it ought not mean that their personal views exist separate to how they perform their roles in shaping how global conservation takes shape.

6. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I summarize the primary findings of my research and offer some reflections on the research questions. I also outline the practical implications of my results and suggest recommendations and opportunities for future research.

Conservationland seeks to tackle some of the most profound challenges of the modern age: biodiversity loss poses an existential threat to all life on earth. Conservation as an action or an aim seeks to change the course we are currently on. These efforts have been ongoing for decades within the global governance frame, which has resulted in diverse bodies of literature. However, these literatures have placed little emphasis on Conservationland and its citizens. In doing so, the views of the practitioners who work to apply global biodiversity ambitions to practice have previously been largely ignored, despite their central role in the shaping of what conservation is and looks like.

Thus, the purpose of this thesis has been to clarify the role of conservation practitioners in translating global biodiversity governance and its commitments into practice by focusing on how individuals' view their own roles in this process. I approached this puzzle through the means of two research questions:

1) What are some of the key structural and ideological themes of Conservationland?

2) To what extent are these themes reflected in the personal views of conservation practitioners?

In answering these questions, this research has demonstrated that within the broader frame of global environmental governance, it is necessary to not only focus on the structural and underlying ideological features, but also to take into account the individual in Conservationland. I 'visited' a specific part of Conservationland on my fieldwork in international conferences where it was possible to be present in the structural surroundings while being amidst the individual citizens of Conservationland. My case study approach and the accompanying fieldwork allowed me to develop a more contextualized account of Conservationland. The new empirical evidence I presented in this thesis demonstrates how the human element – working with people and having high job satisfaction – is of central significance at the individual level. While looking past the individual, there appears to be a depoliticized belief regarding the neutrality of one's work and Conservationland, which consequently translates as an unwillingness or inconsideration to reflect on the contentious nature of the substance of the work in Conservationland.

Over the past chapters, I explored different aspects of Conservationland. My goal was to further advance the contextualization of Conservationland in the footsteps of Kiik (2019). Carving out Conservationland as a non-physical space located within the global environmental governance framework, its history and architecture, I examined the recent history and developments which have had a significant impact on what Conservationland is like today. I emphasized the role of science and experts, while noting how states remain

central actors in global environmental politics despite the rise and increased influence of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and the global civil society.

An essential feature of Conservationland is the paradox between state sovereignty and the borderless nature of biodiversity loss. Perhaps to counter the lack of action to address biodiversity loss, the 2010s saw many efforts to 'economize' biodiversity and place it within a narrative of the economy. In particular the framing of the Green Economy has worked to increase awareness of the environment and biodiversity within economic sectors. The emphasis has been on the positive sides of new jobs and industries, growth opportunities and technological advancements, as opposed to interrogating what the drivers of biodiversity loss are and how they should be addressed.

In my conceptual framework – chapter 3 – I focused on three central features of Conservationland: international institutionalized norms, depoliticization, and neoliberalization of nature. I discussed these features and contextualized them together with the historical accounts of the previous chapter. In doing so, I answered my first research question, 'What are some of the key structural and ideological features of Conservationland?'. The environment and biodiversity as part of it has become a part of a neoliberalist and capitalist accumulation strategy, which comes with a depoliticized quality attached to it. As international environmental governance and its institutionalized norms are built on neoliberal ideas, so, too, do the norms themselves carry underlying neoliberal assumptions about how biodiversity should be governed. This, in turn, creates expectations and 'rules of engagement' for Conservationland and its citizens.

The methodology – chapter 4 – elaborated how I have operationalized this research. The chapter explained why I engaged with a qualitative approach as the most appropriate to research Conservationland and the views of its individual citizens. My approach was one of a case study in which my empirical query focused around the Convention on Biological Diversity. My goal was to produce analytical generalizations rather than statistics-based results, for which I deemed two qualitative research methods appropriate: interviews and participant observations. Both methods of data generation were primarily conducted during my fieldwork, which took place at two global conferences of the CBD in two different countries.

