Folk Filmmaking

Adam Perou Hermans Amir

University of Colorado at Boulder, adam.ph.amir@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.colorado.edu/envs_gradetds

Part of the African Languages and Societies Commons, Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons, and the Natural Resources and Conservation Commons

Recommended Citation

Amir, Adam Perou Hermans, "Folk Filmmaking" (2016). Environmental Studies Graduate Theses & Dissertations. 33.

https://scholar.colorado.edu/envs_gradetds/33

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Environmental Studies at CU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Environmental Studies Graduate Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Scholar. For more information, please contact cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu.
FOLK FILMMAKING

by

ADAM PÉROU HERMANS AMIR

B.A., Colgate University, 2007

M.Sc., University of Otago, 2010

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Environmental Studies Program
2016
This thesis entitled:
Folk Filmmaking
written by Adam Pérou Hermans Amir
has been approved for the Department of English

____________________
Benjamin S. Hale

____________________
J. Terrence McCabe

____________________
Date

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Wildlife conservationists often come into conflict with local communities. To resolve conflict, conservationists conduct education and sensitization programs to raise awareness and teach the value of wildlife. This “missionary approach” raises issues of epistemic and social injustice. Just as conservation often requires local communities to relinquish sovereignty over land and natural resources, conservation education challenges local values and morality.

Invited to produce conservation education media for communities living near the critically endangered Cross River gorilla (Gorilla gorilla diehli), I used the opportunity to pursue a more just method for moral debates over wildlife in contexts of unequal power and unshared cultures. For my dissertation, I designed, tested, and analyzed a form of participatory video production: “Folk Filmmaking.” Folk Filmmaking differs from ethnography. Instead of documenting local moral beliefs about wildlife, it provides an opportunity for locals to represent themselves. It invites them to think collectively and critically about their moral beliefs. It encourages them to articulate, develop, and represent those beliefs. It provides the resources to do so through filmmaking. My dissertation describes the exclusion of African accounts about gorillas, revealing an epistemic injustice that undermines the authority of moral claims developed without this knowledge. It shows how justifications for gorilla conservation—the intellectual puzzles of animal rights; the careful, complex science of primatology, ecology, and evolutionary history; the clarion calls of environmental ethicists—seem salient in Western communities but almost irrelevant in the communities of the Cross River headwaters. It describes the Folk Filmmaking process, the films we produced, and an analysis of the method. It concludes by reflecting on the promise and limits of Folk Filmmaking as a method of moral adjudication in other contexts of wildlife conservation conflicting with local communities.
Dedication

Dedicated to Shakira & Junior Caleb Laisin, & their companions growing up in the Cross River Headwaters

May our generations foster better relations.
Acknowledgements

I extend thanks in many directions.

To my father, Stephen Hermans. He was integral to the execution of this dissertation. He loaned me thousands of dollars to buy a new camera, a new computer, and a ticket to Calabar. He did not accept my attempts at repayment. When I lost my computer to an apartment fire, he replaced it. I spent the year finishing this dissertation in a state of economic torpor. My father helped me survive and afford my school fees. I cannot thank him enough. The biggest obstacle to Folk Filmmaking may be finding the means to employ it without such a benevolent patron.

As if sending me money was not enough, my father also sent me edits. He read my grant applications and my dissertation (in multiple iterations) with a lawyer’s eye and pen. The mistakes are mine but much of the clarity and coherence of argument I attribute to him.

To my mother. She made me into the person who would write this dissertation. My convoluted studies and thinking seem mostly to remind me what she already taught me. When she reads this dissertation, she will probably wonder why I needed so many words to make a simple argument about respect.

To Dr. Alison Jaggar for her warmth, inspiration, and encouragement. Alison’s teaching showed me how to sort through the issues, how to help, and how to be careful. She too proved enormous support—with edits, company, and a wonderful place to live—but I thank her most for how she helped my thinking.

To Dr. Ajume Wingo for first inviting me to Cameroon and remaining a close friend ever since. He gave me a second family and a reason to continue returning to Africa. He, and his friends and family, too, provided us enormous support during our work. I will not forget Ajume and my early morning walks and talks in Bambui. I wish we were neighbors.

Of the many folks Ajume sent to help us, I thank in particular Mamadou and Nicolene Laisin. They welcomed us into their home throughout our fieldwork, always providing us with food, family, and fun. We miss them and their crew of neighborhood children tremendously. We will go back to Cameroon just to see them again. I also thank Marcel Navti for looking after us in so many ways.

To Dr. Mara Goldman for all her knowledge and guidance, especially in teaching me how to appreciate the depth of cross-cultural environmental issues. I appreciate her challenge and remain inspired by her work as much as any other.

To Dr. J. Terry McCabe for showing me how to study conservation from the other side. He provided an essential foundation for my work, as well as an exciting invitation towards anthropology, which I am only increasingly taking him up on.
To Dr. Benjamin S. Hale for teaching me the importance of justificatory muster. Ben showed me how to turn ideas into papers. He also made my PhD possible. I appreciate him asking me to spend a few years together in Colorado.

To Penny Bates for answering my endless questions, helping me address a menagerie of needs and issues, and for bringing her dog to join us in the office. Penny provided more help and support than I can express. I am sure I do not even know all the ways she helped me get through school.

I cannot thank all the many folks who helped us throughout our work in Nigeria and Cameroon without making mistakes or omissions. I offer a huge, general thanks to all the communities. I hope to better show my gratitude when I return to help distribute the films. I offer particular thanks to Apah Smart, Louis Nkembi, Shufai Ngoshitong and crew, Tatang Banda and G.S.S. Bechati, Serika Lucas, Regina Leke, Azure Opio.

To Louis Nkonyu, a towering thank you for bringing me along for weeks in the Cross River, providing me good food, shelter, and adventure. And enough material for a dissertation. Nkonyu, perhaps more than anyone else I know of, may be best suited for improving the conservation situation in the Cross River headwaters.

To Ndimuh Bertand Shancho and Immaculate Mkong. They spent months working with us, devoting enormous amounts of time, energy, and resources to our project. I thank them for their hard work, their enthusiasm and effort, and their friendship.

To ERuDeF, FFI, WCS Nigeria and WCS Cameroon for their collaboration, support, and hard work.

To Ashleigh Baker, Eddie Rosenbaum, and Lyco Keita for so kindly hosting us in Buea.

To Alexander P. Lee for years of good talks, thoughts, and fun times outside. Alex, more than anyone else, helped me think out conservation ethics. I hope we can co-author a book on it together.

To Benni Leutner for the hours making the maps, and for joining me on yet another long walk when we finish.

To Joana Roque de Pinho for all the example, ideas, and advice. I hope to collaborate with Joana too.

To Luke Padgett for the wisdom.

To Noal Amir, without whom none of my work would be possible.
# CONTENTS

Illustrations, Images, & Maps viii

Glossary & Abbreviations xi

INTRODUCTION 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLES</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>WHO KNOWS WHAT ABOUT GORILLAS?</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CONSERVATION IN THE CROSS RIVER HEADWATERS</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>WHY CONSERVE GORILLAS?</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>TABOOS &amp; TOTEMS</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>FILMMAKING AS MORAL EXCHANGE</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>THE FOLK FILMS</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>JUNGLE JUSTICE</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EPILOGUE 326

Bibliography 334

References 346
ILLUSTRATIONS, IMAGES, & MAPS

I produced the hard copy of this dissertation as an extensively illustrated book.

Please contact me for an illustrated copy. The electronic edition includes no illustrations or images.

It features maps on the following two pages: vi and vii.

All maps are by Benjamin Leutner
Ph.D. candidate, Department of Geography & Geology, University of Würzburg

Map References

Borders

Cities

Elevation
NASA SRTM (Shuttle Radar Topography Mission) V2 (30m)

Forest Cover Data

Protected Areas

Rivers & Roads
Digital Chart of the World
# Glossary & Abbreviations

| Cross River headwaters | A crude catch-all to describe the geographic area in which the remaining populations of Cross River gorillas occur. The Cross River actually begins as the Manyu River, in the mountains of South-West Region, Cameroon. The mountains and river continue into Cross River State, Nigeria, where the river takes on its new name. The gorillas remain only on a few mountaintops around the rivers’ watershed. The communities living here vary, with distinct languages, traditions, and cultures. They fall in many different administrative sub-divisions across one Nigerian state and two Cameroonian Regions (formerly provinces), North-West and South-West. No phrase quite captures the region or its people as a whole. I link them all under this general term to refer to the collection of communities experiencing Cross River gorilla conservation issues. |
| Cross River | A large river in Nigeria, not to be confused with Cross River State. |
| Epistemology | Study of how knowledge claims and the authority of knowers is justified.\(^1\) Moral epistemology is a branch of meta-ethics exploring not what is right or wrong but rather how one knows what is right or wrong. |
| Ethnophilosophy | A controversial term describing study of Non-Western, indigenous philosophical systems of thought. Critics contend that the term inaccurately implies that cultures have distinct systems of thought, inaccessible to others. They believe that reason and philosophy can be shared by all. Ethnophilosophy is an important idea at least for characterizing the current, academic practice of philosophy as Western. I use it only in passing. Scholars working on African thought now prefer to call it African Sage Philosophy.\(^2\) |
| Ethnoprimalogy | The study of how people of different times and places seek to understand the wild non-human primates around them. Such work explores how traditions and broader political, social, and economic trends affect and alter cultural understandings of wild, non-human primates. It explores how such trends create ways of knowing distinct and unique to particular places, groups, and times. Descriptive ethnoecologies, including ethnoprimalogy, record and document local knowledge. Analytic ethnoecologies consider not only what is |

---

1 Jaggar, A. 2016. Personal communication.
known by a local community, but also what is not known and/or disregarded, allowing comparison across communities.  

### Folk

People. As an adjective, of the people. Which people these are varies depending on where I use the term but I like that the term applies equally well to any subject, be it villagers in Okwa or philosophers in Canberra.

### Knowledges

For many people in the West, knowledge is defined by its incontrovertibility, rationality, objectivity, testability, and verifiability. Verifiability is especially important: knowledge must not just be known, it must be explained. This explanation should include not just the information, but how one knows it. Knowledge to Westerners then excludes intuition, even if emerging from experience. It also excludes knowledge only true to relative cultures or belief systems, such as from the Bible or an origin story.

The term knowledges confuses some scholars but others use it to refer to the many ways of knowing left out by the framework of Western knowledge. The term helps them grant epistemic credence if not at least consideration and respect to various other ways of knowing. Insights from many disciplines, not least Women’s Studies, contest the Western paradigm’s criteria for knowledge, such as objectivity and verifiability, noting that one’s position in the world affects what one knows and how they know it. Consider what a woman knows about pregnancy compared to a man. Her knowledge is distinct. They have different knowledges. The plural references the different sorts of things different sorts of people know.

### Local communities

A group of people who live together near the subject at hand, in this case wildlife, and most often Cross River gorillas.

### Local Knowledge

Knowledge known uniquely to a people of a particular place, often a community rooted in and engaged with the local environment. This knowledge can include ideas learned from long observation, from a shared cultural history in the area, or simply from living there. I use the term to encompass both traditional knowledge (known from a long history with a place and a connected, distinct culture) and indigenous knowledge (known from living in and experiencing a specific area), so as to include both old and contemporary knowledge of the communities. I use only the term local to

---


remain consistent. Last, as Hunn and Thornton note, the nature-focused indigenous knowledge recorded by scholars is often considered more or less common knowledge within the indigenous community.  

Local moral knowledge in this dissertation often refers to a body of thought akin to that described by African Sage Philosophy. Masolo defines ASP as: “the body of thought produced by persons considered wise in African communities, and more specifically refers to those who seek a rational foundation for ideas and concepts used to describe and view the world by critically examining the justification of those ideas and concepts.”

### Methodology

While a method is a strategy or a technique for gathering evidence to answer a research question, a methodology studies how the evidence should be gathered and how the research should proceed. Methodologies reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of various methods for different purposes. They can be used to explain and justify using one method rather than another in a certain context or research effort.

### Native Doctor

The men and women in Cross River communities who work with herbs, medicinal plants, and other natural elements to treat their fellow villagers’ physical and psychic ailments. They often have unusual powers. The term is a crude translation provided during our subtitling by my Cameroonian colleagues. No one likes it.

### Taboo

Informal institutions guiding behavior through social norms rather than laws or other forms of governance.

### Totem

Personal spiritual helpers or counterparts. A totemic kinship connects an animal and a human in some way. The folks I worked with in the Cross River did not recognize or use this word. They used a variety—shapeshifter, transformer, magician—to describe the person but they did not offer a term for the animal (though this may be because the animal is just a shell for the person’s soul). I use the term totem to follow Dr. Denis Ndeloh Etienendem, a primatologist, anthropologist, and a native of Lebialem, a region in the Cross River headwaters. He works on local beliefs about gorillas and chose to use this word when writing in English. I imagine his guess at translating the local concept is better than mine.

---

7 Masolo 2014  
8 Jaggar, A. 2016. Personal communication.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Visual Anthropology</strong></th>
<th>Using visual tools (e.g. photography, filmmaking) to study cultures and social systems following ethnographic methods. ¹¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The West, Western, Westerners</strong></td>
<td>Another crude, catch-all term for all the collective group of people living in North America, Europe, and the Antipodes. I would prefer to follow Carrithers et al. and use “North Atlantic” to refer to the West. ¹² I appreciate how such unfamiliar, geographic terminology carries less connotation of hierarchy and matches well with West Africa or Cross River. I chose to use West instead as North Atlantic may prove too distracting (e.g. North Altantic-ites vs Westerners).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>In the conservation literature, Western knowledge is often construed with beliefs and facts provided by Western science and the scientific method. It is described as careful, critical, replicable, universal, objective, and impartial due to its precision and sophistication. Critics contest this knowledge as hegemonic and only partial truth, cultural and contextual just as other knowledge systems are. In this dissertation, I refer to Western knowledge that includes beliefs and ideas supported by careful study, e.g. philosophy, but not falling in the regime of science and not emerging from the scientific method. Such knowledge also defines beliefs, ideas, and positions held by those in the West. Western ideas, concepts, notions may be adopted and endorsed by anyone. The designation references their intellectual history and context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whiteman</strong></td>
<td>A local term in Cross River for a person of European descent, though folks also referred to my Afghan-American wife as “whiteman woman.” I choose to use this term, too, as it is so common, reflective of the phrasing in the field, and evocative of the relevancy of race.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **CRNP** | Cross River National Park |
| **ERuDeF** | Environment & Rural Development Foundation |
| **FFI** | Fauna & Flora International |
| **GFF** | Gorilla Folk Filmmaking |
| **WCS** | Wildlife Conservation Society |
| **WCVI** | Western Conservation Values Inculcation |
| **WWF** | World Wide Fund for Nature |

**Author’s Note:**

On the advice of my committee, I used pseudonyms for many of the people mentioned in this dissertation.


INTRODUCTION

Judith Benue teaches at the local school in Pinyin, Santa Sub-division, Northwest Region, Cameroon. Her community of about 27,000 speaks their own language, also called Pinyin.\(^{13}\) Pinyin is distinct but not unique. Such small but culturally-varied communities sprawl across the Grasslands region of Western Cameroon.

On March 1st, 2013, Benue was working her farm when she encountered a large, male Cross River gorilla (\textit{Gorilla gorilla diehli}). Surprised and scared, she screamed and ran. Her alarm raised a crowd. Soon a contingent led by a \textit{gendarmerie} (local policeman) and the village chief went after the gorilla. Discovering the gorilla now a few kilometers from Benue’s farm, the contingent set upon him. They killed him with clubs and stones and about 47 gunshots.

The Cross River gorilla probably wandered into Pinyin from nearby Tofala Hill, a remnant stand of forest home to approximately forty of the three hundred Cross River gorillas remaining in the world.\(^{14}\) The rest of the Cross River gorillas are scattered across fourteen other isolated hill sites in the Cross River headwaters spanning far Southeastern Nigerian and Southwestern Cameroon. The Cross River subspecies of Western lowland gorilla (\textit{Gorilla gorilla}) is critically endangered.\(^{15}\) They are Africa’s most endangered ape.\(^{16}\) From 2008-2010, primatologists included the Cross River


\(^{16}\) Cannon, John C. 2015. A Grassroots Effort to Save Africa’s Most Endangered Ape. \textit{Yale Environment 360}. \url{http://e360.yale.edu/feature/inaoyom_imong_a_grassroots_effort_to_save_africas_most_endangered_ape/2876/}
gorilla on the list of Top 25 Most Endangered Primates in the world. With so few Cross River gorillas left, each and every individual is important. Why would the people of Pinyin kill such a rare and endangered animal?

In initial reports the villagers claimed they killed the gorilla out of self-defense. Further investigation led by the Environment and Rural Development Foundation [ERuDeF] determined that the “gorilla was killed out of excitement.” Excitement was warranted. Conservationists guess Pinyin had not seen a gorilla in sixty years. Most villagers not only did not know how endangered Cross River gorillas are, they are not even familiar with gorillas.

Recounting the gorilla killing at a press conference, acclaimed Cameroonian conservationist and President of ERuDeF Louis Nkembi described it as a “bad omen for the conservation world, given that it indicate[s] that the fight against poaching, ignorance and people who do not yet understand the value of wildlife is still very far from being achieved.” To continue the fight, Nkembi and Mbah Grace, Northwest Regional Delegate of Forestry and Wildlife, began an “education and sensitization campaign” in Pinyin, targeting traditional and political leaders.

Palacios, E., Heymann, E. W., Kierulff, M. C. M., Long Yongcheng, Supriatna, J., Roos, C., Walker,

The Cross River gorilla was dropped from the next iteration of the list (2010-2012). This is not because the situation improved. Rather the list is changed to “highlight other, closely related species enduring equally bleak prospects for their future survival.” Mittermeier, Russell A., Anthony B. Rylands, Christoph Schwitzer, Lucy A. Taylor, Federica Chiozza and Elizabeth A. Williamson (eds.). 2012. Primates in Peril: The World's 25 Most Endangered Primates 2010–2012. IUCN/SSC Primate Specialist Group (PSG), International Primatological Society (IPS), and Conservation International (CI), Arlington, VA. 40pp.


20 Ibid.
21 Ibid, 9
Delegate Grace warned the local Fon [traditional leader] and his people of the serious legal implications for killing a Category A protected animal species in Cameroon: imprisonment for 1-3 years, a fine of 3 million CFA ($5000 US). An article on the conference and campaign ends with the line: “The importance of wildlife and biodiversity conservation was also explained.” This last line, written almost in passing, belies the challenge of justifying moral claims about how people should relate to wildlife. How does one explain the importance of wildlife? Who should explain this? More fundamentally, how and to whom is wildlife important?

National legislation enforces gorilla conservation but many Cameroonians do not understand why Cross River gorillas should be conserved. Understanding the punishment is not the same as understanding the project. Westerners began proposing and debating wildlife conservation in the late 1880s. Wildlife enthusiasts and hunters, environmentalists and developers, conservationists and philosophers, debated and argued for decades. The moral discourse rarely included the people of Pinyin or many similar communities around the world. As these folks’ voices begin to find inclusion, they further complicate the discussion. The debate remains unsettled but the uncertainty does not block action. In the 1980s, conservation biology emerged, with the science predicated on the moral certitude that saving wildlife is the right thing to do. Instead of ignoring or evicting local

---

22 Ibid., 9
communities, conservationists now educate and sensitize them, teaching the importance of saving wildlife as a moral fact. Justifying a moral claim, such as that gorillas should be conserved, requires careful reasoning and argument. To be clear and effective, fair and just, the reasoning and argument need to fit their context.27 A predominately Western debate, based in Western values and morality, Western conceptions and ontologies of nature and wildlife, the conservation discussion does not translate. Akin to sites of conflict between conservation and local communities across the world, the context in which Cross River gorilla conservation is occurring is dramatically different from the context in which folks decided to conserve gorillas.

Most people in the communities around the Cross River headwaters are more familiar with international football stars than the neighboring gorillas. Football reaches them. In the summer of 2014, we watched the World Cup televised from Brazil, live as it happened. In Wula, Cross River, Nigeria, folks gathered in a large, dark church hut with rows of benches. On the altar sat two blaring televisions, set side by side, one streaming the World Cup, the other a black magic Nollywood drama. The audio of the World Cup roared louder outside (perhaps to entice people in), but upon entering, the Nollywood movie’s audio takes over. They screened each and every game live and then again the next day. We had no trouble debating the merits of international teams and players. They have access to football.

Though limp power lines ran over the main towns, folks in many Cross River headwater communities did not have access to electricity. The wealthier homes used small, petrol generators. One or two sputtered on throughout each village each day, charging cell phones at a little booth or

powering a saw. More generators came on in the evening—“so it’s not like living in the bush,” a teenage boy told me. They ran the generators for a few hours to watch television then turn them off before bed. The evening electricity was another way to follow football, World Cup or not.

Football made for easy conversation. Gorillas seemed all but irrelevant. Asking after them felt silly and shallow, if not dated; they are no longer a presence for these communities. The gorillas are now but shadows in the steamy bush dense on the hills overhead. What does conservation mean to a community in this context, when they have scant, if any, relationship to the gorillas? Ironically, folks in the West, with wildlife media and conservation campaigns, may see gorillas more often and know them more intimately, from books and movies and pop culture. They may feel more compelled to conserve them. Folks in the West also do not have to make sacrifices for gorilla conservation the way these communities need to.

Many local children are uncertain what a gorilla looks like. Conservation education classes I attended began with the challenge: “Does a gorilla have a tail?” Preparing for a class, the conservation educator for the Wildlife Conservation Society [WCS] Nigeria, Francis, turned an elaborate, dense e-book into a simple line drawing of a gorilla for his students; the rest stayed on his computer. Without electricity, a projector, a quiet and subdued classroom, the wealth of material included in the PDF was inert. Educational opportunities or resources are in short supply. No books lie around homes or schools. The students lack textbooks but they can play the latest American hip hop songs on their cellphones. The context for conservation is confusing. What does it mean for these communities? What priority should it take when they have great needs themselves and other interests?

28 pseudonym
To be a welcome addition, conservation cannot just prohibit and restrict. It needs to help bring development to these communities. The refrain that conservation must provide development echoes in the demands of local people, the findings of anthropologists and local academics, and the recognition of conservation organizations via their changing mission statements. Conservationists are usually too careful to contest the link but it is a strange turn, perhaps even anathema to the very task of conservation: to conserve natural spaces and biodiversity from development. Gorillas do not need anything developed. Conservationists came to save the last three hundred gorillas left in region, yet most of their time, money, and energy becomes redirected towards local communities. To date, their efforts towards community development in the region, though well intentioned, seem somewhat moot—boxes of free condoms, a few dozen jobs, beehives and a snail farm, three random gorilla statues, the odd visiting oyibo (white person). They built a solar array in Bamba. A few years later, when nothing else followed, villagers destroyed it out of frustration.

Conservationists are trying to win community support through local children. They visit schools to teach special classes and start after-school clubs. I attended many of these classes. At the end of one, on Wildlife Texture and Stature at the secondary school in Wula, Francis offered to take fifteen select students to the WCS Base Camp at Mbe Mountains. To earn the trip, the students had

---


to ask a good question. After “Why is the gorilla’s face uglier than the monkeys?” and a few more of
that vein, a student named Multiple asked: “Why should we conserve gorillas?” Multiple won a spot
on the trip.

Francis’s job and career is focused on answering Multiple’s question, specifically in the Cross
River context. He answered the question for me in many iterations. His reasons, and the moral
exchange between conservationists like Francis and the local communities, appear throughout this
dissertation. The goal of this dissertation is to show how to answer this question not in the abstract
or in the distant West, but in its context, to Multiple in a Cross River classroom, to Multiple’s
family back home, and to his neighbors in the communities scattered around Cross River gorilla
habitat. The dissertation focuses not on providing the answer but on guiding the process to answer
this question together.

In the West, folks have access to all manner of media on gorillas and gorilla conservation:
books, journalism, scholarly journals, television shows, documentaries, lectures, websites, zoos,
museums. In March 2013 many of the people of Pinyin may not have been familiar with gorillas,
but I (in Colorado, USA) was. In the Cross River headwaters, current conservation awareness efforts
rely upon posters, an episodic radio series, and classes and community meetings led by people like
Francis.31 In 2014, inspired by the work of primate conservationists in other regions, they decided to
add a series of locally-produced films promoting gorilla conservation.32 They invited me to come
make these films.

of Primatology, 72(5), 462-466; Van Weeghel, Dagmar. 2013. The Great Ape Education Project.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b039w9p0
I took the opportunity to explore addressing the moral question at the heart of conservation—why should we conserve wildlife?—not through education but through collaborative moral reasoning. I would not make films to educate or enlighten local communities. Instead, we would make films together, using film production as a means for moral exchange and conversation about what to do. The films would capture and present the moral exchange, sharing both our moral claims and method of reasoning in their narrative structure. I would then use my dissertation to assess how well these films, and filmmaking as a practice of moral justification, fit the context of the Cross River headwaters. I designed my dissertation to test and analyze a moral methodology, Folk Filmmaking, which might offer a more fair and just way to address conflict between conservationists and local communities. The idea was to start adjudication of the moral disagreement at the most basic level: justifying conservation as the right thing to do about what is happening to the Cross River gorillas.

My hypothesis was that conservation conflict often stems from failure to justify the conservation project to local communities. The moral imposition of conservation values exacerbates local concerns with the project as it takes conservation beyond governing local behavior and resource access and into challenging their culture, values, and morals. Moral justification requires discourse and understanding, not awareness and enlightenment. Disputants need to agree to methods of reasoning and be able to access and employ them. Moral authority to assert moral claims, e.g. we should save gorillas, comes from endorsement of one’s justificatory practice, not from cultural superiority.

Wildlife conservation is a noble cause but conservationists confuse their good intentions with a certainty in their moral authority. The desire to raise awareness and convert the unenlightened belies disparate positions of power and equality. Consider the title of an article from the director of conservation for the Gorilla Foundation, Dr. Anthony Rose: “We Must Change People In Order to Save Gorillas: Conservation Values Education in Rural Cameroon.” Westerners changing Africans to meet their ends, however well-intentioned, raise serious concerns.

One way the missionary approach of conservation education is problematic is that it implies hierarchies of moral knowledge. Much literature describes a (suspect) distinction between local and scientific knowledge, traditional and local beliefs contrasted with careful study. The hierarchy is clear but it is neither just nor correct. It remains a particular problem for conservation education programs teaching Western ways of knowing nature (e.g. biology) at the expense of local ways of thought. This approach overwhelms not just factual local understanding of these animals, which often corresponds to Western study and is just encoded differently, but also the rich nuances, stories,
and descriptions of the local communities’ relationships with these animals.38 These relationships, connected to community history and identity, can be a source of great cultural and conservation value. Both groups have much to offer and learn from each other. The issue is not with knowledge exchange or congruity, the issue is with one knowledge being considered more valid, accurate, and correct than the other.

Conservation education teaches morality like a pastor, not like an ethicist. Conservation is so assured of its moral superiority that local values and beliefs are not even considered unless they are conservation-positive.39 This is not enough. Conservation raises tough questions about how to live in the world, at both an individual and community level. The ethical and political dilemmas are what should be taught and worked through: not just the reasons but the reasoning. While remaining wary of environmental-ethical relativism, education programs can orient towards a fair and just exchange of ethical positions in relation to environmental problems, arriving at a moral understanding that is shared, not risen to.

Sharing moral understanding requires sharing a process of moral justification. Practices of justification will change. They are contextual. Justifiability will vary based on the information available to the disputants and the particularities of the situation. Local communities and conservationists must work together to assess the justifiability of conservation in each instance. What is needed is not a standard, specific set of reasons and values for conservationists to apply and enforce, but a flexible and reliable methodology to reach agreement on justification.

Cross River gorillas are conserved for us all, but at the expense of a relative few. To be fair and just, conservation projects must be adequately justified to those most affected. Too often they do not include adequate, localized justification for conservation. When they elide this justification, and when they offer locals development and livelihood alternatives instead of reasons and moral discussion, they imply that locals are unable to appreciate the benefits of conserving wild animals. Such efforts divide the locals from the conservationists. This approach—development for the locals, conservation for the foreigners—implies that only the foreigners can appreciate the wildlife.

In a way, this position treats local communities as incidental obstructions in the conservation landscape. To respect them, to treat them as people equally capable of understanding, supporting, and appreciating conservation, Westerners must reconsider strategies for justifying international wildlife conservation. Methods of moral adjudication must be designed together, to be more respectful of and considerate for those populations most directly affected by the conservation. Conservation necessitates intervention. For conservation to have any chance of long term success, the interventions must be accepted as fair and just; the purpose must be understood and shared by those most affected. Justification will emerge from the exchange of reasons between communities, not imposition from outside.

In some cases, conservationists and local communities may share values. Many communities already value their animals. Conservationists increasingly recognize the need to address traditional beliefs and when possible incorporate them into conservation efforts.40 The United Nations

Convention on Biological Diversity promoted this collaboration, calling for local knowledge to be respected, preserved, and applied when consistent with biodiversity conservation.\textsuperscript{41} Traditional beliefs, such as taboos, can offer an effective means of conservation but such knowledge needs to be respected and understood, not dismissed as local preference or eccentrics, useful when aligned.\textsuperscript{42} Local knowledge needs to be incorporated not simply as a means to more effective conservation but also out of epistemic respect.

To be respectful and to be effective, conservationists incorporating local knowledge need to take care. The knowledge of local communities can both challenge and support wildlife conservation.\textsuperscript{43} On one hand, by imbuing wild species with value, local beliefs and narratives can protect them.\textsuperscript{44} On the other, the hunting, eating, and medical use of primates often follows traditional cultural beliefs and practices as well.\textsuperscript{45} West Africa provides a particularly rich example of the complexities of this issue. The region hosts diverse and distinct traditional beliefs concerning primates.\textsuperscript{46} These beliefs vary in both conservation-positive and negative ways. They are also eroding in the face of modernization and globalization.\textsuperscript{47} Species occurring outside of protected areas, or where legal protection is poorly enforced, such as the Cross River gorilla, are particularly threatened

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\setlength{\itemsep}{0pt}
\bibitem{colding} Colding and Folke, 1997, 2001
\bibitem{mulder} Mulder and Coppolillo, 2005
\bibitem{rose2003} Rose \textit{et al.}, 2003a
\end{thebibliography}
by the waning of traditional, conservation-positive beliefs.\textsuperscript{48} Half of the Cross River gorilla’s habitat remains unprotected and even where they are protected, locals do not fear or respect legislation.

Local social institutions—taboos, myths and wildlife tales—can correspond with, and even support, conservation goals.\textsuperscript{49} Retelling local stories, where they originated and among expatriate communities, can have great effect on people’s values and relationship to the natural world.\textsuperscript{50} Taboos, in particular, reveal explicit normative guidance for local communities, at least traditionally. Etiendem describes how in Cross River:

\ldots informal institutions and traditional practices such as local tales and taboos, guided by cultural norms, can play an active role in nature conservation. In these areas it is social norms, rather than governmental juridical laws and rules, that determine human behaviour. People do not disregard taboos against hunting gorillas because, if they do, they may be punished by the ancestors or traditional institutions, unlike the wildlife law which is either poorly understood or hardly recognized.\textsuperscript{51}

Taboos offer a method of conservation aligned with both local culture and conservation goals. The manner in which taboos are spread and shared—myth, narrative, apocryphal accounts—addresses the same, deeper issue: why to conserve. Taboos can be difficult to justify, both to outsiders and to new generations, but their existence among local communities shows that Cross

\textsuperscript{48} Etiendem et al., 2011


\textsuperscript{50} Rose et al. 2003a

\textsuperscript{51} Etiendem 2008a: p. 15
River knowledge includes normative codes guiding human-gorilla relations. My fieldwork began here. I went to Cross River, Nigeria to begin my project guided by these questions:

1. How does Cross River knowledge describe Cross River gorillas and guide gorilla-human relations? What are contemporary Cross River perceptions, anecdotes, and accounts of Cross River gorillas?

2. Can this knowledge help co-produce a shared, non-Imperialist moral rationale for conserving Cross River gorillas? If so, can this rationale be used for conservation education in the Cross River? Can it be made to fit 21st century challenges and concerns? If not, what does this conflict with Cross River culture mean for Cross River gorilla conservation?

I conducted my study for this dissertation in three steps. Before traveling to the Cross River headwaters, I collected and collated Western reasons for conserving gorillas. I wanted a clear understanding of why I thought gorillas should be conserved and how this moral claim had been justified to me. Then I flew to Nigeria. There, I collected and collated Cross River knowledge and local perceptions of gorillas and conservation. I contrasted these with the reasons and reasoning I had brought with me.

Second, from this collision of Cross River knowledge and the Western-based knowledge of myself and conservationists, I began to make films. I worked with seven different local communities to co-produce a series of folk films articulating their knowledge, narratives, and perspectives of Cross River gorillas and the conservation situation. I also trained and equipped a small film team. They worked with two more communities to make two more films after I left.
Third, I wrote this dissertation to assess my work. I began by sharing my research on knowledge and power, starting with control over how knowledge about gorillas is even produced. From here, I present a taxonomy of Western and Cross River reasons for and against gorilla conservation to set up the moral disputants and the context from which the films emerge and the conversation of which they are a part. Next, I assess both the films and the filmmaking. I analyze the films in two ways: 1) for how they identify and raise a moral issue and 2) how they present an “experiment of living” in the Cross River context. I also assess how well the morality presented in the film respects local knowledge and avoids concerns of differing power and cultures between me (the leading filmmaker), the conservationists, and the local communities. Then I analyze the Folk Filmmaking process as a practice of moral justification. I analyze it using conditions developed by Jaggar and Tobin for determining whether a real-world practice of moral adjudication for disagreement between communities differing in culture and power fits its context and does not allow abuse or oppression. I conclude that Folk Filmmaking fit the Cross River context well and offers both a methodological and actual example of collaborative and power-sensitive moral justification in international conservation efforts. I also warn about the many shortcomings of my work and Folk Filmmaking method and reflections on how it could be improved.

Conservation is a normative project—it is not a description of the way the world is but a prescription for the way the world should be. My fieldwork and research focused on its normative dimensions rather than descriptive. My field time and training are inadequate to provide hard, ethnographic facts for the field sites. For such information I refer to historical reports,

---


53 Jaggar and Tobin 2013: 383
anthropological work, and other studies of the region; I work from the literature for the facts of the case study.54 In the field, I collected only what I am trained to recognize: rationale and reasons. I analyze and assess reasons and reasoning in this dissertation, particularly how moral claims are made and justified in a real-world context.

Though this dissertation focuses on Cross River gorillas and local Cross River communities—Boki and Anyang, Mondani and Ngwo—it aims at much broader applicability. Ideally the filmmaking project and its material outcomes will help remedy conflict between local communities and Cross River gorilla conservation efforts. The Folk Filmmaking method presented in this dissertation could go further. It may be applicable for other conservation situations across the globe.

Wildlife can be conserved in a couple ways. One is by relative indifference. No one bothers the animals for better or worse; they continue as they are. Perhaps their habitat is altered or affected, but they adapt and persist. Consider gray squirrels (Sciurus carolinensis) in an American park. This is simple conservation as coexistence.55 Another is through conservation as control. This is the more familiar form of conservation. The endangered species is protected through legislation, enforcement, an active presence of government, perhaps even international NGOs and conservationists. Conservation for endangered species such as these includes protection of both their physical bodies and their habitat.

54 Referenced throughout Chapter Two.
Conservationists stress that more than half of the Cross River gorillas’ habitat remains unprotected.\(^\text{56}\) In late 2014, one of the nine hill sites: Tofala, was gazetted as a national wildlife sanctuary. This was a huge boon for Cross River gorilla conservation. Previously, including when we shot one of our films, *Nzhu Jimangemi (The Gorilla’s Wife)* at a nearby village, Tofala was simply an unregulated forest bloc. During our filming, villagers said they were not keen on the forest’s status changing.

While much Cross River gorilla habitat remains under no protection, the gorillas themselves are protected across their range. Legislation in both countries protects them. This raises a major challenge for justifying conservation in the region: are rationales for Cross River gorilla conservation enough for holistic Cross River conservation? The nuances of this issue are blackboxed by what I call the *Flagship Species Paradox*. A flagship species is an animal so charismatic, cherished, and often ecologically-demanding, that its protection alone can inspire the protection of entire ecosystems. Flagship species are a common conservation tool, based more in propensity for garnering support than in ecological fact.\(^\text{57}\) Yet the concept remains enigmatic: how essentially linked are animals to their habitats? Can we have just Cross River gorilla conservation and not Cross River tropical moist broadleaf forest ecosystem conservation? At first blush, this question may seem moot. As Jane Goodall writes, “A central mission of the Jane Goodall Institute (JDI) is to conserve the great apes and other primates. And this, of course, means conserving the forests where they live.”\(^\text{58}\) What does forest conservation mean in the context of the Anthropocene, of climate change and novel

\(^{56}\) Dunn *et al.* 2014  
ecosystems? Do rationales for saving the most special, precious, sentient animals justify complete conservation of an entire forest or do they obfuscate the real, complete requirements and agendas of conservation efforts: conserving everything (or as much as possible)?

This will be a pernicious, underlying question throughout this dissertation. In a sense, gorillas are just a red herring. All this discussion hovers around them and their value but what conservationists actually seek to achieve is conservation of the Cross River ecosystem. The pernicious but compelling argument is that flagship species are a perfect rationale for comprehensive conservation. The challenge is that rationale for flagship species conservation may be the easiest to provide, or the strongest argument, but it also may not be transferrable to conserving all the rest.

Conservationists use flagship species as a tool to bring about more complete habitat protection not because of some concerted trick but because they believe others do not yet appreciate or understand the value of all the ecosystem, for its own sake. The flagship species concept sidesteps the question of intrinsic value in all nature, locating value instead in the charisma of the said species and then granting the rest of ecosystem a utility value in supporting this animal. It does not matter

59 Consider predators. For decades, ecologists described how predators exert top-down control over an ecosystem, indirectly determining much of the ecological community, both in fauna and flora. For example, without wolves around, elks may devastate riparian plants such as willows. Unafraid of predation, the graze at ease, even in dangerous areas such as riversides. With wolves around, the elk must be more careful and willows can flourish. Ecologists describe the dramatic changes in an ecosystem resulting from the loss of top predators as a trophic cascade. Trophic cascades are an overwhelming reason for predator conservation, and even re-introduction. Marris (2014) writes: “This story is popular in part because it supports calls to conserve large carnivores as ‘keystone species’ for whole ecosystems.” In the early 2000s, inspired in large part by the work of Beschta and Ripple (e.g. 2009), conservationists began raising calls for increased predator conservation and restoration, supporting their claims with the science of trophic cascades, lamenting the trophic downgrading of planet Earth (Estes et al. 2011). Yet, despite its popularity, the idea is controversial. Other ecologists agree that predators have an impact, but disagree to what extent. They argue a better term may be a trophic trickle (Barbosa & Castellanos 2005). If so, this makes a less compelling case for conservation. Marris, E., 2013. Rambunctious garden: saving nature in a post-wild world. Bloomsbury Publishing; Beschta, R.L. and Ripple, W.J., 2009. Large predators and trophic cascades in terrestrial ecosystems of the western United States. Biological Conservation 142 (11): 2401-2414. Estes, J.A et al. 2011. Trophic downgrading of planet Earth. Science 333 (6040): 301-306; Barbosa, P. and Castellanos, I. (eds.). 2005. Ecology of Predator-Prey Interactions. Oxford University Press.

60 Caro 2010
whether or not this ecosystem is valuable; gorillas are valuable and they need this ecosystem to survive.

Gorillas are iconic, charismatic, and appealing. They receive much attention. Other endangered species do not. In the Cross River, Red headed rock fowl (*Picathartes oreas*), *Ophiobostrys zenkeri* (a highly endangered tree with no English name), and the rich bounty of reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, and insects all remain little known. The relatively exaggerated support for gorillas is often critiqued as a mistake, an accident of focusing, arbitrarily, on “charismatic megafauna.” It is not a mistake. The intensity of focus and attention belies not arbitrariness, but instead reflects how much value gorillas hold. Gorillas hold more value than other nature not by accident but because of all they mean to the global community. And thus, all that is at stake when we contest gorilla conservation. Gorillas are more valuable to most people than many other wild species.

The Flagship Species Paradox also has an inverse. Describing the slaughter of four mountain gorillas at Virunga National Park, a Congolese ranger put it bluntly: “the logic was that if the gorillas were dead, there would be no reason to protect the park.”

Gorillas may be a red herring but they function as a proxy. They are a proxy for conservation, they are a proxy for describing injustice, and they are a proxy for value in a dissertation on moral justification. Something happened to these local communities. Something caused them to start losing the power of their myths, their culture, and their gorillas. In the past, they probably did

---


not worry about gorillas going away. They have less awareness of the current circumstances, conservation situation, or stakes. Perhaps they have more dire, immediate, and taxing moral concerns. Perhaps these communities have considered the moral questions raised by conservation less than Westerners. This does not mean moral decisions should be made without or around them. Rather, all this information and complexity needs to be shared for them to enter it into their moral frameworks. From there, moral discussion can emerge.

The critique of insufficient moral discourse may be more applicable in concept than in practice. For example, Godwin, project manager for the Wildlife Conservation Society [WCS] at Cross River National Park, offers that the main conservation success in the region is when a hunter looks through his gun, sees a primate, especially a Cross River gorilla, and lets it go. Godwin attributes these moments to Francis’s work of bringing understanding to local communities in a way they appreciate. Francis is a conservation educator from Okwa II, one of the communities enclaved within the national park established to protect gorillas. With children, he explains the conservation ethic. With adults, at community meetings, he conducts open discussions. He fields objections and questions, offers anecdotes and challenges. He works through ideas with community members. He does not lecture them. He knows local methods and styles of reasoning and he employs them.

His meetings are among the least important and the last things he does on each community visit (and he used my presence as an excuse for bringing up conservation again). Francis mostly just meets and greets these communities, sitting and drinking with them, catching up, discussing any good news or grievances. He is as much a community supporter and organizer as a conservation

---

educator. In conversation, he seems to only bring up conservation by chance, and he quickly lets it bubble back down. In Cross River, this struck me as a brilliant and elegant way to discuss the issue.

Francis straddles the two moral worlds. When I was with him, he worked for WCS Nigeria.64 His boss, employer, and colleagues, as well as his training, education (including a workshop in New York), and corresponding conservation paraphernalia, espouse the Western rationales for conservation. His background, family, friends, and daily life in the field offer him the Cross River reasons. He then presents this exchange back to the community. More than anyone I met in Cross River, Francis offers an example of contextual moral authority and well-honed reasoning in these murky moral waters.

One morning, Francis taught a conservation education class on the Web of Life. Later that day, we were driving home when he suddenly swerved to pull over in front of another car, also slowing down. Francis cut off the other car to intercept a boy running over to sell his freshly-killed, giant pouched rat (Genus Cricetomys). Francis asked the boy what he expected for the rat from the car ahead: “300 naira.” He paid the boy 400 naira and told him to continue along, eliciting a stern, hand-out-the-window, finger-wagging from the driver waiting ahead. That evening, Francis presented the rat at his conservation club meeting as a reward for the students. One of the youngest students, Multiple (again), called him out. The lesson that day had included the importance of conserving ants and even grass as all are essential to the Web of Life. Pressed by Multiple’s questions, Francis rose to the challenge, explaining birth rates, relative abundance, and the many gray areas between preserving, conserving, and utilizing nature. Multiple seemed lost and confused. Francis

---

64 He left in early 2015 to return to working as an independent community organizer and conservationist.
laughed and sent off an even younger boy to roast the rat after cleaning it very, very well. When the rat returned, we all ate it. It was delicious.

Francis had a lower pay grade than the rest of the WCS Nigeria staff because he does not hold a Masters. Many folks in Cross River told us they do not like conservation but they like Francis. He sits and visits. He built a clinic and a road to the enclaved villages, right through Cross River National Park. He has had people arrested for selling bushmeat but sellers help him survey their markets. While I worked with him, we ate (at least) duiker, brush-tailed porcupine, red river hog, a wild frog, and the giant pouch rat together. Much of this dissertation, in information, argument, and contextual moral reasoning, recounts what I learned from him. I could never do the work he does, except perhaps on my little corner of the northern New England Seacoast.

My Standpoint

Lest I sound as if I, too, am assuming the moral certitude of conservation, allow me to offer two concessions: 1) I do think conservation seems to track a universal moral standard and that thus it will be harder to justify not conserving gorillas but 2) I was most open to being convinced otherwise. I conducted my fieldwork and filmmaking with gorilla hunters, frustrated neighboring communities, and a whole slew of folks exhausted by all the white people coming to help out and look after the gorillas and not interested in them.

In such cross-cultural, normative work, I would do well to introduce my standpoint. I write as a WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) white male with a penchant for primates. My mother does not identify as white—her father hails from Haiti—but in the field I am
constantly greeted as oyibo (white man): “Oh! Oyibo! You are welcome.” I am referred to as “white man” or the local dialect’s variant of it by all but my closest companions.

I have seen 57 species of primate in the wild (I keep track) and co-founded the first primate-watching website, about which I have mixed feelings. In my free time I enjoy wandering vast, empty, wild spaces. I spend excessive time, money, and energy to get to them. On almost all my various pursuits of wildlife, particularly primates, the animals drew me in but I left thinking of and concerned for the neighboring communities. The case study of this dissertation offers perhaps the most extreme example of all my trips: eight species of primate occur in the study area. I saw none during my fieldwork and had seen only one before (and it was not the same subspecies).

The site was a disaster for primate watching. The forests feel empty. In all my work I saw the skulls of at least ten species of large animal (from buffalo to crocodile), I ate at least six species of wild mammals, and I saw zero species of mammals in the wild. I had drinks with a chimpanzee researcher working at Mbe Mountains. She saw her subjects ten times in two years. I saw remarkably few birds, too.

I all but worship wild spaces but I have become remarkably critical and wary of contemporary conservation, as the following may reveal. My goal in writing this dissertation is to explore perhaps a better way to motivate, consider, and conduct international wildlife conservation, in a manner more palatable to and aligned with social justice. I write from a feminist, post-colonial, and Anthropocene-acknowledging orientation. I began this project hoping to be convinced by the gorilla hunters, for whatever strange and perverse reasons.

I am trained as a communicator (filmmaker) and a philosopher, not as an anthropologist. My fieldwork was to collect what reasons and rationales were offered on both sides and to see how
these reasons were communicated. I then sought to represent this communication, as an exchange, back to them. And to you, my readers, and to the rest of us, outside of these African communities.

In Nigeria, I was treated too well by all involved—given (too much) to eat and drink at each home we visited and free lodging across the hill sites. Cameroon was different. We worked closely with an organization, the Environment & Rural Development Foundation. A grant funded us to train two of their journalists, Bernard and Impeccable, to continue making these films once we left. Our funding came from the Fauna & Flora International Flagship Species fund. The funding supported the filmmaking, not this dissertation. I am grateful but free to be critical.

With this project, I make great effort to avoid three e’s: ethnocentrism, extinction, and exoticism. Ethnocentrism positions my values and standards, particularly those of the ethics arising from Western analytic philosophy and Western conservation science, as superior to those of the other cultures I encounter. I directly sought to reject my ethnocentric inclinations, while also reflecting on the foundational role of these disciplines in my training, understanding, and intellect. I also mean to maintain respect for their rigor. Both support my avoidance of extinction. This is the great, creeping danger, the high stakes behind this project: the loss of species and the loss of cultures and knowledges. Last, in wandering abroad and afar, and in looking to distinguish our cultures, knowledges, and worldviews, I need to be very wary of exoticism. I want not to portray these cultures in romantic, simplistic, or otherizing terms. I hope that in inviting them to co-produce films and offer accounts of their positions, together we were able to avoid these concerns.

65 pseudonyms
...the historical and racial politics of the international wildlife field are such that [African’s] intimacies [with wild animals] rarely translate into the kinds of successes enjoyed by their non-African counterparts and employers. Africans are simply not currently a central part of the narrative that renders African wild animals glamorous and valuable in the global scheme of things.

--Elizabeth Garland

PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GORILLAS

In 1959, George Schaller ventured to the Virunga Volcanoes to conduct the first study of gorillas in the wild. Though he was only a PhD student at the University of Wisconsin, Schaller began his work at a time when gorillas were little known to Western science. His two years of research became two now-classic manuscripts: *The Mountain Gorilla*, the first thorough scientific study of the animal and *The Year of the Gorilla*, a more public account of the gorillas and his adventures during fieldwork. Schaller’s work is celebrated for popularizing gorillas and dispelling the myth that they are dangerous brutes.

---

Though Schaller’s work preceded conservation biology by a couple decades, he anticipated its distinct blend of descriptive and normative knowledge. Schaller both described what gorillas are like and how humans should act towards them. He blended his ecology and ethology with ethics. In the works, Schaller’s tone may be an artifact of the time and of his excitement at being perhaps the first gorilla expert, but it also belies something more pernicious: a hierarchy of Western over local African knowledge, both descriptive and normative. To this day, such hierarchy informs the missionary approach taken to conservation education. Schaller, writing in 1964: “One urgent need is to teach the Africans the value of wild life”\textsuperscript{67}—sounds little different than Nkembi’s comment following the 2013 gorilla killing in Pinyin: “this is a bad omen for the conservation world, given that it indicate[s] that the fight against poaching, ignorance and people who do not yet understand the value of wildlife is still very far from being achieved.”\textsuperscript{68}

Conservation invites international intervention premised on the idea that Westerners value wildlife more than the local communities living alongside the animals, or that Westerners value the wildlife in a better way (e.g. not as a means to an end). The idea is not just that Westerners have better means to save the endangered wildlife but also that they also have better reasons to do so. Conservation education teaches these reasons, bringing Western enlightenment to local communities.

Proponents tout American conservation success as an example for the world to follow, motivating American-based conservation organizations engaging in wildlife protection across the globe.\textsuperscript{69} For Schaller, the plight of America’s wildlife offered him a dose of ethos: “We in America

\textsuperscript{67} Schaller, G. \textit{The Year of the Gorilla}. University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 70
\textsuperscript{69} Wuerthner, G., E. Crist, and T. Butler (ed.) \textit{Protecting the Wild Parks & Wilderness, the Foundations for Conservation}. Island Press, Washington, D.C.
can speak from experience of the fate of game which is not properly conserved.\textsuperscript{70} Schaller was among the first to make the case that Westerners should get involved in the plight of gorillas. He was also among the first to get involved. A half century later, his work offers a tidy microcosm of the West’s approach to gorillas, the neighboring Africans, and the intricacies of the relationship between all three. It helps to introduce the trouble with applying a Western orientation to knowledge, morality, and environmental problems, to African issues.

Schaller began \textit{The Year of the Gorilla} with an anecdote of how he came to be an expert on gorillas: a fortunate, unexpected, and unrequested dissertation assignment. He continued onto a literature review. He started from wonder as a defining factor of the relationship between humans and gorillas, and motivating factor for writing about them, before delving into the knowledge issue:

> Probably no animal has tried the imagination of man [sic, and for the rest of such usage] to the same extent as has the gorilla. Its manlike appearance and tremendous strength, its remote habitat and reputed belligerence, have endowed the beast with a peculiar fascination and stirred popular and scientific interest. It appears to possess some transcendent quality which inspires every visitor to its realm to put his experiences into print. I read through literally hundreds of popular books, articles, and newspaper stories, and I examined scientific papers and glanced through textbooks.\textsuperscript{71}

Why must so many visitors to the gorilla’s realm put the experience into print while local residents do not? Does this show the lack of value of gorillas to locals or reveal something more problematic:

\textsuperscript{70} Schaller 1964: 70
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}: 1-2
who gets to put things in print? To research this dissertation, I too read many books, articles, and newspaper stories; I found not a single book on gorillas written by an African. I found a few articles and newspaper stories written by Bernard (the ERuDeF journalist who became a leading Folk Filmmaker), and one dissertation, but nothing in more popular press or media. I could find little about wonder and the relationships between local communities and gorillas beyond the realm of science and conservation, with the notable exception of Dr. Denis Ndeloh Etiendem’s work, which inspired and appears in much of this dissertation.72

Schaller began his research wary of most of the reports of gorillas he encountered. He dismissed the accounts of white hunters: “since the ape is studied along the sights of the rifle”, and adventurers’ accounts as well: “the finding of a gorilla nest or perhaps a brief sighting of the ape itself makes him an expert on all aspects of the gorilla’s life history”, noting that adventurers turn to “native tales, rumors, and statements from older literature, no matter how dubious” to make up for their lack of knowledge.73 With this line, on the second page of the book, Schaller revealed how he orients to African accounts. Unlike the adventurers, he did not accept native tales as knowledge. He maintained his orientation in the thorough literature review.

To start the book, Schaller provided a historical survey of knowledge of the gorilla, beginning in ca. 470 B.C. with Hanno, the Carthaginian navigator. Pliny, writing in 150 B.C., described that Hanno encountered the Greek γόριλλα (gorillai), a “tribe of hairy women”, on the coast of what is now Sierra Leone. They tried to capture the animals but succeeded in acquiring only

73 Schaller 1964: 2
three females. The animals died on board and Hanno returned, with their skins, to Rome.\textsuperscript{74} Though from the geography and behavior of the \textit{gorillai} (hooting and throwing stones), the animals were probably chimpanzees, the name persisted, eventually being re-assigned by Thomas Staughton Savage and Jeffries Wyman to describe the first type specimen of a gorilla skull as \textit{Trogloidytes gorilla} in 1847.\textsuperscript{75} Before Schaller wrote of Savage, he jumped from 150 B.C. to 1559 A.D. and an English sailor, Andrew Battell. The Portuguese captured Battel and held him prisoner north of the Congo River. Upon release, he described two apes from the region, pongo and engeco.\textsuperscript{76} His writing on pongo clearly describes the gorilla. The name pongo persisted and got re-assigned too. Western taxonomists confused themselves with their descriptions of the great apes during the 1800s. They referred to many specimens as orangutan, resulting in the actual ginger Asian apes now carrying Pongo as their scientific name.\textsuperscript{77} Orangutans received a local African name for gorillas; gorillas received a local name for chimpanzees. Western ape knowledge has a somewhat sloppy history.

From Battell, Schaller moved to Lord Monboddo in 1774, then Bowdich in 1819, then Du Challi in 1856 (often described as the man to “discover” the gorilla, Du Challi was the first of all these authors to see the animal alive, not just reflect on specimens or recount native tales). Knowledge is white and Western. Or to be charitable, Schaller could only refer to Westerners’ writing of African stories, the African knowledge losing much in the process of being filtered through hunters and interpreted by colonists. Only these men had the power of authorship.


\textsuperscript{76} Groves, 2001: 15

\textsuperscript{77} Groves, 2001: 15
Authors continue to take the same approach to the history of gorilla knowledge. In a 2006 paper titled “Discovering Gorillas: The Journey from Mythic to Real”, geographer James Newman takes a similar orientation:

Reports of a great ape lurking in the depths of Africa go back over two thousand years, but confirmation that one actually existed did not take place until the middle of the nineteenth century. A rush of hopeful discoverers then ensued. Few succeeded in seeing any, much less studying them, and thus “knowledge” about gorillas consisted mostly of fanciful tale-telling based on reports from Africans. By and large, it depicted a savage beast of enormous power that terrorized people, especially women. A turn began as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth. Direct observations in the wild began emphasizing the gorilla’s many human-like qualities and essentially peaceful nature, characteristics subsequent research has essentially verified.78

For the rest of the paper and in a subsequent, 2013 book, Newman only considers Western knowledge in recording the history of knowledge of gorillas.79 He describes the long history before the gorilla was “verified”. The word “gorilla” disappeared from Western literature for over a thousand years. For two centuries, Western reports came from Africa with relative agreement on size, nature, and name of a wild, human-like beast, “but still no sightings, just stories told by Africans

78 Newman 2006: 36
filtered through visitors all too willing to believe.”80 Hard evidence, Newman reports, did not emerge until 1847 when an American medical missionary, Thomas Savage, acquired a skull.81

Not all researchers are dismissive of local knowledge. A hundred years ago, anthropologists asked after it. The stories locals shared with them did not describe the wild, women-stealing beast of hunter’s tales. In 1911, Albert Ernest Jenks wrote of “Bulu Knowledge of the Gorilla and Chimpanzee.” The Bulu are a group of Fang people living in Central and Southeastern Cameroon. Their stories are of the same species (*Gorilla gorilla*) but a different subspecies from the Cross River gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*).

Jenks began wary of anyone’s knowledge:

The following facts are from data gathered at my request by Mr Francis B. Guthrie, recently of Kolodorf, Kamerun province, German West Africa. Mr Guthrie says it is almost impossible for the white man in Kamerun, though in the center of the gorilla’s geographic range, to have intimate knowledge of that animal. He has known of only one white man who has killed a gorilla there in five years.

The facts here presented were obtained from members of the Bulu tribe whom Mr Guthrie has known intimately for some years, and with whose language he is familiar. They were verified by other natives than the original informants; but Mr Guthrie calls attention to the Bulu’s credulity and his decided tendency to exaggerate.82

---

80 Newman, 2006: 39
81 Newman, 2006: 39
He then went on to describe the Bulu’s detailed knowledge of gorillas, including: size of bands of
gorillas and how the bands change in number, rank, and structure; nesting behavior; foraging and
diets; and how they rear their young. The Bulu described the opposite of a ferocious brute:

Until the child is strong enough to travel the mother carries it with her much of the time,
crapping her arm around it. She picks the child up by one arm, often cradling it in her two
arms as the human mother does her child. The natives note in this conduct one of the
gorilla’s greatest likenesses to man.\(^\text{83}\)

The Bulu explained that gorillas only attack when attacked first. They offered various anecdotes
attesting to the gorilla’s gentle nature and, almost, humanity:

The Bulu natives commonly believe that a wounded gorilla is rescued and carried away by its companions. And Mr Guthrie presents one "authentic instance" as grounds for such belief. A Bulu once shot a gorilla, and, thinking it dead, cut off a foot to take back to his village. On returning the next morning with companions, the natives discovered that the body was gone, but they followed a trail leading away for fully a mile, where they found the gorilla dead. The trail was stained with blood, and the marks along the trail plainly showed that the gorilla had been carried.\(^\text{84}\)

The Bulu considered the gorillas among the smartest animals in the forest—though not as intelligent as the chimpanzees—and to be close relatives to themselves. Jenks included two Bulu stories

\(^{83}\text{Ibid.}: 57\)

\(^{84}\text{Ibid.}: 57\)
depicting a close relationship between gorillas and people, but one characterized by fear and conflict: “The Gorilla and the Man” in which a hungry gorilla continues to invade a family’s house and “The Gorilla and the Child” in which a gorilla steals a woman’s baby. In both stories, the gorillas speak to the people, asking for help and trust. In the first, the gorilla is killed. In the second, a man tries to kill the gorilla and kills the child instead.

Many local accounts of gorillas include these sorts of magical, fairy-tale aspects. The two Bulu stories describe real occurrences: crop-raiding by gorillas, the threat a wild gorilla may pose to a village child—while weaving these into a normative narrative, something more like a fable or a morality tale. The blend causes Western scholars, aiming at scientifically accurate accounts of gorillas, to be skeptical of the reliability of local stories.

Schaller was consistent. He was critical of anything falling short of scientific rigor, even a lapse by the great Sir Richard Owen: “Not to be outdone by this tale, the anatomist Owen, briefly abandoning science for mythology, wrote…” He noted that the habits of lowland gorillas remained largely unknown at the time of his writing. “Hunters shoot them, zoo collectors catch them, and explorers take random notes in passing, but only one scientist has made a definite long-term attempt to study the ape.” Again, Schaller referred only to whites, including the hunters, knowing about gorillas, but he eventually referenced local knowledge when he wrote of his fieldwork.

Schaller described local communities that hunt the gorilla for food and the resultant gorilla attacks. Unable to locate the gorillas in certain regions during the fieldwork, he turned to locals: “We resorted to second-hand information about gorillas from miners, government officials, and

85 Ibid.
86 Schaller, 1964: 5
87 Ibid.: 5-6
88 Ibid.: 80-81
especially from the native residents.” 89 He hinted at a few local beliefs, e.g. “the Wabembe in this region believe that the gorilla, the kinguti, is not an ape but a man who long ago retreated into the forest to avoid work,” but he did not offer much local insight or stories. 90 Perhaps the Wabembe and other local communities around the Virunga Volcanoes knew less of their gorillas—high up in the slopes—than the Bulu sharing a forest with the apes; or perhaps Schaller’s relationships with the locals prevented the inclusion of their knowledge. He wrote: “It is never easy to get to know the natives. They usually remain in a world of their own, and most attempts to draw them out are met with silent rebuff.”91 He did not trust their stories:

Reuben and the other guides told us many things about the family life of the gorillas, but like the other Africans we met, they were not reliable. When it came to confirming the presence or absence of the apes or of pointing out the various food plants, our guides were invaluable, but when they were describing the behavior of the gorillas they simply assumed that it resembled their own. Thus gorilla males were said to bring food to their families, and a female about to give birth left the group and secluded herself.”92

Some of this may have stemmed from frustration. He described difficulty in attaining even simple knowledge from natives while they all searched for gorillas:

89 Ibid: 85
90 Ibid: 86
91 Ibid: 42
92 Ibid: 45; I brought The Year of the Gorilla to Cameroon and shared it with a fellow American conservationist. Also a great admirer of Schaller, she excitedly took the book on a biosurvey of Mak Betchou, a proposed protected area, to look for sign of Cross River gorilla or chimpanzee. While at camp one night, her Cameroonian colleague asked if he could read the book when she was done. She agreed but he never got around to reading it. Recounting this story, she said she was relieved as she was so embarrassed by Schaller’s tone and his approach to his African colleagues.
When we peppered [the Batwa] with questions: “Do gorillas eat this plant?” “Do they nest in trees or on the ground?” our inquiries were met with stubborn silence or evasive replies. Bichumu, obviously distressed, finally told us: “If you call the animal you are seeking by name, you will never find it.”

One Bantu had told me that gorillas grab flying spears when hunted and throw them back at the attacker. When I asked Bishumu about this he smiled and replied: “This is a fable. We tell such tales to the Hutu and they believe them. The gorillas fear man. They bark and roar and run away.”

The Batwa were upset by my inquisitive approach to the gorillas, but whether this was for my sake or because they were afraid for themselves, I was not certain. When we followed a fresh trail, Bataka reported over and over like a litany: If you follow this trail, the gorillas will kill you.”

Schaller did not dismiss local knowledge when local myth tracked scientific fact. For example, he offered a longer local tale of a hippopotamus than any about gorillas. He included no local stories at length, particularly not in his history of knowledge of the gorilla. Newman, too, passes over all

---

93 Schaller, 1964: 51
94 Ibid: 53
95 Ibid: 58
96 Ibid: 64, “God made the hippopotamus and told it to cut the grass for the other animals. But when the hippopotamus came to Africa and felt how hot it was, he asked God for permission to stay in the water during the day and to cut the grass only at night. God hesitated to give this permission, for the hippopotamus was apt to eat fish rather than cut grass. But the hippopotamus promised not to eat fish and was thus allowed to remain in the water. Now when the hippopotamus leaves a pile of dung, it scatters the pile with its tail, thereby showing God that there are no fish scales in it.”
African tales.\textsuperscript{97} When Newman does recount African stories, via the colonists who recorded them, his concern seems to be that African stories were so fanciful that the colonists “must have had their legs pulled.”\textsuperscript{98}

The concern that local knowledge is not true mistakes an important understanding of knowledge. Knowledge is not only the information described as scientific fact.\textsuperscript{99} Local accounts describe the gorilla in relation to humans. They understand animals not as wild creatures living in remote forest but in correspondence to their community, behavior, and interactions. Local knowledge of gorillas helps guide and explain behavior; it helps navigate gorilla and human relationships. It is very different from the objective knowledge sought by Western science.

The knowledge Schaller is concerned with is \textit{descriptive knowledge} offering an account of gorilla behavior. Descriptive knowledge describes the way the world is. It provides facts about gorillas. It is the sort of knowledge produced by scientists. Local knowledge offers an important alternative to scientific ways of knowing; it describes how to relate to gorillas, not just what they do. It is much more apt for considering moral questions involving what to do about gorilla conservation. It provides context for the conservation efforts and describes the relationships between local communities and the surrounding wildlife. But Western descriptive knowledge of gorillas is much more present in conservation education and moral adjudication over what to do about gorillas going away.

\textsuperscript{97} Though he does offer some amusing fanciful tales from sensational Western naturalists writing in the late 1800s, such as Gosse describing how gorillas smash elephants’ trunks with a tree-branch club to defend their favorite fruit, Newman, 2013: 18-20
\textsuperscript{98} Newman, 2006: 38
\textsuperscript{99} The knowledge-how vs. knowledge-that discussion is beyond the scope of this dissertation
Scholarship on issues of knowledge and power warns of the many challenges in working across knowledges, from the problems of even conceiving of local (indigenous) and Western knowledges as separated as such\textsuperscript{100} to the concerns of unequal power and unshared cultural assumptions in assuring each knowledge is treated fairly.\textsuperscript{101} Africans may not have studied gorillas in the ways of Western science.\textsuperscript{102} Most have not had the time or means to put their observations and understandings to print. The lack of publication or authority does not track a lack of value or worth. In no way does it mean this knowledge should be suppressed, ignored, or belittled. In fact, it shows how important it is that this knowledge be found, heard, and included. Engaging local knowledge is especially important for fair and just moral adjudication. If Western reasoning is guiding moral action in an international context without understanding or incorporation of local normative knowledge, then it is unjustified and ripe for abuse.

Normative knowledge describes how we should act in the world. It tells of moral rights and wrongs, it guides action and behavior. When the African accounts of gorillas included information about how to interact with gorillas, they confused Westerners looking just for objective gorilla facts. First, these stories were wrapped in metaphor, mixing the message with myth. Second, Westerners were visiting for research. They were not trying to build a community or raise a family here among gorillas; they were trying to figure out what a gorilla is. To them, a gorilla was defined not by its


\textsuperscript{102} With notable exceptions of a new generation of African researchers working with and from Western institutions, such as D.N. Etiendem & I. Imong for Cross River gorillas
interactions with humans but by its role in the ecosystem. Their gorilla knowledge, even if objectively-oriented and descriptive, sat on normative Western assumptions of what nature should be and what sorts of things about gorillas should be studied and characterized as knowledge of gorillas.

Western scientists wanted to study pure, wild gorillas in their “natural habitat.” They wanted to know how gorillas act unaffected by people. This position came from a long Western tradition of separating humans from Nature, and of understanding Nature as defined by that outside of human influence. This affected their study. They would not research gorillas as they interacted with the local communities, but as they acted alone out in the forest. They did not want local anecdotes but proof from hard science—study of evidence, data, and information collected in the way that they produced knowledge. When the terms and criteria of hard Western science set the standard for valid knowledge, less rigorous observations, and other ways of knowing, may be lost. If not fact, they are dismissed.

Local communities may not have always provided accurate descriptive knowledge but this was not their goal. To them, it was important that knowledge had relevance and a connection, that it was normative. Conservationists, too, present a blend of descriptive and normative knowledge. Schaller did too. He described how the first Westerner to see a mountain gorilla reacted by shooting it and how the mountain gorilla is now named after the shooter, Von Beringe, for he was its “discoverer.” He humored elements of being the explorer himself: “It was a wonderful feeling to...”

---

103 Ethnoprimateology emerged out of primatologists recognizing this flawed orientation and embracing cultural anthropology and new approaches to understanding primates and primate behavior.
104 Shooting did not stop there: “first on the spot after the discovery of a new animal is usually an army of museum collectors, intent on shooting the biggest and best specimen.” (1964: 8); 1964: 7-8, Though, almost eighty pages later, he was critical of the same concept: “The Arctic explorer Stefansson somewhat cynically observed that a country is...”
sit near these animals and to record their actions as no one had ever done before,” in so doing offering a new, better way to relate to gorillas.\textsuperscript{105} He refused to enter the forest with a gun, even though:

the reputed belligerence of the gorilla caused a certain amount of uneasiness and concern for the future, especially in my wife Kay. I realized, of course, that hunters exaggerated their tales in order to be doubly acclaimed for their heroism in ridding the earth of such monsters…” \textsuperscript{106}

Schaller contrasted himself with Akeley, his famous predecessor, who claimed “the whiteman who will allow the gorilla to get within ten feet of him without shooting is a plain darn fool.” \textsuperscript{107} Schaller sat alongside the gorillas in peace. Newman too reminds again and again of the need to understand gorillas as gentle giants. Both of their works focus on raising concern for gorilla conservation, stressing the ape’s plight and the need for protection.

*The Year of the Gorilla* captures many of the confusing facets of the relationships between the white Western researcher, the local communities, and the gorillas. Schaller described the great enjoyment he found doing his work, “roaming across grassy plains and uninhabited forests and climbing mist-shrouded mountains”, and his immense wonder at meeting a gorilla:

I felt a desire to communicate with him, to let him know by some small gesture that I intended no harm, that I wished only to be near him. Never before had I had this feeling on...
meeting an animal. As we watched each other across the valley, I wondered if he recognized the kinship that bound us.”

He wrote *The Year of the Gorilla* to separate his feelings from his objective account of the gorilla (his manuscript *The Mountain Gorilla*). In offering a popular account, he felt more free to be explicit with the normative positions he took as he produced knowledge about gorillas. For example, he was critical of the way humanity as a whole treats nature, “sacrificing the eternal for the expedient” and he was clear on his mission to defend it. Half a century later, Schaller is among the most celebrated of all field biologists. He remains prominent: vice president of Panthera and a senior advisor to the Wildlife Conservation Society. He is a hero for many young conservationists. He is cherished not just for his hard science but for his principles and pursuit of the cause of conservation.

Writing *The Year of the Gorilla* in 1964, he anticipated many of the conservation battles to come. In writing of the creation of Albert National Park, Schaller hinted at who conservation was for, at least at the time: “[Akeley] urged the Belgian government to set aside a permanent sanctuary for the animals where they could live in peace and be studied by scientists.” Throughout the book, he hinted at the exclusion of locals from conservation sites, e.g. “Albert National Park alone employs over 250 Africans as guards against poachers and as guides for tourists.” He mulled over wildness, and the arbitrary nature of parks: “for was not the purpose of a park the preservation of game in a natural, undisturbed state untouched by the hand of man? And yet the hunter has been a part of the

---

108 Ibid.: 12, 35
109 Ibid.: 70, 71
110 Ibid.: 9
111 Ibid.: 15
ecological scene for thousands of years, and most parks are much too small to be considered self-sustaining units.”112 His critiques echo years later as conservationists struggle with the Parks model.

Schaller was sympathetic: “As I saw the crowds of Africans delightedly looking at the creatures which they had never seen in the wild, it struck me how drastic the decline of game has been.”113 But he challenged Africans to bear the burden of conservation themselves:

The preservation of wild life ultimately depends, of course, on the African himself. The agriculturalist cannot be asked to save the game, for he needs the land and he craves the meat, and for the sake of his own survival he cannot tolerate elephants and buffalo in his fields. The pastoralist prizes number of cattle and goats above all else, and as his herds increase the wild game must be eliminated to conserve the amount of forage available to them. The plight of Africa’s game has aroused international attention. Experts in wild life management…from Germany… England… America have visited Africa to find a solution… A few years ago the future of the game looked very dim, but a belated, intensive effort by scientists has produced some tentative answers which, I believe, may eventually insure the preservation of some of Africa’s unique fauna.

As a guidance proposition, it is realized that at present the African will preserve the game only if he derives direct material benefit from it, and that wild life is a major resource which requires proper utilization. Recently an important point has been demonstrated: many areas can produce a greater crop of wild animals than of domestic ones.114

112 Ibid.: 65
113 Ibid.: 67
114 Ibid.: 69
Conservation Biology often offers at once precise descriptive knowledge and guiding normative knowledge; fewer than three hundred Cross River gorillas remain, so they must be saved. Western reasoning justifying conservation builds upon Western scientific knowledge of nature. Conservationists produce descriptive knowledge about a species of conservation concern to aid in the normative project of its conservation. The validity of the normative knowledge supporting the project—Western reasoning, especially environmental ethics—is assumed, ensured, and unchallenged in part because it is seen as conjoined with science; descriptive Western knowledge is considered to be the best, most accurate way to understand the natural world. But normative Western knowledge is produced in a certain way, from a certain context, and its foundations are far from sound or uncontested. Schaller’s musings help share challenging questions. Can conservation only be appreciated by a few? Will Africans only preserve game if they benefit from it? Are benefits only economic? Do Africans have the normative knowledge and resources to guide conservation of their wildlife, or must this incentive come from elsewhere?

For many good reasons, Western scientists, especially primatologists, feel they hold the most valid knowledge of primates. Also for good reasons, many local communities feel that their knowledge has been ignored. During colonialism, control over knowledge production and authentication often prevented even the inclusion of local accounts. For example March described his failed attempt at hunting Cross River gorillas and his subsequent knowledge of the gorillas in 115 Vucetich, J.A., Nelson, M.P. 2013. The Infirm Ethical Foundations of Conservation. In: Bekoff, M. (ed.). Ignoring Nature No More: The Case for Compassionate Conservation. University of Chicago Press, Chicago: 9–26.
116 Goldman, 2007
great detail but never mentioned local knowledge of the primates. Contemporary books and papers on “knowledge of the ape in antiquity”, akin to Schaller and Newman, described possible Greek and Roman accounts of gorillas but not African. Recounting his surprise that a gorilla appears depicted on a bowl from before the eighth century, Montagu wrote:

startling, because knowledge of the gorilla was not established until the year 1847, when Savage and Wyman published the first account of the anthropoid. There can be little question that the gorilla had been beheld by human eyes long before the establishment of its existence in 1847… but it is extremely unlikely that those eyes ever belonged to a person other than a native living in close proximity to the native habitat of this animal.

Even Montagu, an anthropologist famous for his critique of race as a biological concept, oriented knowledge in this way: as only established if from the West. On occasion, a colonial writer would notice this. Writing in 1937, Sanderson made a case for the Assumbo:

They are an honest people and not given to imaginative story-telling… and as they probably see more gorillas and know more of their habits that does any other group of human beings in the world, I think their opinions should at least be listened to.

---

120 *Ibid.*: 90
He added that the Assumbo believed the gorilla to be another race of human, rejected a tale popular among other tribes that gorillas carry off women, and knew all the bands of gorillas by sight. They knew where each band would be, what the band looked like, and how many bands there were. This is all Sanderson offered of Assumbo knowledge: that they have it. He used the rest of the chapter to share what he found, learned, and concluded. The legacy of the control over knowledge production is that Western reasoning over what to do about gorillas going away emerged without the context of local African knowledge and stories about gorillas.

As Goldman writes, “By monopolizing what counts as valid knowledge—by claiming epistemological, methodological, and ontological superiority—Western science has silenced the knowledge of Africans.” Folk biology and ethno-ecology seek to work with local knowledges to end the silence and co-produce descriptive knowledge about the world. This project can be expanded. Just as science produces descriptive Western knowledge, philosophy produces normative Western knowledge. Local knowledge can be further distinguished as well. Local knowledge, built on interactions with their particular environment, offers descriptive accounts. Traditional local knowledge, built on cultural history and beliefs, provides normative guidance. Among other things, it guides relationships with wildlife. Discounting local knowledge may not only miss important understandings about how to co-exist with (and thus conserve) wildlife, it also raises serious concerns of injustice.

123 Goldman, 2007: 310
Part II

INJUSTICE FROM INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Though conservationists work on a global scale and argue that they work for a global good, conservation requires international interventions and all too often leads to injustices.\(^{126}\) Some injustices are blatant, such as the evictions of millions of local people from protected areas.\(^{127}\) Others, such as those described by Garland in the opening quote, are more subtle. Africans simply do not benefit from wildlife conservation the way Western conservationists and eco-tourists do.

Miranda Fricker’s work on epistemic justice helps explain how injustice can occur in relation to African communities, African wildlife, and knowledge production. She describes two types of epistemic injustice: testimonial and hermeneutical. Both are caused by a kind of prejudice, conscious or unconscious, against the speaker due to her social identity. Testimonial injustice comes when a listener discounts a speaker’s credibility, and thus knowledge, due to prejudice against the speaker’s identity.\(^{128}\) When a villager tells a story about how gorillas care for their young, and a primatologist


dismisses the story as apocryphal due to the villager’s lack of scientific language or study, this may be a case of testimonial epistemic injustice.

Testimonial injustice can even be pre-emptive, if group members are prevented from even testifying their knowledge due to a lack of credibility or trustworthiness. Here, the injustice comes from social structures that exclude groups from testimony. For example, during colonialism most local Africans had no means or opportunity to publish or print their accounts, of wildlife or any topic.

Elizabeth Anderson builds on Fricker’s work by showing additional structural injustice. If a group’s knowledge and credibility is continually discounted, in line with prejudice and discrimination preventing them resources and other opportunities, the epistemic injustice can become systematic. Without proper education and opportunities, tools or platforms for expressing or presenting their knowledge, a group’s knowledge may continue to be discounted or dismissed: “Testimonial exclusion becomes structural when institutions are set up to exclude people without anyone having to decide to do so.”

Structural epistemic injustice may be the cause of the great dearth in Western and global literature of African knowledge on African animals, from giraffes to gorillas to hyenas. Hermeneutical injustice may identify the cause even better. Fricker describes hermeneutical injustice as always structural, occurring when the prejudicial marginalization of a speaker and her knowledge group prevents society (including both the speaker and the listener) from having the “interpretive resources” to make sense of the speaker’s claims and experience. Lacking the interpretive resources

---

129 Fricker 2007, 130; Anderson, 2012
130 Anderson, 2012: 166
131 Fricker, 2007: 158-159; Anderson, 2012: 166
to isolate the injustice they are suffering from prejudicial epistemic marginalization, Cross River communities suffer hermeneutical injustice. They cannot offer their own accounts of their local wildlife, instead they must accept the knowledge presented by visiting Westerners, and the corresponding normative prescriptions. Their knowledge is absent from the science, media, and reasoning supporting the conservation actions presented in the interests of the wild animals. Only Westerners can speak for the needs of wild Africa, Westerners know the best way forward for their local communities. Africans are not taken seriously. Again, this is a structural injustice. The listeners and readers are not even aware of the African accounts that are missing.

For both testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, the exclusion of the victims must be based in prejudice. The victims must have sought to articulate their knowledge and experiences and been marginalized. Many wildlife researchers visit Africa. Few wildlife researchers record the voices or ideas (the testimony or knowledge) of Africans in relation to their wildlife or its conservation.

Fewer still provide the training, tools, or resources for Africans to document and present their own knowledge in a way that is heard, appreciated, and understood. Lack of fair distribution of resources

---

132 Ibid.
and opportunities presents a familiar case of injustice. Fairness and distribution are challenging to quantify in a global context but parsing out questions of global justice is essential in cases of international interactions such as Cross River gorilla conservation.

Questions of justice fall along three lines: retributive, reparative, and distributive. Reparative and distributive justice are more often applicable to conservation. Reparative justice describes the need to repair the natural world after degrading it, at least when others depend on it, e.g. for ecosystem services, if not for the sake of the natural world itself. Whether or not humans have duties to the natural world—be it to individual animals, species, or even ecosystems—is an enormous and contentious concern long discussed across the environmental ethics literature. Even if humans do not, we do have duties to each other with regards to nature. Thus reparative justice may require that, if one degrades nature, one need repair it for others. Justice may also require that one not degrade nature if repair is not possible. States or other entities may bear responsibility for looking after their nature, particularly when it is unique. I call this the burden of endemism. Nigeria and Cameroon may have a responsibility to conserve the Cross River gorillas. If they do not, the gorillas will be lost to the world forever.

The Burden of Endemism

In the 21st century, in an increasingly global culture, more values and stakes are shared. Such cosmopolitanism means that the global community is aware of gorillas, and people across the planet—in New York and London, as usual, but also in Seoul, São Paulo, and Minsk, and Lagos,
Yaounde, and Ouagadougou—care about gorillas too. In this respect, the value of gorillas can be construed beyond any intrinsic value they may or may not hold. Gorillas are a special thing about the world that many people care about. Even if these people never plan to see a gorilla, they value the gorillas’ existence. As the only countries where Cross River gorillas exist, Cameroon and Nigeria have a certain charge to save them. China has the same charge for its pandas. The United States for Hawaiian monk seals, giant kangaroo rats, and prairie chickens.

The burden of endemism includes international expectations. The global community makes demands for the gorillas, sometimes at the expense of the gorillas’ home country. For example, as I write in the fall of 2015, a collection of international organizations, including the British government, are trying to block a super-highway from being constructed in Cross River. The super-highway would connect the port of Calabar with the large town of Obudu. It would also cut through Cross River National Park. The German firm Broad Spectrum Industrial Services and the China Harbour Engineering Company are funding the construction. Critics argue that the construction violates many international agreements Nigeria has signed, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and Convention on Migratory Species, all of which may bring sanctions against Nigeria if the project goes through. Governor Ayate says he is committed both to completing the project and to the protection of Cross River biodiversity. The unique nature of the Cross River forests and their inhabitants makes the global community feel they have a stake in Cross River State’s development plans (which are also a global endeavor due to the international investors and the global market supporting the expansion).

Endemism is not only a burden. It can also offer a source of pride. Nigeria and Cameroon can be recognized by the world as the only place where Cross River gorillas can be found. This simple fact can offer a point of distinction, of importance, of global recognition and contribution.

Returning from West Africa to the West, I flew home via Europe. Visiting a friend (the geographer behind the maps in this dissertation), I was struck by consistency of culture between a random German university town and the American university town where I lived the past few years. Lumping us together as the West seemed appropriate. I was most struck by abundance—of food, of energy, of comforts, of information, of backyard birds—and by the relative quiet of our temperate forests, particularly as it was winter.

The Cross River headwaters—and many other distant, exciting, exotic places bearing the focus of conservation efforts—boast a wealth of natural and potential biodiversity. Their biodiversity holds great appeal for outsiders. In one sense, it is yet another West African resource to be pursued, exploited, and utilized. By comparison, most of the West has short field guides and relatively abbreviated species lists. Tropical West Africa boasts bounty, richness, and overwhelming natural charisma. If done well, conservation can be much less an exploitation (mining for resources) than a benefit, for the sake of the wildlife and the people. Preserving heritage, natural and cultural, need not be a selfish or exploitative act. But it will need to be justified to all involved.

Many people, of all places and cultures, love and care about wildlife. Others do not. Justifying conservation at this scale, to these people, is straightforward. The challenge is to justify conservation to those that do not but that are affected. For African species, conservation campaigns often target the wider international community rather than the surrounding locals. This may be to raise pressure against these nations, but in so doing, it often villainizes the locals, implicitly or
explicitly, for the sake of the animals and the interests of folks elsewhere, for whom the conservation of this particular species requires little if any sacrifice.\textsuperscript{137} As our film \textit{The Cococa Crusader} shows, Cross River gorillas may be most threatened by a global industry, yet few people would make the lifestyle or behavioral change to support gorilla conservation. More on this in Chapter Four.

\textit{Unjust Benefits & Burdens}

Distributive justice refers to the unfair distribution of benefits and burdens of conservation. It presents the great postcolonial challenge facing Western conservationists working abroad. In an unjust global environment, with such disproportionate power, can international conservation be conducted in a just manner? Conservationists often try to elide this question by referring to the moral righteousness of their cause. Yet, especially on a global scale, even noble pursuits such as wildlife conservation may be unjust.

Concerns of injustice in wildlife conservation raise questions common to the field of political ecology, perhaps most importantly: who benefits and who suffers from wildlife conservation? Ecologists often describe and define nature without realizing the political implications of their work.\textsuperscript{138} Responses to ecological concern, by way of conservation, often result in accidental injustice through exclusion, marginalization, or essentialization (among other problems). Someone controls the language of conservation and the normative assumptions of what wildlife should be conserved and how.\textsuperscript{139} People do not just degrade nature. With conservation, they construct nature (e.g.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Robbins, 2011
\item Robbins, 2011
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
wildlife and proper wildlife habitat) as well. Who defines what this construction should be, who constructs this nature, and what they reconstruct are all political issues.

The political power to define ecological problems and responses often falls upon historically colonial lines, tracking boundaries determined by colonial powers. African environments continue to fall under outside influence. Western people determine, define, and create international ecological landscapes (no matter whether these landscapes are in Western countries or not). This hierarchy in control of the land began with colonialism and continues with conservation. As the millions of conservation refugees show, conservation oppresses many people. These refugees are not in the West. The main drivers of global conservation: WWF, WCS, CI, FFI, TNC, Frankfurt Zoo, are all Western institutions. The charge of critics that conservation is “neocolonial” reflects how colonial ideas, methods, and relationships form foundations of the practice.

This history, as well as many other factors, may be contributing to the injustices stemming from conservation, from the exclusion of African ideas to the exclusion of African communities from conservation projects and areas. The better these factors can be parsed out, the more clearly they can be understood and addressed. When enacted, conservation is about control. This control raises political concerns about group inequality and oppression. Race is relevant to these inequalities. Many people accept that social and political interactions between the West and African countries are embedded in a racial history and framework, but conservationists may forget this due to their focus on natural systems. They think of themselves as working less with Africans (or even in an African

---

140 Nelson, 2003
141 Dowie, 2011
143 Robbins, 2011
political context) and more with wild, natural Africa. This is a mistake.

In his book documenting the immense human rights abuses resulting from conservation, Mark Dowie avoids directly addressing racism outside of a caveat in the glossary:

In the spirit of show-don’t-tell, I do not use the word [racism] anywhere in my book. I really didn’t need to. The incidents I describe speak for themselves, as does the fact that close to 100 percent of the people who have been evicted from their homelands in the interests of conservation have been people of color. The unspoken (and rarely written) rationale for this policy is certainly that European and American (i.e., Northern) science-based conservationists naturally understand the tenets of conservation, while primitive aboriginals do not. I should also make it clear at the outset that I do not consider any Northern conservation leaders to be racist, or believe that racist outcomes are always the result of racist intentions.¹⁴⁴

By not directly addressing the issue of racism in his work, Dowie misses describing an important factor of these injustices. If race is an issue in conservation, then it needs to be addressed as itself, not implicitly or tangentially. Recognizing the effects race has on conservation and interactions between conservationists and local communities will help to address racial issues.

Dowie is correct about intention. Wildlife conservationists are concerned with animals; few are racist.¹⁴⁵ Literature on racism clearly distinguishes between racist acts and institutions, showing how racism can exist without racists.¹⁴⁶ Even if conservationists are not intentionally causing harm

¹⁴⁴ Dowie, 2011: xi-xii
¹⁴⁵ Though disturbing examples and charges exist, I do not see a need to include them here.
tracking racial lines, the institution of wildlife conservation may be. Examples of non-whites suffering from conservation programs led and promoted by white conservationists are legion. Race arises in other critiques of conservation, too. The president of the the Union of Indigenous Nations, Marcus Terena, was racially explicit in his charge:

Why do you white people expect us Indians to agree on how to use our forests? You don’t agree among yourselves about how to protect your environment. Neither do we. We are people just like you.

The problem Terena references, essentialization, is the attribution of certain characteristics to members of a group based on stereotypes of that group. For example, one must be a certain way (for example a supporter of nature), because one is an Indian. This problem is also well-documented in literature on racism. Terena’s charge clearly reveals a racial issue in conservation. Bonner notes another:

As many Africans see it, white people are making rules to protect animals that white people want to see in parks that white people visit. Why should Africans support these programmes?

---


151 Bonner, 1993: 85
Conservation injustices are often racialized. Those suffering from conservation see their oppressors as “whites” as much as the oppressed understand them as anything else. When the power in conservation tracks racial lines in this way, racism is a risk. Moral adjudication in this context needs to consider and reflect upon the toxicity of racism along with moral questions about environmental issues.

Critics also charge conservation with “environmental racism.” The phrase describes how certain races (or ethnic groups) are disproportionately affected by negative environmental impact. The term is usually applied to instances such as the placement of a highly polluting plant in a majority black area but it is now extended to issues in conservation. Akin to the way minorities suffer environmental racism by losing the benefits of a clean environment, conservation may cause indigenous groups to lose benefits from their environment by impeding on traditional hunting rights, resource use, or territory claims. Again, such examples represent institutional racism for the costs affect one race and the benefits accrue to another: the plant pollutes black communities but grants profits to white owners; conservation protects animals for white, Western tourists at the expense of local African populations.

Race can also be added to other critiques of conservation. In an overview of local displacement for the creation of national parks, Agrawal and Redford make a classicist critique. Race can be added right in:

The most important critique against displacement is the injustice involved in the involuntary

---

152 Langton, 2003
154 Langton, 2003
155 Langton, 2003
removal of disadvantaged peoples from their homes and lands: Few elite or rich \[or white\] households have been displaced because of protected area creation. If conservationists do not attend to this, then they strengthen the perception that conservation is a concern of the wealthy \[white\] and the powerful.\textsuperscript{156}

Despite these examples, conservation is not necessarily racist. It rarely tracks intentional racism, e.g. oppressing people due to prejudice against them. It need not be institutionally racist either. Protecting animals could have benefits for some and ill effects for no one (e.g. protecting nesting seabirds on offshore islands). Whites also oppress other whites via conservation, such as with wolf reintroduction in the American West. A concern raised by a Montana rancher: “We’re not always sure why we should go through all this with losing calves and staying up all night, just so somebody from back East can come out here for a week and listen to a wolf howl”, sounds remarkably like anger elsewhere, though in this case the injustice falls on geographic, rather than racial, lines. \textsuperscript{157}

Alternative charges of classism or regionalism do not diminish issues of racism elsewhere. In fact, they may even reveal how relevant race can be. For example, Western whites have an unusually loud voice in protesting wolf conservation. Their whiteness may help them avoid some of the problems that other, less empowered races face when confronted by conservation. Different issues of injustice in conservation will need to be addressed in different instances. When race is a relevant element, racism needs to be considered.

Under colonialism, wildlife conservation was racially explicit. Wildlife conservation in Africa


began as a means to protect wild animals from hunting black Africans for colonial white hunters. The odd situation was justified by the argument that when African hunters hunted (for subsistence) they did so in a way that was cruel and unsporting.\textsuperscript{158} Wild animals were victims. When white hunters hunted (for sport), they were civilized and followed a “code”. Wild animals were game. Killing animals was acceptable when civilized, white people did it, but not when the blacks did.\textsuperscript{159} The racism here is clear. Racism is subtler, but equally pernicious, in determining who controls conservation after colonialism. Stories of great white conservationists, from George Schaller to Dian Fossey, from Jane Godall to Michael Fay, abound.\textsuperscript{160} They are often depicted as saving Africa, which implies that they are saving it from the Africans.

\textbf{CONCLUSION}

As conservation education takes up the missionary role of raising consciousness and teaching locals to value their wildlife, it obscures if not ignores the normative knowledge already present in local communities.\textsuperscript{161} Locals have been excluded from Cross River gorilla conservation in both Nigeria and Cameroon. Many say they do not support Cross River gorilla conservation because it does not take their views into consideration; conservation has not been discussed with them.\textsuperscript{162} I employed the Folk Filmmaking method to begin this discussion. Before I started Folk Filmmaking

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{159} This was not just a matter of numbers, i.e. that subsistence hunting was less sustainable than trophy hunting. Westerners neither had good population estimates at the time nor preserved wildlife well at the time.
\bibitem{160} Garland, 2008
\end{thebibliography}
in the field, I wanted to understanding the context in which I would be working. The context is not limited to the details of the Cross River gorillas, their habitat, or conservation situation. It includes how I know what I know about gorillas; my reasoning about gorillas begins with what I learn in the literature of gorilla knowledge. Almost all Western reasoning about gorilla conservation is colored by this knowledge and how it was produced. To improve moral reasoning in this context, where cultures are not fairly or equally represented in the very knowledge from which disputants are working, African accounts must be sought out, amplified, and perhaps over-represented. To date, they are distressingly absent. Moral issues with this knowledge and the legacy of its problematic production show the sorts of abuse that need to be both addressed and avoided by a practice of moral justification in this context.

In this chapter I showed the first step of Folk Filmmaking: understanding the historical and epistemic context from which the moral challenges to be adjudicated arise. In the next chapter, I further develop the context. I discuss the relevant details of the case study: Cross River gorilla conservation in Nigeria and Cameroon. I also present context by characterizing the moral reasoning of disputants, collating Western rationales for gorilla conservation and local Cross River arguments both for and against conservation.
Chapter Two

Conservation in the Cross River Headwaters
The Case Study

I have never seen a wild gorilla, and my efforts to do so have always reduced me to that state of exhaustion which is most aptly expressed by the grouse-shooting profiteer’s, ‘Well, I wouldn’t go no farther, not if they was golden eagles.’

--F.S. Collier, Chief Conservator of Forests for Nigeria, writing in 1934

Part I

Gorillas in the Mist

The Cross River begins as the Manyu, at headwaters high up in the mountains of Southwest Cameroon. The river weaves down slopes once draped in dense Afro-Montane forest and host to a variety of wildlife: forest elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), red river hog (*Hylochoerus meinertzhagen*), leopard (*Panthera pardus*), three species of duiker, and six species of primate including the gorillas and endangered Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*).164

Today the forest remains only in little gorges, too steep for cultivation or grazing, and among a few protected areas. The protected areas are striking in their small size and stark boundaries. The region is relatively remote. Much of the forest clearance is recent, coming within the past few

---


decades. On top of logging and encroachment by farmers, Hausa and Fulani herders from the North have come and set fire to the steep slopes, clearing land to graze their cattle. Anyang from Cameroon migrated into the forests and settled across the border, seeking to be a bit closer to the Nigerian markets. Most other settlement follows the construction of roads. Since the main road from Calabar to Ikom to Obudu was constructed by the British in the 1950s, communities have been resettling from forest spots to the roadside.

Mist wisps over the hills like hair waving in the wind. No one seems to know the gorillas well—not the conservationists, PhD researchers (myself included), park rangers, not even the locals. There are a spattering of sighting stories, e.g. a porter at Anape once saw nine gorillas, one with a baby on the back. That was the entire story, repeated to me a few times by different people. Few photos of Cross River gorillas exist, most taken by camera trap. Studies are of nests and scat.

Like Collier, much to my chagrin, in my months in the Cross River headwaters I also did not encounter a wild Cross River gorilla. My disappointment is not unusual. Acclaimed primatologist and conservationist John F. Oates surveyed the Nigerian hillsites for his dissertation on conservation in Cross River, Nigeria in 1966. He did not find any gorillas then, or when he returned in 1990 to help WWF and the Cross River government develop the national park. Many of my contemporaries, including Dr. Ndeloh Denis Etiendem who completed his dissertation in 2014 after years of research, have not seen a Cross River gorilla either. Over twenty people work for ERuDeF,

---


166 Nkonyu, L. 2014. Personal communication.

none have ever seen a Cross River gorilla either. Francis saw them a couple times as a child, over thirty years ago. He has not since.

This chapter offers a description of Cross River gorillas and the context of their conservation, beginning with a history of conservation efforts in the region. It includes sections on primatology and taxonomy, ecology and ethology, conservation status and contemporary conservation efforts. My goal is to provide background information which will enable better understanding of the context for the moral dispute.

This chapter may strike some readers as extraneous, an interlude in my argument. I include it for a series of reasons. First, I want to show how even understanding the problem of gorillas going away comes from a Western perspective. Western conservationists are responsible for the problem orientation. They are also one of the disputants. The moral issue is beginning on their terms. It also tracks their ontologies: they define what a Cross River gorilla is, how it is threatened, and how to conserve it. The moral dispute is over a Western-defined problem with Western concepts and Western solutions.

Second, it is easier to finds the facts of the case study concerning Cross River gorillas than Cross River communities. Much of the information this dissertation includes about local communities I only found in the field, not in the literature. I do not want to construe all these groups simply as local communities. I want to grant them nuance and texture and names. Relevant Westerners appear in this dissertation by name, the least I can do is identify and represent the local communities by how they identify. I include this chapter as steps toward epistemic justice, contextualizing the Western nature of even the account of the problem of Cross River gorilla conservation and assuring that local communities receive attention, respect, and consideration.
Context is essential to fair and just moral justification in real world, cross-cultural and unequal situations.\textsuperscript{168} Contextual details such as the many to follow only help later characterize and problematize moral reasoning. They are important for assessing how well moral reasoning fits the context. Readers need not remember all the details below to follow the argument of this dissertation but it is important the reader appreciates the nuances of the Cross River context. I include the information below to assure the reader a reference for assessing herself how well the reasoning employed by conservationists, conservation education, and Folk Filmmaking, fit. Put simply, this chapter offers an account of who is involved in the moral dispute, where the dispute is occurring, and the subject of the dispute. The next chapter offers the moral claims and reasoning.

\textit{Conservation \& Colonialists in the Cross River}

Accounts of relations between local communities and Cross River gorillas prior to colonialism are hard to find. This may be because most communities kept oral histories and lacked access to resources for recording their knowledge. With colonialism, control over knowledge production meant that the literature now recounts the relationship between Cross River gorillas and the Westerners trying to conserve them, but little else. The legacy of epistemic injustice means that even the descriptive facts providing context for the case study—the history of conservation in the region, the descriptions of gorillas, the characterization of threats—come only from a Western perspective. For this reason, the history of conservation in the region begins with British colonists in Nigeria and not with accounts of African governance of their natural resource through customs or taboos.

The first Western reports of Cross River gorillas in Nigeria come from J.C. Allen in 1930. Allen saw the gorillas but Chief Conservator of Forests of Nigeria, F.S. Collier did not. Collier worried the Cross River gorillas would go extinct “in no very long period of years.” Nigeria’s Cross River gorillas are not mentioned again in Western literature for over two decades. They reappear in a 1957 *Oryx* article by E.W. March. March spent over two years looking for the gorillas to no avail. He noted that Allen’s report was “the only written account I have been able to find of a European actually seeing gorillas in Nigeria,” but added, “[the gorilla] are not uncommon and unfortunately [are] still being ‘chopped’ by local hunters.”

March was also the Chief Conservator of the Forests of Nigeria. In 1957 he was already calling for gorilla conservation via a gorilla sanctuary. Though he saw no gorillas, he found plenty of nests. March concluded:

What of the future of these gorillas? They used to be shot for food, and probably still are, but it is doubtful whether they were ever hunted deliberately. Their very habits tend to protect them and it is only when they are encountered by chance that they are likely to fall prey. I think also that the old-time hunter who would face a gorilla is dying out. As a result of the 1956 expedition, plans are afoot to make the inspected area into an additional forest reserve and it is hoped to establish a game sanctuary roughly conserving the area of the map

---

169 Oates 1999
170 Anon [Collier], 1934
171 Cameroon hosts both Cross River and lowland gorillas. The latter are much more abundant. Parsing out which gorillas colonial literature references can be a bit more of a challenge for Cameroon. Nigeria only has Cross River gorillas.
accompanying this article. Preservation of their habitat will go a long way towards preservation of the species.173

Westerners practicing conservation in the Cross River headwaters have long focused on the gorillas. In the 1920s, British colonists founded the Nigerian Field Society to learn more about the local wildlife.174 In their first journal, the Field Society published an article calling for immediate protection of the forests for the sake of the Cross River gorillas.175 Protection did not happen. Overwhelming military disputes—World War II, Nigeria’s independence, the Biafra Rebellion—arrested most efforts for Cross River conservation.

After March’s article, the gorillas retreated for another two decade disappearance from the Western literature. Some scientists suspected the gorillas had gone extinct.176 Unsure, the Nigerian government launched “Operation Locate Gorillas” in 1979. The Obudu plateau, upon which Cross River National Park and other gorilla habitat falls, had been nominated for UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.177 Rediscovering the gorillas would help secure the nomination.

Led by Arikpo Ettah, Chief Conservator of Forests for Cross River state, and Clement Ebin, senior wildlife officer, the researchers found signs of gorillas at the Boshi extension of what would become Cross River National Park and at a new site, the Mbe Mountains. Around the same time, a road opened in the area, connecting Ikom to Obudu. The road reached into a previously remote area of Cross River, including the town of Kanyang. In 1983, a hunter from Kanyang, George Ocha

---

173 March 1957: 34
Abang, brought Ebin a baby gorilla. He had shot its mother. Oates notes that, despite Abang’s killing of a protected animal, Abang was “praised by the Commissioner for Natural Resources for his ‘patriotic gesture.’” The baby was brought to a zoo in Calabar. It soon died, but not before raising much excitement about the continued existence of gorillas in Nigeria. The support helped the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) promote the protection of the Obudu Plateau and they immediately began studies and surveys to support the initiative.

In 1987, NCF brought English ornithologist John Ash to survey the region. Ash discovered new records of birds for Nigeria—the green ibis, gray-necked Picathartes, and violet-backed flycatcher—and further sign of the gorillas. He called for national park status protection for the area, and more gorilla surveys. The surveys followed, led by Alexander “Sandy” Harcourt of the University of Cambridge, a primatologist focusing on mountain gorillas in Rwanda and Uganda. At the same time, NCF dispatched John Mshelbwala and Ibrahim Inaharo to Kanyang. Like many researchers before him, Mshelbwala found only nests. Inaharo saw the gorillas and convinced the Kanyang hunters to initiate a temporary ban on hunting. Inaharo then joined Harcourt and Harcourt’s wife, Kelly Stewart, on a two month survey. They found evidence of gorillas at Mbe, Afi, and multiple sites within what would become Cross River National Park and estimated that Nigeria still hosted about 150 gorillas. The researchers claimed that hunters were killing the gorillas faster than the gorillas could reproduce and that farmers were rapidly encroaching on the habitat. They concluded with calls for a series of conservation efforts: “advertising and enforcing existing laws prohibiting the killing of gorillas, gazetting a strict sanctuary in the core of each gorilla population’s

---

178 Oates 1999: 151
179 Ibid.: 151-152
range where no hunting of any kind would be allowed, promoting conservation awareness among local people, and (based on experience in Rwanda) establishing gorilla-based tourism."\textsuperscript{181} Noting the needs of local people to use the gorilla’s habitat, particularly for commercial bushmeat hunting, Harcourt did not advocate for a complete ban on hunting in the area nor for the creation of a national park.\textsuperscript{182}

The survey brought international intervention to the situation in Cross River. Two American volunteers, Elizabeth Gadsby and Peter Jenkins, began to manage a conservation project at Mbe with NCF. WWF sent Oates to help secure habitat protection with a national park and the gorillas appeared on the front page of the \textit{New York Times}.\textsuperscript{183}

Despite a distressing survey for Oates, where he found evidence of excessive hunting, massive forest destruction, and enormous village enclaves situated within the area, he and WWF succeeded in establishing the gorilla habitat as part of Cross River National Park by 1990. As he describes:

Creation of a park was a relatively straightforward matter, for Nigeria was being run by the highly centralized military administration of Ibrahim Babangida; a presidential decree was promulgated in October 1991, establishing Cross River and several other national parks. In the desire to quickly establish a park, its boundaries were defined as being identical to those of the existing Oban Group and Boshi-Okwangwo Forest Reserves; these boundaries were already identified in legislation so no great difficulty arose in establishing those as a national park.\textsuperscript{184}

\textsuperscript{181} Oates 1999: 153, Harcourt \textit{et al}. 1989
\textsuperscript{182} Cross River National Park did not encompass this area yet.
\textsuperscript{183} J. Brooke, “Nigerians Discover Gorillas Thought Extinct”, \textit{New York Times} 1 August 1988
\textsuperscript{184} Oates 1999: 160
Still, the settlement did not please Oates. In exchange for expediency, secure funding, and political pragmatics, the negotiation resulted in a national park that left out areas of essential conservation importance. Most notably, it did not protect the most of Nigeria’s gorillas. The larger populations of gorillas occurred in Mbe and Afi. Even the park did not succeed in establishing secure habitat protection. Funding quickly dried up and local communities fought back, hard.