In my fifth and penultimate chapter, I analyzed my primary data and provided the results of this research in order to answer my second research question 'To what extent are these themes from chapters 2 and 3 reflected in the personal views of conservation practitioners?'. I focused on showcasing the personal views of international, regional and national civil servants whom I place within the flexible borders of Conservationland. In this chapter, I first provided a more detailed account of Conservationland and a typology of conservation practitioners. In my analysis, three prominent and common work life characteristics of what practitioners within the sample found interesting in their work: the significance of working with people; the

underlying role of politics and positions; and high job satisfaction particularly among the international civil servants.

Though the focus on the individual does not map easily against institutionalized norms, depoliticization or neoliberalization of nature, elements of each can be detected in the findings. The term 'technical' was widely used by practitioners when they reflected on the work they do, but it was evident that it was not something that really drives them – but working with people does. Further, even though there were several occasions during these global conferences when matters falling under the umbrella of neoliberalization of nature were discussed and promoted, only one participant mentioned such a view as interesting. Since institutionalized norms and their implementation is a key area of work for international and regional civil servants, it was surprising that the norms or their implementation processes were barely referred to.

This gap between what the substance of the work is and how the practitioners discuss it and their views about their work in general demonstrates, and reveals, a snapshot of how depoliticization operates within the conservation industry. Though at the heart of conservation there are many highly contentious and political questions around how natural resources are used, including who has access to which resources, whose values and voices matter the most when conserving (or not) nature, these questions are hidden behind the depoliticized biodiversity governance and its institutionalized norms. Many international and regional conservation professionals see themselves detached from these questions, and tend to position themselves as technical actors who do not influence nor play a part in questions of such contentiousness.

The discrepancy in how 'politics' is deemed to (not) be present in Conservationland and in what form is one of the areas of research requiring further investigation. Are international and regional civil servants just technical actors who observe at a distance the politics taking place at the national level? What is the politics like among the international civil service? How do these map against the paradox of state sovereignty and the nature of environmental issues, especially if one zooms into the countries of the Global South and the better resourced international civil service? These questions and the research required to answer them ought to shed further light on the relations, successes and challenges in Conservationland and improve our understanding of the governance of biodiversity.

What do my findings mean for Conservationland and for global environmental governance more broadly? My results suggest that international and regional civil servants are highly driven, very interested in their jobs, and passionate about what they do. Though their national level counterparts often also came across as passionate and interested in their work, they seemed to feel the pressures of the national level politics more and the struggles of making change happen on the ground at home, thus coming across more critical and skeptical. The three themes conceptualized as central to Conservationland are present only to a small extent, most visible when practitioners recounted their views on positions and politics in Conservationland. The

takeaway, thus, is that the human aspect – the personal and individual aspect and the accompanying views – ought to be better considered when studying conservation and global environmental governance, as these practitioners play a significant role in shaping and applying abstract global conservation governance to practice.

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Annex 1: List of interviewees

26 participants were interviewed. Interviewees were anonymized, and each interviewee were given a three-letter code to identify what kind of a group they represent: NCS, RCS or ICS. The CS is short for Civil Servant, while the first letter indicates a level: N for national; R for regional; and I for international. This three-letter code is followed by a randomly assigned number so that it is possible to differentiate between individuals of the same group (01-26). Comments by myself are marked as KJP.

Of the 26 participants, nine were national level civil servants from the Pacific region; three were regional level civil servants from the Pacific region working at SPREP; and the remaining 14 represented international civil servants. These international civil servants were a mix of employees at UNDP, UNEP, UNEP-WCMC, the CBD and the GEF.

As may be expected, the participants at the global conferences where the interviews took place were primarily more senior staff. Hence, most of the interview participants were of manager and director level. As indeed conservation appeared to be a 'small family', I have not provided a more detailed list of interviewees in order to maintain anonymity.

Annex 2: Consent form

Title of Research Project: Biodiversity, public policy and the economy
Name of Researcher: Ms Kaisa J Pietilä

Participant Identification Number for this project: **Please initial box**

1. I confirm I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.

3. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my responses.

4. Please tick **one** of the following:

   a. I understand that my name will be linked with the research materials, and I will be identified or identifiable in the publication or publications that result from the research.

   b. I request to be anonymised.

5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.

6. In some cases, interview audios may be transcribed by a third-party transcription company, rather than the researcher. I give my consent for the recording of my interview to be shared with these third-party transcription companies, on the understanding that no other personal data will be shared with them. I understand that these companies are bound by disclosure agreements that protect my confidentiality.