WWF helped manage the park for a few years but they pulled out in 1998. A 4.08 million euro grant from the European Union to support the park did little to alleviate local concerns with the park or diminish poaching. In 1999, Oates returned with his PhD student, Kelly McFarland. They found little evidence of wildlife in the park. Oates found only squirrels remaining in the forest. The same year, the Nigerian National Park Service became a paramilitary outfit with increased power and permission for enforcement.185

WCS arrived in the region in 1996, beginning a transition to take over for WWF. The next year they surveyed for Cross River gorillas in Cameroon.186 Finding evidence across the border, WCS soon took over Cross River gorilla conservation efforts in both countries, spearheading what became a wide-ranging program including various universities (e.g. the City University of New York, Oxford Brookes), both governments, and multiple conservation organizations: WCS, WWF, NCF, FFI, the Pandrillus Foundation, and ERuDeF. Funding comes from around the world, from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to the San Diego Zoo, from the United Nations Environmental Programme to Bank aus Verantwortung.

---

In 2008, from a forest reserve somewhat protected since 1934, WCS managed to create Takamanda National Park on the Cameroonian side of the border. Takamanda is contiguous with Cross River National Park. It links gorilla habitat between the two countries. Though legislation protects the gorillas in both countries, these are the only two national parks protecting the gorillas’ habitat. All of this: a transboundary national park, decades of conflict with local communities, the arrival of all five of the big international conservation organizations, millions of dollars, a hundred years of concern, for a subspecies.

Part II

THE PRIMATOLOGY of the CROSS RIVER GORILLA, Gorilla gorilla diehli

Taxonomy

In the initial scientific classification, taxonomists listed Cross River gorillas as a distinct species: Gorilla diehli. A German zoologist, Paul Mastschie, made the taxonomic declaration in 1903 based on his measurements of eight skulls sent to him from the then-German colony of Kamerun. Herr S. Diehl, an employee of the German Northwestern Kamerun company and, possibly, a temporary governor of Kamerun in 1900, acquired the skulls. The Cross River gorillas

---

still carry his name. Diehl collected the skulls from villages now falling within the boundaries of Takamanda National Park.

The classification did not last long. Walter Rothschild, the British banker, parliamentarian, and zoologist, reclassified the gorillas as a subspecies in 1908. He also based his work on cranial measurements but added study of a skin and consideration of biogeographic barriers. Though critics later questioned the source of Rothschild’s Cross River gorillas samples (perhaps they came from outside the region, in the habitat of the much more populous lowland gorilla), twenty years later Harold Coolidge, Harvard zoologist and a founder of both the IUCN and WWF, lumped all gorillas together as one species: *Gorilla gorilla*. Before Coolidge, the world had eleven species of gorilla, including many more named by Matschie: *Gorilla jacobi, Gorilla schwarzi, Gorilla hansmeyeri, Gorilla zenkeri, and Gorilla graueri*.

Though Coolidge made some mistakes, e.g. his Cross River gorilla samples did not come from the Cross River region, his classification held for many years. In 1967, Colin Groves re-evaluated and re-classified gorilla taxonomy, splitting the ape into subspecies: Eastern (*Gorilla gorilla beringei*) and Western gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla gorilla*). Though nodding to the “Nigerian” (Cross River) specimens as the most distinct set within his Western gorilla data, Groves left all Western

---


gorillas together as *Gorilla gorilla gorilla*, but further split the Eastern gorillas into mountain gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla beringei*) and an intermediate: Eastern lowland gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla graueri*).195

Taxonomists and primatologists were not certain about the Nigerian specimens’ status. They were also unclear about the taxonomic status of gorillas as a whole. Most of the above classifications sat until the early 2000s, until Stumpf *et al.* called for subspecies status for Cross River gorillas after their morphological study showed that the gorillas differed in body size as much *G. g. beringei* and *G. g. graueri* did.196 Stumpf *et al.*’s work was further supported by Sarmiento and Oates. In perhaps the most careful and comprehensive study of the taxonomic position of the Cross River gorilla, Sarmiento and Oates returned to cranial measurements and again showed that Cross River gorillas are distinct from all others.197 They were convincing. Primatologists and taxonomists accepted Sarmiento and Oates’ work and officially designated Cross River gorillas as a subspecies: *Gorilla gorilla diehli*.198

Around the same time, led by Groves, taxonomists split the species of gorilla into two. Groves concluded his definitive, 2001 account of gorilla taxonomy:

Science has advanced, but human behavior has not. People still hunt gorillas for food or trophies, and still cut down their forests; but now those same advances in science also enable forests to be cut down more efficiently, gorillas to be hunted more efficiently, human populations to increase ever faster and press in on the remaining habitat, so that our second-

---

195 Groves 1970
197 Sarmiento and Oates 2000
closest relative is threatened with disappearing forever. More and more, the work of taxonomists and other biologists must be put at the service of conservation.199

Splitting the species and delineating subspecies furthered conservation objectives as much as it tracked clearer scientific understanding of how to cleave and describe the natural world. Taxonomists reclassified gorillas less to clarify ontologies of what a gorilla is than to provide targets for conservation. Normative environmental ethics infiltrated the descriptive science of describing genetic difference between gorillas.

That noted, geneticists continue to try and hone in on scientific accuracy in classifying species. Improving technologies allow molecular study to better and better describe genetic variability and geneticists to provide more accurate accounts of primate evolution.200 Though the early 2000s brought continued confusion and contestation of the appropriate phylogenetic position of the Cross River gorilla based on the genetic data, in 2016 they remain a subspecies with the support of most primatologists.201

199 Groves 2001: 30-31
The taxonomic history is relevant for showing the tenuous, but also self-reflective strength, of Western scientific knowledge. More importantly, it shows the complexity in describing what makes Cross River gorillas distinct. Conservation may depend on the stability of this distinction. If Cross River gorillas are just a variety of lowland gorillas (plenty of which can be found elsewhere in Cameroon, Gabon, and Congo), how important is it to conserve them? The unstable foundation of the Cross River gorilla’s ontology, of what makes the Cross River gorilla a specific kind of thing in the world, is important for understanding the moral reasoning about the gorillas. Many of the arguments presented in Chapter Three rely on this ontology. One wonders if it might not be easier to distinguish the gorillas as Nigerian, in their geography they have always been unlike any other gorilla.

Geographic Distribution & Legal Protection

Cross River gorillas live in a land of dramatically changing governance. Various fons (traditional leaders) and chieftans presided over their habitat, as did German and British colonists, and for a short time, the Biafrans. Now the gorillas fall within the domain of federal Nigerian and Cameroonian governments, the state government of Cross River, and the regional governments of Northwest and Southwest in Cameroon. They occur only at the headwaters of the Cross River. Their home tropical forest, the largest contiguous block of forest north of the Sanaga River, is a biodiversity hotspot, boasting an unusual level of endemism across species, including ten endemic primates.

202 President Biya re-designated Cameroon’s provinces as regions in 2008.

203 Oates et al. 2004
Cross River gorilla habitat spans approximately 12,000 km² across the two countries. Characterized by dramatic topography, the habitat ranges from 110 meters above sea level to over 2000 meters, with the ecosystems tracking the elevation: semi-deciduous tropical lowland forest abuts the mountains, sub-montane forest creeps up the slopes and Afro-montane forest and high altitude grassland caps the tops.

Though much of the habitat is suitable, the gorillas are dramatically fragmented within it. Their fragmentation is of particular conservation concern. The region may be able to boast an increased, perhaps even viable population of Cross River gorillas, but the gorillas’ population is declining and they remain isolated in about thirteen groups. Each of these groups, and the corresponding human communities, will be described by hillsite below. The largest estimated groups reach about 30 individuals, the smallest may be only six or eight. A 2014 estimate guesses Nigeria has 85-115 remaining Cross River gorillas; Cameroon 132-194. By contrast, the Western lowland gorilla is estimated to number anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000.

Both Nigeria and Cameroon provide full legal protection to the gorillas. The national legislation is further supported by both countries signing international commitments to conservation including the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (1973), the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), the Convention on the Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1997), and most notably, the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats (2007). This last point is of note as four of the nine hill sites, and almost half of the Cross

---

204 Oates et al. 2004; Dunn et al. 2014
205 Dunn et al. 2014
River gorilla’s current and potential habitat, remains unprotected. Without formal protection or conservation designation, depending on various regulations, it may be logged, cleared for farms, or opened up for plantations of cocoa or palm oil.

Nigeria protects its gorillas with the Endangered Species Act of 2004, the National Environmental Regulations of 2011, and the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency which opened an office in Calabar in 2012. Cross River State laws also protect the gorillas, particularly with a 2009 law banning all logging and establishing an Anti-Deforestation Task Force and a 2010 law protecting all primates in the state.

Cameroon’s gorillas (both Cross River and Western lowland) are protected as Class A category wildlife under the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Law: “it is strictly forbidden to pursue, capture or kill them, except in rare and exceptional cases (such as those for research purposes with special authorization issued by the Minister, or in self-defense that has to be proven). Possession of a Class A species or products derived from them can be grounds for prosecution, and those convicted can be fined/jailed.” This law was further supported by a National-Anti Poaching Strategy (1999, 2000) and a National Action Plan for the Conservation of Great Apes (2005).

**Ecology & Ethology**

Cross River gorillas are the least studied of all gorilla subspecies. Recent studies describe them as differing from Western lowland gorillas (Gorilla gorilla gorilla) in size of home range and nesting

---

207 Dunn et al. 2014
The vast variety of the Cross River habitat leads researchers to predict substantial differences between Cross River gorilla sub-populations as well. For example, the gorillas at Kagwene inhabit Afro-montane and submontane forest at over 2000 meters while those in Mawmbi wander semi-deciduous Guineo-Congolian forest consisting of high canopy and limited understory vegetation at elevations from 125-550 meters. That noted, across their habitat much of the forest is secondary, after being degraded by logging or other forest use. At Kagwene, the gorillas are surrounded by grassland. They live on an island of remnant forest, leaving would require them to venture out into farms and grazing lands, far different from their native habitat.

All gorillas live in social groups called bands. Weaned members, i.e. gorillas no longer suckling with their mother, construct their own nests each night. Gorilla nests are platforms built on the ground or in the trees (often depending upon the size of the gorilla, a large male has great trouble getting into a tree). They construct the platform by snapping, bending, and weaving whatever vegetation is at hand. They build their nests close to each other, creating clear ‘nest sites’ in the forest.

These sites are essential for researchers, especially those studying the remarkably rare and elusive Cross River gorillas. As Etiendem writes: “All evidence of [Cross River gorilla] population group sizes and social organisation is based on nest counts.” Careful studies describe Cross River gorilla nesting behavior at three sites: Afi, Kagwene, and Mawmbi. Researchers describe the

---

212 Etiendem 2013: 14
Kagwene gorillas as making more fresh nests in the wet season than dry season, splitting into smaller
groups to forage, and preferring to sleep on steep hills and away from grasslands or signs of human
disturbance.214 The Mawambi gorillas also like to sleep on steep hills, far from people.215 The Afi
gorillas split up to forage but will sleep in groups of 18 or more.216 Nest numbers, and thus group
size, changes across habitat. Bergl describes eight or fewer nests as most common but adds that ten or
more nests are not unusual either. The largest groups of gorillas are at Afi, Kagwene, and Mbe.217
Groups are smaller at Takamanda.218

In an extensive study at Afi, McFarland found that Cross River gorillas feed similar to
Western lowland gorillas. The gorillas eat 216 food items from 168 species, representing 36
taxonomic families and including 69 different trees, 32 lianas and vines, 22 herbs, and six shrubs.
Etiendem and Tagg found the Mawambi gorillas even more proliferate, eating 242 food items: 240
plants items from 186 different species (representing 55 taxonomic families), snails, and maggots.219
Both studies showed the Cross River gorillas feeding activity suffers from their seasonal climate,
which is more pronounced than those in which other gorillas occur. The Afi gorillas are limited in

Mackenzie, M. E., and Higham, J. P. 2011. Nest site ecology of the Cross River gorilla at the Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary,
Cameroon, with special reference to anthropogenic influence. American Journal of Primatology 73(3): 253-261; Funwi-
Gabga, N., and Mateu, J. 2011. Understanding the nesting spatial behaviour of gorillas in the Kagwene Sanctuary,
Cameroon. Stochastic Environmental Research and Risk Assessment 26(6): 793-811; Etiendem 2013; Sunderland-Groves, J. L.,
214 Sunderland-Groves et al. 2009; De Vere et al. 2011; Funwi-Gabga and Mateu 2011
(Gorilla gorilla diehli) habitats in the Mawambi Hills, southwest Cameroon. Endangered Species Research 20: 167-179
216 McFarland 2007
218 Sunderland-Groves et al. 2003
219 Etiendem, D.N. and Tagg, N., 2013. Feeding ecology of Cross River gorillas (Gorilla gorilla diehli) at Mawambi Hills:
their ranging during seasonal scarcity. During hard times they turn to eating lianas and tree bark. They eat this much more often than other Western lowland gorillas, which may account for some of the morphological differences, such as shorter palates and stronger jaws, found in Cross River gorillas. The Mawambi gorillas focus on fruit when available and turn to fibrous pitch, leaves, and bark when fruit is scarce, which is often due to the long dry season and heavy rainfall at the end of the rainy season. In both studies, the gorillas were particularly dependent on the liana *Landolphia* spp., both for fruit and leaves in times of scarcity. Etiendem’s recent study, and the current work by Alison Wade near Mone, are important as the only two previous studies came from Afi and Kagwene, which represent the extreme periphery of the Cross River gorilla’s range and thus may not offer good representation of the population.

Aside from the above, primatologists know little else about Cross River gorilla particulars. The gorillas remain little studied and even more rarely observed. Primatologists extrapolate from other gorilla subspecies to guess at Cross River gorillas’ social life, behavior, and other aspects of ethology.

---


221 Etiendem and Tagg 2013


**Ethnoprimateology (Relations with Local Communities)**

I describe the cultural value of Cross River gorillas to Cross River communities at great length in the following chapters. This section only describes ecological interactions. Most communities in the region grow cocoyams (*Colocasia* and *Xanthosoma* spp.), yam (*Dioscorea*), cassava (*Manihot* spp.), cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*), and oil palm (*Elaesis guineensis*). Gorillas tend to leave these crops alone. They do enjoy sugar cane (*Saccharum* spp.), though the crop is rare in the region, preventing much conflict.\(^\text{224}\)

Gorillas in the region are wary of humans. They come into little direct conflict. Extrapolating from gorilla activity elsewhere in Africa, Norberg suspects that loss of habitat will eventually push the gorillas closer to human communities, as the gorillas deal with food scarcity in the dry season. More common crops inviting conflict between gorillas and local communities include banana (*Musa sapientum*) and plantain (*Musa paradisiaca*). The gorillas destroy both plants to get to the pith in the stem. They ignore the fruits, even if ripe. Farmers, by contrast, harvest the fruits at stem, allowing the plants to continue reproducing.\(^\text{225}\) Both plants have short life spans and gorillas do much less damage than red river hogs, which uproot cassava and yams.

Most communities in the Cross River headwaters no longer have a direct relation to the gorillas. The gorillas rarely enter the human spaces and forest users rarely encounter gorillas in the forest. The lack of records of Cross River knowledge makes historical relationships unclear, except in the Cross River communities where some folks can offer accounts. Their knowledge and stories come in the next chapter. I distinguish them as African accounts almost always fall outside the canon.

\(^{225}\) Norberg 2008
of Cross River gorilla information from which Westerners rationalize conservation. African accounts also often include moral reasoning along with their factual content and moral aspects feature in the next chapter.  

Part III

CONSERVATION STATUS
of the
CROSS RIVER GORILLA

After locating the gorillas in the late 1980s, Western researchers spent the next twenty years focused on sorting out the gorilla’s taxonomy, finding and describing the subpopulations, and raising awareness for conservation. Close study of genetics, behavior, and ecology followed, almost all meant to help conserve the gorillas. Critically endangered, Cross River gorillas are Africa’s most endangered ape. Their study has always included an orientation to conservation.

---


Richard Bergl led genetic work revealing recent population decline and low genetic diversity. Building on his work, Thalmann et al. used century-old museum specimens to determine a drastic decline in population. Both researchers attribute the population decline to hunting. Large, suitable gorilla habitat in the region, sans gorillas, supports this hypothesis. The gorilla populations are distinctly fragmented, existing on hilltop islands of habitat surrounded by farmland, villages, and other anthropogenic pressure. The gorillas persist in areas too rugged and difficult for farmers to cultivate and for most hunters to follow. Genetic work supports the hypothesized isolation of the subpopulations. It shows distinctions between the montane Cross River gorillas at Afi (Nigeria) and Kagwene (Cameroon) from the lowland Cross River gorillas (at the other hill sites, more below). Though researchers found some genetic interchange across the subpopulations, the rapid decline and small overall population leave Cross River gorillas at risk of a population bottleneck. To address the risk, conservationists stress the importance of creating and protecting corridors to connect the hillsites and facilitate exchange between the subpopulations.

231 Oates et al 2003
232 Bergl et al 2012; Etiendem 2013
235 Bergl and Vigilant 2007; Etiendem 2013
236 Bergl 2006; Oates et al. 2007, Bergl et al. 2008
More recently Bergl led a study on Cross River gorilla habitat selection and suitability. He found that the gorillas prefer steep, highland forest far from human settlements.²³⁷ His work also showed that the subpopulations remain just connected enough that it would be possible to conserve them all under one conservation regime. Sawyer and Brashares supported Bergl’s claims, showing that at the unprotected Mount Oko hillsite in Cameroon, gorilla distribution tracked proximity to human disturbance and availability of vegetative food. Other factors—elevation, slope, canopy, thickness of undergrowth—were relevant but the authors stressed that food resources are most important. Imong et al. challenged these findings, arguing that anthropogenic disturbance, particularly hunting, not access to food resources, are the greatest restrictions on gorilla distribution. The researchers agree that conservation must focus on reducing human pressures, not ecological restoration.²³⁸ Addressing human impact on gorillas and their habitat is not a straightforward task, population density in the Cross River headwaters region reaches 500 people/km², among the highest density for both countries.²³⁹ Further, many of the local communities remain impoverished, removed from the main markets and resources of both their regions and countries, and reliant on the forests for their livelihoods.

The most recent Action Plan, or strategy for saving the subspecies, was released by a team of conservationists led by the head of WCS Nigeria in 2014.²⁴⁰ The five year plan calls for $10.5 million US dollars to conserve the Cross River gorilla until 2019. The authors claim that, with this funding, the population could remain viable and stable, adequately protected from poaching and

²³⁸ Imong et al. 2014a.
²³⁹ Oates et al. 2004
²⁴⁰ Dunn et al. 2014
They request funding for better protection of corridors between the hillsites, careful monitoring of disease, and more research, particularly into the gorillas’ distribution. They also need funding to expand and improve engagements with local communities through conservation education.

**Hunting**

Researchers attribute improved hunting prowess, especially tracking the increasing availability of guns, as the main cause of the gorillas’ historic decline. Improving hunting technologies remain a major threat.\textsuperscript{241} Even when not hunted, the gorillas may suffer from accidental maiming from snares set for other animals and stress caused by the presence of hunters moving through the forest. Stress has particular effect on reproductive success.\textsuperscript{242} Along with the silverback killed in Pinyin described at the beginning of this dissertation, one gorilla was killed at Amebisu (Mone) in 2009, three gorillas were killed at Afi from 2011-2012, one was killed in Kakpenyi (Mbulu) in May 2013, and another at Basho (Takamanda) in June of 2013.\textsuperscript{243}

Conservationists suspect that these numbers underestimate the impact of hunting on the population. With so few Cross River gorillas remaining, the loss of any individual increases the threats to the subspecies’ viability. Hunting gorillas is more often for poaching than subsistence. Some hunters eat and share the meat. More often, they sell it to urban markets for much more profit. Hunters can also sell gorilla bones and hands for traditional medicine and fetishes, and pawn

\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{243} Dunn et al. 2014
infants off as pets (historically, this was how many zoos acquired their gorillas).\textsuperscript{244} Local sentiment towards hunting varies greatly by community. Gorilla hunters feature in four of the films. I interviewed two hunters from Kanyang for Chapter Three. One of them graces the cover of this dissertation.

\textit{Habitat Loss \& Fragmentation}

Cross River gorilla habitat is threatened on many fronts. Massive agricultural expansion, particularly industrial forestry, oil palm, and cocoa plantations, are spreading across the region, especially in Cameroon. Logging poses a particular threat. Despite the governor’s ban on logging across the entire Cross River state, a report by WCS found rates of deforestation increasing.\textsuperscript{245} At these rates, the forests in Cross River would be gone within half a century.\textsuperscript{246} Roads are expanding and improving, allowing further access into the remote forests. Settlements and cultivation follow.

Communities already hug the edge of the habitat and encroach with small farms and burning to create grassland. A few communities exist literally within gorilla habitat, including both national parks. As they grow, they further fragment the habitat.

\textit{Disease}

To date, Cross River gorillas remain healthy but their tiny population, small genetic pool, and great isolation leave them at high risk of disease. Ebola is a particular threat. It wiped out


\textsuperscript{246} Ibid.
thousands of their closest relatives, *Gorilla gorilla gorilla*. So closely related to humans, and with their close proximity to human communities and their livestock, Cross River gorillas are at serious risk of transmission of a variety of pathogens, viruses, and parasites. The risk is so great that conservationists chose not to habituate any of the gorillas, either for research or ecotourism. They do not consider the potential economic benefits of ecotourism to outweigh the risks to conservation.

*Conservation Organizations in the Cross River*

Over twenty conservation initiatives, from large international NGOs (WCS, WWF, FFI) to Western zoos (San Diego, North Carolina), from REDD projects to great ape support groups (GRASP, ARCUS), work on Cross River gorilla conservation. We made our films with two organizations (WCS and ERuDeF) and were financially supported by another (FFI).

*The Wildlife Conservation Society [WCS]*

Based in New York, WCS is one of the world’s largest conservation organizations. They are now almost entirely responsible for Cross River gorilla conservation in both countries. In addition to providing and supporting formal protection in the two national parks, they are actively trying to work with local communities at and around almost all the other hillsites. Their Gorilla Guardian program employs traditional leaders and former gorilla hunters in attempt at more community-based conservation. Traditional authorities (e.g. Fons) selected each community’s Gorilla Guardians and

---

248 Dunn *et al.* 2014
are directly involved in the program. Gorilla Guardians undergo ecology training and act as conservation ambassadors between conservationists and local communities, sharing information and enforcing both traditional rights and conservation efforts. The program has had success in improving community relations. It offers a major contact point and resource for conversing with locals about Cross River gorillas. WCS Nigeria invited me to make the conservation films. I worked directly with WCS Nigeria, sleeping at their offices, befriending their employees, and visiting their sites. I collaborated with WCS Cameroon as well but in Cameroon I worked more closely with ERuDeF.

The Environment and Rural Development Foundation [ERuDeF]

ERuDeF is the first and only indigenous Cameroonian organization dedicated to wildlife conservation and the protection of the environment through research, training, and community engagement. They are led by Louis Nkembi, a former employee of WCS. They focus on only one Cross River gorilla site: Tofala, but they have had disproportionate impact. In November 2014, after years of surveying, lobbying, and effort, they convinced the Cameroonian government to gazette Tofala as a national wildlife sanctuary. It was previously an unprotected forest bloc. ERuDeF survey relatively unstudied forests, e.g. Mak Betchou, looking for Cross River gorillas, chimpanzees, and forest elephants. They also lead conservation efforts and programs near their office in Buea. They support and produce the Green Vision newspaper, the only environmental journalism in Cameroon. I wrote a Flagship Species Fund grant on behalf of ERuDeF. FFI awarded the grant to ERuDeF, not me. We were worked closely on six of the nine films included in this dissertation.

---

London-based FFI does not have an office in the region but they have a long-term presence in the conservation of the Cross River gorilla, particularly as financial and logistical supporters of ERuDeF. Their logo emblazons many projects and initiatives around Tofala.

PART IV
THE HILLSITES & SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES

Cross River gorillas occur at about nine hillsite. Below I introduce each region: Cross River, Nigeria and Anglophone Cameroon, and then offer an overview of all nine hillsites, the only places on the planet where Cross River gorillas still occur.

Introduction to the Nigerian Hillsites

Near the Cross River, Nigeria hillsites, most communities either cluster around the potholed but paved roads (Wula I, Kanyang II, Bamba) or sit back in the forest a short walk away (Kanyang I, Bansho). A few satellite communities remain at least a few hours walk from the road (Kundbve, Kanyang II). We met gorilla hunters and saw gorilla skulls only at the most distant communities. We also did not stop to teach at these distant communities as often as we did at more accessible schools. Three communities are enclaved within Cross River National Park. Locals say these communities have been here, deep in the forest, for over a hundred years. Settlements across the region changed following the completion of the first road by the British in the 1950s.
Along the road, houses are often cement, with corrugated tin roofs (tinnies). These tend to be a bit larger than the huts off the road (for obvious reasons, e.g. ease of transporting materials). Off the road, some of the large tinnies still occur but many homes are thachies, the more traditional thatched roof (now raffia palm, traditionally from local bush) huts. Francis told me that folks living in thatchies tend to be more hospitable than tinnies, tracking social class; it seemed to hold true throughout my visit. Even along the roads, electricity is limited to generators running on gasoline. Five liters of gasoline, at about 300 Naira ($1.50) in the summer of 2014, will last five hours or so. At our home we turned the generator on from dusk to sleep, about 7pm to 11pm, mostly to watch television. Available channels included a Nigerian news station, a Chinese history channel, a South African sports channel, and a few American stations (including National Geographic Wild, though folks rarely watched this). Cooking was on both gas canisters, at the wealthier houses and the conservation bush basecamp, and wood fires, even among many of the wealthy. Many locals prefer wood fire. Their persistence on using fire frustrated Francis. He constantly described the health risks of smoke and encouraged the adoption of gas.

Folks grow maize, cassava, and cocoa (aided by pesticide backpacks). They also plant bananas, oranges (a bit different than those in the West, they are green and eaten by squeezing the juice into one’s mouth, not chewing the flesh), and beans, from which a mash, maimai, is made, akin to tamale. Bushmeat, beef, and dried fish are the most common protein. Indomie (instant noodles) is a new arrival. Folks joke that it is not food (they call it stretched out rice) but it is popular due to the ease of preparation and low cost. We ate it almost everyday. It is prepared with chili peppers, egg, onion, and Maggie packets.
God is ever present in Nigeria: in stickers, slogans painted anywhere and everywhere, regular conversation. When I arrived, an ex-pat told me: “Just never say you don’t believe in God.” I saw Muslims in Obudu, the largest city in the region and headquarters of the local government, but nowhere else. They were more common in Cameroon, particularly near Njikwa. The religious separation was more distinct in Cross River.

The gorillas in Cross River, Nigeria live alongside two main ethnic groups: the Boki and the Anyang. The Boki speak Bokyi and the Anyang speak Anyang or Di-yang. The Boki largely outnumber the Anyang, a migrant group from Cameroon residing only in the few villages enclaved within Cross River National Park. They may be the most marginalized group in the Cross River gorilla conservation context—vulnerable due to their relatively recent arrival, ethnic distinction, and political tensions (the Cameroon government offered them resident cards for ease of trade—meaning they could cross the border with no problem—and perhaps with more pernicious intentions, e.g. claiming their citizenship). They are particularly threatened by resettlement. Since the creation of Cross River National Park, conservation organizations have been trying to resettle the communities.²⁵² They are also among the most remote, living 40 km from the nearest road.

The Boki, who fall within the larger ethnic group of Ekoi or Ejagham, span all three Nigerian hillsites, living on the edges of Cross River National Park and surrounding Afi and Mbe. They are the dominant local culture and political power. They administer the area. Ibibio migrants from Akwan Ibom have settled in some areas. Efiks, Calabaris, and Ibos are also present. Almost the entire population is farmers and traders. Most are Christian but still practice African traditional

religions as well. Many are members of native cults such as Ekpe (Mgbe), Ekpo, and Obon.\textsuperscript{253} Strong traditional taboos guide conservation-positive interactions with many wildlife species though locals also enjoy bushmeat and still use animal parts for cultural purposes.\textsuperscript{254} The exclusion of local authorities from conservation efforts, even where their traditions support conservation, frustrates many of these communities.\textsuperscript{255}

All three hillsites fall within Cross River State. The State is predominantly Efik and governed by Efik in Calabar. Nigeria is governed from Abuja and includes many more and much larger ethnic groups. The ethnic differentiation between groups, regions, and power is significant but the Ministry of the Environment, and both the state and national government, have yet to provide conservation education or outreach programs. The differences between these groups is less relevant to this dissertation, which focuses on reasoning made to these communities by outsiders rather than on legislation imposed upon them and enforced by their governments.\textsuperscript{256} Conservation education programs still come from international NGOs, such as WCS. Francis is Anyang. His wife is Boki. He speaks Anyang, Bokyi, pidgin, English, and French. He hails from Okwa II, one of the three villages enclaved within Cross River National Park and the site of the first film.

Park headquarters are located an hour north of Calabar in Oban (rather than Okwango, where the gorillas are). The relationship between Park staff and WCS Nigeria is strained. We visited the Park staff despite WCS’s apprehension. Francis and the director of the Park, got along well but I


\textsuperscript{256} The state and national governments also tend to adopt the rationale and rhetoric of Western legislation.
was presented as a visiting student, not a filmmaker. Bureaucratic measures for such activity would be exhausting, Francis warned, and they are arbitrary. Though an ardent conservationist, Francis circumvented the Park rules when possible. At the same time, he wants the Park to expand to include Mbe, a nearby gorilla hillsite currently only protected as a community Wildlife Sanctuary.

The WCS conservation offices are located a six hour drive away from the hillsites, in Calabar. For their employees, as for me, when they go to visit the communities, they go to the field. They live elsewhere. All but one of the WCS employees are from Nigeria. All employees but the accountant, the director, and database manager spend three weeks out of every month in the field. Rangers, such as Samson, go to the forest, the conservation educator (Francis) stays in local villages. The employees return to spend the last week of the month in Calabar, writing a monthly report for WCS. Most employees spend very little time in the WCS offices or with their familiars, as their families are not located in Calabar, where the office is, or in the field where they do their work. Francis’s wife and six children are in Ogoja, between Calabar and the field sites. Samson’s family is in Abuja, days away.

The workers all seemed steadfast supporters of, if not devotees to, conservation, with strong beliefs. Francis appeared clearly upset and concerned when I spoke with locals and they voiced anything contrary to conservation. He says he “preaches” conservation. He focuses on converting children. Samson, and the rangers he works with, literally risk their lives for conservation. Samson has been stabbed and attacked while on patrol. While I was in the field, Francis worked as Conservation Educator for WCS Nigeria. He has since quit the job and returned to running his own community-based, conservation organization.

257 Please see the hard copy of the dissertation.
Overview of the Nigerian Hillsites

1. Cross River National Park [CRNP]

CRNP is contiguous with Takamanda National Park in Cameroon. The transboundary park hosts somewhere between 53-72 gorillas over about 1200 km². Along with Takamanda, the site offers the only example of “fortress conservation” in the region. CRNP is bordered by at least 39 villages totaling about 29,000 people. Three villages are enclaved within CRNP: Okwa I and II and Okwangwo. The expansion of these settlements could divide gorilla populations within CRNP. The village clusters of Balegete and Matene also threaten to separate gorilla populations between the northern side of CRNP and Takamanda. Though illegal, poaching is rampant throughout the park. Social scientists have studied the site extensively and offer local perceptions and critiques. In the past few years, Nigerian academics have also begun to document local knowledge of the environment, including Cross River gorillas.

---

258 The following site information references Dunn et al. (2014) as this is the most recent resource.


The park is estimated to host gorillas at two sections: Boshi (20-25 gorillas) and Okwa hills (15-30 gorillas). It is further home to over 1,500 species of plants, over 350 species of birds, and at least 75 species of mammals, including 78% of the species of primates found in Nigeria.  

2. Mbe Mountains Community Wildlife Sanctuary

Mbe is where researchers re-discovered Cross River gorillas in the 1980s, after the gorilla’s supposed extinction. The site is only 85 km² but home to about 25-30 gorillas. It has no official protection status but operates as a community reserve managed by the nine surrounding communities of about 10,000 people. Though they border each other, Mbe offers stark contrast to Afi Mountain; thirteen former gorilla hunters now patrol Mbe as ecoguards while Afi remains relatively unregulated.

3. Afi Mountain

Afi is a sanctuary managed by the Cross River State Forestry Commission. It is only 100 km² but home to about 25-30 gorillas. Sixteen villages, with a total population of around 27,000 people, surround the site. Fires and farm encroachment threaten the sanctuary. Six hundred illegal farms exist within the sanctuary.  

Poor enforcement of hunting laws until 2013 encouraged high levels of current local resistance to conservation restrictions.

---

261 Oates 1999
262 Nicholas 2009
Introduction to the Cameroonian Hillsites

The main offices for Cross River gorilla conservation in Cameroon are located at least a day’s drive from the gorilla habitat. Both WCS Cameroon and ERuDeF have their offices near the coast, at the foot of Mount Cameroon. ERuDeF is located in Buea, WCS in Limbe, 10 kms apart.

Arthur, Takamanda-Mone director for WCS Cameroon, apologizes for his candor, but is open about the plight of the Cross River gorillas. A scientist, he openly wonders if Cross River gorilla conservation makes sense. He notes that if these gorillas were not a distinct subspecies, this population would probably be abandoned. He mentioned that WCS Nigeria only exists because of the Cross River gorilla; Cameroon has plenty of Western lowland gorillas (Gorilla gorilla gorilla) in the South and East.

Arthur is relatively new to his position. He offers his freshness as a caveat as well. Coming from bountiful forests in the Congo, he notes the emptiness in Cameroon, the absent animals. Camera trap footage from Kagwene shows nine healthy gorillas but no young, neither infants or juveniles. The lack of young worries Arthur, and he calls it “embarrassing”. Speculating on the cause, he fears the gorillas are already at a genetic bottleneck, or that they may be too stressed from human presence in the forest. The humans in the forest may be trappers after other animals (one Kagwene gorilla is missing a hand from a snare) or herbalists looking for medicinal plants. The human presence in the forest could also be the conservationists themselves. Kagwene is a small reserve: 19 km². Gorilla Guardians mark the nests each day. They have a heavy, frequent presence to the gorillas, and they are in close proximity. Arthur worries about this too, that the conservation efforts may be part of the problem.

---

263 pseudonym
WCS works at Kagwene and in Takamanda. ERuDeF works at Tofala. The other hillsites in Cameroon fall outside protection and direct conservation presence. The local communities vary drastically, fracturing into even more tribes and ethnic groups than on the Nigerian side. The Anyang span the border, living around Takamanda as well as within Cross River National Park. About three villages of four hundred people live around Mawambi.\textsuperscript{264} Along with the Anyang, the Becheve are the main group around the Takamanda and Mone sites. Boki live here as well, as do Bayangi and Banyang.

Across the hillsites in Cameroon, traditional councils headed by a fon or chief still lead most communities. Though women may sit on the council, the councils tend to be male-dominated. Sacred societies persist in many of these communities as well, offering another level of governance and social regulation. For the Anyang, Boki, Bayangi, and Banyang tribes, sacred societies include the ëkpe (leopard) and the makwo (spirit houses). Gorilla sacred societies exist in eastern Cameroon and Gabon, e.g. the Ngi society of Pangwe, but I did not read of them around Cross River.\textsuperscript{265} This does not mean they do not exist. Secret societies often do not share information, especially with outsiders or strangers.

Across the region, local youths increasingly go against traditional and cultural practices, frustrated by traditional restrictions on resource use and behavior and a lack of opportunity. Conflict tends to be resolved by traditional councils though these, too, increasingly come under contention due to abuse by “society elites”. Traditionally, natural resources were not owned but instead available on a first-come, first-served arrangement. Only strangers, from outside villages or from Nigeria,

\textsuperscript{264} Etiendem 2013
were required to receive permission or authorization. As villagers began to clear their own land and plant their own trees, land and tenure rights started to change.

The crops at the Cameroonian hillsites are similar to those in Nigeria. They include oil palm, cocoa, coffee, and (Irish) potatoes. The dramatic elevation changes in the region mean different fondems (collections of communities falling under the rule of the same traditional leader) often focus on very different crops. For example, the type of coffee grown shifts with elevation, with *Coffee robusta* (*Coffea canephora*) below *Coffee arabica*. Lower communities grow oil palms in the warm, moist valleys, higher communities grow potatoes.

Among many communities, local cultural values promote the conservation of the forest. Communities value some areas as sacred, others as secret meeting grounds for traditional societies. Though ritual forest use is allowed within Cameroonian legislation, it comes into conflict with many conservation efforts and initiatives. The shift from forest reserve to national park for Takamanda,

---


268 Kagwene is in the Njiwka Subdivision of the Momo Division of the Northwest Region. The rest of the Cameroonian hillsites fall within South West Region, all in the Manyu Division, except Tofala which is in Lebialem.

and from unregulated forest block to national wildlife sanctuary for Tofala, affects traditional forest use and regulation, including harvesting, hunting, fishing, and farming.

The main ethnic groups around Tofala are the Mundani and the Bangwa, with the Mundani in Wabane and the Bangwa in Alou and Fontem. Though neighboring and falling within the same administrative unit, these groups do not share languages, histories, or cultures. The Mundani speak Mundani, the Bangwa speak Nweh. Christianity is dominant here as well, though for many local folks it compliments rather than replaces their traditional religions.

Eight villages surround Kagwene, including Amassi, Bantakpa, Ekwa, and Ngwo. The nearest village of relative size (at the end of the “road”) in Njikwa. About 2600 people surround the hillsite. Most villages lack social amenities (health clinics, schools) or much development of any sort. Their communities include Christian farmers, mostly the Ngwo people speaking Ngwo, and semi-nomadic Muslim Mbororo (Fulani) herders who speak Fulani. Though the herders do not hunt the gorillas or use the forest, they set fires to create more pasture for their livestock. The fires pose a particular threat to Kagwene’s gorillas as the flames encroach upon the forest. The local communities hold traditional beliefs protecting the gorillas, hence the gorillas’ survival in the tiny forest and the establishment of the community-supported sanctuary.

---


Overview of the Cameroonian Hillsites

4. Takamanda National Park, Cameroon

Takamanda is contiguous with CRNP. Many reports discuss the effects of the park on local communities.\textsuperscript{272} Though a forest reserve since 1934, the national park was only developed in 2008. The park is estimated to host 8-12 gorillas at the Kekpane area and another 10-15 at the Atolo area. Four villages: Obonyi 1 and 3, Matene, and Kekpane are enclaved within the park. The communities are heavily dependent on the forest for resources as they lack good access to roads or outside communities. Poaching and logging are heavy in the park due to a history of poor regulation.

5. Mawambi Hills, Cameroon

Villages holding traditional rights over this hill site: Takpe, Assam, Awurri

Another small site at 43 km\textsuperscript{2}, Mawambi still manages to hosts about 20-30 gorillas. It is unprotected and though surrounded by only three communities of about 400 people, it experiences high levels of resource use within the forest.

6. Mone Forest Reserve, Cameroon

*Villages holding traditional rights over this hill site: Mbu, Nga*

This is a large, unregulated reserve, 538 km², with no nearby villages. Conservationists did not find gorillas here until 2000.\(^{273}\) No laws formally protect the reserve but Gorilla Guardians survey and monitor the 39-52 resident gorillas. Forest use, including hunting and logging, occurs throughout the reserve. This site is distinct in its size and remoteness.

7. Mbulu Forest

*Villages holding traditional rights over this hill site: Bachama, Ashunda*

This site has about 26-40 gorillas over 160 km². It is unprotected and distinct in hosting extremely rural communities. Villages dot the forest. Few have road access. Most community members rely on farming, hunting, and forest resources (timber, bush mango, *Gnetum* spp.). Land use is controlled little if at all yet gorillas are sometimes found close to the villages.

8. Tofala Wildlife Sanctuary

This site of 80-100 km² is 41 km from the nearest gorilla habitat, making it the most isolated population of Cross River gorillas.\(^{274}\) Approximately 144,560 people live in the surrounding villages.\(^{275}\) The hill site hosts 20-30 gorillas and was unprotected until November 2014 when ERuDeF succeeded in bypassing a community sanctuary and going straight to establishing

\(^{273}\) Sunderland-Groves *et al.* 2003

\(^{274}\) Mone and Mbulu are remote from most human settlement but their gorillas are relatively close to other gorilla populations.

the sites as a national wildlife sanctuary. ERuDeF has worked at Tofala since 1999. Some communities around the site hold strong traditional beliefs concerning gorillas.\textsuperscript{276} Recent quantitative studies of local forest use and the potential impact of a conservation scheme on local communities are available.\textsuperscript{277}

9. Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary, Cameroon

Villages holding traditional rights over this hill site: Ngwo, Ekaw, Chikwa, Kenshi, Bantakpa, Alumfa, Ayi, & Amassi

Kagwene is tiny, only 19 km$^2$, but it hosts 20-30 gorillas. Nine villages surround the site. Though the sanctuary is locally managed, the Action Plan notes rangers “have been working to limit illegal activity and to inform local communities about the regulations associated with the new sanctuary.”\textsuperscript{278} The site hosts the longest ongoing Cross River gorilla research, a twelve-year study conducted by WCS.

\textsuperscript{276} Etiendem, D.N. 2008 The Power of Local Stories in Lebialem, Cameroon. \textit{Gorilla Journal} 37: 14-17; \textit{et al.} 2011
\textsuperscript{278} Dunn \textit{et al.} 2014: 14
CONCLUSION: CONFLICT WITH CONSERVATION

In conclusion, it must be emphasized that gorillas in Nigeria and the Cameroons are by no means safe from extinction, and that everyone who has the opportunity should do all in his power to make their future more secure. Their scientific interest to the world in general is quite sufficient to warrant their complete protection, which will neither derive the local native population of a source of food nor endanger their lives or crops. The men in question are a pleasant and interesting lot, but one should not be induced by one’s sympathy or friendship for them to condone any infringement of the regulations completely protecting gorilla. To a native hunter in these rather inaccessible forests a gazetted regulation means absolutely nothing unless he or his friends suffer penalties for infringing it. “Scientific interest” is, of course, quite meaningless to them, and they will not refrain from hunting gorilla until it becomes definitely inexpedient to do so. Unless there are Europeans on the spot who will take personal and active interest in the gorilla, there is little doubt that the Cameroons-Ogoja race of the species will be completely, if gradually, killed out in no very long period of years. --F.S. Collier, writing anonymously in 1934

Eighty years later, academic papers, action plans, and conservation publications continue to call for better enforcement to save the Cross River gorillas. Critics and local communities stress frustration with the imposition conservation requires. Even where traditional beliefs are in line with conservation, many Cross River communities do not support current Cross River gorilla conservation efforts. Just as different conservation regimes span the gorillas’ habitat, conflict with local communities varies based on community perception of conservation and their varying experiences dealing with it. In some instances, conflict may simply describe locals ignoring conservation rules or requests, in others it may describe locals losing livelihoods or access to resources against their will. Conflict can refer to any way in which conservationists or local communities antagonize each other.

---

279 Anon. 1934: 102
280 Dunn et al. 2014
281 Nkemnyi et al. 2013
Both sides of the conflict are well documented, especially as social scientists and local academics pay more and more attention to local communities. Further documentation comes from at least six dissertations and four masters theses written on Cross River gorilla conservation biology and at least two dissertations on locals’ perception of Cross River National Park. The main conflicts with conservation stem from local communities feeling that it does not represent their interests but rather those of outsiders. Local communities have fought against conservation in their region since its inception. Tension persists. Though conflict is most often expressed as community frustration and disenchantment at local meetings, or conservationists decrying the threats posed by local communities and calling for education and sensitization, it can also be more violent and aggressive. Social media posts by conservationists in the region show heightening conflict on both


284 Etendem et al. 2013

285 Oates 1999
sides: local hunters arrested as poachers, local rangers stabbed and kidnapped by frustrated forest-
users.286

Local communities need to feel conservation represents their interests. They need a chance to
help define, describe, and refine conservation themselves. They need to wrestle and grapple with its
morality and moral challenges in their own way, and with outsiders as well. I sought to help. The
next chapters describe the moral methodology I designed and employed to help address the conflict,
step by step.

286 see the hard copy
Chapter Three

Why Conserve Cross River Gorillas?
Reasons for & against Cross River gorilla conservation, from the library & from the field

“Conservation debates are not really arguments about nature, but rather about ourselves and the way we choose to live. They are moral debates, about the way we cope with our demands of each other and the biosphere.” -Adams 2004, p. xiii

Introduction

Conflict between gorilla conservationists and Cross River communities is not surprising. The groups have different beliefs, needs, and values, and variations between individuals within each group as well. Pursuing their respective interests, the groups come into conflict, upsetting local folks in their own home and hindering conservation efforts. Conservation is most often a project of those in power. The power dynamics between the groups raise serious social justice concerns.

Morally justifying conservation efforts requires recognizing not just cultural differences in approach and practice but also in the values and concepts used to motivate and comprehend wildlife conservation. Vucetich and Nelson argue that conservation cannot yet answer fundamental philosophical questions about its nature and purpose and that it must address these in order to be

ethical.289 They provide three essential questions:

1) What is population viability and ecosystem health?

2) How does conservation relate to and sometimes conflict with other legitimate values in life, such as social justice, human liberty, and concern for the welfare of individuals, nonhuman animals? How should we resolve such conflict?

3) Do populations and ecosystems deserve direct moral consideration?290

I seek to address the second question. To do so, I must consider the third question as well.

Many environmental philosophers focus their work on describing the moral status of elements of the natural world.291 It is not easy to describe which elements of nature deserve moral consideration and why. Gorillas offer a good cases study of moral justification for conservation because gorillas are so close to humans that they offer a particularly compelling ethical challenge.292

Though the fundamental questions around why conserve nature remain unsettled, the agenda of conservation biology is clear. Conservation biologists goal is to conserve the natural world. Conflict is less over technical questions of how best to protect and nurture nature and more over normative, political questions of what should be done, who should decide, and who should bear the burdens conservation requires.293 Adjudicating the ethical challenges and disagreements requires not better science, but better practices of moral justification.

292 Many philosophers make the case of bringing apes into our ethical consideration, e.g. Cavalieri & Singer 1993
293 Robbins 2011
Before exploring how moral justifications are made in the Cross River context, I wanted to understand how moral justifications are made to conservationists. What inspired their moral crusade? I began my research as an ethnography of morality.\textsuperscript{294} My field sites were the library, the Internet, the university, and fellow wildlife enthusiasts. I collated a list of general arguments supporting conservation of gorillas. My goal was to isolate the reasoning of the international conservation community for later comparison with the reasoning they presented in the field. I also wanted clarity on Western reasoning for gorilla conservation for later comparison with the reasoning of the Cross River communities.

With Part I of this chapter, I present the foundation of gorilla conservationists’ belief that conserving gorillas is the right thing to do. Revealing their reasoning shows the nuance needed to justify it. It also provides transparency on the cultural values and frameworks required to understand and support the belief. It shows that, while deployed in the field as if a universal moral fact, the argument that gorillas should be conserved is made in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons, particular to the context of Western morality. For example, Western morality tends to pursue moral principles with a disconnect from real world moral complexities.\textsuperscript{295} The arguments below describe why gorillas should be conserved at an abstract level, not a case by case basis. If the arguments come to the specifics of the Cross River subspecies, the principles are still predicated on the concept of the rarity of that subspecies rather than the particularities of the circumstances of its endangerment and conservation requirements. I began by challenging the moral assumptions that I hold. I wanted to


understand the reasoning that supports them before questioning and engaging the reasoning of others.

Before I went to the field, I also found and read the few previous studies of Cross River knowledge of gorillas and of taboos (possible local conservation ethics) from the hill sites, particularly the work of Dr. Denis Ndeloh Etiedem. I also found and read gorilla stories from across Africa, focusing on scholars who included African accounts. These stories were my baseline of local gorilla knowledge. When I arrived in the field, I collected examples of reasoning for and against gorilla conservation made both by local communities and Westerners working in the field (and thus in the context). Again, I wanted clarity on the arguments and reasoning before I began the process of employing Folk Filmmaking as a practice of moral justification.

---


Part I

REASONS FROM THE LIBRARY

Many scholars consider the plight of the great apes (along with that of cetaceans) as a serious, global moral failing. Peterson argues the situation stems from a lack of moral outrage, from conservationists’ fear of being too moral in their approach. Stanford compares the destruction of great apes and their habitat to an act of ethnocide or genocide; a primatologist, he argues that apes have cultures. Machery accuses humanity of apeism. The moral concerns and orientation are explicit: gorilla extinction is wrong. Here I examine the moral reasoning for these concerns, argument by argument.

There’s Only One Cross River Gorilla: The Preservation Argument

The preservation argument is that Cross River gorillas should be conserved because they are a distinct thing in the world. If they go extinct, nothing can replace them. This argument is premised on the idea that the Cross River subspecies of gorilla has value. Simply preserving lowland (Gorilla gorilla gorilla) or mountain (Gorilla beringei) gorillas is not enough: each subspecies should be conserved.

As explained in Chapter Two, the distinctiveness of the Cross River gorilla is unclear and contested. In 2015, scientific consensus classifies them as a subspecies. What is the value of a subspecies? Do they hold equal value to a species? Should conservation focus on preserving

---

subspecies or is this too ambitious; are species enough? Do some subspecies hold more value than others?

Establishing the value of species requires clarity of a species concept and an account of what makes such a cleavage of the natural world valuable. The necessary and sufficient qualities of a species include something like genetic integrity. Some scholars even contest the necessity of genetic integrity in conservation. Philosophers challenge its inherent value, arguing that no prima facie duty exists to preserve it alone. Conservationists sometimes elide genetic integrity for pragmatic purposes, e.g. by bringing Texas cougars to Floridian swamps to help repopulate Florida panthers. Cross River gorillas are distinct in their genetic status and geographic location. If genetics are not sacrosanct, it is possible that other lowland gorillas, nearby in eastern Cameroon, could be used to replace or at least bolster the Cross River gorillas. The preservation argument is often foundational for conservation arguments but it may hold little water for Cross River gorillas. Justification for their conservation is often conflated with justification for the preservation of gorillas at large. To justify the preservation argument, one will have to provide specific reasoning explaining why the Cross River gorilla subspecies is distinct enough to warrant specific preservation.

We Noticed the Gorillas Are Dying: The Lack of Justification Argument

The lack of justification argument is that unless there is a benefit to allowing Cross River gorillas to go extinct, they should be conserved. Stanford argues that driving gorillas to extinction is not a willful act, but an accident of neglect. Accident does not absolve responsibility. Perhaps

---

302 Rower, Y and E Marris. 2015. Is there a prima facie duty to preserve genetic integrity in conservation biology?. *Ethics, Policy, & Environment* 18.3.
303 Stanford 2014
conservationists feel that local communities let the problem get too dire; they lost the chance to resolve it on their own. Conservationist thinking may go like this:

We are keeping careful track of wildlife populations and we noticed that you are about to let the Cross River gorillas go extinct. (We are less concerned about the squirrels or baboons, whose populations remain strong and viable.) We came to help conserve the gorillas and we are reluctant to relinquish control now because we think the risk too great. We only come and take control in a crisis, an emergency, just before it is too late. Unless you can explain why we should let the gorillas die off, we are going to save them.

The lack of justification argument is important in acknowledging agency. Too often rhetoric describing the biodiversity crisis omits an actor. Animals are going extinct. They are disappearing. The lack of justification argument challenges that, noting that some group is causing the gorillas to go away and the onus is on them to explain why they are doing this and why such behavior is morally acceptable.

*Save the Gorillas, Save the Forest: The Proxy Argument*

The proxy argument is that Cross River gorillas should be conserved because conserving them will help conserve the entire ecosystem in which they live. This is the same as the *Flagship Species Paradox* mentioned in the Introduction. It is also value-based, assuming that the ecosystem is of value and worth saving. It is a common argument for conservation of wildlife, especially of charismatic megafauna such as gorillas. The *Revised Regional Action Plan for the Conservation of the Cross River Gorilla (2014-2019)* begins:
The Cameroon-Nigeria border region where the Cross River gorilla occurs is a biodiversity hotspot of global significance. The Cross River gorilla can therefore play a role as a ‘flagship’ species; the actions proposed in this plan ensure the survival of both this Critically Endangered ape and the region’s immense biological wealth. 304

The authors are explicit in their focus on conserving both Cross River gorillas and the greater biodiversity within the region. By referencing the Cross River gorillas as a flagship species, they describe the gorillas’ use for what Caro calls “conservation by proxy”: conserving Cross River gorillas means conserving the ecosystem as well. 305

At first blush, the argument is simple. The goal of conservation is to “stop or delay the extinction of plant and animal populations and to prevent or slow habitat destruction.” 306 Conservation seeks to save more than pieces. Caro describes how four factors limit comprehensive conservation:

1. Nature is too complex to fully catalogue, describe, or understand
2. The biodiversity crisis is too large to adequately address
3. Political decisions must be made often and quickly
4. Financial support is vastly inadequate

In response, conservationists must take shortcuts. One of these is to use certain species as focus points for conservation. Caro calls these surrogate species, defining them as “species that are used to

---

304 Dunn et al. 2014
306 Caro 2010: 1
represent other species or aspects of the environment to attain a conservation objective.”

These species may indicate disturbance (akin to a canary in a coal mine) or biodiversity at a larger scale, allowing conservationists to extrapolate from the plight of one species to better understand that of other species more difficult to study.

Conservation by proxy does not necessarily track ecological fact. Instead, it tracks conservation goals. Flagship status may be granted to a species due to certain ecological, aesthetic, or visceral appeal. A flagship species such as the Cross River gorilla can be used in a few ways. One way is as an umbrella species. Umbrella species require habitat at such a great extent that their conservation can encompass protection of large swaths of their ecosystem. In this way, conservationists can create reserves and other protected areas, e.g. the Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary, focused on a single species but encompassing many. As Caro writes: “If the population of a charismatic species is thought to be worthy of protection for its own sake, and a reserve is especially set up for this purpose, the reserve will necessarily harbor other species…” Conveniently, some characteristics of being charismatic, such as large body size, track with important traits for an umbrella species, such as requiring a large home range.

Only the umbrella aspect of a flagship species tracks ecological fact. The other aspects are the features that make it a tool for public relations. Flagship species are chosen, Caro describes, because “the public is assumed to have inadequate knowledge of ecological or biodiversity

---

309 Caro 2010, 247
complexities” or simply “a short attention span.” Their charisma is marshalled to raise awareness, money, and support for both the species and its corresponding habitat.

Caro lists four main uses for flagship species:

1. Raise awareness
2. Symbolize natural heritage
3. Promote their organization
4. Raise money

This belies the fact that biodiversity is itself an ambiguous concept; even it does not quite capture all that biologists seek and hope to preserve. Conservationists seek to encompass as much of the natural world as they can with their efforts. The argument is that Cross River gorillas should be conserved because conserving them means conserving biodiversity throughout the biologically rich, diverse, and distinct Cross River headwaters. A cynical conservationist may formulate the argument to her peers as: we should conserve Cross River gorillas because, if we fail to conserve them, then we will be unable to conserve the entire ecosystem. Once the gorillas are gone, the general public will see nothing in this ecosystem worth saving.

---

Gorilla Meat Can Be Deadly: The Health Argument

The health argument follows the precautionary principle: gorillas and gorilla meat can be dangerous, gorillas should be conserved because the alternative, using or slaughtering them, creates risk. Leave gorillas alone to avoid harm. (Such thinking also invites the alternative argument, that gorillas should not be conserved because they pose too great a risk to human communities; more on this in Chapter Five.) The increasing destruction of ecosystems and human encroachment into wild areas allows diseases, particularly zoonotic diseases transferred between animals and people, to emerge and proliferate.\(^{314}\) Due to their close evolutionary relation, gorillas and humans are particularly susceptible to each other’s diseases. Strains of HIV/AIDS came from gorillas in Eastern Cameroon.\(^{315}\) Mountain gorillas host an alpha-herpes virus endemic to their population and at risk of transmission to humans.\(^{316}\) Other diseases surely exist too, but Ebola presents a particular risk. Ebola infects some wild bat populations.\(^{317}\) The bats transmit the disease to other animals and perhaps humans directly (see figure below). Public announcements around West Africa inform communities: “To protect yourself as well as bats, primates and forests, please don’t touch, evict, kill, or eat bats.”\(^{318}\) Bats are probably not reservoir hosts of Ebola but they are sources.\(^{319}\) They can be infected and can, in turn, infect people. They can also infect primates, perhaps by eating and then dropping a fruit, salivating on it in the process. When a primate comes and picks up the fruit, it too becomes infected.


\(^{316}\) Butynski 2001, 36


\(^{318}\) PASA

\(^{319}\) Quammen 2014
A 1996 Ebola outbreak in Gabon resulted from the butchering and eating of a chimp.\textsuperscript{320} In 1997, fourteen people died in a Cameroonian village from a suspected Ebola outbreak after they ate one of four dead gorillas found in the forest.\textsuperscript{321} Gorillas suffer especially from Ebola, an estimated 5000 died during an outbreak in the Congolese jungle in 2004.\textsuperscript{322} The 2014 Ebola outbreak erupted during my time in the field, raising great concern about the gorillas among the government, the conservationists, and the local communities (for different reasons). I discuss it in Chapter Five.

Gorillas can bite people.\textsuperscript{323} Not conserving them—whether by hunting them, capturing them and relocating them, or destroying their habitat—poses health risks. All activities, even venturing into their forest to clear farmland, raise potentially dangerous vectors for disease. The argument is simply to conserve gorillas for they can present a great risk to humans in their death.

\textit{Gorilla Rights: The Animal Rights Argument}

The animal rights argument is encapsulated by the Great Ape Project’s “Kinshasha Declaration on Great Apes”, which calls for basic moral rights: to life, liberty, freedom from torture—for all great apes (the full declaration is included in the Appendix).\textsuperscript{324} The great apes, including gorillas, are our closest living relatives. We are remarkably similar biologically, socially, and emotionally.\textsuperscript{325}

Recognizing this, scholars from philosophy to law to anthropology argue for the extension of

\textsuperscript{320} Peterson 2003
\textsuperscript{323} Peterson 2003
\textsuperscript{325} \textit{Ibid.}
something akin to human rights for the great apes. Some argue that acknowledging rights to great apes, and other animals, is a sign of moral progress. While animal rights proponents continue to pursue a shared, consistent, and clear account of which animals need moral consideration and why, the great apes offer an unequivocal place to start. As Warren writes:

the mental, social, and emotional capacities of the great apes, their endangered status, and their specific scientific, spiritual, and aesthetic value to humans all support a level of protection for their lives and well-being equal to that to which humans are entitled. ...although the basic moral and legal rights to life and liberty of great apes ought to be as strong as ours, and as morally binding, the content of those rights will need to be formatted somewhat differently.

Utilitarian arguments are among the most popular reasons for granting animals rights. They argue that suffering is clearly a bad thing, so preventing suffering is good. By this logic, humans should avoid causing animals to suffer. Many utilitarians argue that gorillas hold more rights than other animals as they are “near-persons”, in part because they are aware of their past and future (which at least gives them greater capacity for suffering). Studies suggest episodic memories and self recognition for gorillas. Such cognition elevates gorillas above the mere sentience of most other animals, and raises important considerations into their needs: not just to avoid pain but also for a

326 Ibid.
331 Ibid: 186
right to liberty. Animal rights and conservation biology have long come into conflict. Animal rights proponents tend to focus on the needs of individual animals, conservationists on the needs of populations. In conservation cases, the rights of individuals may be sacrificed for the greater good of the species. When a species nears extinction, the last few may be captured and bred in captivity, with the idea that their offspring (or offspring’s offspring) will eventually be released in hopes of ‘saving’ the species. Conservationists saved the California condor, for example, in this way. In many cases, such as in Australia and New Zealand, conservationists cull exotic species in great numbers to protect the populations of native species the exotics threaten. Arguments for or against certain animal rights will rest upon whether one is focusing on individual or communal rights.

Conservationists’ focus on populations and species often results in challenges from the animal rights camp. Jamieson, for example, stresses the ethical inconsistency inherent in a species-focused approach:

Is it really better to confine a few hapless Mountain Gorillas in a zoo than to permit the species to become extinct? To most environmentalists the answer is obvious: the species must be preserved at all costs. But this smacks of sacrificing the lower-case gorilla for the upper case Gorilla….What is to blame is the peculiar moral schizophrenia of a culture that drives a species to the edge of extinction and then romanticizes its remnants.

---

332 Jamieson 2002: 48
334 Jamieson 2002: 173, 178
The animal rights arguments for the protection and moral consideration of great apes can be confusing. What does it mean to protect the apes? Should conservationists focus on the needs of the species or the individual apes? These questions raise important issues relevant to moral justification for gorilla conservation. While Westerners argue for gorilla conservation abroad, they keep gorillas around them in zoos, raising other moral questions about the needs of gorillas.

Zoos justify their captivity of apes by making arguments similar to conservation biologists: they keep animals so as to foster relationships with and sympathy from humans, and thus compassion, support, and concern for the conservation of the captive ape’s still-wild cousins. The individual’s rights are sacrificed for the greater good of the species. If captivity for conservation is questionable, captivity for supporting conservation may be even more so. While in captivity for conservation the intention is to eventually return the individual, or at least its progeny to the wild (and thus to return liberty), a zoo is a permanent change.

When a wild animal becomes captive, it gains many domestic animal rights: food, water, shelter, safety, to be medically treated by a veterinarian. But its loses other rights. The animal may experience no more suffering (i.e. neither pain nor, in a clever zoo, more benign suffering, such as boredom), but it also has no more freedom to pursue all but its most basic interests. If suffering is the ultimate moral arbiter, this may be a good trade. Otherwise, it may not be.

Most people probably agree that the trade is not a good one. Dale Jamieson writes that there is a ‘moral presumption’ against keeping wild animals in captivity.335 Doing so, Jamieson argues, prevents the animals from behaving in ways that are generally natural to them, such as finding their own food and establishing social orders. He acknowledges that many zoo animals are now captive-

bred (eliminating the wrongs stemming from the horror of capture, transportation, and sudden confinement), but argues that this does not solve the problem. One would not argue that a human born into slavery does not deserve freedom. In fact, captive breeding may be even worse; the animals never even experience freedom.

Jamieson argues that the moral presumption against keeping wild animals in captivity is not the property of some particular moral theory; it follows from most reasonable moral theories. Either people have duties to animals or we do not. If people do have duties to animals, surely they include respecting those interests which are most important to them, so long as this does not conflict with other, more stringent duties that people may have. Since an interest in liberty is central for most animals, it follows that, if everything else is equal, people should respect this interest.

Jac Swart proposes using care ethics to address the issue.\textsuperscript{336} Instead of being concerned with the well-being of individual wild animals (e.g. their suffering), people should be concerned with the ‘health’ of the animal’s habitat. A wild animal’s environment is most important for its well-being, and the environment is where people should focus their care and attention.

Swart makes a distinction between the needs of wild and domestic animals akin to, but different from, that between positive and negative rights. He argues that proper care for domestic animals is specific. It’s directed towards each individual’s specific needs. Meanwhile, good care for wild animals is non-specific. It is not directed at individuals or their specific individual needs (including a need not to suffer), but rather at what the wild animals need to survive. The rest is up to them. People may hold very different duties and responsibilities in relation to domestic and wild

animals. Ignoring these duties may eliminate the wild animals’ wildness, resulting in a loss of value (if one values wild nature), or in cascading responsibilities following human intervention (to eliminate not just suffering from pain, but also suffering from thirst, hunger, frustration, fear, discomfort).

A utilitarian could accept non-specific care as well, but argue that good care for wild animals is still directed at individuals; the focus on habitat is just a means to the end of the good of the individual animals. People focus on the habitat because they care about the animals. Taking care of the habitat is the most efficient way to benefit (at least) wild individuals. This reasoning helps establish that conserving Cross River gorillas means conserving wild gorillas. It connects the animal rights arguments to the proxy argument. The animal rights arguments that gorillas have a right to be conserved are complicated. They raise further moral questions.

Gorillas for our Children’s Children: The Future Generations Argument

The future generations argument is that we people (all of us) have an obligation to future generations to preserve the natural world, including gorillas, so that they can enjoy them too. We are fortunate to live in a world with the kind of thing called a gorilla; we should be sure to pass on a world equally rich, biodiverse, and adorned with such sorts of things. The future generations argument is akin to the preservation argument but, unlike that argument, locates the wrong less in the destruction of value and more in taking something away from our progeny and from not fulfilling our obligations to them. Challenges to this argument include what if taking away the gorillas, for example to grow chocolate, creates a better world for these future generations? Another
challenge can simply be asking how and why we are obligated to them at all.\textsuperscript{337} What this argument requires is not clear. Must they be wild gorilla populations? Can we conserve some in zoos for people to see? Genes in gene banks for future generations to someday recreate?

\textit{Gorillas for Science: The Information Argument}

The information argument is that gorillas should be conserved because of the wealth of scientific information they contain, particularly in relation to human evolution. Study of gorillas advances scientific understanding of ourselves, our evolution, and the natural world. They are a resource from which to enrich our intellectual life and our health. The information argument is not unique to gorillas, some philosophers claim it is the best argument for motivating the whole project of biodiversity conservation,\textsuperscript{338} but the gorillas’ close relation to us makes them particularly valuable candidates. Conserving Cross River gorillas would be justified because they provide a certain type of information that other gorillas do not.

\textit{Gorillas are Cool: The Aesthetic Argument}

The aesthetic argument is that gorillas should be conserved because they bring people joy. Gorillas are charismatic. Few animals elicit more wonder. They are marvelous creatures to behold. Aesthetic arguments for the preservation of nature are legion.\textsuperscript{339} Animals can be like gems in the


\textsuperscript{338} Sarkar 2005: 85-86

\textsuperscript{339} Parsons, Glenn. 2008. \textit{Aesthetics and Nature}. Continuum.}
landscape. Even if a familiar presence, such as a backyard bird, their unanticipated presence can bring magic to a place.\textsuperscript{340} Though ecologists may fault preference for the beauty or charisma of one species over that of another, many people acknowledge the importance of these added values.\textsuperscript{341}

The argument is a phenomenological reason. As such, the aesthetic experience of gorillas, the joy they pass along, could also be construed another way. Maybe they taste good.\textsuperscript{342} Hunters were among the first, and best, conservationists in the US and the UK.\textsuperscript{343} Americans are perhaps best at conserving what they like to hunt and eat: deer, elk, ducks. Enjoyment can be a powerful reason to conserve.

Ideas of use (even for enjoyment) and the arbitrariness of aesthetics—tasting good to some, gamey to others; looking spectacular to some, terrifying to others—mean the aesthetic argument faces many challenges. Charisma does not correspond to scientific criteria. In no way is it ecologically-oriented. Charismatic species may be redundant in maintaining an ecosystem, or they may be valuable if not essential. Further, not only is charisma not ecological, it is strictly anthropocentric. Charisma focuses conservation on what humans want and like, rather than on what is in the interest of other elements of the natural world. Focusing on charisma can be dangerous; it risks sidetracking, or even confusing and conflating, conservation efforts with other interests, such as


\textsuperscript{342} Petersen 2003

eco-tourism.⁴⁴ Last, it may even be unethical. If all species hold intrinsic value—if species are where one locates value, as many environmental ethicists do—then one species cannot be chosen over another.⁴⁵ Intrinsic value is not commensurable.

Many of these weaknesses can also be construed as strengths. For one, charismatic megafauna are not necessarily ecological, but they often are. Many are umbrella species—protecting a whole range of species below them just by demanding so much themselves, hence the proxy argument.⁴⁶ Their economic risk is also their strength—they draw tourism and garner financial support.⁴⁷ Politically, they pull even more support. They offer a symbol, a flagship, around which to motivate and rally conservation movements.⁴⁸

These are all pragmatic reasons but others go beyond, helping to show how a focus on charisma better matches intuitions that species alone are not enough, or all, that people seek to conserve. In the same way that people may have a duty to protect diversity, they may have a duty to protect beauty, either for its own sake (people treat beautiful paintings and other art as if they have intrinsic value) or with regard to others who appreciate the beauty.⁴⁹ Many argue aesthetic value exists in nature, is not described by biodiversity, and needs to be preserved as well.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Ibid.
The value of beauty, like the value of species, may be hard to locate—is the value in the animal or in the appreciation the person receives from it?—but people collectively, or at least predominately, appreciate charismatic megafauna. It is simply empirically the case that many people specifically care about gorillas, pandas, and koalas. It is simply empirically the case that few people care specifically about the flat pebble snail, the golden toad, or Allen’s cotton rat. People’s orientation is important to recognize and acknowledge. People are not just ecological-effectiveness calculators and this is not necessarily an accident or a problem.

Focusing on charisma helps account for relationships people hold with the natural world. Charismatic megafauna inspire the most awe, wonder, and appreciation of all species. People can relate to them in a way more meaningful and profound than any other element of nature. Charisma may at first seem arbitrary but perhaps it is just a description that tracks all sorts of other things that people value: connections, relations, certain attributes of an animal. Charisma may best be understood as referencing and representing all of these elements together. The aesthetic argument is contentious and somewhat convoluted but it is also among the most applicable and compelling when applied to gorillas.

Gorillas Make Money: The Economic Argument

The economic argument is that gorillas should be conserved because they make money. Elsewhere in Africa, especially Uganda, gorilla ecotourism makes enormous amounts of money.351 Tourists (including me) pay hundreds of dollars for one hour with the gorillas. In the case of Cross River

---

gorillas, this argument is not yet applicable. At the time of research, many challenges and dangers (especially Boko Haram and Ebola) prevented almost any eco-tourism in the region at all. Feasibility studies for gorilla habituation and eventual ecotourism further challenge the argument; Cross River gorillas are too rare, their plight too serious, to habituate them and risk exposing them to transmission of disease or increased danger of hunting. Still, Cross River gorillas could someday be a huge economic resource. They already are. They bring continual international attention, organizations, studies, efforts, and projects to the region. They are a draw. They raise money. People will pay for them, in their interest, and in their stead. To eliminate them is to eliminate economic opportunity.

Part II

REASONS FROM THE FIELD

The reasons for conserving Cross River gorillas do not appear the same in the library and in the field, i.e. the communities where the gorillas occur. Rationale and reasoning for conservation are presented to the communities on posters and signs, as declarations and rules. They appear on stickers handed out by WCS reading: “I Love Cross River Gorillas.” On a large sign looming over the main (and only) road in Bechati:

---

352 Dunn et al. 2014
353 In one respect the “I Love Cross River gorillas” stickers can be seen as promotional: “I Love Cross River gorillas ... so you should too”. In another, they can be seen as orienting the gorillas’ protection as a second personal issue (see Darwall, S.L., 2006. The second-person standpoint: Morality, respect, and accountability. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.): “I love CRG so it matters to me if harm comes to them.” As such, even if one does not feel concern for Cross River gorillas, they should at least feel concern enough for each other to respect the sticker-bearer’s wishes.
Na very big crime for kill or catch gorilla or chimpanzee. U fit spend up to 5 years or pay up to 3 million if dem (forest guards) catch you with any gorilla or chimpanzee part. Wuna join we for protect and conserve the remaining Great Apes for Lebialem Forest.

The most these posters include are a small list of facts. When I found more thorough argumentation (e.g. a few dusty books at the NGO headquarters, most notably John Oates’ *Myth and Reality in the Rain Forest*), it was in large cities, at the conservation organizations’ offices, hours away. The contrast in the availability of moral justifications between Western and Cross River communities poses a troubling question: Why is the reasoning for gorilla conservation so much more careful, extensive, and accessible continents away from the gorillas?

The answer includes issues of knowledge and power discussed in Chapter One. The researchers and philosophers are based elsewhere. The moral debate occurs in Western scholarship. The funding and resources, the financial and political support, fall outside the Cross River headwaters, in the West. Communities around the hillsites lack opportunities for education. The universities sit in the same cities as the NGOs, far away. Many villages have only one or two classrooms for all the grades. They have no books. It is a large jump from learning arithmetic to analyzing ethics.

Perhaps the geography of resources is becoming moot. Though shockingly slow and expensive in Cameroon and Eastern Nigeria, the Internet does make Western reasoning about gorillas increasingly available and accessible. For many people, the information may still be out of

---

354 That said, the 2011 opening of the University of Bamenda provided a big boon for the region. As it expands, it could bring many educational opportunities and resources. Bamenda is a large city in North West, Cameroon, and the closest city to the Kagwene hillsite. It is not far from the other hillsites, especially with the improvement between Bamenda and Mamfé.
reach, not least because of inadequate previous education to help one understand it, but also due to
expensive journal subscriptions and the impossibility of ordering books or papers. Other people, for
example local teachers and community leaders who left for their extended education and then
returned, may have less trouble. As Google continues to scan books and Google Scholar links to
articles, these discussions may not be so far away from anyone with an Internet connection. As
phone data plans improve, local folks may be increasingly able to utilize the Internet for such
information. Already, Western researchers and volunteers, myself included, come and leave behind
their books, their thoughts, and their ideas. They may share their research. I dumped my folder of
references on my colleagues’ computers, and sent them this dissertation. All this references only the
availability of Western reasoning to Cross River communities; it describes their ability to listen in,
not to partake.

The discrepancy of reasoning available between the West and the field may also belie the
imperial aspect of the moral crusade to save gorillas. Conservationists may feel that the gorillas’ crisis
is so dire, the moral certitude of their cause so clear, that there is no need or time to make the case to
all involved. They still need to convince certain people—funders, donors, governments—but others
can be skipped over. Conservation education programs teach values; they do not invite critical
discussion of human-nature relationships or parse out the complex thinking the issue of Cross River
conservation may require. They also tend to engage local children rather than adults.

I am probably mistaken in hoping that, in such a context of inequality, Cross River folks’
education can echo mine, or to expect they learn and think in the same way. Journal articles and
books, Western philosophy and environmental ethics, are not their tradition, their reasoning, or
their sort of intellectual discourse. Instead, folks in these communities may prefer learning from oral
accounts, open debate, and communal meetings. They may seek out elders and arrive at ethical answers together.

Justifying gorilla conservation is not simple or easy. People may believe it is the right thing to do for a variety of reasons. Not everyone needs to weigh these reasons against each other, nor go through careful ethical analysis. Many people may intuit that conserving gorillas is the right thing to do and support conservation. Others may accept the reasons without worrying about their faults. The importance of displaying the reasoning is to place the arguments in discussion with other reasons, be they against conservation or Cross River arguments construed in different way. Unpacking the reasoning helps reveal that gorilla conservation is not a reason in itself; it is predicated on other values, norms, and goals.

The discrepancy in availability of reasoning struck me as a serious problem for moral justification in the Cross River context. I was concerned not only with lack of access to Western moral discourse but also by how the Western discourse, de-contextualized and with scant participation from local communities, becomes assumed better knowledge. Westerners’ concern with impartiality encourages thinking that separation makes the moral knowledge more accurate; because it is disconnected from local issues, concerns, and needs, Western moral knowledge should be more valid, objective, and careful. The presumed validity of the moral knowledge allows educators to weave it with scientific fact. Moral “facts” and biological facts come presented together—Gorillas are

---


just like humans so gorillas should be protected just like humans—eliding the chance to debate the normative (“should”) questions which do not follow clearly from science.

Lack of access to moral discourse in the literature does not mean lack of moral discourse. Among the communities of the Cross River headwaters, folks are very much willing, able, and interested in discussing the moral issues, nuances, and complexities relevant to gorilla conservation. When I arrived, I listened. Before filming at any hillsite, we would discuss the moral contours of conservation in that particular village and context. Sometimes the foundational question: why should we conserve gorillas? came up, asked by a student, me, or a colleague during a meeting or lecture. Often, the question would only be referenced indirectly.

Before employing Folk Filmmaking, I collected local normative knowledge. I wanted clarity on local ethical positions and reasoning, their arguments and ways of arguing, before I began to help the process of adjudication across moral communities. Building on research conducted at the Tofala hillsite, and following the work of ethno-primatologists Riley and Baker, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with various community members, including traditional rulers, community leaders, elders, hunters, and students. During these interviews I asked after conservation and gorillas, often with normative questions, but mostly I listened, inviting the informants to share folklore, stories, anecdotes, and any accounts about nature, conservation, and gorillas. As these interviews were often conducted among groups, folks would carry each other along, prompting further thought and discussion. Following Goldman et al., on occasion I shared stories

---
from other respondents and my previous research to invite alternate versions, reflections, or interpretations of African accounts of gorillas.359

We held these conversations before we shot each film. We included our collaborators, so that the script and story could emerge from the discourse. We wanted the films to express local normative positions and moral guidance through their narratives. We wanted to collaborate on morality tales (more on this in the following chapter). In this section, I share a few examples of reasoning for gorilla conversation that emerged during these conversations, some of which appeared in the films. With the arguments, I include anecdotes and descriptive detail; these help show how and from where the rationale emerged. I put the local reasoning in context to contrast it with the out-of-context (and presented as such) argumentation of the previous section.

All of the folk films offer reasons for (and against) conservation in the context of the field. The reasons, along with the films, feature in Chapter Five. I keep the list below short to avoid redundancy. This section introduces the reasoning encountered in the field before engaging it with the Folk Filmmaking.

*Conservation Before the Whiteman*

Chief Joseph of Wula, one of the nine communities responsible for Mbe Mountain community wildlife sanctuary, is a former hunter and a former eco-guard. He supports conservation. He believes caring for the natural world is an elevated form of morality, akin to embracing Christianity and holding an education. He is aware of local environmental changes and the global

context; he describes how the rains are changing, no longer coming in consistent seasons or intensity. He references the value of his community’s forests to the world for carbon sequestration. Francis was the only other person to mention climate change during my fieldwork in Cross River, Nigeria.

During our conversation, Chief Joseph attributed the origins of conservation to the Bible, noting Noah. With further discussion, he acknowledged pre-whiteman African conservation as well. Before Christianity came, he said, his community lived in a very different way. Their method of conservation, along with other cultural practices, went away with the influence of outsiders.

Their local method of conservation worked on taboos and totems. The community would define an area as off-limits once the area’s resources were used up, protecting it with a bushel of leaves. If anyone passed these leaves, they would be marked by the enchantment on the leaves, e.g. they might turn into a whiteman. Then everyone would know that that person had violated the taboo. Chief Joseph’s example brought laughter from the men gathered around for our conversation, as if his account was too silly or surreal, yet he described it as completely effective as a form of conservation.

Francis added how, nearby in Okwa, the community would levy huge fees on outsiders who wanted to hunt in their forest. This provided powerful regulation. The Anyang of Okwa, a village nestled deep in the forest, would welcome these hunters: sure you can come hunt here, but it will cost you this much. The price tended to be much too much for most to afford.

Hearing this story, another man, Immanuel, offered that, due to war, villages were settled very far apart. Plenty of forest was left in between, for safety. The forest was so great between the communities that it would take a long time to finish. They needed to protect the large forests between them to keep the peace.
The men shared other stories how local beliefs imbied animals with protection. Chief Joseph described how native doctors would inhabit an elephant and then lead other elephants over from Cameroon, so that the elephants could be shot by hunters. “Just don’t shoot the first one, that is me”, the native doctor with the elephant totem would instruct the hunters. Similar totem stories appeared across the hillsites, especially in the Lebialem Highlands. Such magical stories may have inspired a sort of local conservation ethic akin to the explicit taboos. Perhaps the possibility of a human soul nestled temporarily in a wild animal caused great care, caution, and restraint in hunting.

Francis told another story, an origin tale of how his people, Anyang originally from Cameroon, came to be in Okwa, Nigeria. The Anyang were fleeing an enemy when they arrived at a large, raging river and were unable to cross. Crocodiles noticed the people’s trouble and lined up in a row, allowing the Anyang to cross on their backs. When the enemies tried to follow, the crocodiles turned over and devoured them. Ever since, the Anyang have protected crocodiles. In Okwa, when people find a dead crocodile, they give it a ritual burial. Chief Joseph told us a similar story about an ancestral connection for the Boki (his tribe) to genet cats. These stories may be a way local conservation ethics emerge: cultural narratives imbuing wildllife with value and providing protection.

Whether these narratives track gratitude for the beauty of biodiversity or for a mythic act, they can inspire a sense of respect and protection for certain wild species. Stories akin to these, of animal totems and taboos, inspire coordination between local and international conservation efforts around the world.360

---

Taboos against eating or harming gorillas exist in many communities, including around the Kagwene and Tofala hillsites. Gorillas also feature in totem stories. Chief Joseph described great traditional value of the Cross River gorillas, as sources of power and pride in particular. In the times of hunting, killing a gorilla made one famous. Gorilla fetishes, made from skin or bones, provided one great power. Chief Joseph noted that such value, in killing or using gorillas, is not necessary anymore. It is against the laws of the government and those should not be contested. Pondering this, he added, but primates are valuable for medical testing and human health.

Many folks described how conservation existed before the arrival of Europeans. They argue that conservation is nothing new, it is not a strange or foreign concept. Local communities valued nature and found ways to conserve it. How and why varied among communities but local conservation ethics often existed. The implied reasoning may be that the moral issue is not with the ideas or goal of conservation—they can comprehend and endorse it—the problem is with something else, perhaps its method or impact.

The Last Line of Defense or The Grumpy Old Whiteman

Beneath the Afi Mountain hillsite sits the Pandrillus Drill Ranch, a drill (Mandrillus leucophaeus) rehabilitation and captive breeding center. Located within the drill’s native habitat, the

ranch promotes itself as a kind of conservation. Francis and I arrived early one morning, after a long, wild motorbike through a remote village, riding through a waist-high river and down long logging roads.

Robert, the founder, owner, and co-director, arrived a while later, entering his bush kitchen carrying a pump shotgun. He made himself a proper coffee (not Nescafe) and, contrary to local custom, did not share. Robert is an American. He has worked in Nigeria for conservation, particularly of primates, since he arrived in 1988. He proceeded to tell me all the reasons conservation was failing, especially in Cross River, Nigeria.

I include his argumentation here for I met him in the field. He is a local institution and an outspoken advocate for conservation—people know him and hear him. He is also powerful. In 2011, the governor of Cross River, Liyel Imoke, installed Robert as Chairman of the Cross River Anti-Deforestation Task Force. Together, Robert and Governor Imoke issued a two-year moratorium on logging, a multi-billion naira industry. Robert feels it his personal duty to protect the forests of Cross River. The government’s sanctioning only further empowers him.

As asked why we should conserve nature, his reason was Hilarly-esque: “because it’s there.” He referenced the varied ecotones and diversity of Nigerian biota. Robert spoke to me but in front of Francis, our two motobike drivers, and other Nigerians (including an apparent guest). He gave the impression of always speaking freely, no matter the company. He claimed that Nigerians like

361 pseudonym
362 I noticed because I really wanted some and each of every one of my Nigerian hosts had offered me as at least food and drink since I arrived.

nothing less than an honest man. He said he was the one to speak the truth. Conservation is hard and tough work—you make people unhappy, you have to step on them—but someone needs to do it. He referenced the number one need for Cross River gorilla conservation: corridors, and how no one but him will do the work of creating them. He said conservationists in the region have no idea what each other is doing. He lamented how conservation has become a business run by “suits”. No one (including myself) is around long enough to know the people or what is going on.

Robert argued that conservation requires working with governments, businesses, and a lot more money than currently provided: billions not millions. He referenced the need to work with local people but seemed not to like them. He called the nearest town, Bansho, “Sodom and Gomorrah”. He noted Sanderson’s negative descriptions of the Boki (in the 1930s) and how he wished he had heeded Sanderson’s warnings before coming.\(^{364}\) Robert said Nigeria was a great place when he first arrived in the 1980s. He attributed the degradation to Christianity—“We took the best parts of their culture and threw them away; then we gave them the worst parts of ours”—and to democracy in 1999: “It doesn’t work here.” He described arriving in Okwa in the 1980s, before they had a church. A big juju greeted everyone before they arrived at the village. Once you passed, you could not mess around. Any bad behavior would be instantly punished. He claims such beliefs assured a social order and individual responsibility now lost, the later being the most important part. Now he says (and said this to the Boki sitting all around us): “Boki people lie. And the worst lie they tell is to themselves.” Everything in Cross River, and across Nigeria, he said, is about money now. In the past two months (May and June 2014), Robert had seized 6-8 million USD worth of ebony and written to the chief’s council to oust six chiefs who were allowing illegal logging. He keeps lists of

names and records, he told me, while adding telling quips: “I seize every saw I see. The saw is the worst invention of mankind… I’m from Oregon, I had one when I was nine.”

He claimed Boki people do not reason. They want money but they do not want to work. Robert gave the impression of a war-weary, embattled and embittered conservationist. Many times, he repeated variations of: “conservation is nothing without consequences.”

Robert is a curmudgeon and a vigilante. He tries to provide and enforce the consequences for violations in his area. His drill ranch—captive animals enclosed by an electric fence in a semi-wild, native environment, subsisting on enormous daily purchases of fruit (which at one point the locals refused to sell the ranch)—shows a need for complete control. His frustration with his inability to deter the destruction of the forest may track his inability to take control.

Robert says the main threat to Cross River gorillas is cocoa, not hunting: “No forest, no animals.” Cocoa is easy to plant and people continue to clear land and plant it, expecting to profit. Labor, pesticides, and tools all cost too much, so people continue to clear land to plant more cocoa and the cycle continues. The expenses only grow greater with scale, they do not diminish.

For conservation to work, Robert wryly proposed eating the most abundant source of meat on the planet: humans. As Francis and I motorbiked off, I wrestled with what to make of the encounter: Jenkin’s old whiteman’s truths (he argued with Francis when Francis called him white: “That paper is white. You don’t even know what color I am”); his cowboy charisma and his awareness of it; his long, long experience working here and my lack of any. After a couple weeks in the villages, Robert’ bush camp and the magic of finally being in the proper forest, of watching dazzling primates (albeit in glorified cages), had me, too, mourning the loss of wild Cross River. As
we drove away, we passed some young men, pulled off at a river crossing a bit out of town, roasting a
dog.

Francis verified Robert’ stories about Okwa the next morning. When he was a child,
traditional beliefs remained very strong. If you passed the village juju with evil intent, you would die.
Crocodile peppers hung over the door and protected against spirits. A particular stream caused
miscarriages whenever a woman pregnant via adultery passed over it. The first time the church came,
in the early 1990s, the villagers burned it down. They finally accepted Christianity when, following
word of Okwa’s rebellion, a whole team of missionaries arrived. The villagers decided to embrace the
new religion in hope that it would help quell troublesome spirits. Before, they had to dig up bodies
and burn them over a pyre if the spirits were disturbing. Christianity did not prove strong enough.
Women continued to encounter spirits. They would ask men to go remove the juju and the men
would question them back: “Is your God not strong enough?”

Francis corroborated that morals and civil society in his village diminished with the loss of
these beliefs. He also had much to say about Robert. Francis notes that Robert believes conservation
only comes by force and that he has acquired great power: If Robert is a hand, WCS is just a
segment of the pinky. He has a license to employ force and violence if necessary, granted by the
governor. He has shot at people and been shot himself. Francis thinks Robert will be killed if the
governor changes.

Robert is scared too, especially of poison. His main danger comes from rich loggers. He takes
down the big men involved in logging operations. They are the sort of people who retaliate. Robert
is willing to devote, and risk, his life for nature because “it’s there”. He claims motivation simply
from the existence of the great biodiversity of the Cross River headwater. Folks around him may be,
unsurprisingly, confused by this sentiment and his corresponding zeal, but they are aware of his power.

*The Whiteman Knows…*

In arguing for conservation at a community meeting in Bomaji #12 (the villages are lined up in a row and numbered chronologically), Francis told the gathering that he read a Western study of his home village of Okwa. He was shocked. When researchers came to visit and asked folks in Okwa how big their families were, everyone lied—they wanted to look bigger than they were so they gave exaggerated numbers. Francis expected the resulting reports on Okwa to be ridiculous. Instead, they were precise, maybe even exactly right he thought. He could not believe it. He told his fellow community members: “We can lie but the whiteman knows. They know the truth.”

Francis’s use of whiteman’s studies surprised me. He referenced knowledge and a knowledge hierarchy during the community meeting, about a loss of memory and thus care for native wildlife—“they remember (and we don’t)”—and about accuracy, “they will know.” He also argued from facts he learned from the careful whiteman’s studies, for example that non-timber forest products make more money than bushmeat, again referencing whiteman authority but applying it to address direct community concerns. 365

---

Wielding knowledge hierarchies and their relations—the whiteman knows more and knows how to learn more, even about our own communities—Francis uses the whiteman’s purported superior knowledge to make his point. His reasoning is that, because the whiteman has better knowledge, the whiteman’s values should be trusted as well, including their concern for gorilla conservation.

Francis’s arguments raise concerns of knowledge and power but they also reference the allure of education. I will delve into this more during the discussion of our folk film, Conservation Education, in Chapter Five, but one of the most common arguments made to me by folks against conservation, the reason why they may need to kill gorillas and enter the forest to harvest resources, is that they need money “to send our children to school.” Knowledge is a tool, a commodity, and a goal. It is wielded, referenced, and pursued. In a sense, Francis is using the higher knowledge from afar, and dangling it before the local communities, to convince them to believe that what he says, including that they should support conservation, is true.

Big Money

One implicit reason to support conservation, starkly apparent in the field, is money. Money may reflect value, for example that people somewhere care, but in the field, it may also be a reason in and of itself. Francis is a Big Man (a local term for a person of power and prestige). He drives his own car. He is among the richest people in Okwa. He says, when he was child, whiteman

conservationists came to his village. Struck by their gadgets, technology and resources, Nknoyu decided he wanted to become a conservationist. Conservation organization take local children on field trips and show them photos of themselves. They screen movies for them. They sponsor meetings, bring various infrastructure and livelihood opportunities, the occasional white researcher. Conservation brought me. Some locals are frustrated by their perception that conservation organization make money off the gorillas and community forest and then spend it on their own wishes. They see that only a select few people get money, education, and advancement from the shared resource. The challenge to conservation in practice will be addressed further in Part III, but the money that gorillas bring provides a stark reason for conservation.

Conservation Sensitization

ERuDeF produces a newspaper: The Green Vision, Cameroon’s only environmental newsletter.\(^\text{366}\) Though I saw many papers at our office and for sale in Buea, I did not see them out in the field. The papers may make it to some large cities, such as Mamfe and Bamenda, but they do not reach the villages.

ERuDeF reaches out to villagers in a different way, through “conservation sensitization” campaigns. I did not witness any of these but my colleague, Bernard, sent me an article describing a February 2015 sensitization program across the Tofala hillsite, including students from Bangang, Folepi, Nkong, Banti, Besali, Egumbu, Fonjumataw, and Bechati.\(^\text{367}\) ERuDeF held a Wildlife Advocacy Week in which students promoted environmental messages:

\(^{366}\) Available online here: http://www.thegreenvisionnewspaper.com/

They also brandished placards bearing unique conservation messages like "No to Illicit Hunting; Protect the Cross River Gorilla", "Plant More Trees, Save Our Water Sources", "No to Bush Burning, Keep the Environment Green" "No to Deforestation, Save the Great Apes and their Habitats" and others. They also displayed paintings of the Nigeria-Cameroon Chimpanzee and the Cross River Gorilla, which they want protected.368

ERuDeF held seminars to teach the students ecology and primatology, “interspersed with conservation songs, poetry dramatization and drama on the importance of environmental protection and wildlife conservation.” To this, they added competitions: sack races for gorilla conservation and the gorilla football match.

The simple messages of support continued, as children stamped “their palms on cloths of pictures of great apes with unique statements like ‘I love chimpanzees and gorillas,’ ‘they are our cousins’, ‘plant trees’, ‘chimpanzees and gorillas are my friends’, and many others.” They then hung up the posters and went out to impress the conservation message upon their parents. Achunkeng Nadesh of GSS [Government Secondary School] Nkong, for example, “said she would tell her parents that, ‘it is not good to burn the farm or cut down trees before you cultivate and hunting endangered animals too is against the law.'”369

Local officials agreed that targeting the children is a wise idea, as they will lead in the future, and, as Sylvester Zah of GS Banti told Bernard, because the “villagers would believe more in them.”370 Children learn conservation messages at school and then return home to spout them. This

---

368 Ibid.
369 Ibid.
370 Ibid.
is another way conservation rationale is passed along. This, too, is shown in our film *Conservation Education*.

**Part III**

**WHY NOT CONSERVE CROSS RIVER GORILLAS?**

*A Taxonomy of Counter-Arguments & Objections*

I presented examples of reasoning in Part II muddled among details, anecdotes, and varying trains of thought as this tracks how rationales are expressed in moral discourse in the field. In such conversations, the conservation-supporting reasons are not only nestled among other ideas but also often intertwined with, hinting at, and giving way to counter-arguments and objections. I conclude the chapter by distilling some of the counter-arguments and objections I encountered in the field, again for clarity. I heeded the objections below and featured them in the folk films. They receive more depth in Chapter Five, where I describe them in the context of Folk Filmmaking. The main conflict with conservation is that communities feel it is not in their interest. Why it is against their interest varies among communities and community members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Benefits Objection</strong></th>
<th>We do not benefit from conservation, gorillas, or protection of the forest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Bushmeat Objection</strong></td>
<td>Gorillas are a good source of meat, we should be allowed to eat them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Proxy Objection</strong></td>
<td>If the gorillas are gone, we do not need to save the forest. We can use it for other things, such as farming, housing, or cash crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Feasibility Objection</strong></td>
<td>Gorilla conservation is no longer feasible in the Cross River headwaters (for various reasons, from the isolation and meager size of the gorilla populations to the dense, increasing populations of people). We should give up. It is too late to save the Cross River gorilla. We should cut our losses and focus on species with a better chance. (I heard this from an ex-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
pat working in the region. This position, not unheard of in the conservation community, is called conservation triage.\(^{371}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Colonialism Objection</th>
<th>International conservation feels too close to colonialism—outsiders continue to tell us what we can and cannot do on our own land.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Community Needs Objection</td>
<td>Our community has greater needs than the protection of the environment. We should be focused on first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sovereignty Objection</td>
<td>Akin to the Colonialism Objection, simply: we want to decide what happens within our own villages and forests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Expense Objection</td>
<td>Conserving gorillas is too expensive. We could better use the money on something else. For example, conservationists estimate it will cost them 10.5 million USD to conserve the Cross River gorilla over the next five years.(^{372})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pragmatic Objection</td>
<td>Conservation does not work here. It is too expensive, ineffective, or at odds with local issues. This is akin to the Feasibility Objection but locates the problem with the communities or the situation, not with the gorillas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Loss of Naturalness Objection</td>
<td>Conserving the gorillas will require too much human influence on the animals. They may need to be captured or relocated to maintain genetic diversity between the populations. They may need to be habituated for study or tourism opportunities. The many ways in which conservationists engage the gorillas, even if well-intentioned, bring the gorillas closer and closer to human-dependency, and further from the wild population most seek to conserve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Corruption Objection</td>
<td>Government and enforcement officials are too corrupt in this region. Conservation resources slip into their pockets. Benefits accrue with them instead of trickling down to the community. They do not do their job and they take advantage of the situation only to help themselves. Conservation cannot work here without better governance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These objections are common and compelling in the field. The film series explores them as direct challenges to morally justifying gorilla conservation. Before I explain the Folk Filmmaking in

---


practice, I address one large concern that these objections raise: is conservation the sort of thing folks can only support once certain needs are met? Is it a mistake to assume conservation can be a project shared between these two communities?

CONCLUSION

I designed this dissertation to assess how moral justification can be made in a fair and just manner in the context of Cross River gorilla conservation. I began this dissertation by showing the way Cross River gorilla conservation is argued for and justified to local communities and how most current approaches elide just and respectful moral debate. In this chapter, I presented arguments for and against gorilla conservation, offering accounts of moral reasoning from the West and from Cross River. The arguments show the elements and vocabulary of the moral discourse that we focused on adjudicating. They set up the conversation for the films to enter. In the next chapter, I show how it is possible to share the project of conservation but also why appealing to shared values alone will not suffice for moral justification. The danger of abuse in appealing to shared values motivates the need for a more fair and just practice of moral justification, such as Folk Filmmaking.
Chapter Four

TOTEMS & TABOOS

Most definitions of conservation provided by conservationists reflect their authors’ particular view of what conservation ought to be.
–Sandbrook, 2015

Moral debates over conservation values are not only abstract. They are of consequences, affecting policy, decision-making, and actions in the field. Questions over the plight of Cross River gorillas do not fall only to primatologists, conservationists, and the surrounding Cross River communities. As the gorillas garner more attention, international involvement increases. As I revise my dissertation, the gorillas continue to make headlines. On December 16, 2015 newspapers announced that Nigeria and Cameroon will be applying for UNESCO designation for a joint, transboundary Cross River-Korup-Takamanda Biosphere Reserve. The plan emerged from a meeting including the Federal Ministry of the Environment (Nigeria), Nigerian National Park Service, UNESCO, Nigerian Man and Biosphere Committee, Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria, National Commission for Museum and Monuments, Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (Cameroon), Arcus Foundation, the IUCN-WCPA Transboundary Conservation Specialist Group, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. The next day, December 17th, Nigerian papers ran: “Be More Environment Conscious, US Tells Nigerians.” The story described the first visit to Calabar, the

---

capitol of Cross River, by James Entwistle, the United States’ ambassador to Nigeria. Entwistle told
the people of Cross River State that he came to learn more about what the state and federal
government are doing to protect their environment and how the US can better help Nigerians to
promote conservation. He said that Cross River was of global importance and that collaborating
with NGOs such as WCS and Robert’s Pandrillus “will help strengthen the bilateral relationship”
between countries. He offered to expand help in training and technical exchanges, information
sharing, and public education promoting conservation. Entwistle argued that addressing
conservation problems is not just for governments but local communities as well, reprimanding the
communities while espousing environmental values:

They have the ability to stand in the gap where conservation is concerned. You can refuse to do
business with these wildlife profiteers and illegal loggers. Communities that respectfully share this
forest with wildlife show reverence for nature. They also have a responsibility to protect and defend
the wildlife with which they share this forest.

…[During my visit] I became more aware of the challenges that the state and federal governments face
in protecting these natural wonders. I also became more aware of the nexus of issues that surround the
protection of the forests of Cross River. They play an important role in an issue that affects us all –
climate change.

As conservation of Cross River forests and wildlife gains increasing international attention,
conservationists gain increasing power to intervene, despite moral disagreements and conflicts with

376 Ibid.
377 Featured in Chapter 3, “Grumpy Old White Man”
378 Oguntola 2015.
local communities. Conservationists justify their interventions by claiming a morally superior position. Their supposed moral knowledge that saving gorillas is the right thing to do allows them to argue that those who disagree are in need of education and sensitization to “learn the value of their wildlife.” Because conservationists assume that locals are morally backward, they do not give them due respect as moral disputants.

With their claims dismissed, locals can not partake in a fair and just dispute. Instead of debating values and justifying their reasoning, conservationist avoid the process of justification by rejecting the dispute. They address the disagreement with education for local children and sensitization for adults. They tell their disputants to accept and adopt conservation’s moral claims by teaching and deploying the values as moral facts. The strategy may be effective but it is not an ethical way to teach ethics nor a moral method for addressing moral disagreement.

Moral disagreements require adjudication. Adjudication requires employing a method of moral reasoning to determine which moral claims can be justified and which cannot. Justification grants certain claims moral authority, allowing them to guide action. Which claims receive moral authority depends upon the method of moral justification.

Moral disagreement is not unique to conservation. Folks debate public policy and personal choice, how to deal with immigration and whether or not to eat meat. Another way to address moral disagreement is through appeals to shared values. A community may agree to resettle refugees because they share values of hospitality. Rhetorical strategies may help as well, such as appeals to tradition (we are a nation of immigrants) or calls for empathy (imagine if your country was at war). Not all issues will be resolved this way. Values may be understood differently or of varying import;

379 Nkembi and Leke 2013, see Introduction
they also may conflict. Across moral communities, values often diverge. When moral disagreement occurs across communities, it can be obstinate. Without sharing values, assumptions, or moral vocabularies, diverse moral communities face great challenges adjudicating their disputes.

Cross River gorilla conservation presents a classic case of moral diversity. The disputants come from vastly different worlds and life experiences. Their diversity presents a serious challenge for sharing needs and values, and for emphasizing with and even understanding each other. Can a relatively wealthy, Western conservationists fathom the daily needs of a Cross River villager? Can a Cross River villager appreciate the cultural distance the Western conservationist is trying to bridge? Everyone is human. They share some values, though the values may often differ in priority or take different forms.

I initially planned to appeal to local values with my Folk Filmmaking project. I sought to integrate moral reasoning drawn from both Western and Cross River knowledge to develop a shared, non-imperialist moral rationale for conserving Cross River gorillas. I hoped such a rationale could then be used to resolve conflict and to motivate more contextual, considerate, and appropriate conservation efforts, tailored to Cross River communities. I planned the Folk Films as an appeal to shared values.

Then I analyzed my approach. Philosophers Alison Jaggar and Theresa Tobin offer guidance on adjudicating moral disagreement in situations such as Cross River gorilla conservation, where unequal power between the participants, and unshared cultures, raise serious social justice concerns about imperialism, marginalization, and epistemic injustice. Their work both inspired my Folk

---

Filmmaking project and showed me the problem with my initial approach. In the next chapter, I describe how Jaggar and Tobin’s work helped me refine the Folk Filmmaking methodology. In this chapter, I show why only making an appeal to shared values, in the case of Cross River conservation, is not an adequate practice of moral justification.

Before a primatologist enters the field, she researches gorilla population estimates and feeding requirements, breeding rates and genetic diversity. From this information, she hypothesizes about her particular study group, then goes to the forest and tests her theories. As a philosopher headed to the field, I researched various arguments and reasoning. I hypothesized from these about what moral justification would fit the context of the case study, then went to the field to test it. My hypothesis was that values could be shared and appealing to these values would adequately address the moral disagreement. In Part I, I share the basis for this hypothesis and the importance of recognizing local capacities for conservation. In Part II, I show how appealing to shared values alone is inadequate for moral adjudication in the context of Cross River; it does not avoid concerns of cultural imperialism.

Part I

CAPACITIES FOR CONSERVATION

Is appreciating and thus conserving wild animals a phenomenon limited to a Western orientation to nature? Do other entry points for motivating and understanding wildlife conservation exist? What allows a woman, wandering home from her farm through the thorny forests and the steep hills of Cross River, to enjoy encountering a gorilla? Perhaps she passed and did not notice an obscure insect underfoot or a small brown bird overhead, lovely only in its unusual ecology. The
small animals did not stir her. But then a broad and bold gorilla lumbers along, plain and easy
enough to see but wild enough not to linger long. Does she appreciate this moment? What
conditions must be met for this to be a pleasurable and memorable experience for her, for her to
enjoy the wildlife simply as an aesthetic experience?