7. I agree to my anonymised data being saved for 10 years with effect from 2018. I understand that the Data Controller for this research project is the University of Sheffield, and that I can request to access my personal data held by the University and/or request its deletion at any time.

8. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature
(*or legal representative*)

_____   _____   _____
 Lead Researcher   Date   Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Copies:
Once this has been signed by all parties, the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, A copy will also be saved in the research data file.

PROJECT CONTACT INFORMATION
- Project lead: Ms Kaisa J Pietilä, k.pietila@sheffield.ac.uk
- Primary supervisor: Professor Rosaleen Duffy, r.v.duffy@sheffield.ac.uk
- University of Sheffield Privacy Policy: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/data-protection/privacy/general
- External contact (for use in event of complaint only): Ms Anne Cutler, Data Protection Officer/Freedom of Information, University of Sheffield, a.cutler@sheffield.ac.uk

Annex 3: Participant information document

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Research Project Title: Biodiversity, public policy and the economy

This research project examines the relationship between the environment, public policy and the economy. It will form the basis of a doctoral thesis, which is set to run until the end of 2020. The data gathered for the research may also be used for publications following from the doctoral thesis.

You have been chosen to participate as you have important specialist knowledge of the manner the environment and the economy are governed, either in your country, regionally, or globally. We believe that your input into this research is critically important and will provide us with unique insights into the possible intersections between biodiversity, public policy and the economy. Taking part in this research is entirely voluntary, and if you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You can still withdraw at any time without any penalties, and you do not have to give a reason.

You will be interviewed by the researcher at a time and place convenient to you, and as agreed together by you and the researcher beforehand. At the interview, the questions will be open-ended and around your area of work and knowledge. You are expected to answer to the best of your abilities, but you can decline to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering. There may be some follow-up questions which the researcher would like to ask you, but it is voluntary for you to take part.

Other than the time the interview takes, it is assumed that there are no other disadvantages from participating. If you feel that you may become disadvantaged due to taking part in the research project, please contact the researcher to discuss whether these disadvantages could be avoided. There are no expected benefits to participants from taking part in the research project.

If you have a complaint regarding the conduct of this research and/or the conduct of the researcher, you should in the first instance contact the Supervisor, whose contact details you will find at the bottom of this information sheet. If you feel your complaint has not been adequately handled by the Supervisor, you can contact the Head of Politics Department at the University of Sheffield. If you come to any serious harm as a result of the research project, please report it to the respective authorities and if possible, inform the researcher of the event if it is safe for you to do so. The information will assist in mitigating such events happening in the future.

The information collected about you during the course of the research project will be securely stored, but you and your answers will be identifiable in the research and possible follow-up publications, unless otherwise agreed. You have the option to indicate your wish to be anonymised in the consent form presented to you at the same time with this document.

The information sought from you is your name, work position, and your views, knowledge, understanding and ideas considering the research topic. The collection of this information is relevant for achieving the research project's objectives due to your work position and experience.

The results of the research are likely to be ready in 2020, and available to the public three years later. You can obtain a copy of the thesis either by indicating at the time of interview that you would like the results once available, or alternatively contacting the researcher at a later date. Some or all results may also be

published in subsequent publications post-2020. Please note that if you have not indicated that you wish to be anonymised, you may be identified in any of these publications.

This research project forms the basis of a doctoral thesis. The researcher has a scholarship funded by the Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures at the University of Sheffield. The researcher is based at the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute.

The research has gone through an ethics review procedure at the Politics Department at the University of Sheffield.

If you wish to obtain further information about the project, in the first instance you should contact the doctoral researcher, but if the doctoral researcher is unavailable or if you wish to raise a complaint, please contact the Supervisor.

Doctoral researcher	Ms Kaisa J Pietilä k.pietila@sheffield.ac.uk
Supervisor	Professor Rosaleen Duffy r.v.duffy@sheffield.ac.uk
Address for both	SPERI ICOSS 219 Portobello S1 4DP Sheffield United Kingdom

You can keep a copy of this information sheet, and you can ask for a copy of the signed consent form for your record.

Thank you again for taking part in this research project.