Some argue that one condition is a full stomach: “conservation comes after breakfast”.381
Conservationists must come and protect wildlife because local communities are too hungry to
appreciate the resident wild animals. To these communities, the animals are just moving meat.
Bushmeat is a term for wild animals slain for food, particularly in West and Central Africa. Wild
animals slain for food in the West are called “game”, perhaps tracking the distinction between
hunting for survival and hunting for sport. While conservationists and Western hunters have long
collaborated (including now with trophy hunting), African bushmeat hunters present a major crisis
for conservationists.382 Bushmeat hunting is listed among the main threats to Cross River gorillas,
both in deliberate hunting and accidental injuries via snares set for other animals. Many of the
conservationists seeking to help local communities meet their basic needs—protein, adequate
nutrition—mean only the best.383 But in separating the projects, e.g. lemurs for conservationists,
chickens for local communities—conservationists imply that they are at a stage to appreciate the
wildlife while the local communities are not.384

381 Conradie, B., Treurnicht, M., Esler, K., & Gaertner, M. 2013. Conservation begins after breakfast: The relative
importance of opportunity cost and identity in shaping private landholder participation in conservation. Biological
Conservation 158: 334-341.
382 Dickson, Barney, Jon Hutton and William M. Adams (ed). 2009. Recreational hunting, conservation and rural livelihoods :
science and practice. Chichester, UK ; Hoboken, NJ : Blackwell; Bennett, E. et al. 2002. Hunting the world’s wildlife to
extinction. Oryx 36 (04).
Pub.
the National Academy of Sciences 108 (49): 19653-19656.
Other scholars argue that a condition for appreciating wildlife is economic security. The argument motivated the enormous effort to link conservation with the development movement such as through the Integrated Conservation and Development Projects.\textsuperscript{385} The expanded focus created greater demands on conservationists. It also resulted in a great schism in the conservation community between those who advocate for conserving nature for nature’s sake and those who argue for conserving nature to help people.\textsuperscript{386}

The argument over values goes much deeper than debating the value of a subspecies of gorilla. It echoes discourse from the beginnings of the Western conservation movement, when Gifford Pinchot argued for conserving nature for its instrumental value, or use to people, against folks such as John Muir, who argued for nature’s preservation due to its intrinsic value, or value beyond its use.\textsuperscript{387} Contemporary conservation was founded on the intrinsic value principle. Soulé conceived of conservation biology based on the axiom: “\textit{biotic diversity has intrinsic value, irrespective of its instrumental or utilitarian value}” [emphasis in the original].\textsuperscript{388} The Society for Conservation Biology shares the foundation. Various governments, as well as the United Nations, underpin national and international legislation, including the U.S. Endangered Species Act and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, with the same position.\textsuperscript{389} Though a formative, ethical foundation of conservation, intrinsic value is a messy, confusing, and vague

\textsuperscript{387} Muir’s aim more tracks conservation now, which seeks to preserve nature as best it can. What Pinochet called conservation in his time, conserving nature while continuing to use it, is today more commonly referred to as sustainable use. See: Hargrove, E.C., 1989. \textit{Foundations of Environmental Ethics}. Environmental Ethics Books, Denton, TX.

In part because of the ambiguity of conservation’s ethical foundations, the debate continues, reaching an unusual intensity in recent years. Initially, Muir’s view of conservation as preservation won out. North America developed a system of national parks, where nature was protected and not used. The parks soon inspired similar conservation efforts across the world. As conservation efforts became international, pitting large NGOs and Western conservationists against small, local communities in distant lands, the debate renewed. Scholars re-named it—the New Conservation Debate, Parks vs. People, the New Conservation Science—and the positions became more nuanced, but both sides continue to strawman, simplify, and take unsympathetic views of their disputants.\footnote{Minteer, B.A. and Miller, T.R., 2011. The New Conservation Debate: ethical foundations, strategic trade-offs, and policy opportunities. Biological Conservation 144 (3): 945-947; Wilkie, D.S., Morelli, G.A., Demmer, J., Starkey, M., Telfer, P. and Steil, M., 2006. Parks and people: Assessing the human welfare effects of establishing protected areas for biodiversity conservation. Conservation Biology 20 (1): 247-249; Doak, D.F., Bakker, V.J., Goldstein, B.E. and Hale, B., 2014. What is the future of conservation?. Trends in ecology & evolution, 29(2), pp.77-81. See also the 2015 Environmental Humanities 7.}

Those arguing for instrumental value, spearheaded by the eco-modernists, argue predominantly that conservation will be more effective if it joins with other initiatives, from improving livelihoods and mitigating pollution to business ventures and social causes.\footnote{Asafu-Adjaye, J., Blomqvist, L., Brand, S., Brook, B., de Fries, R., Ellis, E., Foreman, C., Keith, D., Lewis, M., Lynas, M., Nordhaus, T., Pielke Jr., R., Pritchker, R., Roy, J., Sagoff, M., Shellenberger, M. Stone, R. and Teague, P. 2015. An Ecomodernist Manifesto. Accessed 9 October 2015. http://www.ecomodernism.org/manifesto, 28} They argue that the intrinsic value approach not only has not stemmed the tide of biodiversity loss and species extinctions, it also arose from faulty beliefs conceiving of nature as separate from humans.\footnote{Ibid.} They point out the construction of the idea of wilderness (e.g. ignoring or forgetting previous human
inhabitants’ role in creating most ‘natural’ environments), the ubiquity of human impact on the planet in the Anthropocene, and the impossible entanglement of people and nature in many biodiversity hotspots (conservation focus-points) outside the Western world.394

The eco-modernists’ position shocks more traditional, intrinsic-value based conservationists.395 They maintain that their ethical argument is valid: nature should be saved because it is intrinsically valuable. They fear that orienting conservation towards people could have dire consequences for an effort already in crisis. They staunchly defend intrinsic value.396

Many eco-modernists agree that nature holds intrinsic value. They reject the argument not on truth grounds, but on grounds that is an ineffective path to conservation. By November 2014, the debate between the two sides had become so acrimonious that it inspired a petition in *Nature* calling for reconciliation “to the infighting that is stalling progress in protecting the planet.”397 Led by Heather Tallis and Jane Lubchenco, the petition describes:

Unfortunately, what began as a healthy debate has, in our opinion, descended into vitriolic, personal battles in universities, academic conferences, research stations, conservation organizations and even the media. We believe that this situation is stifling productive discourse, inhibiting funding and halting progress.

Adding to the problem, in our view, is the issue that this dispute has become dominated by only a few voices, nearly all of them men’s. We see this as illustrative of the bigger issues of gender and cultural bias that also continue to hinder conservation.

---

394 Ibid.
396 Doak et al. 2014
The stakes? The future of conservation science, practice and policy. Conservation regularly encounters varied points of view and a range of values in the real world. To address and engage these views and values, we call for more-inclusive representation of scientists and practitioners in the charting of our field’s future, and for a more-inclusive approach to conservation.

...Together, we propose a unified and diverse conservation ethic; one that recognizes and accepts all values of nature, from intrinsic to instrumental, and welcomes all philosophies justifying nature protection and restoration, from ethical to economic, and from aesthetic to utilitarian.

...Clearly, all values will not be equally served in every context. Approaching conservation problems with representative perspectives and a broad base of respect, trust, pragmatism and shared understanding will more quickly and effectively advance our shared vision of a thriving planet.

Prominent institutions already embrace multiple voices and values.

...Academic training of conservation scientists should more accurately portray the rich, global history of the field, introducing students to the diverse ways in which nature has been valued and conserved for centuries. More forums at conferences, in journals and on social media are needed to elevate the voices of scientists and practitioners from under-represented genders, cultures and contexts.

Conservation organizations and scientists can embrace all plausible conservation actors, from corporations to governmental agencies, faith-based organizations and interested individuals, and advance conservation efforts when they can benefit people and when there is no obvious human-centric goal.

....It is time to re-focus the field of conservation on advancing and sharing knowledge in all relevant disciplines and contexts, and testing hypotheses based on observations, experiments and models. We call for an end to the fighting. We call for a conservation ethic that is diverse in its acceptance of genders, cultures, ages and values.398

398 Ibid.
Tallis and Lubchenco make a pragmatic argument, noting that forgetting intrinsic value can cheapen nature or miss parts not considered valuable but that instrumental value can remain more powerful in other instances for motivating support. As conservationists take a pragmatic approach, offering certain values in some instances while holding their own values separate and elsewhere, they need to be wary. Champions of intrinsic value may feel they retain a somewhat sanctimonious position. While more voices join in defining a conservation ethic with their various values, other values will still fall short of the purer intrinsic value supported by those at the moral top.

To engage with and share values of local communities, conservation needs to consider its moral structure, particularly in international contexts of unequal power. Even when conducted with the best of intentions—saving local communities’ nature for them (not just for the nature), until they are ready and able to appreciate it—the foundation of the nature-for-people position implies that one could be too poor to appreciate a wild animal.

In its special report on biodiversity, *The Economist* argued the case:

As mankind has got richer, he has set about cleaning up some of the mess that he has made of his surroundings. Growing prosperity has induced him to care about matters beyond his own survival and that of his tribe and to translate those concerns into laws, regulations and programmes, both publicly and privately funded, that have changed people’s behaviour towards their environment. At the same time, the technological progress that has accompanied economic growth has not just made conservation more effective but has also enabled man to produce more of what he wants from less, to the benefit of other species.
Many in the environmental movement regard economic growth and technological progress as enemies of biodiversity. Actually, they are its friends. Only through more of both can man hope to go on enjoying the company of the 8.7m or so other species with which he was born to share this planet.\textsuperscript{399}

When one is concerned with economic or physical survival, she cannot enjoy animals; to her they are only a resource for food or trade. Just as conservationists help hungry, local communities source alternate forms of protein in place of bushmeat, they seek to provide alternative economic opportunities to impoverished communities, especially when conservation efforts threaten local livelihoods. One method for improving local incomes is ecotourism.

Proponents often tout ecotourism as a key to conservation, particularly for endangered wildlife outside the Western world.\textsuperscript{400} The idea is that wild animals must ‘pay their way’ to survive. If the animals can earn more alive than as parts, if their habitat can bring more money as a destination than as a source of exploitation, the wild animals can be conserved. Wild animals ‘earning their keep’ becomes especially appealing in conservation situations lacking funding from elsewhere (e.g. hunting permits, government support, or well-heeled NGOs).

When conservation is described as only possible if economically viable, the argument implied is that such communities can only appreciate their endangered animals as sources of economic, i.e. instrumental, value. They cannot access the intrinsic value of nature and thus will always be a step-

\textsuperscript{399} Averting the sixth extinction. (2013). The Economist 14 September: 1
down the moral hierarchy from true conservationists. Western, wealthy people can appreciate animals as ends in themselves, and are willing to pay just to see them, while local communities only appreciate animals as a means of making money. Such solutions just accept that some people will be in a position of power and privilege, allowing them to appreciate wildlife and thus support the animals’ existence, while other people not only cannot help, but also must bear the burden of conservation to keep these animals around for those who can and do care (at least now they are paid for their troubles). Ecotourism perpetuates a relationship of subservience. It maintains wildlife conservation as a project of the privileged, where willingness and ability to pay are how one shows appreciation for wild nature.

Assumptions about conditions for valuing conservation inspire problematic prescriptions for addressing conflict with local communities. The above conditions make two mistakes. First, they confuse what I will call conservation as control with conservation as coexistence.401 Second, more fundamentally, they forget an appreciation for the aesthetic, something all humans can share.

Wildlife conservation can be passive, simply living alongside wildlife and not eliminating it. This approach, conservation as coexistence, describes Americans’ relationship to backyard birds, gray squirrels, city pigeons. The term conservation usually applies to active conservation, conservation as control, including protected areas set aside as habitat, strict legislation regulating interactions between humans and wildlife, and other forms of enforced protection of both viable and endangered species.

Conservation as control is a noble undertaking, expending great effort to save threatened species from extinction. Americans pour resources conservation as control abroad and at home. North

America has a bounty of well-protected parks, the Endangered Species Act, and carefully managed relationships between citizens and wildlife. Sometimes, communities even take conservation upon themselves. Consider the case of the Great Pacific Octopus in Seattle. Though the octopi are abundant and unthreatened (and incredibly popular as a salad at a hip, local restaurant), Seattleites voted to protect them after public outrage following release of photos of a nineteen-year-old spear-fisherman with his giant dead octopus catch. Even when coexistence was enough, when octopi populations remained healthy in the surrounding waters, Seattleites called for conservation as control.

Local communities also reject conservation in America, even simple conservation as coexistence. The iconic species protected in America’s parks—wolves, grizzly, bison—now live in not even a shadow of their former range. In very few places do they simply coexist outside strict protection (less taxing species, such as squirrels, or highly adaptable species, such as coyotes, opossums, and raccoons, still manage). Assisted by a well-organized and agreeable government, as well as by powerful technology (guns, strychnine, steel traps), Americans were able to wipe out (wolves, grizzlies) or utilize (bison) most of their wildlife years ago. They also ferociously fight its reestablishment, be it bison in Boulder, Colorado or wolves across the West.

Conservation as control, as employed internationally, tends to assume a state of chaos in local communities. It orients to foreign situations as if the wildlife remains by accident, despite neglect or exacerbation of their plight by local communities, as people continue to utilize the animals and

---

404 Ibid.
habitat. Sometimes local communities may be apathetic or unaware. In other cases, they may not be. Conservation ethics underlie many local communities’ relationship with their natural environment; they sometimes may be the very reason why any animals remain to protect. Communities outside the West coexisted, in some way or another, for thousands of years with the animals now under the focus of international conservation efforts. On rare occasions conservation as control existed, but more often human pressure was just not enough, or local beliefs and behavior were harmonious enough, for such conservation not to be necessary.

Why and how these communities protected nearby wild animals varies dramatically between place and people, but conservation as coexistence is not always or only accidental or unintentional. Instead, it may reveal shared values recognized in wild animals, values that often motivate conservation as control as well. Such values may also show that certain conditions are not necessary for appreciating wild animals.

People may not need to meet certain conditions in order to appreciate aesthetics in nature, any more than they must meet conditions to appreciate art or any beauty. One may need to meet certain conditions to appreciate certain pieces of art—e.g. one may need to read Greenberg to appreciate Rothko—or to appreciate certain entities in nature, e.g. understanding endemism helps one appreciate varieties of subspecies. One may need to meet certain conditions to have the time and energy to create and pursue art, or birdwatching, or a career in conservation as control. But all people have the capacity to appreciate beauty and experience wonder. And this capacity alone may be enough to motivate conservation as coexistence and an array of conservation ethics that support it.

Animals are often even more accessible than art, especially for remote and rural communities. Ecology and ethology may encourage appreciation, but they are not required background study. People did not only start admiring nature with science, natural history, or Romanticism. I suspect even a tired, desperately poor person, searching for a meal, may stop in her tracks and admire a lovely passing passerine. Herein lies hope for appealing to shared values. Perhaps a desire for conservation as control only comes after certain conditions are met, but conservation rationales, e.g. an appreciation of wild nature, are available to all.

Not all will agree. Some people will encounter wild animals and feel fear, annoyance, or indifference. When surfing, it is hard to appreciate sharks. Further, critics challenge that aesthetic appreciation is not often enough to save nature, no matter if the appreciation comes from comfortable Westerners or struggling Africans. Describing the motivation for his new television series, Earth: A New Wild, M. Sanjayan said that he is connecting conservation with human needs because the reverential approach is not enough, people need more than just beauty to care about nature. Instead, he claimed, they need self-interest:

When you start framing ourselves as part of the picture, then the reasons for protecting nature really become self-serving. So for me, doing a natural history show that really has the human story within it makes a lot of sense because that’s how I feel about the natural world with humans as part of that tapestry.

---

407 Consider a passage from a collection on ethno-ornithology: “Professional ornithologists have discovered that they share with unschooled hunters and farmers a common appreciation of the beauty and fascination of birds and that they also share a common language of equivalent bird names with which to compare their ornithological observations.” from Hunn, Eugene S. 2010. Foreword. Ethno-ornithology: Birds, Indigenous Peoples, Culture, and Society. Earthscan: Washington, D.C., xi

408 http://mashable.com/2015/01/21/new-show-panda-breeding-video/#yN8gpjinLskS
Perhaps Sanjayan is correct. If so, the important point is that the moral diversity is not between communities but within them. Some folks appreciate the aesthetics of nature and believe it should be conserved for no other reason than its intrinsic value. These folks may live anywhere, in any stage of development. Others disagree, and need a good reason to conserve nature. These folks may have all their needs met and still not care, or they may need nature to help them.

Part II

LOCATING SHARED VALUES THROUGH ETHNOPHILOSOPHY & ETHNOPRIMATOLOGY

Conservation biology applies across the world. From Antarctica to North Africa, Siberia to the Sumatra, conservationists study, manage, and protect wildlife, guided by their science and their values. Few integrate local knowledge.\(^{409}\) Most of the conservationists that do tend to use local knowledge as a sort of citizen science, further supporting scientific studies or adding historical context.\(^ {410}\) Conservation educators make little use of local knowledge when educating or sensitizing


local communities. How would teaching a community their own knowledge help bring the change conservationists hope for?

Local, non-Western knowledge is also conspicuously absent from the moral debate over how and why to conserve nature. Akin to how science overwhelms local knowledges, Western philosophy denigrates other ethical approaches by dismissing their methods and reasoning, charging them with poor logic and unfamiliar structure, myths and folklore. Ethnosophists seek to address this, focusing on studying and appreciating indigenous philosophical systems. They also quickly point out that the distinction is not necessary, Western normative claims are also based in a certain culture, it is also a “local” philosophical system, based in the West.

All philosophy is ethnosophy.

Akin to ethnosophists, ethnoprimatologists seek to understand wild primates by engaging local knowledge. They are among the first to acknowledge the ethical challenges of primate conservation, asking: “how do we prioritize competing values when there is a disconnect between the values of the primatologist and those of local communities?” They call for openness to “the integration of philosophical ethics into the practices of field primatology.”

---


416 Ibid.: 783
Ethnoprimateology emerged from anthropologists’ observation that all primates overlap with human communities and that “coexistence translates into knowledge.” Communities coexisting with primates have local, descriptive knowledge of the primates’ behavior. This knowledge, also called traditional ecological knowledge, is akin to Western knowledge of primates accrued with study, i.e. primatology. Locals also have normative knowledge concerning their surrounding primates. This knowledge both emerged from and guides the communities’ long relationship with the animals. It is not so different from Western knowledge reflecting on relationships to nature, e.g. environmental ethics. People in the local communities who directly interact with the primates, such as hunters, have particularly nuanced knowledge. Though hunters can directly conflict with conservation goals, they also tend to have deep and complex relationships with their prey. For example, local hunters expanded conservationists’ understanding of the Cross River gorillas’ range and found more nests in one year than conservationists had over eight years of surveys. They also provided the most stories of gorilla encounters, behavior, and uses when I visited.

Hunters hold both local knowledge of where the Cross River gorillas are and of the gorillas’ cultural importance. Cultural knowledge, especially, can guide behavior. Traditionally locals hunted gorillas because of the gorillas’ great value as totems, folk medicine, and fetishes. Despite the rhetoric depicting hunting as a main conservation threat, gorilla hunting has never been in direct

---


420 Etiendem *et al.*, 2011
conceptual conflict with conservation, i.e. people never hunted gorillas to exterminate them. Hunting primates shows that they are valued.\footnote{Hill, C.M., 2002. Primate conservation and local communities—ethical issues and debates. \textit{American Anthropologist} 104 (4): 1184-1194.} Traditionally, Nkyonu’s people, the Anyang, regulated gorilla hunting; it was only allowed for the initiation of a new chief.\footnote{Meder, A. 1999. Gorillas in African Culture and Medicine. \textit{Gorilla Journal} 18.} Strict rules dictated use of the gorilla’s body: the chief ate the brain, another high-ranking person the heart. If anyone else killed a gorilla at any other time, the chief sentenced the hunter to death.\footnote{Ibid.}

The foundations for developing conservation ethics may be consistent or akin across the world. In the West, conservation ethics arose among those who saw the sacred in nature (e.g. Muir) and among hunters (e.g. Leopold, Roosevelt), reformed or not. Whether inspiration comes from cathedrals of stone or elephant totems, seeing the dying fire in the eyes of a wolf or a gorilla, the desire and decision to protect nature need not arise only from hard ecology or some enlightened sophistication.

Pelts and meat, cathedrals of stone and elephant totems, are all ways of locating value in the wild world. Different sorts of conservation need not always conflict: if done well, they often all result in conserving animals. The values embedded in nature offer different sources from which an ethic can spring. The values can collaborate and reinforce each other. More reasons to conserve—from mystical to ecological to cultural—should only help conservation efforts.

Some reasons will no longer be justifiable. Some values will be lost. Cross River gorilla numbers are so low, hunting regulation so weak, and resale value of their meat to urban markets so high, that any hunting now poses a direct threat to their survival. The stakes, the economization via the bushmeat market, and an increased global appreciation for the personhood of great apes, all make hunting perhaps no longer a justifiable cultural expression. Though hunting may stop, the deep cultural connection hunting represents need not be sacrificed as well. The loss of certain local, cultural activities for the sake of conservation may only further the need to conserve other aspects of cultural identity, memory, and relationships related to the wildlife, along with the wildlife itself.

427 Dunn et al. 2014
To resonate with and to respect local ways of knowing, a shared conservation rationale needs to include elements of local culture. Local legends and myths address primal questions, foundations of belief. In so doing, they reflect the values of their community. Sympathetic conservationists argue that “folktales may provide the effectual basis for the development of conservation policy by profoundly residing in a people’s cultural essence.” As shown in Chapter One, the scant scholarship recounting African gorilla stories and their absence from gorilla literature has to do with control over knowledge production, not lack of local knowledge of gorillas.

One community in Cameroon shared a variety of local stories and traditional beliefs about Cross River gorillas with researchers, even though not a single member of the community had ever seen a gorilla. Etiendem’s work presents a bounty of local knowledge of Cross River gorillas around the Tofala hill site; one story he collected became our fourth folk film, Nzhu Jimangemi. Many of the Tofala stories are strikingly consistent with those collected over 150 years ago across the region by Paul du Chaillu, the first Westerner to describe seeing a gorilla in the wild. For example both authors share local stories of how if a pregnant woman sees a gorilla, she will give birth to a

434 Etiendem 2008; et al., 2011
gorilla baby or how if a gorilla is killed, a man connected to it via a totem will die. In Nigeria, hunters told me a variation: if a woman eats gorilla meat, she will give birth to a strong baby.

Traditional beliefs inform perhaps the strongest form of conservation via culture: taboos. Taboos against killing and eating Cross River gorillas persist at some hillsites and inspired community-based conservation projects at Kagwene, Mbe Mountains, and Tofala.436 Local beliefs also support primate conservation in nearby regions, e.g. of tantalus (Chlorocebus tantalus), Sclater’s (Cercopithecus sclateri) and mona monkeys (Cercopithecus mona) in Igboland, Nigeria; of chimpanzees (Pan troglodytes) in the Taraba region, Nigeria; of ursine colobus (Colobus vellerosus) and Campbell’s monkey (Cercopithecus campbelli) in Ghana and bonobos (Pan paniscus) in Congo.437 Baker’s work describing local folklore protecting Sclater’s guenon offered particular inspiration and guidance for this study.438 She shows how in Igboland, the state neighboring Cross River, Sclater’s guenon is protected entirely by traditional beliefs. Local knowledge and beliefs appear to be powerful, persistent, and often effective rationale for primate conservation in the region if not across the world.439

Conservationists often forget, if not omit, local social institutions—taboos, myths and

---

438 Baker 2013
wildlife tales—that correspond with, if not support, their goals. These stories have great effect on people’s values and relationship to the natural world, especially as elements of cultural identity. Taboos, in particular, reveal explicit normative guidance for these communities, at least traditionally. They offer a method of community conservation aligned with both local culture and conservation goals. The manner in which taboos are spread and shared—myth, narrative, apocryphal accounts—addresses something deeper: why to conserve. While taboos protect value, storytelling describes it. Collecting and reinvigorating local beliefs could aid in conservation through an appeal to shared values. Etiendem describes how in Cross River:

…informal institutions and traditional practices such as local tales and taboos, guided by cultural norms, can play an active role in nature conservation. In these areas it is social norms, rather than governmental juridical laws and rules, that determine human behaviour. People do not disregard taboos against hunting gorillas because, if they do, they may be punished by the ancestors or traditional institutions, unlike the wildlife law which is either poorly understood or hardly recognized.

Local values supporting Cross River gorilla conservation are available. They may prove effective as forms of conservation education and conflict adjudication, just as they helped inspire and garner support for community-based conservation efforts at three hillsites. Basing contemporary conservation efforts in local conservation ethics gives credit to the communities. It shows respect for

---

442 Etiendem 2008: 15
their past choices, behavior, and governance. It reflects appreciation of their past and current cultural identity, particularly in relation to nature. To respect these communities, conservationists working among them must engage local values and morality, especially as they seek to prescribe new values and moral frameworks.

Conservationists may be reluctant to work from local stories, taboos, and ethics. They may fear supporting local beliefs and values that they, as outsiders, believe untrue. In one respect, local beliefs may not “work”: they may not track facts. Once a person breaks a taboo and nothing happens, the person may lose respect for the taboo, the connected values, and ethic. Conservationists may feel that promoting “false” beliefs is either patronizing or harmful; it perpetuates misinformation and confusion. To these concerns, insights from epistemology and particularly ethnophilosophy are helpful:

1. Value does not necessarily track factual truth. One can be clear and correct that Cross River gorillas have thirty-two teeth and yet have no reason to care about them.

2. Truth takes many forms. Even after centuries of hard thought, philosophers struggle to define what makes something true. Truth is not only correspondence to scientific fact. Local beliefs and stories may contain many elements of truth—about their world, their relationships to each other and to nature—which should not be disregarded just because they are missed or misunderstood. Moral truths, for example, are often contained in such stories. Stories transmit value as much as fact.

3. We in the West need to be wary of how Western thought, including epistemology and ethics, function as a paradigm. Western environmental ethics rest on shaky foundations, too.

---

444 Vucetich and Nelson 2013
The ethics work despite this—environmentalists and conservationists are passionate and devoted to saving nature even if their moral foundations can be challenged and contested.

Local knowledge is not necessarily better. Indigeneity does not guarantee moral authority.445 Sometimes traditional beliefs and local experience conflict. Lee notes “ethics, aesthetics and traditional values attached to primates are discussed in the literature, but on the ground… indigenous peoples’ interactions with primates tend to be predominantly negative in perception as well as consequence.”446 That noted, the observation does not discourage Lee. She adds, “If conservation only works when it is emergent rather than imposed, then perhaps it is time to listen more and tell less?” Ethnoprimatology provides an important guide for more fair and just conservation of all species: the goal is not just better protection of wildlife but also epistemic humility. We in the West can learn as much as we can teach. Working with local knowledge may be imperative but is it be enough for adjudication? Are shared values sufficient?

I initially designed the Folk Filmmaking methodology to help integrate local knowledge with conservation education. Upon hearing the Cross River gorilla stories of totems and taboos, I planned to collaborate with the communities to retell their stories as cinema. Together we would pursue both epistemic justice and conservation. Our films would present long-ignored African accounts of gorillas and offer local values as the reasons to conserve the apes.


Folk Filmmaking would challenge each group to better understand the other’s values and help find opportunity for agreement. By working together, the Folk Filmmaking participants and conservationists would achieve a culturally-based and contextual conservation ethic, mitigating conflict and jointly pursuing conservation at once. Upon analysis, I found that my methodology, if designed in this way, would not suffice as fair and just moral adjudication in the Cross River context. In the next chapter, I explain why not and describe how I refined the methodology before employing it.
And tomorrow? ...Tomorrow will be the time of completely portable color video, video editing, and instant replay (“instant feedback”). Which is to say, the time of the joint dream of Vertov and Flaherty, of a mechanical ciné-eye-ear and of a camera that can so totally participate that it will automatically pass into the hands of those who, until now, have always been in front of the lens. At that point, anthropologists will no longer control the monopoly on observation; their culture and they themselves will be observed and recorded. And it is in this way that ethnographic film will help us to ‘share’ anthropology.

--Rouch, 1973

Folk Filmmaking can be a tool for epistemic justice. Fricker argues that combating epistemic injustice requires cultivating epistemic virtues. She advises discounting one’s judgments of credibility in order to counteract one’s prejudices. Openness to diverse speakers and arguments helps avoid testimonial injustice. One should consider a speaker’s challenges in articulating her knowledge as a problem of language and access to ideas and concepts (if not of translation), rather than an issue of the speaker’s intelligence.

A Folk Filmmaker needs to work on cultivating epistemic virtues and on creating films that cultivate the same in the audience. In villages in the Cross River headwaters, I listened attentively and was careful in my assessments of the speakers. When I agreed with someone’s account of an issue, I tried to figure out how and why we agreed. I was even more thoughtful when I disagreed. I considered if I was rejecting, overlooking, or discounting the account because of who presented it to

---


me, because of how she expressed herself, or simply because the concepts were not clear to me. Throughout my research, especially as I wrote my dissertation, I asked myself how open am I, as a philosopher and researcher, to different epistemic accounts?

Anderson adds that epistemic virtue must function at both individual and institutional scales. Achieving structural epistemic justice requires integration, a sharing of educational resources and opportunities so all groups gain markers of their credibility. They also need to share in the process of inquiry, which helps avoid ethnocentric biases and ensures all are heard. Anderson describes the goal as a sort of epistemic democracy, in which all inquirers participate equally.

Guided by these ideas and virtues, I designed Folk Filmmaking to include as many folks as possible—from fons and village elders to schoolchildren. We worked with hunters, farmers, marketsellers, teachers, and shop keepers. We invited our cast to incorporate their friends and families. By putting the process to film, Folk Filmmaking not only encourage collaboration and inclusion in inquiry, it also creates an artifact of moral reasoning that helps provide other voices credibility and representation.

Chapter One showed the problem with control of knowledge production. Chapter Two showed the problem with control over local communities and the environment of the Cross River headwaters. Chapter Three showed the problem of controlling the moral debate. Chapter Four invited collaboration with local knowledge and values to address these problems. Chapter Five begins by showing the problem again here, now with control over the integration of select local values. It then shows how the Folk Filmmaking method would have to differ. In order to respond to all these concerns—the cascading effects of unequal power on moral knowledge, debate, and

---

449 Anderson 2012
adjudication—Folk Filmmaking will need a design sensitive to power and accessible across cultures. To fit the context of Cross River conservation, it needs to address the litany of concerns: the long and continued suppression of local accounts of gorillas, the challenge of conservation agendas to local sovereignty, the moral crusade of conservation education and its impact on local values and culture. It must do all this while also considering the conservation situation and the risk of extinction for the Cross River gorilla subspecies.

Part I

Towards a Shared Conservation Ethos?

Dr. Paul Jepson, a geographer at Oxford, studies conservation governance. From 1991 to 1997, he was Indonesia Programme Coordinator for BirdLife International. In Indonesia, he tried to foster a local conservation ethos by building on local knowledge and cultural practices, specifically related to bird-keeping. Jepson’s idea was that a distinct, local ethic can emerge when space is created between the conservation rationales of international organizations and local knowledge of wildlife. Describing the project, Jepson argues that a “vigorouss” conservation movement can arise across cultures if:

- the worldviews, forms of knowledge and practices that underpin Western-generated conservation approaches are made visible;
- local ways of knowing [wild animals] and the practices and actor groups related to these are revealed; and

Jepson describes how international organizations justify conservation with a standard package: a set of arguments and ideas applied broadly and consistently, whatever the context. The standard package focuses on species and notions of “scarcity, rarity, endemism, and diversity.”\footnote{Jepson 2010: 314} By contrast, local knowledge often focuses on the relationship of the community to the species. Acknowledging local knowledge, Jepson argues, can help connect it to conservation, leading to a “common, but differentiated” conservation ethos.\footnote{Ibid.: 313} Conservationists must acknowledge the Western nature of their knowledge as well. Once they better understand each other, the communities can begin dialogue across their knowledges.

Jepson shows how each community has its own “frames”. Frames include ideas and concepts, rituals and practices, objects and images. Each community uses its frames to understand the world.\footnote{Ibid. 314; Goffman, E. 1974. \textit{Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience}. Harvard University Press: Cambridge.} Widely accepted frames help determine social governance.\footnote{Tarrow, S. 1992. Mentalities, political cultures and collective action frames: Constructing meaning through action. in Morris, A.D. and Mueller, C.M. (eds) \textit{Frontiers in Social Movement Theory}. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT.} Shared frames include the values and principles that define a moral community. Jepson describes conservation frames as including:

- beliefs and aspirations (values) concerning the human-nature relationship;
- scientific, cultural and recreational practices and the particular knowledges and aesthetics that they produce;
- actions, species and places that are emblematic of these frames;
To engage a local community’s knowledge, a conservationist must work across frames. They do not share her framing of the conservation issue. The conservationist must first develop an understanding of the local community’s frames, their beliefs and values about gorillas, their cultural relationships to the animal, their sense of what conservation represents. The conservationist must encourage and enable local community representatives to explain their framing of the issue to the conservationist. The conservationist may share frames with her colleagues—beliefs and aspirations about gorilla conservation; studies in primatology; her own scientific and cultural relationships with gorillas; the wildness gorillas represent, the adventure of conservation—but she must learn new ways to consider and discuss the plight of gorillas when she starts justifying conservation to a local community.

Working across frames requires “frame bridging, amplification and/or transformation.” Other scholars refer to similar cross-cultural communication as building dialogue across knowledges. Moral disagreement may come when frames conflict or simply when they do not align and groups do not understand each other.

Jepson argues that some conservation frames can blend across cultures. He advises looking for cross-cultural notions of conservation for frame integration. He calls for appealing to shared values. Sharing values will help achieve a “common, but differentiated” conservation ethos; both

---

456 Jepson 2010: 315
communities will work towards a shared goal while maintaining their own cultural knowledge, beliefs, and orientation. In Indonesia, Jespon pursued a shared ethos by working with urban bird-keepers. Rather than try to teach Indonesians to understand Western conservation frames, he sought to learn local frames relating to birds and then to amplify them. He believed that locating bird-minded people and collaborating with them would help create “new conservation governance techniques…[and] help to inform and inspire place-specific bird conservation visions and practices appropriate for the times.”

*Governmentality & Imperialism*

Conservation frames, from concepts of endemism to critical habitat, the IUCN Red List to biodiversity classification, influence discourse about wildlife everywhere from Nigeria to the Netherlands, Nepal to Nicaragua. They increasingly control human behavior in relation to wildlife, often limiting access to the wild animals to experts (biologists, park rangers). Jepson analyzes the “governmentality” of conservation frames: the logic and rationales they use to govern people’s behavior towards a certain relationship with wildlife.

Western conservation frames attempt to control local behavior around the Cross River headwaters. International organizations maintain a strong presence around much of the gorillas’ habitat. They influence national legislation; both Nigeria and Cameroon adopted laws protecting the gorillas and much of their habitat. Both countries are signatories on the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (1973) [CITES], the UN Convention on Migratory Species (1979),

---

460 Jepson 2010: 327.
the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), the Kinshasa Declaration of the Great Apes (2005) and the Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and their Habitats (2007). These agreements and corresponding legal obligations require the governments to employ biologists and equip rangers, to develop parks and protected areas, to welcome international organizations and researchers.

The governance came motivated by Western frames, stemming from concern over species extinctions, loss of wild spaces, and animal welfare. Jepson describes how the values in these frames emerged from distinct Western cultural experiences. The concern for global nature follows colonial histories, in which Western cultures developed interest in classifying, collecting, and exchanging exotic specimens from new territories, and a sentiment of having a stake in the fate of distant wild lands. Alarmism in the media further encouraged concern for wild species, especially charismatic creatures like gorillas. Pet-keeping inspired animal welfare worries.

Westerners appeal to the adoption of the international laws and treaties as proof that the conservation frames are universal. They understand the international agreements and range-state commitments as entrusting gorillas to the global community. Though they were integral to the creation and adoption of the legislation, conservationists now refer to the legislation to justify their international intervention.

---

462 Dunn et al. 2014; Cross River gorillas are considered a migratory species because they wander between the two countries, the UN Convention on Migratory Species includes the “Agreement on Protection of Gorillas and Their Habitats” (2007). Nigeria ratified the agreement, Cameroon did not.


Most Cross River communities do not share the Western conservation frames. They have little sense of a stake in the fate of wild animals, especially not in North America or Europe. Most people do not keep pets, at least not in a way familiar to Westerners. National governments may have adopted Western frames to suit their own interests—control over large areas of land, opportunity for global recognition—but now Western frames govern via the requirements built into adopted legislation.\textsuperscript{466} The UN Conventions, CITES, and other protected area policies determine how areas are managed, following Western frames, including notions of abundance, habitat degradation, ecosystem health, wildlife corridors, and biodiversity requirements. Valuing and protecting gorillas in these ways requires reserves, exclusion, militarization.\textsuperscript{467}

Jepson argues that conservation can benefit from incorporating local frames. They often better govern local behavior. He adds that “it is important to think about how local ways of knowing [wildlife] can benefit international conservation frameworks and how the process of embracing non-Western knowledges can break down perceptions (where they exist) that Western knowledge practices are superior in pursuit of [wildlife] conservation.”\textsuperscript{468} The problem is that engaging local knowledge in a fair and respectful manner requires not only employing it when it serves one’s interest. Integrating frames and sharing values in an ethical manner requires also relinquishing control. If conservationists only select for local, conservation-positive beliefs they are abusing their power by continuing to govern the discourse. Their values still dictate what happens.

Consider an example where conservationists selectively engaged local knowledge to suit their goal of colobus conservation in Ghana:

\textsuperscript{468} Jepson 2010: 317
…the assumption of a complete overlap between biological conservation and local taboo can be problematic. Although the local hunting taboo protects the monkeys, and thereby seems to fulfill the mandate of biological conservation, it does not protect the forest (the monkeys’ habitat) and thus is not in accord with the interests of biological conservation in the modern sense of the notion. Furthermore, we interpret the present situation to involve an extension of the taboo and totemic principle so that it not only accords with local politics and social relationships but also conforms to global interests and concerns.469

Jepson, too, notes that to engage pro-conservation attitudes and behaviors among local communities, conservationists may need to introduce “ideas of the wild in the minds of citizens and [create] a sense of place, limits, and vulnerability.”470 He builds on ideas that conservation needs to define space and make that space and its inhabitants iconic.471 As natural spaces and their inhabitants come to be considered cultural assets, the thinking goes, the natural elements of a landscape will invite interest, care, and concern. For Westerners familiar with being enticed by exotic new lands and curiosities (e.g. a new sort of gorilla, the Cross River gorilla), travel and checklists, ecotourism and adventure, the marketing of a place makes sense. To local communities, it may be confusing. Why is our forest suddenly a park, a place, a destination? When did it change? Why is it so different?

Jepson describes how frames of the romantic wild may be weak or absent for local communities but how other cultural assets can be deployed to similar effect. For example, he works with bird-keepers to identify the native habitat of their captive species, showing them maps on the

470 Jepson 2010: 325
Internet and connecting the captive individuals to wild populations. He hopes local concern for their own birds will translate to concern for the species at large.

Jepson sees the value in the exchange of perspectives but his process needs to relinquish more control. If he seeks to foster an ethic in which even the conception of conservation is co-produced, he cannot remain based in his Western conservation ethic. Conservationists should engage local cultural assets and values not as a means to re-align with their own goals and values but to learn more about local identities, beliefs, and values. Most conservationists are guests among these communities. They should engage local communities and their knowledge not only with respect but with great epistemic humility.

Conservationists claim conserving gorillas is the right thing to do in the Cross River headwaters. To justify their claim, they need uptake from the local community. Conservationists cannot simply engage local knowledge by nesting select, conservation-positive frames within their greater Western conservation frame. Justification comes from the process of adjudicating the dispute together. Neither side can control the discourse and guide it to a predetermined moral conclusion. Conservationists must work outside their own frames and garner moral authority among new frames as well. Local communities need the power, freedom, and ability to work through the moral dispute as equal participants, outside the governmentality of the West.

For Folk Filmmaking to work as a method of moral justification in the Cross River context, it would not only need to present alternative frames for understanding gorillas and gorilla-human relationships, it would also need to explore different prescriptions of control and moral guidance. As a Folk Filmmaker, I would have to be sure to reveal the frames I operated within to my colleagues. I

472 Jepson 2010: 326
would need to invite them to challenge my frames and provide them an opportunity to present their own frames through cinema.

Film can be a powerful tool for both bridging and disrupting frames. Through narrative, it can show how governmentality functions and offer alternative visions of behavior, power, and control. It can also reveal how long control over framing—particularly of the image of nature—has affected behavior. Film creates an artifact of framings. It distills them into stories and images. It arrests frames in time. It proves a powerful tool for conservation, it may prove a powerful tool for addressing conflicts over conservation as well.

*Wildlife Film & Governmentality*

Cross River gorilla habitat falls within Nigeria and Anglophone Cameroon, both former British colonies. During colonial times, Britain’s visual representation of nature had great impact on environmental framing and policy.\(^{473}\) The images encouraged imperial possession of distant lands, at once inspiring exploitation and conservation of faraway natural resources.\(^{474}\) They familiarized imperial audiences with exotic nature. Be they in London, Lagos, or the Lebialem Highlands, citizens began to feel they had a stake in wildlife’s well-being. Now that they had seen a gorilla, they worried about them.

Art and advertising connected colonialists to distant resources through propaganda promoting the consumption of foreign goods. The exotic became a familiar presence in the marketplace.\(^{475}\) The advertising images spanned the British Empire, from Canada to Australia, and


\(^{474}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{475}\) See appendix
reached other markets, such as the United States, as well. Global connections and impact on the environment, including in the forests of Cross River, are nothing new.

Colonial conventions dictated what was scenic, photogenic, or intriguing. Colonial frames determined the visual representation of distant places, their nature, and their people. Image creation, like knowledge production, was another form of control. Artists made strong statements about how people should relate to their environment. They painted landscapes and scenes of settlement. They glorified resource extraction and big game hunting; later, they promoted conservation.

The development of photography increased the efficiency of both image production and replication. Image creators gained even more control over narratives and accounts of nature, especially with photography’s pretensions to truth. Photography also offered opportunity for subversion. Much more than other forms of imperial image creation and knowledge production, cameras could be co-opted, both by colonists with alternative ideas and, on occasion, by the colonized themselves. Conservation-minded colonists, particularly in Africa, used photography to foster sympathy for wildlife and to subvert hunting, a celebrated form of imperial exploitation at the time. Some of the earliest conservation movements made their moral arguments with imagery. Colonized peoples, particularly in India, used photography to define their own aesthetic and challenge Imperial ways of seeing, depicting, and knowing.

---

477 Ibid.
478 Ibid.
Wildlife films, too, come from a colonial history. Though colonists used some of the earliest motion picture cameras to document hunting, wildlife films soon began to track the increasing move towards conservation across the empire. Colonial filmmakers celebrated and supported the burgeoning imperial wildlife reserves. By as early as the 1930s, wildlife films were a genre in Britain and the United States with animals as the lead characters. By the 1950s and 1960s, with television becoming commonplace, animal films and conservationist filmmakers reached audiences in the millions.

The filmmakers shot and set most of their work in East Africa but they focused on an audience of “essentially Western people.” With their great power, influence, and reach, the filmmakers felt a duty to inspire sympathy and concern for wild animals. Film served them well, providing their audiences with a surprising (and false) intimacy with wildlife. Telephoto lenses, extensive editing, slow motion, improving technology for sound and color, not to mention bigger budgets and filmmaking resources, allowed filmmakers to share wild animals with their audience in increasingly compelling ways. They made wild, distant nature at once digestible and captivating, shocking and sympathetic.

Beinart and Hughes note that:
Most of the film-makers and publicists still saw the primary responsibility for protecting African wildlife to lie with themselves and Western society. Thus although elements of their conservationist projects were subversive of an earlier imperial hunting ethos, they were not directly challenging the pre-eminence of Western ideas. It is striking that natural history film in this period tended to write out or diminish the presence of African people who had lived so long with wild animals.  

Though the authors write of the 1960s, and note that after independence Africans received more recognition, wildlife films continued in much the same vein. They remain striking not only in their obfuscation of who lives near the wildlife, but also of local communities’ issues, needs, or concerns. Often, local people only appear near the end of the films, as examples of threats to the wildlife. The genre remains closed to local voices, narratives, and knowledge, unless their message is in-line with conservation desires. As conservationists turn to films as a tool for educating local audiences—such as the Ajani series for Ugandans or “We Don’t Kill Lions Anymore” for Maasai—they may move to local characters and languages but they do not relinquish control of the narrative or message.

Historically, film was prohibitively expensive, requiring more means and resources than perhaps any other artistic medium. Expense restricted authorship. Improvements in technology for both film production and distribution made film more democratic. Like photography, filmmaking now offers great potential for subversion. It invites new aesthetics and, especially due to its linear and

---

491 Beinart and Hughes 2007: 229
temporal structure, new narratives. Just as nature art, including wildlife films, “stimulat[ed] conservationist impulses” across the British Empire, films may be able to stimulate appreciation for local communities, varied ways of knowing, and alternative relationships with nature. They can affect local and global audiences at once.

As video-making technology becomes increasingly affordable and available, a wider range of filmmakers disrupts dominant narratives and viewpoints, challenges common tropes, and addresses unequal representation. Participatory video projects and the democratization of the medium through YouTube, Facebook, and simple phone video-sharing, help all sorts of people utilize the medium and present their voice on film. Yet tools and technique still matter for issues of power. Craft matters. A low budget aesthetic will hamper locals’ expression, it will inhibit equal respect and recognition for their knowledge and narratives. The global audience may not even notice how or why they automatically dismiss or view a low budget video as funny, silly, or amateur, but the dismissive quick reaction does a disservice to the message. It discounts the video subject’s testimony. Many participatory video projects forgo craft and production polish. To expect that local communities need fewer resources, less training, or less skills to produce films is to sell them short. Their stories do not deserve lower quality just because their immediate, local audiences do not go to movie theaters or stream HD video. Even with their limited technology, local audiences will notice craft too. They are exposed to television, increasingly high quality media via phones and cyber cafes, Hollywood videos playing at the market… They can tell a low budget, slapped-together film from a proper production. Craft and polish mean even more for presenting local communities’ narratives and knowledge to the greater, global community. Their stories need the respect of good production.

492 Ibid. 232
Folk Films and other locally-produced media compete with media produced by professionals, businesses, and the state. The competition is not only economic. Media influences the frames audiences use to understand the world.\(^{493}\) It affects how people behave.\(^{494}\) Governments use the media, via propaganda and campaigns, to promote state goals, ideas and control.\(^{495}\) They influence dialogue and imagery in popular films and television.\(^{496}\) Geographers describe the ways the state employs media to affect environmental and social understandings, how “media narratives and discourses produce common knowledge and taken-for-granted truths, durable tropes, and measurable effects on behavior, attitudes, and even material conditions.”\(^{497}\) Popular Western media, with big budgets and professional polish, is especially powerful and hegemonic due to its slickness. The better the craft, the subtler but more affecting the message. The audience trusts the rhetoric in part because it has been so well presented. Working against these governmentalities requires responding with careful craft as well. Folk Films do not need to compete with Hollywood on a financial or entertainment level but they need good, clean craft to help their subjects earn respect and acquire some power and control over narratives.\(^{498}\)


\(^{498}\) Minor, Je. 2015. CFP AAG 2016: Media, governmentality, and managing the ‘more than human’ environment. 9 October.

\(^{499}\) On whose terms this craft is to be judged, or what makes good art across cultures are well beyond the means of this dissertation but I will offer that film is a global language. These communities watch, along with everyone across the globe, the World Cup and its corresponding commercials. They are familiar with traditional Hollywood-style continuity editing and what has come to be understood as the “clean” way to tell a story on film.
Part II

FOLK FILMMAKING as a PRACTICE of MORAL JUSTIFICATION

Conservationists need to be careful in moral discourse. Disputes over conservation issues are moral debates which must be tempered by sensitivity to power.499 Conservationists have to learn to question the very foundation of their beliefs.500 They need to recognize and acknowledge the power they wield and that their control—over knowledge, behavior, and values—may be part of the problem local communities have with conservation. Ideally, through better moral discourse and justification, solutions will emerge that satisfy across moral communities, Western conservationist and local alike.501

Participatory practices, such as Folk Filmmaking, invite local folks to collaborate on a project, be it knowledge production, ethnographic documentation, or moral adjudication. Such joint efforts may offer a method of better moral justification. By inviting disputants with less power to regain control, participatory practices can nurture more fair and just process and help address previous abuses and injustice. Even if they do not lead to resolute solutions to moral disagreements, participatory practices can help start to sort out where Western cultural imperialism continues,

where locals find their knowledge may make a moral mistake, or other instances where current reasoning and moral claims, by either moral community, do not meet justificatory muster.⁵⁰²

Appealing to shared values alone will not adequately adjudicate moral disagreement in the context of Cross River conservation. Conservationists engaged shared values to create community sanctuaries. It works to an extent, but it is not sufficient rationale. Selectively incorporating local values into conservation justification still leaves open who determines which values to share. Why are these the values selected? Why do these values justify Western conceptions of conservation and not something else? The moral discourse still favors the more powerful.

Sharing values will not suffice but moral adjudication in the Cross River context requires a different method anyway: some local communities do not share values with conservationists. Some folks value the forest’s fertile soil for cocoa production, other folks value the forest. When values are divergent, the disputants need a method to determine which moral claims are authoritative. They need to decide whose values to pursue and whose values to sacrifice, or how to remedy the conflict between them. They need a method of moral adjudication that can work, fairly and justly, across not only divergent values, but also different cultures and unequal power.

Revealing each group’s frames helps start the process of contesting implicit power and authority. Each group begins to understand how the values of both groups were produced. Investigating the production of values at a fundamental level helps show where claims to moral authority are based. It shows the cultural aspects of the different values. Many people think of values and morals within the domain of religion. They believe values are handed down by God, by ancestors, or by tradition. Even secular conservationists often follow this form, believing in values

handed down from nature: e.g. something is good if it is natural; the more pristine, natural, and wild an ecosystem is, the more valuable it is.

Philosophers tend to contest such values, noting logical fallacies. Some traditions, such as paying men more than women for comparable work, may be best jettisoned. Nature is not sacrosanct either. Nature creates diseases which humans do not value. We humans intentionally drove rhinderpest and smallpox to extinction; we are now trying to eradicate polio and malaria.

Most Western philosophers believe moral authority comes from models of reasoning that produce reliable conclusions. Moral epistemologists, specialists in this realm of philosophy, study how such models work, guide reasoning and confer moral authority. They study and explain not only how values are produced, but also how they can be shared and justified. With their work, they seek to find the values worth keeping and the ones to be given up. They focus on the reasons for holding or rejecting a value. Like scientists, they trust that the validity of their conclusions depends upon the rigor, reflexivity, and replicability of their process. Other people should be able to follow their logic and reasoning and accept their conclusions as reasonable and reliable.

Attentive to how and why their methodologies guide reasoning, moral epistemologists use their sound methodology to further support their results. Even the best methodologies are imperfect, but just as good science or a good legal system will self-correct, the reasoning of a good moral methodology will guide it in the right, most rational direction. The methodologies of moral epistemologists are designed for adjudicating moral disagreement. They provide ways for weighing

503 Jaggar and Tobin 2013
505 Jaggar and Tobin 2013
506 Ibid.
507 Ibid.
moral claims against each other, resolving moral debates by determining which moral claims are authoritative and why these claims carry authority. Also akin to scientists, philosophers have sought ideal models of moral justification, objective and unbiased, applicable by anyone to any circumstance. In so doing, Western philosophers flattened the diverse nature of moral communities and the sticky, confounding aspects of context and identity in resolving moral disagreements or contextualizing moral claims.\(^{508}\) Jaggar and Tobin show how, with closer inspection, specific, influential models of moral justification, proposed as being neutral by contemporary Western philosophers, turn out to lend themselves to abuse, implausibility, or other issues when used in contexts of diversity and inequality.

Jaggar and Tobin call for contextual models and practices of moral justification based on real world circumstances, not ideal situations.\(^{509}\) They argue that models and practices will differ by context—they will no longer be universal or replicable—but this is not a problem. Contextual practices will consider and address the varying cultural identities and social inequality between disputing moral communities. Ideal models miss the challenge of diverse power and vulnerability among moral communities.

Jaggar and Tobin characterize moral communities by “broad agreement among their members on how moral claims should be justified, although members may sometimes disagree about how to interpret and utilize methods of justification that are supposedly shared.”\(^{510}\) Moral communities can track cultures or religions, class or context. Moral disagreement across communities tend to track deeper disagreements, such as how to resolve a moral dispute. Addressing

\(^{508}\) Ibid.
\(^{509}\) Ibid
\(^{510}\) Ibid. 386
cross-cultural conflict requires justifying claims in a fair and just way, understood by all. Because such situations tend to be characterized not just by diversity but by inequality, a fair method of moral justification will have to assure that “all salient perspectives be accorded due respect, rather than be disregarded or repressed, and that processes of moral reasoning be unbiased by social power and privilege.” To check that a method meets the criteria, Jaggar and Tobin offer four adequacy conditions. Their conditions follow, along with a guide for how a filmmaker can practice the Folk Filmmaking method in a way that meets these criteria. How a model or practice satisfies these conditions depends on the context of the moral justification. A main motivation for Jaggar and Tobin is appreciating the relationship between context and reasoning strategy, situation and moral justification. They describe:

The situational features that influence whether and how a reasoning practice will satisfy these adequacy conditions include the social relations of power and vulnerability among moral interlocutors in particular situations of dispute, as well as the particular moral vocabularies and styles of reasoning that are available, meaningful, and usable to and by various parties.

Jaggar and Tobin challenge both particular philosophical methods (appeal to universal principles, intuitionism, discourse ethics) and dominant philosophical assumptions about how to do moral epistemology—i.e. how to produce reliable moral knowledge. They challenge how philosophers address moral disputes at both the methodological and epistemological level. They are interested not only in how philosophers use (and often misuse) philosophical models of moral justification to rationalize claims in contexts of diversity and inequality but also in the various

---

511 Ibid., 386
512 Tobin and Jaggar 2013: 413
practices used in the real world to address these issues. They mean for their conditions and criteria to apply to real world practices as well, so that philosophical models and real-world practices can be analyzed and assessed in a consistent and comparable manner.

Jaggar and Tobin propose that methods of moral justification must be “fitted” to particular contexts. Folk Filmmaking is a method of moral reasoning designed for a real world circumstance: conflict over Cross River gorilla conservation. It is not a fully developed model. A model of moral justification may present an authoritative resolution to the dispute. Folk Filmmaking’s goal is more modest. It seeks only to initiate the process of better moral deliberation, to invite the disputants to engage each other in a more fair and respectful way, to understand each other better, and to develop a method of moral adjudication together that both will accept and endorse.

How Folk Filmmaking Functions as Practice of Moral Justification

I designed Folk Filmmaking to be a method grounded in the Cross River context. To work well, it must involve relevant disputants and represent their moral positions fairly and respectfully. It needs to focus especially on the communities’ most often marginalized. My idea was to create many opportunities and platforms for disputants to share their accounts. During scripting meetings and filmmaking, edits and screenings, folks could present their ideas and reason out their claims. On any of these occasions, they could exchange reasons, with me or with each other, and begin a process of more open and transparent deliberation. These exchanges could serve as examples of moral justification for others. Those present at these exchanges will see how we work through moral issues in the narrative. The films include moral exchanges depicted in the narratives. After watching the films, the audience can continue the moral exchanges in conversation, reflecting on the film,
challenging and contesting claims in it, or championing them. The process would raise moral issues and work through them at each step. Justifications may occur during these exchanges. Justification is an interactive social process.\textsuperscript{513} A moral claim achieves justification through uptake by its disputants.\textsuperscript{514} It must go through wide, deliberative scrutiny by the communities evolved.\textsuperscript{515} The process of recognizing affected parties, of seeking assent and permission, of deliberating together, grants the resulting moral claims authority. The justification comes in the justifying.\textsuperscript{516} If folks convinced each other to accept their moral claims during our Folk Filmmaking process, we may be able to record and document practices of justification and moral adjudication that worked in and fit the context. If folks were unable to justify their claims to each other, we may start to see where and why their justifications failed to achieve muster.

Folk Filmmaking provides many opportunities to justify moral claims throughout the process: in deciding which moral issues to include in the narratives and how to depict them on screen, in audiences’ interpretations, reflections, and discussions after watching the films. Salient moral claims can become more plausible or persuasive by arising in preproduction, appearing in a film, and emerging in discussion after screenings. They can garner moral authority from the process of presenting the reasoning behind them. By collaborating across communities and addressing the moral dispute in the places home to the issues, Folk Filmmaking would be contingent and contextual, respecting the divergent values and sensitive to inequality among the disputants. The

\textsuperscript{513} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{514} Ibid.  
content of the folk films would be unique to the Cross River conservation situation but the Folk Filmmaking method may prove to also work in similar cases, where supposedly global conservation values clash with local attitudes toward non-human nature. Jaggar and Tobin describe the importance of adherence to context:

Moral justification always occurs (or fails) in particular contexts. The need for justification arises when a particular action or social practice faces a particular challenge and must be justified to a particular individual or group of people. This means that practices for justification must be tailored to the situation at hand. Even though occasions of successful justification must always meet the conditions of plausibility, usability, nonabusiveness, and practical feasibility, the ways in which those conditions are fulfilled will vary according to the context. The same strategies of justification may be plausible, usable, nonabusive, and practically feasible in one context and fail some or all of those conditions in another. Plausibility and intelligibility are obviously relative to particular addressees, and who are the relevant addressees depends on the particular dispute in question. Which strategies are usable and practically feasible also depends on the particular situation. Therefore, in moral reasoning across communities, the appropriate moral vocabulary and forms of reasoning cannot be assumed but instead must be negotiated and perhaps invented.517

Folk Filmmaking is an attempt at one such invention, offering a distinctive method for moral reasoning toward justification. The following table is an assessment of the Folk Filmmaking method with regard to Jaggar and Tobin’s conditions. Folk Filmmaking needs to meet these

---

517 Tobin and Jaggar 2013: 405
conditions in order to be a fair and just practice of moral justification in the Cross River context. Otherwise it may be relying on suspect methods which will undercut any conclusions it has to offer, not to mention perpetuating injustice and the moral disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jaggar &amp; Tobin’s Four Conditions of Adequacy</th>
<th>Folk Filmmaking Within the Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plausibility to the Disputants</strong></td>
<td><strong>Folk Filmmaking as Moral Exchange</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaggar and Tobin’s first condition is that all disputants must understand not just the moral claim or prescription that emerges from a practice of reasoning, but they must understand the practice of reasoning as well. They contend that the disputants across moral communities should find the practice a plausible way of determining moral authority.</td>
<td>When employing Folk Filmmaking to help address a moral debate, the Folk Filmmaker must make it clear to the communities engaged that the filmmaking has a normative dimension: i.e. that the Folk Films should raise and perhaps respond to moral issues. The Folk Filmmaker must discuss with the community how the films can do so in a way that respects local moral knowledge. The Folk Filmmaker must share her own moral knowledge, perspective, and (perhaps) position on the issue. The Folk Filmmaker needs to assure that the community understands the filmmaking-as-moral-exchange process and agrees to it as a process for moral reasoning and, perhaps, to justify moral claims across cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Usability by the Disputants</strong></td>
<td><strong>Collaboration &amp; Co-Production</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaggar and Tobin’s second condition is that the practice is not only plausible but usable. Across moral communities, the disputants need to be able to utilize, not just accept, the reasoning practice. Jaggar and Tobin explain that, “if people cannot participate in reasoning about moral claims, they are not acting as full moral agents in situations of justification but merely waiting passively to be told what is right or</td>
<td>Folk Filmmaking requires collaboration. The films must be produced with community support and participation. Inclusion is an integral part of the process. It only works if it is accessible. The filmmaking process must be open to interested disputants. The films must be made widely available. Folk Filmmaking faces challenges. The resources required are rarely available, especially</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

518 Jaggar and Tobin offer their conditions for both models of moral justification developed by philosophers and for practices of moral justifications used in the real world. Henceforth I refer only to practices as my work concerns only real-world practices. This is my omission, not theirs.
This condition does not require that all involved are equals in adjudication, just that folks are able to participate in a way akin to how their community establishes authority. For example, many communities include epistemic hierarchies and these are not necessarily an issue, e.g. people trust a doctor to tell them about physical harm. Usability may mean disputants work with particular rhetoric or communicative strategies most comfortable for them.

for the communities who may most benefit from it. Even screening the films may be difficult for communities.519 Many people cannot afford the time or energy to participate either. The filmmaker can provide resources and compensation. She can assist her participants and adapt to their schedule, but invisible barriers to participation may still exist.

Still, Folk Filmmaking is well-suited for co-option. It can incorporate the particular rhetoric of each moral community involved in the dispute. It provides space and opportunity for performance and for wide inclusion. When resources are available, a Folk Filmmaker can do her best to share and delegate the opportunities across the participants and community.

Nonabuse of Power and Vulnerability by Any Disputant

Jaggar and Tobin’s third condition is that the reasoning practice not abuse power or vulnerability. This is particularly important across moral communities as social structures grant different social power and vulnerability to disputants based on a variety of characteristics. Abuses of power and position often follow from hierarchies. Though these hierarchies may be justified by their institutional import—in governance, education, health—they also create opportunity for abuse when a person uses power for purposes beyond which it was authorized.

Jaggar and Tobin describe that:

“in contexts of moral justification, abuse occurs when some disputants take wrongful advantage of

Relinquishing Control, Sharing Authorship

This condition reveals both the strengths and challenges of Folk Filmmaking. The challenges arise from risk of the filmmaker abusing her power, even unintentionally. Jaggar and Tobin note that this often happens as “superior social power and privilege are frequently invisible to those who possess them.”521 This is probably often the case for even the most well-intentioned conservationists. The invisible power hints at where their moral reasoning, even when trying to align local conservation values with conservation, falls short: the power carries, justifies, and pushes the moral agenda. When a Folk Filmmaker enters a cross-cultural situation, especially with a normative agenda, the context is ripe for abuse. The filmmaker is empowered in myriad ways. She has the idea

519 This may quickly change. We worked with an extremely remote community in Kyrgyzstan in 2015. They lived hours from the nearest town and paved road. They too lacked access to electricity. Our colleague brought them a cheap, portable DVD player from China (akin to a small AM/FM radio). It ran on batteries. Soon we were watching music videos and Kyrgyz stand-up comedy on it each morning.

521 Ibid 389
their own power or others’ vulnerability to discredit the views of others and make their own views appear unduly credible. This can happen in innumerable ways short of overt physical coercion. Abuse includes but is not limited to: misrepresentation or selective presentation of evidence, distortion, intimidation, logical trickery, mystification, ridicule, disregard, and refusal to understand. It also occurs when some disputants insist on a particular style of argumentation in which others are unskilled or uncomfortable or on using a vocabulary that does not fit well with the moral concepts of some disputants or is inadequate to express their perspectives.”

and the initiative; it is her project. She has the tools and the resources. Much of the project is on her schedule—when it begins, how long it takes, when it is over. She has the training and the resources, the time and the energy. The imbalance risks defeating the purpose. Why even try?

For a Folk Filmmaker to conduct her project well she must invite and take opportunities to relinquish control. She must open up the project for other authors, visions, and ideas. She must use her tools to realize others’ wishes, to create space and means for her collaborators. She must reflect throughout the process on her power and privilege and upon how they affect her work and the results. She must challenge, contest, and undercut these impacts. She must share her concerns with and her appreciation of this challenge with her collaborators. They must address the concerns and challenges together.

At the same time, she has to be wary of creating any opportunities for the collaborates to abuse her as well. For example, she may be vulnerable in her guilt, self-reflection, or cultural confusion. Folk Filmmaking is not easy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practical Feasibility for the Disputants</th>
<th>Cinematic Solutions?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jaggar and Tobin’s final condition is that the practice of reasoning is not only plausible in method but in prescription. In other words, the results the reasoning offers, i.e. what people should do to solve the moral debate, are real possible courses of action for the disputants. Ought implies can.</td>
<td>Folk Filmmaking works well in this regard. Though film can be fantastical, with the medium inviting characters and stories to take bizarre turns from reality, the audience will interpret such narratives as absurd (and know they do not need to follow them). To be compelling as a morality tale, a Folk Film needs to be grounded in reality. When executed well, a Folk Film should not prescribe a moral principle but invite discussion and reflection of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

520 Ibid. 388
the morality displayed in its narrative. In this way, the practical, feasible actions, the result of the Folk Filmmaking method, remain to be determined. Ideally, they will emerge during discussions among the audience. The films are just the first steps, meant to reorient and improve the moral debate, and to present it in a more fair, just, and non-abusive way.

Jaggar and Tobin developed their adequacy conditions because “no reasoning practice confers moral authority in a given context if it is initially biased against any of those involved or their views.” Throughout this dissertation, I have sought to show how biased the reasoning practices of conservation justification are against the Cross River communities. African knowledge of gorillas has been all but absent from even informing the issue. Local morality is either overridden in education and sensitivity efforts or only selectively included when compatible with Western conservation. To be morally justified, practices of moral adjudication in Cross River gorilla conservation need to address this bias and abuse.

Whether convincing or coercing the local communities, conservationists maintain a position of power, assuring that their values and goals guide action and decision-making in the Cross River headwaters. Even if the power is invisible to them and they do not mean to wield it, their approach does not adjudicate moral disagreement as much as override it for a supposedly superior morality.
Part III

**SHARED CINÉ-ANTHROPOLOGY**

*or*

**HOW FOLK FILMMAKING HELPS AVOID IMPERIALISM**

Film can foster an essential space for cross-cultural communication. As Jean Rouch wrote, everyone knows how to look and listen. An anthropologist, Rouch conducted much of his early work with a community on the border of Niger and Mali. He wrote many articles, a book, and his dissertation about the community. After finishing, he returned all of his work to the community. He found his written words were inert, even when the schoolmaster read them aloud. When Rouch gave his thesis to the head fisherman, the man took out the photographs, hung them on his wall, then discarded all the papers.522 Along with his writing, Rouch shot an ethnography. When he showed the film back to the community, folks gathered around. They watched the film three times. At first they focused on their community, especially mourning folks who appeared in the film but had since passed away. Then they understood how the film was working, how it was depicting them, and they began to offer Rouch critiques.

For example, the film included a hippopotamus hunt. Rouch cut the hunt to “a very moving hunting air, played on a one-stringed bowed lute.” After the screening, the hunters demanded he remove the music: “What? When did you hear music during a hippopotamus hunt?... the

---

522 Rouch 2003: 157
hippopotamus underwater has very good ears, and if you play music, he’ll escape!” Rouch was embarrassed. With film, cross-cultural collaboration can be very feasible.

I have a similar story. Trained that music covers sloppy editing, taking over the rhythm of a film and suffocating the images, I composed the Folk Films with only natural sound. When I screened the films, folks asked where the music was. They asked that I add a soundtrack and make the movies pop. They were upset that their films did not have the soundtrack of Nigerian dramas or the sorts of films they saw on television. During Rouch’s time, most of his subjects were probably not watching movies. Feedback changes with exposure to media. The change in reception only speaks to how accessible and well understood the medium can be.

Where literacy and language-choice may perpetuate power and privilege certain frames and knowledge, film’s accessibility can make it more democratic. Craft very much matters—in pretty pictures and elegant edits as much as eloquent argument—but here is where Folk Filmmakers can help, and where the strength of Folk Filmmaking lies. Film production is a collaborative effort. Narrative and imagery emerge from the collision of authors and energies, visions and ideas. The collaborative nature creates much space and opportunity for cross-cultural work.

Movie cameras attracted ethnographers from the very beginning of the technology, particularly as a way to collaborate with their subjects. While shooting *Nanook in the North*, Robert Flaherty built a film development laboratory and a projection room. He shared his footage with Nanook and Nanook’s family and they helped Flaherty throughout the editing process. Years later, Jean Rouch employed similar techniques in West Africa. He described how people quickly

---

523 Ibid. 42, 157
524 Ibid. 98-99
recognized and understood the camera and its presence. He screened rough cuts with them and they would work through the editing together. Rather than expressing concern over the film somehow capturing or stealing from them, communities from both Niger and Mali requested that he make more movies.\footnote{Ibid. 44} We had similar receptions and requests after our initial screenings; folks wanted to make more movies. They had lots of ideas.

Rouch argued that sharing all the footage shot with one’s subject is “basic honesty” and an “indispensable...essential” part of the process\footnote{Ibid. 32, 40} He noted how ethnographers have used such screenings as part of their process since Flaherty, to invite participant observation and feedback. He described the ethics of ethnography—one must be aware that making a film is a cultural disruption, that the more people in the film crew, the greater your presence: “We must remember that two whites in an African village are enough to constitute a foreign body, and hence to risk rejection.” He was attentive to power and to the effect his position has on him understanding and working with local knowledge.\footnote{Ibid. 36, 37}

Many aspects of film production impede the participatory ease needed for Folk Filmmaking: the awkwardness of a film crew, the filmmakers’ social naiveté of local culture, the impact of the filmmaker’s very presence. At the same time, the presence of filmmakers and equipment can also elevate the sense of importance, as folks notice the attention and opportunity given to them and their performance. Folk Filmmaking can work across cultures but this ability does not necessarily describe whose interest the films are made in.

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Ibid. 44}
\item \footnote{Ibid. 32, 40}
\item \footnote{Ibid. 36, 37}
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
Who are Folk Films For?

Rouch noted that the first question he would receive after screening his work in Africa would always be: “For whom, and why, have you made this film?” He answered in three parts. First, he made the films for himself. He claimed many justifications exist for ethnography: scientific (“creating archives of changing or disappearing cultures”), political (“sharing in the revolt against an intolerable situation”), aesthetic (“discovering the fragile mastery of a landscape, of a face, or of a movement that is irresistible”) but he did it for himself, from an intuitive need to document when compelled.

His second answer was that he also made the films for his subjects:

Film is the only means I have to show someone else how I see him. For me, after the pleasure of the ciné-trance in shooting and editing, my first public is the other, those whom I’ve filmed.

The situation is clearly this: the anthropologist has at his disposal the only tool (the participating camera) that offers him the extraordinary possibility of direct communication with the group he studies—the film he has made about them…

...This type of posteriori working is just the beginning of what is already a new type of relationship between the anthropologist and the group he studies, the first step in what some of us have labeled “shared anthropology.” Finally, then, the observer has left the ivory tower; his camera, tape recorder, and projector have driven him, by a strange road of initiation, to the heart of knowledge itself. And for the first time, the work is judged not by a thesis committee but by the very people the anthropologist went out to observe. This extraordinary technique of “feedback” (which I would

---

528 Ibid. 43
529 Ibid.
530 or self-reflective anthropology in the US
translate as “audio-visual reciprocity”\(^{531}\) has certainly not yet revealed all of its possibilities. But already, thanks to it, the anthropologist has ceased to be a sort of entomologist observing others as if they were insects (thus putting them down) and has become a stimulator of mutual awareness (hence dignity).

This type of totally participatory research, as idealistic as it may seem, appears to me the only morally and scientifically feasible anthropological attitude today.\(^{532}\)

With this answer, Rouch shows how Folk Filmmaking can work for both groups as a direct medium for communication. It can record cross-cultural communication then return a record of that conversation before it is shared more widely: I heard you say this. I presented your thoughts and knowledge as such. Is this correct? Together, through this reflexive feedback loop, not to mention the process of creating the film together in the first place, frames and knowledge will be bridged, co-produced, and contained within a signal artifact, now available and vetted by both cultures.

Rouch’s third answer was that it is absurd to condemn such films to a closed circuit; the last audience for these films is the public at large, i.e. as many people as possible.\(^{533}\) He saw ethnographies as a necessary tool to foster appreciation for cultural difference and, eventually, to change and disrupt the narratives, gaze, and the monopoly of Western observation. He ended his presentation of his answers with the quote that began this chapter, describing how eventually the tools of ethnography will finally reach the subjects; they will create their own work, ethnographies of the ethnographers.

---

\(^{531}\) contredon audio-visual

\(^{532}\) Rouch 2003: 44.

\(^{533}\) Ibid. 45
Folks Films are meant to invite this transition and reflexivity. The Folk Filmmaking methodology invites local folks to take on the task of depicting those involved on both sides of the debate. It invites them to direct their gaze wherever and however they please. In almost every film, folks wanted to include a conservationist in the story. In Chop Gorilla, our lead collaborator, Augustus, managed to wrangle me into the movie (despite my protests and attempts to avoid it). I now see the great value of his use of me. In so many ways, my simple appearance in the narrative shows the strangeness of the whiteman spewing morality in the Cross River context. By making ethnographies of conservationists, ethnographies of Westerners or Western ideas in their midst, local communities can dictate a new narrative. Along with presenting their own frames and knowledge, they can show how they read outside frames and how Western knowledge looks isolated and out of context. Passing on the training and tools of Folk Filmmaking helps avoid imperialism and assure that such projects are in the local interest.

For the Folk Filmmaker, all three levels of audience track Rouch’s answer. The first audience of the Folk Films are the Folk Filmmaking collaborators themselves. The goal of teaching them filmmaking is to share and support excitement in the process, in the energy and fun in creating narratives, in spreading and recording knowledge, in tackling the moral challenges together. We make films so that our fellow filmmakers can learn how to make more, and for all of us to later reflect on and learn from. In so doing, our collaborators learn to see the construction of the media they encounter as well. They learn to question and challenge it, to contest it, and to co-opt it. The projects work first for them.

The second audience of the Folk Films are the greater community around where they are shot, i.e. the community from which the local Folk Filmmakers are drawn. These communities are
not used to seeing themselves on screen, to watching narratives framed in their terms, to a movie working from their knowledge. Folk Films are meant to provide this. With these films and filmmaking, local communities should be “able to discuss and have access to what has happened to them.”

The third audience is the greater public (mostly in the West), also not used to seeing these communities on screen, or to seeing themselves, their beliefs, or their values, depicted by outsiders: how many films about conservation are made by non-conservationists or non-Westerners? The hope is that sharing these films not only presents these communities to the greater world (who are currently more aware of the gorillas than the cultures of the folks beside them), but also raises respect and understanding for these folks and their concerns. These films can add much needed context and nuance to the greater narrative about gorilla conservation. Almost a half-century after Rouch, our goals remain much the same.

CONCLUSION

Visual anthropologists inspired the Folk Filmmaking method. Their work and reflection continue to guide me as I refine the method. Yet Folk Filmmaking differs from visual anthropology in important ways. Folk Filmmaking is not aimed primarily at discovering and describing local people’s moral beliefs about gorillas, conservation, and related issues. Instead, Folk Filmmaking provides an opportunity for local communities to think collectively and critically about moral beliefs they hold already. These moral beliefs may be fragmentary and incoherent, especially in translation to outsiders as the two communities engage in a moral dispute. Folk Filmmaking encourages the

534 Rouch 220
local communities to articulate, develop, and represent their moral views. In so doing, it helps local beliefs and views achieve better inclusion and consideration in adjudication of the moral dispute over conservation in the Cross River. Instead of being presented as static, culturally-distinct morality—taboos—or lower on the moral totem pole due to lack of education or concern for more basic needs, local values can be represented as equally valid, nuanced, and complex. By better representing their own values and morality, local communities can call upon conservationists to better represent their own beliefs, values, and moral foundations as well.

Folk Filmmaking helps make the moral debate of conservation explicit. It invites the disputing communities to transcend notions that conservationists hold higher morality while local communities need to be appeased. It contextualizes both local and Western conservation values, challenging the moral authority of both. It asks both communities to justify their claims, first and foremost, to each other. Ideally, it helps remedy conflict between the communities. With justification can come adjudication. Disputants will be able to justify certain moral claims and values. Their claims will gain authority from the process of justification. With this authority, the claims can help adjudicate the moral dispute.

With Folk Filmmaking, I sought to achieve two aims:

1. Use filmmaking to collaborate with Cross River communities to co-produce an acceptable integration and articulation of local moral views into the dispute about gorilla conservation
2. Make these views intelligible to a possibly international audience by presenting them via a series of films

The next chapter describes the films we made.
Chapter Six

The Folk Films

...a scriptless video process, directed by a group of grassroots people, moving forward in iterative cycles of shooting-reviewing. This process aims at creating video narratives that communicate what those who participate in the process really want to communicate, in a way they think is appropriate. ... [we] cannot imagine a more effective method to quickly comprehend the often-complex perceptions and discourses of local people than to produce, watch, discuss and analyse [participatory video] material together with them. 535

The goal of Folk Filmmaking is to co-produce moral knowledge through a fair and just practice of justification. Rather than teach a predetermined morality, Folk Filmmakers collaborate with local folks to identify and address conservation-related moral issues in terms that are meaningful to the local community. Folk Filmmakers invite collaborators to make moral claims, present their reasoning, and lead the process of adjudicating the moral dispute.

I began Folk Filmmaking in the Cross River headwaters by offering my collaborators a prompt: Cross River gorillas are going away. They are facing extinction. I asked: What should we do about this? Is this a problem? How have you navigated your relationships with gorillas in the past? How would you like to now? What are you issues related to outsiders coming to address the gorillas’ plight?

This chapter is broken down by folk film. In each films’ section, I describe the distinct process we followed to make it. The general form took a series of steps. First, based on formal and informal interviews and my knowledge of local conservation issues, I would develop an idea for a locally-based story. I would mock it up, then present it to a group of community members and our collaborators. The locals would adjust the story as they saw fit. Then, with their help, via chain-referral and other networking, we would collect a

cast. We would go over the script together, again making changes as they saw fit, then they would perform the story. We would film for up to five days. Then I would edit the film with my colleagues.

I made two films in this manner in Nigeria. Then, while in the field, I received a grant from Fauna & Flora International (FFI) to train and equip a film team with the Environment and Rural Development Foundation [ERuDeF] in Cameroon. For the rest of the films, the project took on a new dimension. Throughout the process I not only collaborated with local communities, I trained two ERuDeF journalists, Bernard and Impeccable, to make films as well. Bernard and Impeccable increasingly took over control of the filmmaking as our project went along. On our first film together, *Chop Gorilla*, we worked with a local, professional film troupe, Ngoshitong Productions. Bernard and Impeccable learned by watching how the film crew went about everything, from scripting and casting to shooting and performing. I cut drafts of the final film for the troupe and they gave edits and corrections until we were all pleased. They also gave the film an alternate title (*Ebola Madness*), took it to Yaoundé to copyright their version, and started selling it as DVDs at local markets.

Impeccable wrote the script for the next film, *Nzhu Jimangemi*, and Bernard produced and shot it with me. For this film, we invited a local school’s drama club to perform our story. I also began to run basic classes on technical aspects of the filmmaking with Bernard and Impeccable, including editing classes while we cut the films together.

Bernard scouted our fifth film, *Human or Gorilla*, while I took my wife to hospital. He then wrote, directed, co-produced, and starred in the film. Impeccable shot it. Our last film together, *The Cocoa Crusader*, was a complete collaboration. Impeccable lead the scripting, inviting other journalists at *Green Vision*, ERuDeF’s environmental newspaper, to contribute. We based the production at ERuDeF’s offices in Buea and included our friends and colleagues in the shooting, and editing. We also cast our ERuDeF friends for the main roles. After I left Cameroon, Bertand and Impeccable produced the final two films of the series, *The Illegal Exploiter* and *No Gorilla, No Development*, all on their own.
Throughout this chapter I mention scripts and scripting but the scripts were never much more than a skeleton. On every film, with remarkable creativity and charisma, our casts adlibbed and improvised their lines and scenes. I was overwhelmed and relieved. I always worried I was having too much of a hand in the process, especially early in the making of each film, as I proposed ideas and developed the story. Each time, as filming got underway, I watched my proposals get co-opted, altered, re-imagined. I quickly saw that they were never my ideas to begin with, the proposals were just my wording of ideas already present. I was echoing what someone had told me. I came to see my scripts as merely sparks and impetus from which a story and tale—local, unusual, and surprising—would grow.

Each film addresses a different moral issue related to the loss of Cross River gorillas. Each also depicts a different experiment-in-living and the corresponding benefits or challenges of the approach. As vignettes of different experiments-in-living, the films provide examples of where the experiments succeed and where they fall short. They help bubble up the moral challenges still present in each experiment. As a study, the films present examples of the process of defining, refining, and contesting conservation ethics. In this chapter, I interpret the films we made through a series of questions: What languages of justice do the characters mobilize? How do they make, rationalize, and justify moral claims? Which values, beliefs, and ideologies define the moral communities? Which translate? How diverse are the moral communities involved? I consider these questions with respect both to the films we produced and to our process of producing them.

Watching the films is better than reading about them. I include them as the main text of this dissertation. They are my research, data, and results all at once, expressed narratively and visually. As I distill them below, the films lose much nuance, poetry, and feeling. The cinematic form provides much more direct, unadulterated examples of local folks making their case. Though I had great impact on the images and structure, the films still better translate local knowledge, reasoning, and communication than my words below. I provide this chapter as annotation to the films, to put them in context of the study. Below, I present
each folk film we made, isolating the elements of each film relevant to the research questions, the research process, and the assessment of the methodology. The final analysis comes in the following chapter.
Francis and I began to concoct *Obi & the Juju Forest* during our two-day journey into Okwa II. Francis grew up in Okwa II, one of the three villages enclaved within Cross River National Park. He remembers the arrival of the first white Christian missionaries, and how the villagers chased them out and burned down their church. He remembers the first white conservationists coming in the 1980s. He wanted to be like them so he could play with similar gadgets. Years later, he became a conservationist himself. He now uses conservation to support his community as best he can.

Okwa I and II are a full day’s walk from the end of the road at Butatong. Butatong, population 1,500, is the nearest community of any size. Francis used a grant to make the footpath from Butatong to Okwa II into a three-meter, fairly good motorbike track. Aside from the river and stream crossings, it works well. The track crosses a series of rivers, waist-deep and quick without rain. A rain means bikes cannot go and folks must swim the crossing. It rains often. One bridge—a point of great contention with conservation organizations when proposed—spans the largest crossing. Conservationists feared it would increase development in the park. Local community members claimed people, especially pregnant women, were suffering from the crossing, getting stuck on the long journey to the paved road. Some were dying. It was pelting rain on our journey. We used the new bridge and a canoe-ferry to take motorbikes part of the way. Eventually we reached a crossing too high for the bikes. The drivers turned around, we waded across, and continued on foot.

Both Okwa I and Okwa II are small. They sit four kilometers apart. Francis had a secondary school built between them so that it would be equidistant for the communities. Children from both villages attend school there. Two jujus (in this case, a bamboo pole laid over the path with a few leaves hanging from it)
protect the village. Such symbolism—fetishized sticks, tied with leaves—adorns village doors for similar reasons. We passed a pia tree on the footpath with a leaf across a crook in its trunk—the leaf marked that the tree’s fruits are not for public consumption.

After a few elders at Okwa I jogged his memory, Francis pointed out a tree that had “devils” inside. These trees are not cut. Osu “Smart” Apah—son of the Fon of Butatong, recent graduate with a B.S. in Geography from the University Abuja, and our traveling companion—did not accept this. Francis responded by saying that sometimes herbalists deceive people to protect the things they need (perhaps he was winking to my Western thinking). Francis also described, and Smart also rejected, the miscarriage stream: if you cross it, you lose your baby. Francis stressed that a woman would miscarry before she reached Butatong; the stream worked.

Residents of Okwa have no electricity, no running water, not even pit-holes for toilets. Francis’s family home, perhaps the most furnished in town, has a mattress on a wooden bed frame, eight white plastic chairs, a wooden table, and a wooden set of shelves. A 2007 calendar featuring his late mother and faded family photos adorn the walls. The kitchen is in a thatched-roof, bamboo-sided hut behind the house. The community has few resources or economic opportunities, especially as it falls completely within Cross River National Park. Villagers are reluctant to relocate outside the Park as they do not trust that they will receive long-term assistance or economic security. Community land is owned by the fon but he requires community consent to transfer it to the government, as would be required if the land were to become part of the National Park. Local distrust of the national government not only keeps the villagers within the Park, it also prevents the inclusion of Afì Mountain Forest Reserve and the Mbe Mountains Community Sanctuary into the National Park.

---

536 Nkonyu, L. 2014. Personal communication.
About sixty-six villages surround Cross River National Park and most of their communities, too, depend on the forest.\textsuperscript{538} The main threats to the forest include slash-and-burn agriculture and illegal logging for \textit{Carpolobia}, \textit{Garcinia}, and ebony.\textsuperscript{539} Logging trails and snare-trapping lines crisscross the park. Conservationists fear the interior villages, Okwa I and II and Okwango, help support these activities.\textsuperscript{540} Most of the people in the surrounding villages are Boki. Most of the people in the enclaved villages are Anyang, a tribe from Cameroon that wandered over into Nigeria through the dense forest now protected by the contiguous Cross River and Takamanda National Parks. The Anyang retain a tenuous political position. Though the Anyang now reside in Nigeria, the Cameroonian government offered them ID cards, ostensibly to make it easier for them to come over for trade and goods.\textsuperscript{541}

Along with being one of only three areas of habitat for the Cross River gorilla in Nigeria, Cross River National Park hosts over 1500 species of plant, over 280 species of bird, and three-quarters of the primates in Nigeria (the gorilla’s are joined by Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees, Sclater’s guenons, Preuss’ monkeys and drills).\textsuperscript{542} The park was proposed in 1965 but not seriously pursued until 1988. The government officially established the park in 1991, though not to much effect; researchers estimate about two gorillas were killed


\textsuperscript{541} Nkonyu, L. 2014. personal communication

per year between 1990-1998.\textsuperscript{543} In 1999, the Nigerian government turned the National Park service into a paramilitary outfit, increasing its powers and ability to protect resources.\textsuperscript{544}

Despite increased protection and legislation, the park continues to suffer from encroachment. As we hiked through we passed cocoa trees, small cocoa plots, and snare lines. We passed an armed hunter. He was more scared of us than we were of him. Over five days of walking across the park, we encountered no wildlife.

I spoke with Francis about the film during our day-long walk to Okwa II from Bomaji (itself a day’s motorbike ride and walk away). We arrived in Okwa in the evening, around dusk. We sat outside beneath a stately tree, between family compounds, and continued discussions before rain forced us in. We had rice and brushtail porcupine for dinner, then slept three to a mattress on the floor.

We awoke to continued rain and waited for hours (until noon) for it to abate. When the rain let up, we went out to visit a family who had just lost their patriarch. We crowded into a dark room, squeezing about twenty of us, all men—with teenage boys crowding the window and door—onto wooden benches and plastic chairs along the walls. Once we had exchanged pleasantries and sympathies, and taken shots of the local gin made from further fermentation of palm wine, Francis introduced me. He explained who I was, what I was here to help them do, and my questions. He then asked my main question in the local dialect: “What was conservation like before the whiteman? How did we protect these forests before the national park?”

The group told many stories. Francis translated them for me. I slipped the stories into a rough, skeleton script over the next afternoon, evening, and long, rainy morning, adding what I remembered from my conversations with Francis during the walk in. Francis said he hoped the film would discuss forest use and traditional ways of conserving the forest; he specifically wanted to focus on the forest, not the gorillas. Perhaps reflecting my prerogative, gorillas stayed in. I polished the script over stewed plantains and more rain, then presented it to Francis. He liked it. We then read it to an assortment of folks, including some of the


\textsuperscript{544} Aniang 2003: 350
storytellers from the day before. They approved. We acquired a cast quickly. Neither Francis nor I chose
them. Local folks picked the cast by correspondence to the story's characters: “Who in our village would go
find his own dinner?” A boy, Salvation Latham, arrived. Who hunts? Paddy Abang arrived with his dogs.
Olum Akwo appeared later, unsolicited and unscripted, just as the filming began. He proved to be an essential
close Beshaba Tabi for her personality, then someone else told her to go change. All the
men but the chief also changed their outfits. The mother, Anna Apah, did not. I do not know how or when
she was cast. Folks made the most fuss over the hunters’ outfits being just right.

Once we had gathered, I read the script to the cast, with Francis translating in Pidgin, and
occasionally adding thoughts in Anyang. After a read-through, we began shooting. The film immediately took
on a life of its own. As soon as I invited Salvation to start the first scene, he performed it, then continued the
story, walking right past me and into the hut, starting the following scene. It was clear to me that I was not
directing, only recording. Francis faded into the background and I was alone, chasing the cast. From the first
line, the characters spoke in Anyang; I had no idea what was going on. The actors played off each other, not
the camera. They did not seem to notice whether I was shooting or even set up yet, they just continued
performing. My only option was to keep up, as if filming theater or sport. The story was alive and moving, I
had to chase and follow. The language barrier and energy of the characters prevented me from chopping a
scene into sections; I could only call a stop and ask for a repeat take at the very end of the entire scene. I just
tried to keep track of it all as best I could.

When we crossed the rushing (post-rain) river to shoot the forest scenes, Smart helped carry my
equipment and translate my few directions into Pidgin for the actors. Francis stayed on the other side of the
river, so Smart and I had especially no idea what was going on for the entire forest section of the film (Smart
is Boki and does not speak Anyang). For example, I had no idea that someone else had crossed the river with
us and snuck into the bushes to provide gorilla barks. When the barks erupted during the shoot, they
surprised me too.
At the time of shooting, I worried about polish, about what would distinguish our haphazard film from a school project. I worried about the constant rain—it was too heavy, too frequent, and too prevalent for me to pick up any B roll shots of the village.\(^{545}\) I could garner very little footage to work with. I worried that, by not guiding the film, I would not be able to cut it to suit our projects or our goals. It would be either incomplete, from lack of footage, or irrelevant to the context of conservation.

I need not have worried. Folks created something much better on their own than I ever could have directed. The script emerged from what I learned in our discussions the day before. The ideas and events of the story were familiar to the cast and a direct echo of what they had shared with me. As such, they understood the narrative and could improvise off it with ease. I did not direct the film—control the performances, scenes, or even scenarios, design the production, organize the narrative, I merely recorded what was going on before me.

Lest I go too far, I do not pretend I did not have some authorship. It is no better to pretend disappearance than to take control. I still am responsible for much of the aesthetics—in the way the film looks and, to an extent, the rhythm of the editing, though much of the edit was dictated by the pace of the performances as well. I acknowledge my role in facilitating the theme and elements of the narrative. I am also responsible for the final form of the narrative—albeit within the bounds of what our collaborators provided me to work with—and the editing decisions. For example, I cut out some lines in which Obi bashes his mother, including a line where he threatens his mother with a cutlass (machete). I may not have been justified in doing so, but Francis (translating for me) agreed we did not need it. Salvation ad-libbed the lines on his own and neither Francis or I wanted to include the show of disrespect.

Language limited my control throughout the process. It limited my comprehension during filmmaking and restricted my freedom in editing. Francis was surprisingly absent from the filmmaking.

\(^{545}\) B Roll is footage not scripted or essential to the story, e.g. shots of the surrounding environment, the weather, objects inside a home
standing back among the crowd watching the performance, not following us into the hut or across the river. His absence was fine and allowed for the continued chaos for me. He is responsible for the translations and may be attributed with any narrative edits here. Aside from the aforementioned changes, my edits are limited to small, formal choices for smoother transitions and storytelling.

Filming in the local language worked well for a few reasons:

- It kept the film local; the community can recognize it as their own.
- Other local communities can also recognize the film as distinctly Anyang. Outsiders will gain exposure to Anyang too.
- The actors were more free to improvise and express themselves.
- As the filmmaker, I lost control of the narrative in shooting and was restricted in my editing. I could not put words into the characters’ mouth or dictate their actions.

I discuss the production of the first film at great length for it so exemplified how Folk Filmmaking can provide a storytelling platform for a local community.

Synopsis

The story begins with Obi returning home with a giant log of firewood. His work was hard and he is hungry. When he asks his mother what she prepared for dinner, he is frustrated by her answer: English rice. He will not eat it. They bicker. She tells him, if he is to act so stubborn, go find his own food. He heads off to do just that.

On his way, Obi meets his father and another hunter. They tell him he will be a great man if he can kill a gorilla; a slain gorilla will bring a village-wide celebration. They reprimand him for trying to take wire snares instead of using vines. They show him all the animals they have caught using only vines. They remind him not to go hunting in the Old Forest, an area the community designated as off limits with a juju. Obi nods and goes on his way.
Across the river, Obi encounters the other hunter again. The hunter, suspicious, again warns him not to go to the Old Forest. Obi continues on his way, eventually wandering into the Old Forest. Here he encounters an abundance of animals but also notices the juju. A storm breaks. Obi gets more and more nervous. Suddenly a silverback barks at him and Obi takes off, terrified. In his fear and haste, he gets hurt escaping the forest. The hunter finds him and they struggle together to cross the river. Back in the village, Obi visits an elder. The elder reprimands Obi for venturing past the jujus and explains why the taboos must be respected. Obi returns home to a bowl of English rice.

**Moral Issue**

The moral issues in *Obi & the Juju Forest* may, at first, confound an outsider. They worried me; I was afraid our collaborators at WCS would not want to use a film like this. The men tell Obi he will win great glory for killing a gorilla, though not with this tool, and not in that forest. Apparently, not unlike a British sportsman, Obi must follow strict and specific rules when hunting—even if he hunts for subsistence rather than for sport. The strict rules—which the hunters warn Obi of and the elder reprimands him for breaking—show an appreciation for restraint, for harmony, for leaving nature alone sometimes. The reasons—bad juju—can be understood as superstitious or as a sort of regulation. Obi is not supposed to avoid the forest because he risks bad luck but because the forest needs to rest. The jujus offer a conservation ethic. Obi’s ill will brings ill will upon him.

The moral issue here is implicit: conservation existed, in its own manner and own ways, before the whiteman arrived. The experiment in living may have been working. That is why the gorillas are still around the Cross River headwaters, while gone from all other forests in Nigeria. If the forests lost protection, if gorillas are now threatened, it may be due to the corresponding loss of local culture, beliefs, and values in the face of Christianity, modernity, and other, outside influences often coming from the West.
Echoing Chief Joseph in Bamba, folks in Owka II told me that the improvement of tools killed off the gorillas. Wire snares and guns are too effective. Before the whiteman provided such advanced technology, the animals had a chance. A strong animal could snap a vine snare, and the snares rotted into inefficiency if forgotten or untended. The guns only allowed one or two good shots before the gorilla got away. Now repeating guns allow hunters to shoot many times into a band of gorillas. Wire snares can trap almost any gorilla. The snares can also snag a gorilla long after they have been set, even if the hunter forgot about them. The technology is too powerful.

As early as the 1930s, colonialists began calling for the protection of the Cross River gorillas, in fear that they would go extinct without immediate imperial action. Conservation did not come for half a century but the gorillas persisted. The gorillas may have survived by accident. They may also have survived due to local beliefs and taboos such as the jujus protecting the Old Forest. A moral issue, implicit in the film’s telling, is that the loss of sovereignty, of cultural norms and practices, resulted in the loss of control. The community of Okwa lost control over their impact on the forest—they did not yet appreciate the power of the new tools—and they lost the ability to regulate themselves. New beliefs and values overwhelmed the old culture. The loss of natural and cultural heritage happened at once.

At the same time, the film also glorifies killing gorillas. Obi ventures into the forest intending to kill a gorilla, with the encouragement of older folk in his community. As discussed in Chapter Three and Four, his purpose may seem anathema to gorilla conservation, but it need not. Hunters maintain a close relationship with wild animals and, often though not always, with the animals’ conservation. Hunters tend to know where the animals are and have a sense of how their numbers are fluctuating. They hunt because they value the animal, not because they want to exterminate it. Often times, they need the animals. They do not want them to disappear. Hunters in North America adorn their homes with the antlers and busts of deer and elk,

---

paintings of pheasants and waterfowl. They celebrate animals in a way most other folks do not. They conserve the populations to use them.

It may not be justifiable to use gorillas but a moral debate over this claim will require more than a prohibition. Western communities may need to justify their use of gorillas in captivity for zoos, science, and movies. They may need to discuss the use of other great apes, such as chimpanzees, in medical research.\textsuperscript{547} They may also need to acknowledge the cultural history and relevance of gorillas to the Anyang.

The Anyang have a distinct and complex relationship with gorillas, including use in ceremony and regulations on hunting.\textsuperscript{548} Gorillas probably hold many other cultural values as well. Many tribes will not talk to foreigners or outsiders about their use of gorillas due to the sacred nature of the relationship.\textsuperscript{549} Secret societies formed around the gorilla.\textsuperscript{550} Gorilla skulls adorn fetish shields, transferring power. Charms from a dried brain gave hunting prowess; others functioned as an aphrodisiac.\textsuperscript{551} Gorilla meat gave power or gave women violent husbands.\textsuperscript{552} Strict rules regulated eating. Ancestor masks may have gorilla skins or hairs.\textsuperscript{553} Gorilla hairs can make charms too. In the Cross River headwaters, gorilla heads and genitals are used for

\textsuperscript{547} Conlee, K.M., 2007. Chimpanzees in research and testing worldwide: Overview, oversight and applicable laws. \textit{AATEX} 14:111-118. Many Western countries have a total ban on great ape research—including the Netherlands, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany and Austria—but the United States maintains a schizophrenic policy on the issue. Researchers are allowed to conduct medical studies on chimpanzees despite the 1990 listing of wild chimpanzees as endangered species—with all the corresponding protection. In 2015, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service expanded the listing to include captive populations. Legal ramifications of the expansion remain to be sorted out but it appears now researchers will only be able to study captive chimpanzees by acquiring a permit: “Permits will be issued for these activities only for scientific purposes that benefit the species in the wild, or to enhance the propagation or survival of chimpanzees, including habitat restoration and research on chimpanzees in the wild that contributes to improved management and recovery. The Service will work closely with the biomedical research community to permit biomedical research that must use chimpanzees as research subjects.” See Kauffman, V. 2015. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Finalizes Rule Listing All Chimpanzees as Endangered Under the Endangered Species Act. June 12. http://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ID=E81DA137-BAF2-9619-3492A2972E9854D9 Scientists argue that they need permission to continue to study captive apes in order to protect wild ones, for example by studying Ebola vaccines. See: Gill, V. 2014. Ebola and ethics: Is animal welfare killing wild apes? \textit{BBC News} 27 June. http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-27896589


\textsuperscript{549} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{550} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{551} Du Challi, Paul B. 1861. \textit{Explorations and Adventures in Equatorial Africa}. London.

\textsuperscript{552} Meder 1999

\textsuperscript{553} Ibid.
medicinal purposes.\textsuperscript{554} Ingesting crushed gorilla canines can give a person a strong jaw. Rubbing crushed gorilla bones on the skin can fortify a baby. A mother drinking water fortified by gorilla bones passes on health and power too. Folks are also wary of sharing this information and being exploited by Western pharmaceutical companies.\textsuperscript{555}

Nigerians use gorilla skin and other by-products to protect against witchcraft and disease.\textsuperscript{556} Cameroonians rub with gorilla hands to transfer power.\textsuperscript{557} Even tribes far from gorilla habitat, such as the Bamileke in the Cameroonian Grassfields or the Igbo further West in Nigeria, have ceremonies involving gorilla skulls.\textsuperscript{558} Tribes around gorilla habitat further East in Africa share many beliefs and uses for gorilla parts. They also have their own cultural practices, such as fetishes made from gorilla hands or dried suborbital ridges.\textsuperscript{559} For the people in North Kivu, even branches from gorilla nests can have great power: causing a man to beat his wife or lose his job.

In the 1930s, Ivan T. Sanderson was visiting Assumbo, a mountain community nestled in the Cross River headwaters, when a hunter returned announcing he had just shot a gorilla. Sanderson described the chaotic scene when the corpse arrived at the village. At least six parties lay claim to the meat, including the chief, the hunter, the villagers, the porters, and Sanderson himself. The chief grabbed select portions. The hunter kept certain organs for jujus. He also amazed Sanderson with his “uncanny” knowledge of gorilla anatomy:

\ldots with amazing deftness he selected pieces of the muscular covering of the eyeridges, flesh from the armpits and groins, the whole heart, a part of the small intestine, the tip of the left lung, some

\textsuperscript{554} Adeola, M. D. 1992 Importance of wild animals and their parts in the culture, religious festivals, and traditional medicine of Nigeria. \textit{Environmental Conservation} 19:125–134
\textsuperscript{555} Meder 1999
\textsuperscript{556} Adeola 1992
\textsuperscript{557} Meder 1992
\textsuperscript{558} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{559} \textit{Ibid.}
abdominal muscles, and the pancreas. I tried to fool him by offering the left lobe of the liver for the last named, which was exactly the same in colour, but he was not having any of it...\textsuperscript{560}

Sanderson’s guide, Ekumaw, further described how the hunter uses the parts to make medicine: rubbing them on his gun so that he may have good luck hunting, cooking it in his pot to bring good luck to his compound. The chief took the rump steak and the intestines, the latter makes a medicine for belly ache.\textsuperscript{561}

Sanderson noted that folks in Assumbo (near Cross River and Takamanda National Parks) did not hunt gorillas but only shot them in self defense, though he suspected that a bit further West, near Ikom, locals must hunt the gorillas, due to the number of gorilla skulls for sale and in juju houses.\textsuperscript{562} He also noted that across the region he met men with bum legs from gorilla bites. He heard enough stories of gorilla attacks to believe that silverbacks in the Cross River headwaters would attack as soon as they saw a human, or knew that the human had seen them.\textsuperscript{563} The fear of male gorillas appears in the film, too, when Obi reacts not by shooting the gorilla but by running away.

Despite all the cultural practices, researchers note use of gorilla parts probably poses no real danger to gorilla populations.\textsuperscript{564} It does express value and show the importance of gorillas to traditional, local cultures. To argue that Africans cannot use gorillas, Westerners will have to acknowledge its own use of gorillas. Both groups will need to discuss what gorillas mean to their cultures and work how to navigate relationships with the apes in the face of their endangerment.

Hunting and killing a gorilla requires enormous energy, effort, and luck. For the community in the film, it is an unusual event, to be celebrated if it occurs but only if pursued in the proper way. The moral

\textsuperscript{561} Sanderson took a quarter of the meat, the skin, and the skeleton; he bought the entire gorilla from the hunter but agreed to some concessions.  
\textsuperscript{562} \textit{Ibid} 185  
\textsuperscript{563} \textit{ibid} 188  
\textsuperscript{564} \textit{Ibid}.  

issues they present in the film have to do with proper behavior: hunting in the right forest, with the right tools. They relate to traditional, Anyang cultural norms, to following the community’s rules and taboos, to being a good member of the community.
Francis and I began work on *Conservation Education* before *Obi & the Juju Forest*, but we shot *Conservation Education* second. During my six weeks with Francis, I attended many of his community meetings and conservation education classes. I was struck by how well he straddled the moral discourse between Western conservation ethics and Cross River community needs.

We wanted to film a story at a community near each of the Nigerian hillsites. *Obi & the Juju Forest* covered Cross River National Park. With *Conservation Education*, we covered Mbe Mountains Community Wildlife Sanctuary. The Mbe Mountains link Cross River National Park to the third and final gorilla hillsite in Nigeria, Afi Mountain. Along with Cross River gorillas, Mbe hosts Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees, drills, leopards, and forest elephants. The mountains lack formal conservation status but fall under traditional ownership of the nine surrounding communities. About 10,000 people live in the nine communities.\(^{565}\) In 2007, WCS helped the communities form the Conservation Association of the Mbe Mountains to manage the area.\(^ {566}\) WCS continues to support the association with eco-guards, training for local hunters in bee-keeping and snail farming, and conservation education programs.\(^ {567}\)

During our time together, Francis based us in Wula, one of the nine Mbe communities, where he seemed to have the closest relationships. We cast our students from the local school. To Francis’s great surprise, the students he targeted—six, outgoing, secondary school girls that form the core of his conservation club—were not around on the day we came to collect them for shooting. Francis chose our lead, Janet Otu, almost by random; she was selected for her age and availability. I left casting very open and up to him. I only

\(^{565}\) Dunn et al. 2014  
\(^{566}\) Ibid.  
asked for a girl or woman to lead the film. I wanted to alternate between men and women lead characters in our series.

Francis chose Bamba for the filming, and for providing the rest of our cast, because of Bamba’s history of conflict with conservation. Apparently they have a particular problem among the Mbe communities with crop-raiding elephants. Folks told us of devastated farms and constant encroachment onto their land by wildlife. Francis did not contest their issues but he did announce that biologists estimate only four forest elephants remain in Cross River National Park. Francis suspects the elephants could be responsible for the problems and that folks exaggerate their impact. He said farmers could plant chili bushes around to keep the elephants out.

A year later, Francis reported that poachers from Bamba killed three elephants:

On the 8th of September 2015, WCS Conservation Education Officer visited Bamba to investigate the rumor behind the reported elephants killed in July 2015. It was gathered that 15 men from Bamba independently arranged with a Hausa poacher to enter Cross River National Park and hunt elephants for their Ivory. It was then reported that three elephants were killed on the 27th of July 2015. Some of the men butchered the elephants and brought the meat back to the community. When the community noticed it, they were angry and compel the people involved to pay a fine which they did and then agreed not to leak the information out. But one man, Enu Ayine, disagreed with community and threatened to report the matter. The community became angry with him and forced him to pay a fine of N100,000 and a goat for attempting to reveal the secret. He took the matter further to the Paramount Ruler and Boki Local Government Council Chairman who later sent a delegation to Bamba. The incident was report alongside with ebony logging to the Range Officer of Okwangwo Division of Cross River National Park who called the attention of his rangers working at Bamba station. The Park Rangers denied any information associated with elephant
poaching. At present, the community has officially accepted the allegation and the matter is being handled by the management of Cross River National Park.\footnote{Nkonyu, L. 2015. Quarterly Education Report July-September 2015. WCS Nigeria.}

Folks from Bamba also destroyed a WCS mountain ranger station and dismantled the solar panels out of frustration with the lack of benefits conservation was bringing to them.\footnote{Nkonyu, L. Personal communication.} They expected that conservation would provide resources, infrastructure development, and opportunity. They expected much more from WCS, the sanctuary, and gorilla conservation efforts in general, perhaps more than any other community we visited.

They have a long history of conflict with conservation, consider another account from a local academic at the University of Calabar:

Park officials arrested Fulani men who contracted Bamba community to supply them with sticks.

The arrested Fulani men were freed by the community. They also fined and ostracized natives who supported and sympathize with the park management to arrest and prosecute the Fulani men. Pro-park locals who were fined but refused to pay were expelled from the village, including resident Okwa park staff. Locals later invaded the park and exploited timber sticks and fruits in the forest. Oral informants are firmed from [sic] that the state prefers plants and animals to humans. To them the forest provides the resources to educate their children and seek medical attention. The forest provides banana plantains, yams, fruits meat fish vegetables. It is in farming and exchange of these resources that we acquire money pay taxes to the state and local government councils (… Boniface Mato and Others).\footnote{Ewah, J.O. 2013. Survival Strategies of Support Zone Communities in Cross River National Park Okwangwo Division, 1990-2010. \textit{International Journal of Humanities and Social Science} 3 (1): 242.
Again, Francis chose to focus on Bamba due to these issues.

I kept more control of the filmmaking this time, partly because we shot in English and Pidgin, partly because our leads—a secondary school girl and her friends—sought more direction, and partly because of the more muted energy during our filmmaking. Osu Smart Apah helped us with the second film as well. This time he was among his own community, the Boki, and his ability to follow the story made him more assertive. He directed our actors during the scenes, yelling at them over my shoulder even during takes. Erasing Smart’s voice during postproduction proved a huge headache but his direction was an incalculable help during shooting. He improved the acting. He attended to everything I did not. He addressed the cultural nuances and little mistakes in lines or behavior that I could not even notice. Best, Smart’s efforts helped further wrestle control, at least of the performances, away from me and help his own community guide the filmmaking.

Nknoyu was again surprisingly absent from the actual shooting of the film but he translated my script and directions, providing translations into Pidgin from my verbose, fast, and odd diction-ed American English. Francis also starred in the film as himself. The classroom scenes are literal classes I filmed; they were not put on for the camera.

We shot most of Conservation Education over two sessions on a single day. One session went from 6:30 a.m. until 12:00, the other from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm. We went by the schedule of our cast, not by good lighting or other filmmaker needs. We visited Bamba a few times. First to talk with people and mock up a story, then to scout locations and invite participants. Following custom, we first sat with a local leader, Honourable, to present ourselves and our intentions. Honourable brought us chairs and beers and then, surrounded by his family and other folks gathered around, immediately went into his problems with conservation. When I asked if I could record them and take notes, he said please do, but make sure you do something about all this.

Based particularly on the conversation with Honourable, I composed a script.
On the day we arrived to film, Honoroble confronted me as I pulled out my camera:

“Why do you always show Africans living in huts? We have nice kitchens. Show modern Africa!”

I assured him this was my plan. Then he told me a story:

One whiteman brought a tie. He gave it to an African man, told him to tie it around his waist, and climb a tree. Then he took photos of the man to show the world that Africans have tails…

Francis cut him off at this point, laughing. It became particularly important to me that Honourable approved of our script. Once the cast had been collected—again not by me—I nervously read the script out loud to them. Many other folks, foremost Honourable, also attended. Again Francis translated my English into Pidgin. I read slowly and in a voice raspy with nerves. At the end Honourable said: “This is very good. Add: ‘Money too is critically endangered.’”

Honourable, one of the most outspoken locals against conservation, not only accepted the script, he chose to act in the film. His participation felt an encouraging sign of mutual understanding. With the cast’s approval, we began to shoot.

A large crowd gathered for the breakfast scenes. I thought they gathered for the spectacle of the filmmaking but it turned out they came for the free food. Filming with a crowd was difficult. They populated the scenes with more people than planned and added lots of incongruent sound. The random background chatter in Boki may not strike Western audiences but I am afraid it will distract from the film for locals.

My only instruction to the cast during filming was to do things as normal as possible: please just tell us the best way to depict daily life and your community. For example, we scripted Janet going to the farm. Francis told me folks do not go to the farm alone so we found her friends. Fortunately, her friends had tagged along—again, unscripted and unsolicited—and they soon became indispensable to the film.

In one scene, one of the friends, Linda, goes on and on to Janet about how much she loved Cross River gorillas and how special they are. Her comments may be sincere but I was afraid that our influence was
too strong and that she was just offering the lines for me and Francis. I also worried that my concern came from either a) a pretentious filmmaker attitude that the lines were too blatant for the subtle narrative or b) healthy suspicions that Linda’s lines revealed the film was a conservation project and not a more natural, local story. I am surprised I did not worry about artifice more often throughout the Folk Filmmaking.

The classroom scenes we shot during school. They were unscripted and simply documented in process, from the students’ call and response to their classroom behavior to Francis’s ease with the lessons. I visited many classes Francis taught. The lessons and examples in the film are consistent and exemplary. In the edit, I cut sections to focus on a few topics: rationales presented for conservation, information about Cross River gorillas, and examples of argumentation. Nkoynu’s classes are usually about forty minutes long and a bit scattered in structure. The glimpses in the film do not represent that.

The man who played the hunter, Amos Mkpe, is an ecoguard hired by WCS to patrol Mbe Mountains. When we asked for a hunter, he was the first person everyone thought of. He had a gun and two dogs; he was ready to go. When we asked for a hunter, someone asked if the person selected would get in trouble. We assured him the hunter would not.

We also asked after a local elder who had seen a Cross River gorilla in the forest. We wanted a character who could recount a gorilla encounter. The crew was keen on using one particular elder so we chose him. I am not sure if he had seen a Cross River gorilla before or not. He may have just made up his story—it was not as rich or nuanced as others folks told—but at the time of filming I did not know; he performed in Boki. We fed him some lines about habitat encroachment and fragmentation, with Francis’s approval, to try and mitigate the “hunting is the problem” message that was built into the film’s narrative. Hunting is a problem, a big and serious one, but one of a variety of threats to the gorillas. The elder’s lines about the whiteman caught me completely off guard. I did not know about them until Francis translated the scene during editing.

Synopsis
Conservation Education begins with a secondary school student waking up and joining her sister to do the chores. After the morning duties, she walks to class with her friend. Class concerns wildlife conservation, including gorillas, as the student lives in one of the villages next to gorilla habitat. She walks home with her friend, conducts her afternoon chores at the farm, and visits her grandfather to ask after his experience with gorillas, curious after her class.

The next morning, she repeats her chores. This time, a strange man is eating breakfast with her father. She goes to school, learns more about conservation, then sees the strange man again on her way home. In the evening, she again heads to the farm. This time, while collecting bush mangoes, she is surprised to see hunting dogs. She follows them, deeper and deeper into the forest, until suddenly stumbling upon a gorilla. She is in shock, and then she notices a hunter: the strange man she has been seeing all day.

Believing him to be an outsider who does not know or follow community rules, she confronts him. They argue. She tells him not to kill gorillas, echoing what she has learned in school. He tells her he must kill the gorillas to send his children to school. She tells him not to. He asks her why not. She tells him why not. He asks her if she learned that in school. They argue in a circle, scaring the gorilla away and frustrating the hunter. The student is successful but upset. She does not know what to say to the hunter, other than: stop. The film ends on the confusion.

Moral Issue

Though a moral issue is central to the film, it only appears in the final scene of confrontation. It is also not resolved. In school, the student learns not to kill gorillas. To afford school fees, the hunter claims, he needs to kill a gorilla. When the student hears this reason from the hunter, she is unsure how to challenge him. She tells him that if he kills the gorillas, they will finish; the gorillas are critically endangered. He tells her that money, too, is critically endangered. She threatens to turn him in. She says that, around here, they don’t kill gorillas (the hunter is an outsider). She values both gorillas and school. She is not sure what alternative to offer. The hunter feels justified. School seems like a good thing, but it and its messages are not
an option for him. The hunter will not stop and the student cannot make her case. The experiment in living
is not working, at least in that moment. She is receiving the education that this man seeks to provide his
children. She can only fault him because of that same education.

Hunting gorillas may not provide a viable livelihood in the twenty-first century (if it ever did). One
can make an enormous amount of money selling gorilla meat to the urban bushmeat market, but finding and
killing a gorilla is such a Herculean undertaking, the animals so rare, the danger and risk so high (from the
animals, their protectors, and legislation) that it seems unlikely anyone would survive as a gorilla hunter.571
Killing a gorilla may make enough to cover school fees for a long time. It is a way to reap great benefit from
the forest. The hunter’s character is as much a literal interpretation as he is a representative for anyone who
needs to use the forest for resources. He is the dramatic extreme of the forest user. Many people around the
Mbe Mountains survive as forest users, hunting and trapping in the forest, harvesting bush mangoes and eru
(Gnetum spp.), cutting wood, making charcoal, and foraging for all sorts of nutritional and medicinal plants.
The forest-users still use the forest for their livelihood. They feel they need to use it to support themselves and
their families. The moral issue is the repeated tension between protecting and using the forest. In this case, the
gorilla too is both a literal character and a metaphor, standing in for nature at large.

The moral challenge is not that the two characters disagree: the student, too, goes to the forest to
collect firewood and bush mango. She lives a rural life and sympathizes with the hunter’s plight (her sympathy
might also be interpreted as fear—she is younger, a woman, and unarmed). She agrees that his children
should go to school and she knows how hard it is to pay school fees.

The hunter, too, values the girl’s education and concerns. She tells him she
learned not to kill gorillas in school and he retorts, “You see, that is why I want to kill it and send my children
to school”, implying that it is too late for him to reach such an educated position but that his children still
have a chance. He is also reflecting that such a position of abstraction—of concern for principles beyond

---

survival—is not yet available to him. His position is a common argument in the Cross River headwaters. The Chairman of Cross River State Forestry Commission, Dr Odigha Odigha, claims that the main threat to conservation in the region is a lack of viable alternatives for livelihoods or wealth creation. 572

The film does not answer the debate, it just shares the conversation and invites thought. What is a student learning about conservation to do in such a situation? What does she say to older community members when they challenge her in this way? How is a forest user to respond to calls for conservation from children, especially if their own children are the ones they want to help?

I wonder about this film. I worry about the rain overpowering the conversation, about the open ending, about the ambiguity. I am not sure what to make of it. Perhaps it reflects the moral stickiness and confusion of the summer of 2014, around the Mbe Mountains Community Wildlife Sanctuary, where community needs and conservation do not align. Perhaps we just did not sit with the problem or the narrative long enough.

The film also shares many moral issues earlier in the film, via Francis’s classes on conservation. In the second class, he clearly states three reasons why the students should conserve:

1. “We might need them tomorrow. If I am building a house, and I fell the only iroko tree, tomorrow I want to build more, what will I do? If you define conservation, it’s not abstinence is it? No, it’s the wise use of natural resources.”

Francis works from a broad approach, discussing the general conservation of the forest or ecosystem rather than that of a particular species. Conservation in the case of Cross River gorillas is not about sustainable use. Francis begins by teaching students reasons to accept and support the conservation of nature in general

first, perhaps to prevent a kneejerk reactions that conservation does not make sense, is not for them, or is only in the interest of outsiders.

2. “We like them… If I bring an elephant here, who would not like to go and see? ...So naturally we like Nature, man like Nature.”

Francis presents his elephant argument as a thought experiment to help the students see that nature is at least valuable as spectacle, as novelty, or in an aesthetic way. It is not without interest. He describes the aesthetic appeal of nature as an innate human condition; they all can appreciate an elephant. Again, nature, wildlife, and conservation are not just for outsiders.

3. “We ought to. It’s a responsibility. They born you to this world, naked, did you come with pants? Even earrings? Super ta-ta-la [dialect adjective] earrings, did you come with it? So you came now, you saw these things, and you are enjoying them, you would be a very bad person to destroy them… because you will still give birth to children, it’s your responsibility, every man’s responsibility to conserve… you need to save them so that your children, also, can come and use them.”

In his third point, Nkoynu blends many arguments. He makes the case for future generations (in a way repeating the first argument), he makes a case for empathy, and he makes a case for virtue. He shows the students that, if they want to leave a good world for their children, then that world should include the same nature they were born to. He reminds them that they were born with nothing, and should be grateful for all they received. They should not waste it or take it for granted. The way he orients these points, by beginning with normative language of duty and responsibility, implies to the students that conservation is what a good person does. Francis raises conservation as a moral issue by showing the moral dynamics of conservation: why
the students should conserve. None of his points focus on gorillas but all present a general argument in favor of protecting nature, including gorillas, as a moral choice.

In the first class, Francis focuses on the gorillas directly. He begins by connecting them to place, first at large and then specifically where the students live. He makes gorillas a source of pride:

“Gorilla originated in which place, in which continent?”

“Africa.”

“If you see any gorilla in England, in a zoo, means it was taken from where?”

“Africa.”

Nyonku invites the students to feel ownership and a connection to the gorillas, only their communities have this subspecies. He tells them that their subspecies is unique, that it is called the Cross River gorilla for you can only see them at the headwaters of the river Cross.

Francis also describes extinction, the message the student later offers to the hunter. He tells the class that conservation comes up to prevent extinction, to prevent the gorillas from just “finishing”, from going away. If you let them finish, Francis describes, “One day your son will come up and say, ‘I want to see a gorilla. I want to see the rainforest.’ Where will you take him to? Everything is gone.”

Our next film focuses on just this question. It takes place at a forest that lost its gorillas.
In between working at the gorilla hillsites in Nigeria and Cameroon, my wife, Noal, and I visited Dr. Ajume Wingo and his family in Kumbo, North-West, Cameroon. While there, we went to a neighboring community, Oku, famous for its woodcarving. I had shot a documentary in Kumbo and Oku a few years prior and wanted to see old friends. I also hoped to find a gorilla mask to use in a totem film. In Oku, we found a collective of carvers with all sorts of animal masks, including gorilla silverbacks, females, and babies. Oku sits below the Kilum-Ijim forest, among the largest and most bio-diverse remaining in all of North-West, Cameroon. The forest hosts an endemic bird species, Bannerman’s turaco (Tauraco bannermani). It probably once hosted gorillas and chimpanzees but both are now gone. When I asked one of the carvers why he carved gorilla masks, he gave such an arresting answer that I turned our brief exchange into a short film.

Synopsis

*A Message from Oku* presents testimony from the mask carver, Ban La Nying, of Oku. Ban La declares that he carves gorilla masks so that the children do not forget. Oku’s forests once boasted all sorts of large animals: gorillas, forest buffaloes, forest elephants, leopards. He carves them all. Now Oku’s forests only have giant rats. Ban La wants the children to know what Oku lost. He wants the community to remember its

---

573 Noal flew in to join the project after we received the grant from FFI. She played an integral role in the entire Cameroon portion of the project.

natural heritage. Throughout the short film, Ban La’s father, Mbuntum George Ngun, chips in with support and confirmations.

Ban La Nying’s speech, in full:

Everything we see around us...

In our tradition, in our culture, we want to transform them into craftwork,

so that it will never, ever...

for instance there are no more gorillas now but if a child wants to see a picture of a gorilla in Oku or around Oku he or she may only see it through craftwork

like this one I am putting on.

That’s just the main reason to be carving a gorilla like this one.

Formally they were here and now we don’t have gorillas here.

The population is increasing and decreasing the forest.

The forest is no more there, there are no gorillas, no what, you cannot see, there are no big, we don’t have any, we just have giant rats left in the forest. That’s what’s left here. We don’t have any animals.

They were here and now we don’t have gorillas here.

*Moral Issue*

This film, better than any other in our series, expresses the stakes of conservation: gorillas can disappear. Ban La offers a variation on the future generations argument. He carves because it is too late for his community. Carving is the only way to show the children what their forest once had. The moral issue is the risk and tragedy of loss.
Local extinction hints at the specter of total extinction, perhaps the strongest argument for conservation. Conservationists describe how both local and absolute extinctions bring not just loss of biodiversity but loss of memory as well. Communities soon forget the wild species they lost and become unaware of the impoverishment of their surrounding natural areas. Each generation encounters a new normal, natural environment and then measures environmental decline against this baseline. As environmental degradation generally increases, each generation accepts increasingly degraded conditions as their new normal. Ecologists describe the phenomenon as “shifting baselines” and a corresponding “inter-generational amnesia.”

In my home region on the North Atlantic seashore, most folks do not know of the vast schools of Atlantic salmon, shad, alewives, and eels that once ran up our town river, providing food and employment and enriching the ecosystem. Where I studied for my PhD, on the Front Range of Colorado, many folks do not know the grasslands are missing bison, or that the mountains lack grizzly bears and gray wolves. (They also may not know that the locally-abundant moose were introduced and never naturally established in Colorado.)

The loss of memory creates a feedback loop. As species diminish, if not disappear, folks forget. As folks forget, the wild species lose both cultural relevance and community support for their return, only further challenging conservation. Most folks now living in the Cross River headwaters have never seen a wild gorilla. The gorillas are as wary as they are rare. As local communities’ relationship with the gorillas fades to almost nonexistence, conservation of gorillas may feel almost an abstraction. Folk sense they are conserving a space only for the idea that it hosts gorillas. They must trust outsiders and scientists that this is true (and that this

---

577 Ibid.
matters). Almost all community members no longer have visceral experiences of the creatures or encounter tangible proof that the forest supports them, especially if they are prevented from entering the forests. Limberg and Waldman call the feedback loop of species losing their viability and then their relevance and supporters, eco-social anomie. Examples include young Chinese residents along the Yangtze knowing nothing of their *bajii*, a river dolphin probably now extinct, and spite killings of the critically-endangered Hawaiian monk seal by local beach users.

International conservation efforts make it unlikely folks in the Cross River headwaters will forget gorillas anytime soon, but I was surprised carvers in Oku remembered gorillas too. Researchers do not think it unlikely that the gorillas lived here—Cross River gorillas remain less than a hundred kilometers away—but they claim no records of gorillas in Kilum-Ijim forest exist. If the gorillas did live in Kilum-Ijim, the people in Oku probably had a relationship with them. The researchers note: “Most mammals are considered edible by the local people and many species are also used locally for medicine or for ceremonies.”

Ban La’s testimony implies a moral claim that something of value has been lost. Oku’s forest is impoverished, their children lost their natural heritage. At least some of the community wishes they had conserved the gorillas. The carvers are now doing their best to conserve at least their memory. Gorillas should be conserved, they may argue, because when the gorillas are gone, you will miss them.

---

580 Waldman 2010  
582 Maisels *et al.* 2001  
583 Ibid.
While I was directly involved in concocting the first two films, the third film’s narrative developed without me. From the start, *Chop Gorilla* was an experience in relinquishing control. While visiting Dr. Ajume Wingo’s family in Cameroon, we were introduced to a local celebrity: comedian and filmmaker Augustus, better known as Shufai Ngoshitong (essentially “Senator little brown bird of the reeds”, a play on local titles and nobility among the Banso). Our housemates greeted him with glee. They took photos with him. He put on one of his movies for the family. A week later, when we met with him a full day’s drive away in Buea, folks greeted Augustus the same way—calling to him on the street, requesting his greeting, buying his DVDs. Augustus has made ten films to date, from music videos (he is also a singer) to comedies to dramas, including a film on female circumcision, *Asoni*, that won an Africa Magic award. He is a social critic. In his work, drunk priests disgrace the church, gluttonous jujus embarrass the tradition, *gendarmes* exhibit egregious corruption. He pays for his satire. Upset audiences have imprisoned him, impounded his car, and chased him out of town. The punishments and corresponding financial expenses challenge him from making further work. He has to shoot even his benign music videos in Jakiri, a few towns away from his home of Kumbo.

Augustus was as excited to meet us as we were to meet him. He lives to make films but he has trouble finding funding or even a camera. We instantly agreed to collaborate. I invited Augustus to direct the third film. I hoped working with a professional, seasoned filmmaker would provide the best chance of us producing a real, vibrant local film. Finally, I could just facilitate. Further, with this film we began training our ERuDeF
colleagues, Bernard and Impeccable, to make movies. Watching Augustus and his crew in action would help them learn about filmmaking in the local context and offer much more practical guidance than I could.

A month after our first meeting, Augustus had a full script, a cast of actors, and a filmmaker ready. He wanted money up front to transport and pay them, and to buy a big, black goat to stand in for gorilla meat. I wanted to set the film in Takamanda or Kagwene, two gorilla hillsites relatively close to Augustus’s home in Bamenda. He chose Mamfé instead, for ease of access I suspect, and because he has connections there. Augustus appreciated the necessary logistics of our burgeoning film production much better than I did. Sticking to Mamfé was a good idea.

Mamfé turned out to make sense for the series too. It is the main and largest city for the region of Cameroon in which Cross River gorillas still occur.\footnote{Along with Bamenda, which is much bigger, but only closer to the gorillas at Kagwene. Kumba is the biggest city in the South West province and Cameroon’s largest city, Douala, is not too far away either.} It is the hub and main market for most of the communities living around the most remote Cross River gorilla habitat: Mone and Mbulu, and for the communities in and around Mwambi Hills and Takamanda National Park. Both the national park service and WCS Cameroon keep offices in Mamfé. They base their conservation work in Takamanda and Mwambi out of Mamfé. Folks across the region know and recognize Mamfé.

The morning we left for filming \textit{Chop Gorilla}, we took a share-taxi down to Mile 17 to catch a share-car to Kumba. On the way, the radio announced that Ebola had just been discovered in a fifth West African country: Senegal. Throughout our filming in Cameroon, Ebola surrounded us, to the West in Nigeria, to the South in DR Congo.\footnote{Congo had an outbreak of Ebola at the same time independent of the outbreak occurring in West Africa: see World Health Organization. 2014. Ebola Response Roadmap Situation Report Update. 29 October. \url{http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/137376/1/roadmapsitrep_29Oct2014_eng.pdf?ua=1}} We received frantic letters from home, asking our whereabouts, when we would return, and how much longer we needed to stay to complete our films.
The response in Cameroon was very different. Folks seemed almost more concerned with how the outbreaks affected their image abroad than with the health risks it might pose to themselves. They were tired of how the Western media continued to, in their words: “paint Africa black.”

When we invited Augustus to lead the third film, he immediately announced he would make it about Ebola. He titled the piece *Ebola Madness* [*Chop Gorilla* is the title for our international edition]. He composed the narrative both to fit the gorilla film series and to respond to the alarmism, confusion, and chaos stemming from the outbreak.

When the West talks about African current affairs, the stories are often negative, depressing, and frightening. Where we worked, despite the proximity to tragedy, folks had a much lighter way of sharing news, good or bad. Ebola was as much an opportunity for jokes and reflecting on the absurdities of everyday life as it was for anything else. With this film, we wanted to be sure to maintain the utmost respect for those suffering or at risk but we also wanted to share the great levity with which many Africans respond to crises.

The lightness in the film was not always present in the filmmaking. *Chop Gorilla* proved to be perhaps the most difficult film to make. Before we started shooting, we sent Augustus off ahead, with 20,000 XAF, to make arrangements and preparations in Mamfé. We also gave him 10,000 XAF to bring three actors from Bamenda. We arrived in Mamfé late at night (our share-car broke down a dozen kilometers from any town—a few hours out of Kumba and still a couple hours from Mamfé—we thought we might be sleeping in the bus that night). When we finally arrived in Mamfé, we called Augustus to ask where he had arranged for us all to stay. He directed us to a brothel. We made our way there, then our ERuDeF colleague (and editor of *The Green Vision* newspaper), Azure Opio, vetoed it, with the ostensible excuse that the music was too loud. Next Augustus found us a new guesthouse. He got a discount for having so many of us stay for so long, then apparently used the extra money to buy the cast beer.

The beer is where the trouble started, though we did not yet know it. The next morning, we held a long script meeting. Augustus brought nine actors instead of the four planned. His prepared script turned out
to be no more than a germ of an idea. After we all argued over how much we needed a script (with dialogue, further scenes, direction...), I took over as scribe. Augustus had plenty to say, I wrote it down, and we ended up not needing most of it. After the meeting, Opio discovered that Augustus had used the money the night before. A fight ensued. The next morning, we were to start filming at 8 am. At 8:30 am, only half the people arrived. Augustus needed to bring two dem guns and asked for proof of authorization to protect him as he carried the guns around town. We had no such thing and decided to hide the guns. We barely got to filming that day anyway. We spent most of the day seeking a film permit from the local authorities. We had no success and, by late afternoon, decided to film anyway. (Augustus had a friend in the office and said it would turn out okay.)

Throughout the film production, we felt tension between the ERuDeF crew and the filmmakers. Distrust in the finances made everyone wary of being cheated. Noal and I, tone-deaf to cultural propriety, behavior, and expectation, stumbled along, feeling terrible about the social situation. In the midst of it all, we had to force Noal to go to the hospital to treat her purple, bloated leg. Despite all this, we made the film. Eventually, the issues settled and we all became good friends. A week later, after Augustus, the filmmaker, and I finished editing, we had a lovely, warm, cozy screening for our whole crew back in Bamenda. Everyone loved the final film.

**Synopsis**

*Chop Gorilla* begins with a prayer for all the people suffering from Ebola. The story starts at dusk, with a hunter, Pa Gorilla, stalking deep in the bush. He kills a gorilla. Titles follow, then a montage of butchering at the market, concluding with Ma Gorilla selling gorilla meat pepe (pepper) soup to a bushmeat connoisseur. He loves it.

Later, Ma Gorilla returns home, excited about her great success at the market. She finds Pa Gorilla and his brother, Ndango, by the fire. When Ndango hears that they were selling gorilla, he gets upset. He was crippled by a gorilla in the bush. He believes gorillas are too dangerous to mess with. They all argue, with Pa
Gorilla boasting of his hunting prowess, threatening to stop sharing food with his brother, and eventually marching off to the bush to prove himself.

Meanwhile, at the national park headquarters, the rangers learn that another case of Ebola has come up in a nearby country. Orders come to begin patrolling the forest immediately—especially for primate hunting—and to shut down the bushmeat sellers at the market.

At the market the next day, the connoisseur refuses to buy the gorilla soup again. Ma Gorilla is surprised but he is too scared by the news. He gives her a spiel about Ebola (while enjoying python, a safe species). Back in the forest, Pa Gorilla has a close call with a forest ranger. Ebola continues to erupt in the news.

Later, the forest guards and a commissioner arrive at the market and seize Ma Gorilla’s pot and bushmeat. She returns home crying. Pa Gorilla declares he will go to the park office and get their pot back. At the office, he gets in an argument and then is almost arrested after shotgun shells slip out of his pocket. He runs away, returns home, and says he will go shoot a gorilla to make their money back.

Ndango and Ma Gorilla protest, warning of the dangers of gorillas, arrest, and especially Ebola. Pa Gorilla, brazen as ever, storms off into the forest. He hunts for a long time, with no luck. In the middle of the forest, he encounters an international aid worker, come to warn him and other forest-users about the dangers of Ebola. Pa Gorilla dismisses the aid worker, his imperialism and alarmism. Pa Gorilla asks what is the difference between Ebola and Boko Haram, declares that his ancestors hunted gorillas, and pushes the aid worker off a bridge. He continues hunting but remains unsuccessful. He begins to worry about returning home empty-handed, especially after all his boasting.

Then he discovers a dead gorilla in the bush. It smells funny. He is wary but decides to take the meat and save his pride. He brings the dead gorilla home. Ma Gorilla cooks it up, both her and Ndango complaining of the smell while Pa Gorilla dismisses their concerns. All reluctantly eat, then go to bed. Late that night, Pa Gorilla wakes up with a stomach ache. The film ends with him admitting to Ma Gorilla that he
brought home a dead gorilla, her berating him, and then Pa Gorilla wandering off into the dark, at her behest, to relieve himself.

Moral Issue

The first moral issue is, of course, the suffering of Ebola. Though the concern is implicit in the narrative of the film, it is the stark subtext. At the last moment of the editing, Augustus added the prayer at the beginning:

This film is dedicated to our fellow Africans suffering from the Ebola virus. We pray for you and for the end of Ebola. Gold help us all. Amen.

The rest of the film does not address Ebola directly, aside from the hysteria, but it speaks to the emotional experience of West Africans as they face the crisis amid so much confusion, uncertainty, and misinformation. The film also references the literal impact of the Ebola crisis. The border with Nigeria closed a week before we shot the film, having great (and little discussed) economic impact on the two countries, especially Cameroon. Bushmeat stands and markets closed across both countries, and all of West Africa, at a remarkable rate.587 Some of the closures came from government pressure, others from fear after patrons learned of the risk.588 Some sellers attributed it to a government media campaign.589 One woman said she went from selling 10 to 20 pieces in a day to about one piece a week.590

---

590 Ibid.
When I began filmmaking, I saw bushmeat for sale all over Cross River, Nigeria. When I reached Cameroon, it was almost gone. People pointed out where stalls used to stand (especially as we looked for them to include in the film). They expressed concern for the women who ran them, wondering what they were doing for money and livelihood now.

Some conservationists argue that Ebola presents a “silver lining” for conservation, by preventing Africans from eating bushmeat. Others critique this position, arguing:

Framing this human tragedy in this way risks unforeseen conservation outcomes on the ground in Africa, and could alienate support for conservation efforts in the territories where it is most needed, as well as in the developed world. Such large-scale human disasters can at best be used as occasions to explain the important ways in which human and animal lifestyles are intimately interlinked and the consequences of these disasters for animal and human health.

Augustus’s satirical performance—of the ignorant but proud African, the blustering buffoon—presents the moral issue of maintaining pride in the face of familiar persecution. His performance represents feeling of alienation. He exaggerates common, local reactions to the news. In-between films, I ate many breakfasts at Usman’s small, spaghetti-omelet stand outside our apartment in Buea. During the morning news (usually from France or BBC), folks around me would protest the Western framing of Ebola, of ignorant Africans, of the crisis which they did not see around them. They wondered why Ebola, like AIDS, started in Africa and not the West. They asked why both diseases had more impact in Africa than elsewhere, and why the vaccines took so long and cost so much. They offered conspiracy theories and claimed that Ebola had never been an issue before. They responded to the news with distrust and suspicion.

---

On camera and in real life, Augustus is a character (“I tried the Internet once. I knew it was a bad place for me. I will not go back”). I hard trouble reading where he actually stood on Ebola, Western science, or conservation. But Augustus understands and evokes the local everyman. Folks love his films because they recognize each other and parts of themselves in his characters: they know that guy. The moral issue Augustus presents is how ‘that guy’ feels in the face of conservationists, in the face of trouble, in the face of the Ebola crisis.

Another moral issue, raised directly in the film, is Pa Gorilla’s ancestor argument: my grandparents ate gorillas. Appealing to tradition is a common logical fallacy (some American’s ancestors kept slaves, this fact does not justify their progeny in doing so now) but Pa Gorilla is also referencing trust and autonomy. Why should he believe outsiders now telling him that he is suddenly at risk? Who are they to tell him to stop? He presents challenging moral questions. His challenges take gorilla hunting from a question of environmental ethics to issues of politics and power; he makes the moral questions interpersonal instead of interspecies.

Conservationists are coming to appreciate the need for nuance. They note the need to address bushmeat more carefully, distinguishing between safe, sustainable hunting and practices risking transmission of zoonotic diseases or the viability of wild species, arguing that:

Doing so will also help avoid foisting particular culturally specific moral imperatives (not eating wild animals) on others from different cultural backgrounds and economic circumstances, not to mention valuing wild animals in Africa (should not be eaten) in a different way to valuing wild animals in the developed world, notably the United States and Europe (where they are widely eaten).\footnote{Ibid, 965-966.}

Bushmeat, and the regulation of the bushmeat crisis, is one moral issue. Killing and eating gorillas is another, or at least a distinct subset of the issue. Primatologists suspect Cross River gorillas experienced heavy
hunting, especially in the lowlands; hunting is why the gorillas exist only on hilltops today. Primatologists suspect hunting decreased after the arrival of conservationists in the late 1980s, but still they expect hunters killed about two Cross River gorillas per year from 1990 to 1998. Sporadic hunting continues, with one gorilla killed in Mone in 2009, three in Af on 2011-2012, and three in 2013: one at Mbulu, one at Basho, and the aforementioned gorilla at Pinyin. Hunting gorillas is illegal in both Nigeria and Cameroon. It continues because of weak enforcement and unenforced laws. Primatologists warn that even relatively low levels of hunting may be unsustainable for Cross River gorillas due to their tiny population.

The political economy of gorilla hunting limits wanton slaughter. Gorillas are elusive, large, and dangerous. Hunting them requires great skill and strength. It requires a gun, ammunition, and understanding of their behavior. During my field time, no one voiced frustration to me at not being able to kill gorillas any longer. Perhaps no one said anything because of the company I kept (i.e. conservationists) but folks seemed fairly candid. Francis is a local and folks trust him. He can conduct surveys and write entire reports on bushmeat with the hunters and sellers themselves helping him. Around a few hillsites, particularly at Kundev e and Bamba, folks made general arguments about the loss of income from hunting and the dire need of income for expenses such as school fees, but no one said they needed to hunt gorillas in particular. Unlike

---

596 Bergl 2006 
598 Bergl, 2006; Dunn et al. 2014 
599 Ibid. 
600 Ibid. 
the species-specific needs of traditional Chinese medicine, for example, gorillas may not be irreplaceable as prey.

Bushmeat hunting is a complex moral issue.\textsuperscript{602} For many rural communities in the Cross River headwaters, it is an important source of protein.\textsuperscript{603} For others, it is cultural cuisine or a personal preference. Many people prefer the taste of bushmeat.\textsuperscript{604} Each aspect of the issue raises different moral questions, some pertaining to survival, others to cultural identity, respect, and aesthetic value. Bushmeat hunting even raises questions of virtue. Some hunters find virtue in developing hunting skills and in the relationship hunting creates between them and the environment:

For hunters like me, hunting isn’t ultimately about the gun. It’s about wildlife and the land that sustains it . . . I decided to learn to hunt because I wanted to read landscapes and understand their secrets, too. I wanted to learn more about where my food comes from. To hunt is to become fluent enough in an ecosystem not only to watch but also to participate in it.\textsuperscript{605}

Though bushmeat and hunting may have value, they also bring risk. The film ends by showing how Pa Gorilla’s arrogance and rash decisions put his loved ones at risk of disease. We left the story open, in part


\textsuperscript{605} McCaulou, L. R. 2012. “I Hunt, but the N. R. A. Isn't for Me,” New York Times. 24 April. Some animal rights folks may such reasoning surprising: “This always struck me as a strange kind of reason to kill something, but apparently there are many people who kill and also feel good about themselves for doing it” (Driver, Julia. 2012. Book Review: Ethics and Animals: An Introduction. October 4.)
to show the uncertainty around the issue, in part to maintain ambiguity about Pa Gorilla’s culpability. We also left it vague due to our colleagues’ concerns.

A couple conservationists feared our film may bring rumors of Ebola having reached Cameroon (some folks take movies seriously, hence Augustus’s arrests) or counter-reactions to conservation: rather than no longer eating gorillas, people may instead decide they should kill all the gorillas to eliminate the risk of the animals transmitting the virus. We made sure to that the film does not say that Ebola was in Cameroon, or ever came to Cameroon. We hope the film helps provide some nuance and clarity, but we are not sure how it will be received.

The conservationists’ concerns were not unwarranted. After finishing Chop Gorilla, we went to make arrangements to shoot our next film at the villages around Kagwene, specifically Nijikwa and Kinshi. During our first meeting, with the Regional Delegate of Forestry, he told us that we could film in the villages but not enter the gorilla sanctuary—the risk of Ebola was too high. The new restrictions had come down from the top office. WCS Cameroon later showed us the same memo in their office and noted the crazy implications—Ebola is not only a risk during outbreak. If the government comes to see gorillas as permanent Ebola threats, they may change policy and greatly affect conservation: no one will be able to study or protect the gorillas, ecotourism opportunities will be void. Most of all, what of the nine communities living next to the Cross River gorillas at Kagwene everyday? How would the new laws regulate them? When we went to film our movie at Kagwene a month later, we were still not allowed to enter the forest. The park rangers offered to take us in, anyway, for a good price. I did not go in, though Kagwene offered perhaps the best chance of seeing the Cross River gorillas in the wild.

Some conservationists have had a different reaction. They call for vaccinations of gorillas and other great apes to protect them from Ebola and other possible disease outbreaks:

Some readers may object to vaccination on the grounds that the conservation objective should be to maintain the “natural balance”. Consequently, we should only be concerned with diseases introduced
by humans. However, modern human activities are now upsetting the “natural balance” in Equatorial Africa in massive and unprecedented ways. The extraction of timber, oil, and minerals for export to developed countries is destroying vast tracts of habitat. The jobs created by these export industries, and the food and medicines imported from developed countries have allowed local human populations to explode to many times their historic levels, creating unprecedented demand for agricultural land and firewood as well as a cash market for bushmeat. Ecological communities and ecosystems are so affected by local, regional and global level anthropogenic impact that we suggest that it is no longer clear what “natural” means. Thus, even for pathogens such as Ebola, SIV, or malaria, which are originally enzootic, we now likely need to intervene in “natural” diseases that handicap the resilience of wild ape populations to other threats.

…Based on our research …we suggest that the great ape conservation community should pursue and promote treatment and vaccination, as weapons in the arsenal for fighting the decline of African apes. This should include rigorous assessments of both safety and cost-effectiveness, and should emphasize program sustainability, with particular attention to the training of African veterinary personnel. Field studies on safe and efficient methods for delivering treatments and vaccines orally should be a priority, but there is also a critical need for studies evaluating the cost-effectiveness of all ape conservation strategies in terms of their marginal effects on ape viability. 606

Morally justifying such action will require not only convincing other conservationists that vaccinating gorillas is the right thing to do, conservationists will need to explain this action to local communities as well.

In 2008, Dr. Denis Ndeloh Etiendem, a Cameroonian conservationist and primatologist, collected eight gorilla stories in the Lebialem Highlands. One begins:

When I was young (referring to some 10-15 years ago) a hunter in a neighbouring village (Fossimondi) shot and killed a male gorilla while hunting. It happened that this gorilla was the totem of the most powerful herbalist in our village. Since he could not survive without his animal totem, he died.\textsuperscript{607}

\textit{Nzhu Jimangemi} is adapted from this story. The idea of a gorilla totem connecting the souls of a human and gorilla appeared in other, older accounts I read as well.\textsuperscript{608} The story struck me. I introduced it to our team, proposing to make our film at Bechati, the village where Etiendem recorded it. Bechati is also one of the communities around Tofala, ERuDeF’s main field site; we had many contacts and resources available there. Noal and Impeccable took over the idea, developing it into a much more involved story.

When we arrived in Bechati, folks offered us a similar account. Referencing the gorilla killed in Pinyin, they told us that less than a month after the killing of the silverback, a nearby fon (chief) died as well. They hinted, this is strange, no? It should be heeded. We cannot be so sure how such things work.

We brought Noal and Impeccable’s script to the village secondary school, read through it together, and then passed along copies to the drama club and the two teachers. They took it for a couple days and revised it again. On Sunday, we met to begin filming. We had asked for six or seven students for the story,

\textsuperscript{608} Meder 1999
leaving the casting up to the teachers. Over thirty students came. We filmed all day but did not finish shooting before dark. The next day was a school day; we lost our cast. We also worried that they had not performed well.\(^6^{09}\) Over a long, restless night, I thought to solve our problem by spanning the film across many years. The next day we found new stars: various folks willing to take a day off from the farm or other duties. Our crew worried that the skin color of our two women leads did not match (adult Nanji was too dark compared to childhood Nanji). We cast a few folks and then they fell through—either sick, busy, or not home when we arrived to start shooting—but we literally grabbed neighbors to take on the roles and they each did a tremendous job.

We made this film in an unusual context. Only a local, Cameroonian organization, ERuDeF is small and limited in its resources. While WCS spans both countries and works at almost all the Cross River gorilla hillsites, ERuDeF works only at the Tofala hillsite and its surrounding villages.\(^6^{10}\) ERuDeF’s founder, CEO, and President, Louis Nkembi, grew up in Menji (Fontem), the capital of the Lebialem Highlands division of the South-West Region. He focuses his organization’s work back in his community.

Tofala hosts the most remote of all Cross River gorilla subpopulations. On the map, the subpopulation is a stark satellite. Their isolation makes them the least viable subpopulation. Other conservationists mention, in passing, that Tofala’s best hope may be as a “living zoo”. None of this dissuades ERuDeF. Nkembi describes ERuDeF as a “species-focused” organization. Cross River gorillas are one of their main species, gorilla conservation one of their organization’s main goals.

Nkembi began this dissertation with his comment about Pinyin villagers not valuing their wildlife. He has a personal connection to the Cross River gorillas. They come from the forest beside his

\(^{609}\) We had little idea what was going on—they performed in the local dialect, Mundani—but our lead actor seemed to reject her love interest’s advances, rather than warm to them. We thought we were making a romance. Her behavior made sense later, she acted well, but at the time we did not know how they had changed the story.

\(^{610}\) ERuDeF also has a few small projects on Mount Cameroon, near its offices in Buea, and they are starting to expand their work into Mak Betchou as well. That said, Cross River gorillas are a main focus of their organization but they work only at the Tofala hillsite.
Hometown. He helped ‘discover’ the Tofala sub-population in 2004. Ten years later, after years of lobbying by ERuDeF and just after we finished filming, the Cameroonian government designated the Tofala hillsite a national wildlife sanctuary with Prime Ministerial decree 20145212. On September 29, 2014, the decree designated 8.087 hectares of the forest as a reserve, making ERuDeF the first Cameroonian organization to protect land in the country. Though ERuDeF made the application, support for the sanctuary came from, among others: Fauna & Flora International, Tusk Trust, African Conservation Foundation, Rufford Foundation, FFEM Small Grants Programme, Taiwan Forestry Bureau/Conservation Division, Man & Nature, Arcus Foundation, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Seaworld and Busch Gardens Conservation Fund, Prince Bernhard Conservation Fund, People’s Trust for Endangered Species, International Primate Protection League and Transpetrol Foundation. Many of the organization helped accelerate the designation via online petitions.

Until the designation of the sanctuary, the forest fell under communal forest laws. The communal laws meant the forest could be converted for any use outside forestry: farms were appropriate, commercial logging was not. Researchers found that in Bechati, Fossimondi, and Besali (the three villages closest to the Tofala hillsite), 86% of livelihood activity was forest-dependent. Folks used the forest for hunting and trapping, fuel wood, and harvesting non-timber forest products for food and medicine. The researchers note both that all these activities have a negative impact on Cross River gorillas and that “very few” livelihood alternatives are available.

613 Ibid.
615 Ibid.: 846
Folks around the sanctuary, including in Bechati, were wary of the forest gaining any protection, fearing it would take away their “God given forest and animals.” Others feared that, without livelihood alternatives, hunters would continue to trap and kill animals in the forest whether protected or not. ERuDeF responded with community sensitization meetings and by offering livelihood opportunities through palm oil mills, beehives, and micro-financing programs.

Sentiment differed both across communities around Tofala and within them. Some villages, such as Bangang, avoided negotiation for years. Their fon, Folah III, demanded his people be taken care of first. The fons of both Bangang and Nkong agreed to the sanctuary once they heard it was coming from the government.

I am not sure what happened after we left. When we filmed, the area was not yet protected. The government decree is the first legal protection for the forest. ERuDeF now needs to work with the Cameroonian government, the mayors of Menji, Wabane, and Alou, and the traditional, local authorities, to develop a task force and collaborative management schemes for protecting the area. ERuDeF will also lay boundaries for the sanctuary, continue to sensitize the surrounding communities, and deploy guards.

The government set the sanctuary’s administrative headquarters in Bechati though the community had fought the designation. The Bechati Village Forest Management Committee welcomed the designation and hoped that it would help turn the community around by bringing socio-economic development such as electricity, improved roads, and tourism. (We had to take motorbikes to reach the village and we charged our camera batteries at a solar panel set up in the village market.) A quote from the committee leader, Talumbu Ebenezer is telling:

619 Opio and Shancho, 2015
620 Ibid.
621 Ibid.
It has been very difficult trying to make people understand the importance of this project. I have been accused of conspiring with ERuDeF to sell village forest and my life has been threatened severally [sic]. I am very happy now because Tofala has finally gained government protection. It shows that we have not been working in vain. I know that when the people start seeing the benefits that will come to Bechati, they will be very happy. 622

Similar sentiment comes from the neighboring village of Besali (the site of our eighth film). The president of the Besali Forest Management Committee, Solomon Tankoh, offers:

I hope that the chief will be the one to break this news to the people. Many of them still think it is a joke and remain stubborn. I think when the chief will explain to the people that the forest is now a government protected area, showing the legal documents to back it up, they would understand better and take things more seriously. 623

Bechati and the other Lebialem communities show that even where local stories may support conservation, local sentiment may not.

Synopsis

Two farmers begin the film, discussing a mysterious recent death in the community: a person was in the forest, transformed as an animal, when a hunter shot and killed her. One farmer argues that the story is true, the other dismisses it, citing the story’s clash with the Bible. That evening, a young man, Atabong, tries to woo a young woman, Nanji, down by the river. They soon part but agree to meet again. Nanji returns home late, to reprimand from her brothers and sister.

622 Ibid.  
623 Ibid.
The next morning, the fon of the village warns a prolific young hunter, Asong, to stop hunting in the old forest. People with totems (those transforming into animals) are tired of being chased around by the hunters. They are scared, too. Also, the conservors, who are white, cannot see the animals when Asong and the other hunters act this way.

The fon repeats his demands that Asong stop hunting in a certain part of the forest (the Old Town) and tells him to make sure the other hunters do the same. He explains a further reason why. The ancestors are angry. The hunters are killing the young ones (animals, I think) and trampling their food. The fon warns that the community will call the ancestors to go wild on the hunters if the hunters do not cease their behavior. All the hunting activity upsets the ancestors and they are making the community suffer from hunger.

The fon warns Asong not to bring strangers into the forest, describing how they do not know local custom. They will not respect local taboos, such as against killing animals that people transform into, including gorillas and chimpanzees. He adds that Asong should avoid going to this part of the forest at all, in case strange hunters follow him. His actions are putting the transformers at risk. Asong agrees to all of this.

The next day, Asong meets Nanji by the river. He pursues her. Nanji tells him Atabong is courting her already. Asong dismisses this and offers her plenty of bushmeat. She rejects him and heads home. That night, she meets Atabong again by the river.

Time passes. A few weeks later, Asong and a hunter friend discover Atabong mysteriously emerging from the forest. He is exhausted and has no tools (which would have explained his forest activity). Atabong dodges their questions, simply reminding them to stop hunting, especially the primates. Meanwhile, Nanji confides to her sister that she is pregnant and does not know what to do. Her sister warns her against getting an abortion.

The next day, Asong confronts two of Nanji’s friends, asking them to help him woo her. They refuse. That evening, Atabong and Nanji meet by the stream. She tells him of the pregnancy and demands he come
meet her family and, eventually, marry her. He rejoices about the baby, but dances around the ensuing responsibilities.

The next day, Nanji prepares the born house with her mother.

The couple have their baby. Years pass.

Years later, the story begins again with lizards around a doorway—a sign of bad luck in the region. Atabong is repairing a fishing net. Asong is hunting deep in the forest. Nanji is doing chores. Eventually Atabong and Nanji sit down to dinner with their large family, then Atabong goes for a nap. Around this time, Asong discovers a gorilla. He stalks and shoots it. Atabong dies.

The next day, Nanji performs a funeral. Asong returns to the village, announcing his success—his first gorilla! He is shocked to learn that his friend died. He does not believe it. He goes to Nanji. She tells Asong it is true. She is devastated and concerned about how she will care for her children. Asong promises to find out what happened.

Exhausted, he stops for a nap. During Asong’s dream, Atabong visits him and explains he had a gorilla totem. When Asong killed the gorilla, he killed Atabong too. Atabong reprimands Asong, reminds Asong that he warned him not to hunt gorillas, and demands that Asong now take care of Atabong’s family.

Asong wakes up distressed. He goes to a native doctor to see if his dream was true. The native doctor confirms it, reaffirms Asong’s duty to watch over Atabong’s family, and asks Asong to help one of Atabong’s children who also “has a gorilla in his belly”. Asong goes to Nanji and explains everything. She chases him away.

Awhile later, Asong visits Nanji again, apologizing profusely and offering his help with their family. Now resolved to her fate, she quietly accepts, then returns to mourning.

Moral Issue
The narrative’s moral issue (relevant to the conservation question) concerns the risk in hunting. In the story, hunting gorillas may be hunting humans. Killing a gorilla may kill an important member of the community, be it a traditional healer or even a fon. As in the film, a hunter could accidentally kill his friend.

The tragedy in the story could offer a metaphor for the accidental loss of species. It tracks the tragedy of extinction, where species are lost through collective action but not collective intention. Wild species disappear because of choices humans make but not because humans are trying to eradicate them.

In the film, morality comes entwined among totems and taboos. Totems can make moral culpability tricky. Shadowy and uncertain, they blur boundaries between humans and animals, agency and vulnerability. In my understanding, in Bechati “totem” is a crude term for a connection between a human and an animal that allows the human to transform into the animal at will. When we were subtitling, our translator, Ketunze James, was unsure of the applicability of the term. I use it here, following Etiendem (who hails from Lebialem), but we did not use it in the film. Ketunze preferred “transformers” and “gorilla in the stomach” and other more direct descriptions.

Ketunze holds a degree from the University of Bamenda. He is a government school teacher and the only teacher at the local school originally from Bechati (hence his fluency in Mundani). When we were translating, I asked him if our story retained relevance, if folks still believed in totems, or at least remembered the old ideas. He responded, of course we still do. He knows people who say: “You want to see a monkey?”, then go behind a bush and, a moment later, a monkey appears. He offered the evidence as matter of fact. Totem beliefs persist.

Totems may mean hunters must take a pre-cautionary approach in the forest, unsure of which animals are transformed humans and which are fair game. Taboos offer more clear moral prescriptions. They repeat throughout the film as warnings. The fon tells a young Asong a clear prohibition: “Do not hunt in the Old Town.” Atabong tells Asong not to hunt gorillas. The native doctor tells Asong that he broke a taboo as

well. As in *Obi & the Juju Forest*, the taboos show local ways of conserving and regulating behavior prior to Western conservation efforts.

The fon’s speech presents the most explicit moral proclamations in the film.\textsuperscript{625} We scripted none of his lines. We did not even plan to have the fon in the film. As a courtesy, when we arrived in the village we went to the palace. We brought palm wine to greet the fon and seek his permission and approval for our project. After hearing our plan, he said something to the effect of: “I hope I will be included.”

We made sure he was. When we arrived to shoot a few days later, we set up and waited. Eventually the fon appeared and simply ad-libbed his part, knowing only where he fit into the narrative. He presented his own moral prescriptions. They reflect how a local, traditional authority may explain wildlife conservation. Whether or not he supports conservation around his community, he performed as a character who does. In so doing, he showed how a fon may make a moral case for conservation to his community members.

At one point, the fon tells Asong not to hunt because “the animals are going away so the conservors, who are white, are not privileged to see them.” His comment is interesting for, at the time, Tofala fell outside most conservation regimes. Their experience with conservation comes from the last decade with ERuDeF (a Cameroonian organization) implementing various efforts but having far less impact than the larger conservation organizations on other hillsites. Once or twice a year, ERuDeF brings Western eco-tourist/volunteers (especially Germans) to Bechati for biodiversity monitoring trips in the forest. The fon’s comment may come from his experience with the eco-tourists. It may also come from him speaking to us and guessing at what we might want to hear. The statement surprised me when subtitling and it remains a surprising line in the context of the narrative (which lacks white people or any signs of conservation), but it reflects an important reality: the wild animals seem more relevant to the interests of white people, at least to

\textsuperscript{625} Other moral issues and proclamations arise in the film, particularly concerning Nanji’s pregnancy. We did not script these either; the girls improvised the abortion discussions, the lovers improvised the “tell my parents” talk. These are strong, striking normative conversations but they fall outside the scope or subject matter of the dissertation except to show how Folk Filmmaking can invite moral discourse on all sorts of issues.
the white people coming all the way out to the forests. To the community members, the animals may be important in other ways, but not as subject for viewing pleasure. The comment also hints that it is a bad thing to disappoint the white people.

The fon’s statement may seem questionable moral grounding, especially in the context of the film—stop hunting so white tourists can come and watch the wildlife—but it expresses real local sentiment. Researchers found that most people in Bechati feel conservation is not in their interest. With the changes coming following the designation of Tofala Wildlife Sanctuary, the orientation of conservation may be a source of ire. If the community understands conservation to be for white people, they may be frustrated by the sacrifices it requires them to make, feeling the restrictions come not for their own good but rather for the interests of powerful outsiders. The colonial echoes are bad for conservation and bad for socially-just relations. I was surprised by how casually and clearly the fon provides the “for the conservors” reason, as if accepting the situation. Along with the urban outfits (especially among the children), the white people line is a strong reminder of the modern context in which the old story takes place.

The other reasons the fon offers align more with traditional beliefs. They track ideas of respect. The fon references bad consequences—famine if you disrespect the elders; accidentally murdering a fellow villager (transformed into an animal), if you go hunting—but he also makes a clear case simply for considering others’ interests. The transformers are uncomfortable in their own forests. The hunting behavior goes against the wishes of the ancestors; they are offended. Referencing the ancestors may be akin to referencing God. Local laws and customs need to be respected because they are based in culture and tradition. The fon further reiterates the idea with his warnings to Asong not to bring outsiders hunting and to beware of them entering the forest. The outsiders do not know the laws of Bechati’s forest, and the local customs need to be followed.

Later in the film, Atabong repeats similar warnings to Asong and Nkeng when he encounters them entering the forest. Unlike the fon, Atabong does not give reasons—in part as his character is trying to avoid

---

626 Nkemnyi et al. 2012
conversation or questioning—but he gives a clear normative statement: do not hunt animals like gorillas, chimpanzees, and monkeys. Without offering reasons, Atabong does not provide grounds for the moral claim, he just makes a prohibition.

Morality arises in the story again after Asong shoots Atabong’s gorilla totem, killing both the gorilla and Atabong. Asong regrets the act even before knowing the full extent of it. Upon returning home, he finds that Atabong died in his absence. He is sorry to have killed the gorilla, not wanting to bring a celebratory feast to the village in a time of mourning. In the dream, Atabong reprimands Asong for hunting and killing him. Again, he does not offer much in the way of reasons or moral justification, only: I told you not to and now you killed me.

Asong is upset but confused. He does not know how he killed Atabong. He goes to the native doctor to find out. The native doctor describes the totems and what happened. He then adds an important moral dimension: responsibility. Whether he meant it or not, the doctor tells Asong: “You went for hunting, didn’t you?” Even if Asong shot Atabong by accident, it was not acceptable. Asong accepts all he hears, from Atabong’s transformation to his own responsibility. He further acknowledges his culpability by apologizing to Nanji and offering to help care for her family.

The strength of Nzhu Jimangemi may be in its metaphor: killing animals can be like killing people, the loss can be profound. We are responsible for the loss of wildlife whether we meant to kill it off or not. Akin to A Message from Oku, it expresses the tragedy of loss, particularly when unexpected and unanticipated. It also offers a vision and example of conservation outside of the Western regimes.
Film 6

HUMAN OR GORILLA?

41 min | Njikwa, North West, Cameroon | Hill Site: Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary

Bernard wrote this film. After our team discussed how all our films focused on gorilla hunters, and how hunters are good for cinema but not necessarily the main threat to Cross River gorillas, Bernard took on the more amorphous threats of forest use and habitat encroachment.

We decided to set this film around Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary. Kagwene began as a community reserve after conservationists learned that gorillas were sacred to the surrounding villages. Local communities hold taboos against killing or eating gorillas. Early conservation projects went well and the reserve became a national wildlife sanctuary in 2008, with support from WCS. It is now managed by the Cameroonian government with continued support (including rangers, equipment, and weekly food drops) from WCS Cameroon.

The conflict around Kagwene comes not from gorilla hunting but from habitat encroachment and forest use. Kagwene is an island of forest high on the top of mountains in the Cameroonian Grassfields. It is the highest elevation Cross River gorilla habitat and the only to fall within the North-West region of Cameroon. The sanctuary is very small but it hosts 20-30 gorillas.

Along with farming and forest use, Kagwene is also threatened by cattle grazers. The herders are Mbororo, a nomadic Fulani tribe. The Mbororo have little relation to the gorillas or the forest but they want

---

630 Dunn et al. 2014
631 Ibid.
632 Ibid.
good grass for their cattle. They set fires to create good graze. The fires often burn beyond control, posing serious threat to the remnant forest clustered in the steep valleys and atop mountains.\textsuperscript{633}

A month before we began filming, our WCS colleagues brought Bernard and Impeccable to Njikwa, the largest village in the remote region (hours by dirt road from the nearest major town or good road), and entry-point to Kagwene. They met with the fon, dropped off Bernard’s script, and made arrangements for filming. When we returned to film weeks later, the quartermaster, Serika Lucas, had everything ready. He did an enormous amount of work in our absence. He cast the film for us, led the cast in practicing their parts, and found all the locations and props we would need.

Despite Serika’s help, again we arrived on location and could not start filming. To even venture to Njikwa, we had to hire a forest guard to accompany us each day. Njikwa’s proximity to Kagwene requires chaperoning for tourists. Even with the guard, we were not allowed to enter the reserve. Trying to film near Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary revealed the challenges following official protection. We were not allowed to shoot—even in the villages—without authorization from Yaoundé, the Ministry of the Forestry, the Regional Delegate, and the Conservator of Kagwene, even though we had permission and affiliation with WCS. Before coming to Njikwa, we had visited the Delegate and the Ministry in Bamenda, and we spoke with the Conservator on the phone many times, but they all told us we would need to acquire permission from elsewhere first.

Even to enter Njikwa, not the reserve, we had paid relatively high prices: 30,000 XFA to the Conservator; 10,000 XFA/day for Gabriel, the Head Forest Technician, to be our chaperone; 5,000 XFA/day for a gendarme to protect us (as we were on the border with Nigeria).\textsuperscript{634} We could have hired a ranger for half the cost of Gabriel. Had the gendarme joined us, he would have been our first guard on the entire trip. At

\textsuperscript{633} Dunn \textit{et al.} 2014
\textsuperscript{634} pseudonym; We could not track where the expenses came from, there is no yet clear regulation. For example, WCS already pays the Conservator 50,000 XFA/month, but only if he joins them in the field. He often does not and he did not join us.
each film site, we checked in at the local office. They guaranteed our safety (from Boko Haram), asked us to check in often, and then we never saw each other again. Only here did they ask us to pay. The expense of permission to access Kagwene, for just a three-day visit to the villages outside the reserve, surpassed 150,000 XFA, more than our usual cost of living for two-to-three weeks.

Gabriel, the Head Forest Technician, took our payment for his services, then chaperoned us into Njikwa and told us to sit and wait for official permission to begin. He seemed to want a bribe to start filming without the proper authorization. He also wanted us to pay a larger amount to the conservator. Without ecotourism prices established or any official regulation, all the fees felt arbitrary and coercive.

I had very much wanted to film Cross River gorillas at Kagwene. The small forest, the large band of gorillas, and the local taboo make the reserve perhaps the best place to encounter wild Cross River gorillas in the world. I felt I desperately needed wild Cross River gorilla footage for our film series. I also did not want to write an entire dissertation about an animal I have never seen. But going into Kagwene would not only require flaunting the recent ban on all visiting due to Ebola, it would also require paying even more money, hiring more guides and guards, and paying everyone’s expenses for almost a week. We could not afford to take the money from the project budget, no matter how much I thought I needed wild gorilla footage. I could afford to pay out of pocket but I felt it inappropriate to wield so much money all of a sudden, for a personal, seemingly luxury interest and activity. How could I pay so much money to go see gorillas when we were all living on so (relatively) little?

I did not go see the gorillas and we could only afford paying for three days in Njikwa to shoot our film. We lost the first day waiting for permission. We shoot throughout the second day. On the third day, we woke to find Gabriel already gone.

The costs of visiting Kagwene raise the question: who is Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary for? Only the gorillas? Outside researchers? The greater global community, who cares about the gorillas? A Njikwa local, now a biology teacher in Bamenda, told us that one problem with Kagwene was that no one knew what it
was. He claimed no local leaders or elites had visited the sanctuary. Only the fon—a powerful military attaché based in America for many years—had been there. The fon described Kagwene as wonderful, unlike any place the people of Njikwa have ever seen; it was “like America.” The teacher stressed that local elites should be brought to the reserve. He also asked for a good road from Bamenda to Njikwa—he would like to take his students there for a picnic.635

The only local people who enter the reserve legally are Gorilla Guardians. Trained by WCS, they patrol the reserve to protect the forest. They probably see gorillas more often than any other people working on conservation in the Cross River headwaters. They shared charming stories of watching the babies play. WCS Cameroon continues to work closely with Kagwene, visiting at least once a month to bring supplies.

Jacob, Francis’s counterpart as conservation educator for WCS Cameroon, describes conservation as a generational issue.636 Each generation had its own style. Roughly cleaved, the seventies had one way, the eighties another, the nineties, aughts, and twenty-tens yet others. Each needed its own solutions to the problem of environmental degradation and the concomitant loss of wild animals. Jacob helped us make arrangements at Kagwene and he helped Bernard and Impeccable with their scripts. He reminded them that not all Cross River gorillas occur in protected areas. He stressed to Bernard that the film should be sure not to say: If Cross River gorillas are in your forest, you can no longer use it. Jacob anticipated the Flagship Species paradox and challenged it: perhaps conserving a species does not require saving all of its habitat.637 He invited a change in generational style. Jacob’s offered his mantra, too: We teach, we train, we explain.

Following Jacob’s advice, Bernard wrote a complex but careful script. Folks at Njikwa liked it and accepted it. When we did shoot, Serika’s arrangements worked out well. Again, even more people wanted to participate than he cast; we added sisters to be with the wives. The ease with which folks adapted Bernard’s

635 The road is atrocious. On the way in, we made the fifty-kilometer trip in three to four hours. On the way out, we left after a rain. The trip out took twelve hours.
636 pseudonym
637 See the Introduction and Chapter Three
script made it seem consistent with local culture. Bernard also grew up in the North-West Region, nearby in Bambalang. He relates to the folks at Njikwa and connects well with local culture.

Bernard and the people of Njikwa (and of Oku) are all from Cameroon’s Grassfields, but in the Grassfields culture changes quickly. Language, traditions, and customs vary within a dozen kilometers. The local language of Njikwa, Ngwo, only appears in the film on a few occasions. Bernard asked folks to speak in Pidgin so that he could follow along and help direct the story. The quartermaster also asked the villagers not to speak in Ngwo. The film is going out to the wider world, he told them, and we want everyone else to understand the story. I explained subtitling but we decided he was right. Subtitles may prove hard for audiences to follow. Pidgin would make the film easier to watch, especially for Cross River communities, all fluent in Pidgin.

Synopsis

The film begins with a band of gorillas running away from sounds of sawing. The sounds also bring a forest ranger, Desmond. Desmond chases the loggers off and confiscates their chainsaw. Meanwhile, a trapper, Pa Mboro, retrieves a squirrel from one of his snares in the forest. Nearby a group of women fight over farmland. Two of them are Pa Mboro’s wives. He arrives and asks them to relax. You better get along, he warns them, a third wife is coming soon. They fight further over this—we do not have enough farmland for two!

The next day Pa Mboro and his second wife clear forest to create farmland for the third wife. Down at the river, Desmond meets up with one of the loggers and takes a bribe to return the chainsaw.

The next day a couple herders are setting fire to the bush. Patrolling nearby, Desmond spots them. He manages to put out the flames but the herders escape on horseback. In the forest, Pa Mboro is checking his traps. To his dismay, he discovers a gorilla caught in one. As he comes closer, the gorilla escapes. Pa Mboro quickly removes his traps and runs off, exclaiming that his community does not harm gorillas, this is
terrible, how could this have happened? Back at the park headquarters, the regional delegate discovers the missing chain saw.

Pa Mboro arrives at the new farm to help his new, third wife. He laments about hurting the gorilla. They gather firewood and head home together. On their way home, they run into Desmond. He greets them warmly—he is Pa Mboro’s Godson (or something similar). Desmond greets his new, third Godmother and thanks his Godfather for all his financial support: now he has graduated school and become a forest ranger!

Desmond asks his Godfather what he was doing out around the reserve. Pa Mboro says he is returning from the farm. Asking where the farm is, Desmond learns that his Godfather is encroaching on protected forest. They argue, tussle over the firewood, and Pa Mboro and his wife storm off, wood still in hand.

Meanwhile, a conservation educator arrives to hold a community meeting. She tries to explain the importance of conservation to the community but they continuously challenge her, asking how they are to make money, even to survive, without the forest. “Does it mean you value animals more than humans?” She responds and debates with them until a community member proposes she provide piglets to replace forest use. The idea causes great commotion and she agrees to try it, ending the meeting.

That evening, Desmond arrives back at his office. The head forest ranger is waiting. As he yells and scolds Desmond for corruption, Desmond tries to bribe him in turn. The gesture infuriates the head ranger even more. The film ends with him chasing Desmond out of the office.

Moral Issue

Moral issues abound in this film: corruption, community and conservation conflict over land use, conservation’s disconnect from local communities. Until the conservation educator arrives near the end of the film, the only argument for conservation is that gorillas should be conserved because it is the law. The narrative focuses instead on the needs of the community and the many challenges to enforcing conservation.
Desmond exemplifies the challenges with his many mishaps. He encounters four different threats: logging, burning, forest encroachment, and corruption; he is unable to stop any and becomes complicit in the last. Reprising his role from *Chop Gorilla*, Bernard again played the hapless forest guard. When he wrote the film he had no intention to play the part—he thought our actual forest guard would do it—but the guard did not want to appear on camera taking a bribe.

In *Chop Gorilla*, Bernard played Desmond as inept due to the vagaries of the script: Pa Gorilla somehow always had to get away. In *Human or Gorilla*, Desmond’s constant failures are more fraught. They reveal the shortcomings of conservation enforcement, the ineptitude of under-paid, under-trained, and under-equipped rangers in dealing with such overwhelming obstacles.\(^{638}\) Moral issues here include the difficulty in enforcing legislation and the distance of the law from local support, acceptance, or context.\(^ {639}\)

Bernard wrote the film well. Each vignette hints at much grander problems. The threats of habitat encroachment and grazing fires chip away at gorilla habitat here and there, while not directly hurting the gorillas themselves. They undercut conservation efforts with their slow, eroding nature. They are pernicious in their subtly; each little act of corruption or forest encroachment augments each other. Even the trapping of squirrels and small animals seems relatively harmless, until it snares a gorilla. I am not sure how audiences will interpret the film. Westerners may be surprised by all the threats to the forest and by the neglect of the law. Local communities may see local actions are standard behavior, they may be more surprised by Desmond. The film does not offer clear moral prescriptions in these scenes. It shows the character’s reasons for acting, and how their reasons conflict, but not whose reasons are better.

With the arrival of Impeccable as the conservation educator from the NGO, the film begins to offer moral claims for gorilla conservation. Impeccable argues (translated from the Pidgin):

I have come to educate you; you know that this area [Njikwa] is rich in some

---

\(^{638}\) The situation appears much worse in East Africa, where rangers confront heavily armed and highly trained poachers.  
\(^{639}\) The film does not address moral issues related to gender outside from the trouble Mboro’s wives are having with limited space and resources.
wildlife species that are not found anywhere else in the world like the Cross River gorilla. This has a lot of touristic potentials but we are engaged in some practices that are destroying the habitats of this animal and we can lose this benefit.

A community member quickly interrupts her: “Gorillas are like humans so we in this community don’t eat gorillas,” asserting that they have their own reason for not harming gorillas. They already conserve them. Impeccable continues on, explaining that the forest use is not okay, they need to practice more holistic conservation. She justifies the restriction by explaining how few gorillas remain, referencing tourism benefits again, and warning that children will never know or see gorillas if things do not change.

Her future generations argument elicits another response: If you are to keep us from the forest, how will we send our children to school? The needs of future generations cannot preclude meeting the needs of the current generation. Impeccable tells them that, due to conservation legislation, it is too late to use the forest. It is now protected. She came to offer alternatives. Her NGO provides alternative livelihoods: fishing ponds, bakeries, livestock… what would they like?

Again, they respond: does this mean you value animals more than humans? They want to keep the moral issue up in the air: why is the forest protected for the animals rather than available for us? Impeccable wants to move on to a solution, some sort of compromise. Eventually the group agrees to try piglets. The scene shows how “conservation sensitization” (as ERuDeF calls it)—conservation education for adults—often does not work. The rationales may not be compelling, the justification tried and stale, the arguments irrelevant.

With their gorilla taboos, the communities around Kagwene may feel as if they already protect gorillas, and have for decades. They have their own reasons and do not need outside justification or imposition. They may also not want to make sacrifices. Impeccable’s arguments appear to fall on deaf ears, as the community protests, contests her arguments, and demands alternatives. While Impeccable presents moral
rationales for gorilla conservation, the film functions at another level, showing the moral issue of the disconnect between conservation efforts and the community, between conservation justifications and their needs. Bernard wrote the meeting scene because he is familiar with such situations. The community at Njikwa acted so well—we did not script their lines, they just played themselves—as they are familiar with this too, probably having had lots of similar meetings and arguments with WCS. Their aptitude for challenging conservation may reveal common sentiment that it is not their project.

The final scene raises one last moral issue: corruption. It presents an indictment of the behavior, but also humor. Desmond knows he has done wrong, but he tries to lure in his boss with him. Corruption can be contagious. The boss does not go for it, but he is not surprised. Corruption scenes may appear very differently in other conservation contexts. We found it ironic that Bernard wrote this scene before we had a similar experience trying to make our film here. Corruption presents a toxic threat to conservation. Even when governments support conservation with legislation, gazette protected areas and enforce their protection, corruption can erode trust with local communities and the effectiveness of all efforts. Corruption raises the moral issue that threats to gorillas include not just physical affronts to the gorilla’s habitat and the morality of the surrounding communities, but the moral character of the conservationists and conservation enforcers themselves.
This film is, in part, my acknowledgement of my own moral culpability in the challenges to Cross River gorilla conservation. I asked our team to make this film and I mocked up a skeleton of the script for my colleagues. Impeccable took the script over, co-writing it with her office colleagues and making it their own.

After months of working in the region, I was embarrassed. We had made four films about hunters, a fifth about a trapper, and these characters were probably not representative of the main threat to Cross River gorillas. So far our villains were all small, local forest users. The big obstacles for Cross River gorilla conservation, akin to many environmental issues, are much more global. Both in Nigeria and Cameroon, conservation leaders told me that the real problem was cocoa.\(^{640}\) Cocoa production, they assured me, competes for land and destroys habitat more than anything else. The Species Action Plan describes the problem of local farmers growing cocoa within protected areas, especially as the market price increases.\(^{641}\) Both small-scale cocoa production and large-scale plantations are increasingly becoming the main drivers of deforestation in Southern Cameroon.\(^{642}\)

Researchers estimate that cocoa and coffee production began to increase deforestation decades ago.\(^{643}\) From 1967 to 1976, the government placed high taxes on the crops. A combined decrease in taxation and

\(^{640}\) Peter Jenkins in Nigeria; Louis Nkembi in Cameroon

\(^{641}\) Dunn et al. 2014


increase in global market price encouraged farmers to clear land for coffee and cocoa from 1977 on. When global commodity prices dropped in the 1980s, farmers cleared more land to grow more cocoa and make up for lost income. As prices rose over the past decade, farmers grew more cocoa for more profit. Experts worry global demand for chocolate (especially from India) may soon exceed global cocoa production.

We hitched rides on cocoa trucks to and from filming sites. On buses and share-cars, we swerved around huge swathes of cocoa nuts, laid out across the road to dry. We passed cocoa plantations as we drove to hillsites and we stumbled upon small cocoa farms deep in gorilla habitat. Many folks shared delicious raw cocoa pods and dried cocoa beans with us. We decided to take on cocoa as a threat. It presented a global, twenty-first century challenge to conservation in the region. It also did not offer a clear chain of responsibility. Culpability does not track a trigger finger or snare.

For this film we invited our office superstar, Shakira, to play herself. When we began filming with ERuDeF, even though we went faraway to shoot in Mamfé and she had commitments in town, Shakira demanded to know why I had not immediately cast her. Her time was overdue. We invited our ERuDeF accountant, Nkeng Ursela, to play a seasoned old reporter and another office friend, Margaret Eyong Abio, to play the CEO of a cocoa export company. We included other friends from around the office, the driver Sud Cadinot, the head of logistics Njingo Thomas, to play other roles too. In a way, ERuDeF, the Cameroonian conservation NGO, formed our final local community, as we wrestled with our own connection to the threats to gorilla conservation.

---

644 Ibid.
648 pseudonym
Synopsis

Conservationist Impeccable visits her friend Shakira, an investigative journalist, to ask for help. Impeccable worries that the main threat to Cross River gorillas is cocoa production but she does not know who to blame. Can Shakira find out and help her address the problem?

Shakira goes on a journalistic crusade, seeking to sort out who to blame. She begins with a small cocoa farmer. He says not me, I do not grow much, you should go to a bigger farmer, a plantation owner. She goes to see a Big Man plantation owner. He dismisses her, telling her to be careful. Go look at the cocoa companies, he directs her, I just grow it. The companies make much more money re-selling it. Shakira goes to a buyer, he sends her to the CEO of the export company. The exporter sends her away.

Shakira has no idea what to do. She is scared by challenging these big business people. After all her interviews, she feels no closer to the answer. Impeccable visits to console and thank her. During their conversation, Shakira has an epiphany: why not look at the whole problem… it is not just cocoa but chocolate! She decides to start a campaign, visiting the local university, raising awareness on social media, and promoting the connection between gorillas and chocolate.

A short montage follows, showing the Palais de la Porte Dorée (including the cocoa beans and word “cocoa” on the wall) and a chocolatier in Paris. The film then whisks to Germany, where a woman is watching Shakira’s video online. When the woman’s cousins ask for chocolate, she is unsure what to do. They go to the store and the fair trade chocolate wrapper references Cameroon, explicitly linking it to her movie. She buys a bar for her cousins anyway but opts out of eating it with them.

Moral Issue

This film, too, elides addressing why gorillas should be conserved. At the start, when Impeccable tells Shakira she wants to conserve gorillas, Shakira accepts it right away. They move on to the question of

---

649 France has the closest colonial connection to Cameroon, though the region we worked in fell under German and English rule.
responsibility. The moral issue for them, and for the film, is who is responsible for the great threat cocoa production poses to Cross River gorillas? Who should change their behavior to help conserve gorillas? The film never lands the blame. Instead, it expands the scale of the moral challenges of Cross River gorilla conservation to include the global community and raise questions of global responsibility.

Most people in the West probably agree that gorillas should be conserved and that measures should be taken to accomplish this. To date, such measures often required loss of livelihood and economic opportunity for the communities near the gorillas. The imposition conservation required has not yet caused gorilla conservation to lose support. While we in the West expect these communities to make sacrifices, we do not make small sacrifices ourselves, such as forgoing the pleasure of chocolate. We in the West impose our values upon the Cross River communities, while not holding the demands of the values as strongly for ourselves.650

I imposed the moral orientation of the film on global responsibility. I was inspired by what I was told locally—that the real threat to the gorillas was the scale of cocoa production—but I saw cocoa production simply as a means to chocolate. Chocolate makes the issue global.651 If chocolate was a gorilla conservation issue, I felt immediately complicit. Worse, our Cameroonian colleagues—akin to many Africans—rarely, if ever, eat chocolate.652 I bought a bar for filming and it proved a big treat around the office (everyone shared, each took a small section). The small-scale cocoa farmers are even further from the product. Many do not even encounter chocolate in the processed form.

Recent conservation campaigns against palm oil and rainforest deforestation champion orangutans and draw important connections between the global marketplace, Western consumption, and distant primate

651 Global inequality, globalization, and international economic relationships all surely impact how people in the Cross River headwaters need and use natural resources but their influence can be hard to measure or consider. Chocolate, at least, makes a blatant connection.
652 For example, here is a video of cocoa farmer tasting chocolate for the first time: VPRO Metropolist. 2014. First Taste of Chocolate in Ivory Coast. 6 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEN4heZutO0
conservation. The same has not yet happened for gorillas and chocolate. I am not sure why not. Putting primate conservation in the context of global pressures helps relieve the focus on local communities. Instead of scrutinizing only their values, behavior, and livelihoods, it helps reorient the question to include us all. What will we do to conserve gorillas? The global connection expands the moral scope to a scale more consistent with considering the survival of species (or at least subspecies). It takes a large, driving force to wipe out a species like gorillas.

In 2014, the price of cocoa soared, following a growing demand from Asian markets. The Asian market’s preference for dark chocolate, which requires more cocoa, added to the swing. An unusually troublesome Harmattan (dry, dusty trade winds affecting West Africa) added to the expense, as did vast fungal infections attacking cocoa trees.

The International Cocoa Organization [ICCO] recorded an average price of $2,921.05/ton for cocoa in January 2015, raising chocolate prices unusually high for Valentine’s Day, but still lower than the peak price of $3,270.27 in August of 2014, during fear of Ebola’s effect on cocoa harvesting.

Farmers grow cocoa across the tropics, in Africa and Madagascar, Latin America and Southeast Asia. Some corporations, such as Alter Ego in Latin America, support their growers by improving infrastructure and returning profits to local communities. West African farmers, responsible for growing 70% of the world’s cocoa, do not have the same support. West African farmers are at the bottom of the supply chain. Though they directly destroy the forest to plant their crops and they grow more cocoa than anyone else, they

655 Ibid., infections included witches broom and frosty pod
656 Ibid.
657 Ibid.
658 Ibid.
may be among the least culpable in the question of gorilla conservation. The farmers benefit the least from
their product. They are among the weakest drivers of the threat. They just exhibit it directly.

As the whims of the global market shift, many West African farmers no longer see a future in
cocoa.659 As they turn to rubber trees or jobs in the city, they diminish cocoa production, driving back up the
price, and value, of cocoa.660 For West African villagers, the price is too volatile, their farms too small, other
crops more lucrative.661 Further, yields are not rising. Barry Parkin, head of global procurement and
sustainability of Mars (the company behind M&Ms, the best selling chocolate in the USA) explains:

> Everybody is worried that the farmer is living on the edge of poverty. They produce half a ton per
> hectare of cocoa, and it has been that way forever. All major agricultural products have improved
> their yields by a factor of 5 to 10 in the last 50 years, and cocoa hasn’t.662

While cocoa growing does not get any easier or more efficient for cocoa farmers,
global demands increases. Cocoa supplies cannot keep pace. The chocolate market expands by 2-3% a year.663
The ICCO predicts the 2015 cocoa crop will fall 50,000 tons short. Parkin predicts by 2020 demand will
exceed production by 1 million tons.664 Major chocolate-producing companies made large investments to
combat these challenges. Until 2020, Mondelēz put $400 million towards raising yields and farmers’ incomes,
Barry Callebaut invested $44 million in training and yield increase, Nestlé sent 110 million Swiss francs for
cocoa science and sustainability.665

659 Ibid.
660 Ibid.
661 Almeida and Monnier describe: “Due to shortages and political instability, cocoa prices experienced annual swings of
more than 20 percent in 10 of the past 20 years. Prices were below $1,000 a ton in the early 1970s and more than tripled
by the end of that decade. By 1989 they were again below $1,000 a ton. Cocoa climbed to a 32-year high in 2011 but has
since fallen 74 percent. After peaking at more than $2,700 in September, the price has slumped 18 percent to about
Business. 7 February.
662 Ibid.
663 Ibid., according to Zurich-based Barry Callebaut (BARN:SW), the world’s biggest maker of bulk chocolate.
664 Ibid
665 Ibid.
Cocoa is big business but it is not an easy crop. The trees do not produce pods for three to five years after being planted. They need hot, humid conditions hovering between 18ºC (64ºF) and 32ºC (90ºF).\textsuperscript{666} Climate change threatens current cocoa farms, especially in Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana, the world’s top two producers. Nigeria and Cameroon are the fourth and fifth top producers in the world; as Côte d’Ivoire and Ghana falter, demand may only increase for them.\textsuperscript{667}

Nigeria’s Southwest grows seventy percent of the country’s cocoa but sparse rain in the region can devastate the crop, limiting flowering and fruiting.\textsuperscript{668} The Southeast region, including Cross River State, grows 30% of the country’s cocoa. Much wetter, the region did not lose production from the 2014-2015 Harmattan and drought, as the rest of Nigeria and the other West African cocoa-producing countries did.\textsuperscript{669} Hilly and mountainous, Southeast Nigeria also offers good land for continued production in the face of climate change. The growing altitude for cocoa is now 100 to 250 meters but, with climate change, it is projected to raise to 450 to 500 meters by 2050.\textsuperscript{670} The raise could push cocoa farms higher up the hills and even more into conflict with the remaining forests inhabited by Cross River gorillas.

Whether or not cocoa farms continue to encroach upon gorilla habitat has much more to do with the whims of the global market than those of local farmers. As the cocoa farmer explains in the film, when Shakira asks him why he plants cocoa when it hurts Cross River gorillas [translated from the Pidgin]:

Well, to earn a living with my family and send children to school.... about gorilla, I don’t know what to say… Sister, that question is more than me because I have just this small portion which help me to meet family needs. You can see my neighbor, Pa Michael, who has several hectares of cocoa farm.. they can better answer your question.”

\textsuperscript{666} Ibid, U.K. risk advisory firm Maple-croft.
\textsuperscript{667} UN Food & Agriculture Association 2015. \url{http://faostat3.fao.org/browse/rankings/countries_by_commodity/E}
\textsuperscript{668} Awere, T. 2015. Nigeria Cocoa Midcrop Battles Amid Sparse Rains, Heat. \textit{Bloomberg Business.} 19 February.
\textsuperscript{670} Almeida and Monnier 2013; International Center for Tropical Agriculture.
As the film goes up the production chain, seeking to find moral responsibility, no one seems fair to accuse. Not the Cameroonians involved in cocoa production at any level, nor the German at the end, buying chocolate at the store. The film leaves out many folks in the global chain: from the processors in Indonesia to the corporations in Switzerland. All have their own problems and challenges.671 Moral issues related to chocolate abound. Accusations of child labor, forced labor, and other human rights violations elicited a variety of responses by chocolate companies, including certification processes and commitments to community development and sustainability.672 While these measures may help sustain the production of cocoa, they may not sustain Cross River gorillas.

Film 8

THE ILLEGAL EXPLOITER

This is the first film produced after we left. Bernard led the way. I have yet to see the film but Bernard offered this account:

Most forest communities in Africa and Cameroon in particular live under abject poverty and difficult conditions. They are mostly farmers and are in dying need of basic facilities/infrastructure like portable water, electricity supply, and farm to market road, hospitals, schools, community halls etc. This makes them very receptive and hospitable to anyone who proves to them that s/he can provide any of such needs. Some of the few educated ones, who are the opinion leaders of their communities, live in cities; are engaged in politics and mostly visit their communities when elections are approaching. Cognizant of these, some forest exploiters usually bribe local politicians, make their way to the communities; offer palm wine and whisky to village authorities; promise them the above facilities, exploit timber from the forest and disappear leaving the people even worse than they were before. Something like this happened a few years ago in Ngutu, Ndian Division-Southwest Cameroon.

Given the endangered and endemic nature of the cross river gorilla, any such practice in a gorilla habitat will be very hazardous. It is often said “forewarned is forearmed”. This movie therefore comes to educate/sensitize communities adjacent to the cross river gorilla habitats to prevent this from happening in their area.

While shooting the film, the traditional ruler of Besali (where the film was shot) said no such practice has ever taken place in his community but said it was important to educate them so that they can be on the alert.

The Illegal Exploiter talks about the destruction of gorilla’s habitat by an illegal logger who bribes a parliamentarian and village chief; promises the villagers developmental activities and in turns destroys the gorilla habitat. This development does not finally come and an NGO comes in and educates the chief and villagers on the importance of the forest to the conservation of Cross River gorilla.
Film 9

*NO GORILLA, NO DEVELOPMENT*

This is the second film made after we left. I am waiting to see this film too. Again, here is Bernard’s account:

*It is often said “Conservation cannot be done on an empty stomach”. This conservation concept, which stressed on the need to meet the livelihood and development needs of forest adjacent communities in conservation efforts, is a very vital determinant to community engagement and attitude change in favour of conservation. Most communities adjacent to endangered wildlife species regard conservation as giving more preference to animal welfare than human welfare. Thus to achieve conservation goals, it will be really necessary to project tangibly what they stand to gain both in short and long run with the conservation of Cross River Gorilla. This movie therefore seeks to get divert community attention from the hunting of the Cross River Gorilla by projecting what they stand to gain should they stop hunting and engage in Cross River Gorilla Conservation and vice versa.*

*During casting for this movie, one of the actors, who is also a secondary teacher after a short debate with the film producer on the importance of conserving the Cross River Gorilla said “if conserving them will mean meeting community needs then I am with you”. This means that such film will aid and generate local debates and discussion in local communities on the conservation of this endangered species and will get them involved given that the advantages of conservation to a community is projected in the film.*

*The second film 'No Gorilla No Development' focuses on the touristic and developmental benefits that a community stands to lose if they do not conserve endangered wildlife species most especially the Cross River gorilla.*
CONCLUSION

We made the Folk Film series in response to the concern that Cross River gorillas are going away. Each film heard this concern, then re-oriented the moral issue. They presented moral claims in response, often along with new moral reasoning. Neither a consistent moral issue nor moral argument arose across the series. As their subjects, challenges, and contexts changed, the films and narratives did too. The films meandered around the topic of gorilla conservation. As a collection, I hope the film series represents at least a taste of the sorts of moral issues, complexities, and challenges that emerge when trying to justify gorilla conservation in the Cross River headwaters.

Despite a lack of theme, a few arguments do repeat throughout the series. Repetition may mean that these arguments are among the more compelling across communities. The first argument concerns the priority of sending children to school. Many characters respond to conservation claims by stating that they need to send their children to school. They worry about the best for their children—the immediate, next generation—before they worry about an animal or any further states of the world. Characters make this argument in Conservation Education, Human or Gorilla, and The Cocoa Crusader.

The second argument pertains to the simple gravity of not conserving gorillas: they will finish. Nigeria will have no more. Cameroon has a substantial lowland gorilla population in the East (Gorilla gorilla gorilla), but Anglophone Cameroon, the Grassfields and the South-West region, will lose their distinct subspecies forever. Folks make this case in Conservation Education, A Message from Oku, and Human or Gorilla.

Another, implied argument references lack of direct responsibility, or at least moral culpability, for the problem. In Obi & the Juju Forest, hunters blame the efficiency of technology in killing off wildlife. In Cocoa Crusader, Shakira shows how difficult it is to attribute the impact of cocoa to any particular party. In Conservation Education and Human or Gorilla, folks threaten the survival of Cross River gorillas simply by trying to survive themselves. In Nzhu Jimangemi and Chop Gorilla, gorilla conservation is not even an issue,
the narratives reorient morality to consider other communal and individual problems; the gorillas function as a narrative device, not an issue in themselves.

All the films reference moral issues related to gorilla conservation. The final chapter analyzes how well the Folk Films and the Folk Filmmaking process, function as a practice of moral justification.
For the preservation of diversity in all its forms, we may find that sharing thoughts is superior to collecting knowledge, or that forms of friendship have advantages over forms of reason. --Lowe, 2006

With this final chapter, I compare and contrast two actual (out of many possible) approaches to reasoning over the moral dispute concerning Cross River gorilla conservation. I assess which method better fits the context of the Cross River headwaters and perhaps helps resolve the dispute. I am less concerned with which moral claims should win than with assuring that the process of moral adjudication is fair and just itself. In other words, instead of arguing that conservation values are correct (or not), I argue for a more fair and just method to address the moral disagreement.

The first approach I call Western Conservation Values Inculcation [WCVI]. Broadly, WCVI describes the many ways conservationists teach Western values to enlighten local communities and achieve conservation goals. Practitioners believe the values they teach are not only universal, but superior to local morality. Consider an excerpt from a “Conservation Values Education” project conducted in rural Cameroon by gorilla conservationists:

At the urging of scores of field primatologists and conservation activists, we decided to investigate the “epiphany potential” of certain conservation education processes. We began in Cameroon… by

---

exposing local conservationists, community leaders, and hunters to certain North American perspectives of non-human primates. Similarities between apes and humans were emphasized. The aim was to stimulate cognitive dissonance among those who had been taught by outsiders to see wildlife as a material resource, to revive traditional perceptions of nature, and to enable restoration of totemic kinship-with-animals to reduce inclinations to hunt and eat endangered species.674

WCVI selectively engages local values consistent with conservation and replaces those that are not. The conservationists working on the Conservation Values Education Project appreciate local context but reference it as proof of moral inferiority. They worry that local morality may be so pernicious that it even perverts conservation education:

To bring humane conservation values to the forefront in rural African societies will require us to pay much greater attention to the utilitarian values that shape attitudes and influence behaviors. Otherwise we can expect our attempts at conservation education, no matter the form or objective, will be transformed into opportunities to survive, to make a better living, to master at least one element of a harsh and unforgiving world.

What an irony it would be if our many and varied attempts to teach conservation biology to people in great ape range countries were being twisted into information gathering programs to improve peoples’ ability to hunt and market wildlife. And yet, why would we expect people who can barely get food on the table to be interested in great ape behavior, socialization, evolution, intelligence, or emotionality? Preserving biodiversity, saving endangered species, keeping apes alive in the wild—none of these enlightened ideals are likely to motivate a hunter to leave the forest and

return to hunger in the village or to unemployment in the city.

We expected to enable hunting societies to restore taboos against eating apes by exposing them to the human-like characteristics of gorillas, chimpanzees, and bonobos. It is those similarities that led to establishment of taboos against eating primates throughout history... The recital and discussion of stories and myths which evoke humane concern for apes can make a difference. But for every three people who argue that gorillas should be spared pain and suffering, there is one person who will ask why should we humans suffer, but not the apes?

There is only one answer to that challenge which is both ethical and practical. We must work to reduce the suffering of African people and African apes, simultaneously. Apes and people must be valued equally in our eyes and in our programs. We dont [sic] want to teach rural Africans about apes so that they can hunt them more effectively. Neither do we want to preach conservation of wildlife to deaf ears.675

On their project, the conservationists conducted “interventions” by reading story-books about gorillas to Cameroonian villagers. They began with Koko’s Kitten, the true story of the famous, captive gorilla’s friendship with a kitten, followed by Michael’s Dream, the tale of a gorilla poached from Cameroon and ending up learning sign language with Koko in the zoo.676 The authors wrote Michael’s Dream specifically for their interventions in Cameroon. They note the story focuses on Michael’s “gorilla mother in the forest, and his trauma witnessing her slaughter.”677 They narrate the

---

675 Rose et al. 2003(a): 17.
677 Rose et al. 2003(a): 11
stories in Pidgin, describe the events in each picture, and conduct discussions to clarify and answer questions.

In the Cross River headwaters, conservation organizations broadcast a radio program, “My Gorilla, My Community”, and screen films: BBC’s *Life of Mammals, Mountain Gorilla, Ape Hunters* and *Chimpanzees* and the Dutch organization, Nature For Kids’ *Ajani’s Great Ape Adventures*. They hold outreach and community sensitization meetings. They conduct classes at local schools and start conservation clubs. They also contact hunters and forest users and teach them the need to change their ways.

My interest is not whether the values taught by WCVI are correct. Rather, I am concerned with how WCVI presents Western values not only as consistently applicable but also as authoritative. WCVI addresses the moral dispute over conservation by teaching local communities that they should agree with conservationists.

Many conservation educators working in the Cross River headwaters are local Nigerians and Cameroonians. I include their efforts within WCVI because they use Western materials and media, work for or in collaboration with Western conservation organizations, and continue to present Western values to local communities as correct, superior, and objective. Even the local educators do not present the values within their Western context (expect as proof that, if they come from the West, they must be authoritative).

---

I contrast WCVI with Folk Filmmaking as a method of moral reasoning that may better fit the Cross River context. I focus on the method as we employed it but also discuss the potential of Folk Filmmaking in general. To distinguish, I refer to our work in the field as Gorilla Folk Filmmaking [GFF] and the method in general as Folk Filmmaking. To assess how well both WCVI and GFF fit the Cross River headwaters, a context characterized by cultural diversity and inequality among the disputants, I follow Jaggar and Tobin’s four categories of analysis, considering:

1. How each delineates the moral domain
2. How each characterizes the salient moral agents
3. What methods of reasoning each uses
4. The practical actions that each approach ends up justifying

After applying the analytic categories in Part I, I employ Jaggar and Tobin’s four adequacy conditions to analyze each method of reasoning in Part II. The chapter concludes with objections and responses to the Folk Filmmaking method and reflections on how it can be improved.

---

Part I
THE CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

1. Delineating the Moral Domain

First, Jaggar and Tobin consider how a practice of reasoning delineates a moral domain. This includes how the practice decides, frames, and characterizes a moral issue. Disputes over Cross River gorilla conservation include (but may not be limited to) issues of wildlife and habitat preservation, of forest use and community needs, of human and gorilla rights, of inequality and autonomy, of cultural preservation and colonization, of individual and community health, of education and cultural values, of livelihoods and access to resources, of social, global, and epistemic justice. Each issue illuminates a moral aspect of the dispute.

WCVI focuses morally on only a few issues relevant to gorillas: abundance and scarcity, ecosystem health, habitat fragmentation and degradation, gorilla health and viability. It omits many salient moral issues relevant to the local communities. Instead of addressing the issues through moral debate or deliberation, WCVI relegates them to other conservation efforts, such as integrated development programs and alternative livelihood programs.

The problem is that WCVI is dogmatic. WCVI programs come with a predetermined morality: Cross River gorillas and their habitat need to be saved; the global community already decided to save them; too few gorillas are left to question the crisis; we must act now, we have no time to debate. WCVI foregrounds conservation biology and Western environmental ethics, applying the general prescription: “saving wildlife is the right thing to do” across contexts. It assumes what it needs to prove.
By engaging a variety of communities, GFF resulted in a broader and more inclusive collection of focal issues; each film delineated the moral domain in a fresh way. GFF allowed relative freedom to each community to take the project in the direction they desired. Now, as we distribute the films as a series, they work together to offer a wide representation of the issues. As a series, they present a diversity of moral questions, challenges, and contexts. At the very least, the series shows how complex and challenging the issue of gorilla conservation remains and how many moral aspects need to be considered.

2. Characterizing Moral Agency

The next category Jaggar and Tobin consider is how a practice of moral justification treats moral agency. Questions of moral agency include who is harmed or wronged, how the victim is represented, who is responsible for the moral wrong, and who evaluates the harm and the wrongs. Practices of moral justification vary in how they deal with moral agency. Disputants “may participate as moral agents, whose voice is recognized in processes of justification; they may participate as informants providing testimony whose moral import is assessed by others; or they may be viewed simply as moral objects, beings of moral concern with a stake but not a legitimate voice in justificatory processes.”680

In WCVI, the moral victims are gorillas. Conservationists portray themselves as speaking on the gorillas’ behalf. Their positioning creates the irony of the most powerful (Western organizations) working for the least powerful (voiceless gorillas) at the expenses of the less powerful (local

---

680 Ibid: 390, 391
WCVI teaches that the wrongs committed against gorillas justify Western conservation efforts. Africans do not get to represent gorillas or their needs. Primatologists and conservation biologists do, as do animal rights communities in the West. Some people may be able to justify their position as gorilla representative. Through decades of study, certain people do have expert understanding of gorillas and can perhaps best speak to their needs. One concern is that the same power that allowed these people the opportunity to learn enough about gorillas to represent them also allows these people to hold more power, when representing gorillas, over local communities. In WCVI, the moral structure is predetermined. The educators characterize moral agency on their terms, not during the process of justification.

Folk Filmmaking starts with a more open morality question. In GFF, gorillas may be totems; attacking them harms not an animal but a human counterpart. Conservation restrictions may wrong a gorilla hunter. Diseased gorilla meat may harm a family member. Moral victims become more varied and diverse, moral issues more intricate and complex. With Folk Filmmaking, locals who feel morally wronged can speak up for themselves. Environmental issues become not just about the wrongs to nature but the wrongs emerging in various responses to environmental threats as well.

3. Defining Moral Reasoning

Jaggar and Tobin’s third category of analysis considers how a practice guides reasoning. They investigate which reasoning methods are allowed and which are rejected, what counts as a good reason and what is dismissed or ignored. WCVI assumes the moral matter at stake has already been

---

settled; the issue now is helping the community to understand the determined morality. It poses the question not as: what should we do about gorillas going away, but rather, how could you let this happen? WCVI invites conservation-positive reasoning but not reformulations or challenges to its values and message. WCVI rejects alternative ideas as proof of not understanding or valuing wildlife, as ignorance or moral mistakes.

WCVI asks its subjects to trust the moral calculus of others and simply to accept its conclusions. Westerners have good reasons and values, adopt them. It is telling that WCVI often focuses on local children. Adults receive conservation sensitization and alternative livelihoods more often than values education. In both cases, WCVI operates as a top-down imposition of ideas instead of as an exchange of reasons among people whose positions are assumed equally worthy of consideration (if not acceptance).

Folk Filmmaking invites moral reasoning first and foremost from the perspectives of the local communities. To compose the films and narratives, the collaborators raise a moral issue and work it out on screen, and then ideally again in conversation after the screenings. The structure is open and well-suited to featuring various sorts of reasoning. During production, filmmakers and communities collaborate, reasoning out what to depict, how, and why. On screen, characters reason out moral issues together; they navigate moral challenges in the plot, representing their reasoning. Watching characters in contexts and situations akin to their own, the audience can follow, appreciate, and engage the moral reasoning as well.

More than challenging what it means to reason, Folk Filmmaking offers alternative representations of argumentation. The aesthetic and narrative aspects of film provide the
opportunity to present moral ideas in ways very different from logical argument structures. Folk Filmmaking encourages a wide variety of representations of reasoning.

4. Recommending Courses of Action

Last, Jaggar and Tobin assess the prescriptive outcomes of the practice of moral justification: what does it propose for action in response to a moral dispute? WCVI proposes replacing local values with Western environmental ethics. It describes the value of gorillas and the appropriate relationship between nature and people on Western terms. It often includes that following these values will bring later benefits. Benefits include ecosystem services and economic opportunities such as ecotourism.

Folk Filmmaking does not necessarily prescribe any course of action, outside further discussion of the moral dispute with inclusion of more perspectives. Ideally, watching folk films raises curiosity and concern about the positions and perspectives of even more people. Folk Filmmaking expands the moral conversation but it does not tell what to do. In fact, it may make the moral dispute only more complex and confusing. Watching the films after our GFF could leave one feeling the dispute is intractable.
I introduced Jaggar and Tobin’s conditions of adequacy in Chapter Five. Here I apply them to assess both WCVI and Folk Filmmaking by analytic category.

1. Plausibility to and Usability by the Disputants

1a. With regard to delineating the moral domain

WCVI’s moral delineations may seem plausible and usable to some people in the Cross River headwaters. ERuDeF, the local conservation organization, employs it, as do many Nigerian and Cameroonian employees and sympathizers of Western conservation organizations. Many other locals dispute WCVI’s delineations. They contest the focus on the needs of nature over the needs of their own communities. They may also distrust it, sensing the epistemic injustice in educating their children and community on another culture’s values and terms. They would prefer to delineate the moral domain on their own rather than accept an outside interpretation, developed out of context.

GFF framed the moral issues at stake in a more inclusive and fair way. It seemed both plausible and usable to the disputants; many locals we worked with were able to understand GFF and employ the opportunity to represent their moral issues and concerns. Our focus on gorillas could be read as an abuse of power by our team, but it could be charitably interpreted as providing a

---

682 see Chapter 3
structure and target for the moral debate: this is the dispute we are considering, please address it however you would like. In every film, our collaborators just used gorillas as a narrative device—no film is about gorillas.

Being freer in form may have offered more varied narratives and moral issues. It may also have been much less helpful in remedying the moral dispute in question. During GFF, each film and filmmaking production succeeded at different levels in delineating its own moral domain but overall GFF seems to have done an excellent job. It delineated the issues to both moral communities in a way that was plausible, usable, and fair to the disputants. Also, in its ambiguity, GFF tracked the real messiness of prescribing moral principles or authorizing moral claims concerning Cross River gorilla conservation.

1b. With regard to characterizing moral agency

WCVI characterizes gorillas as victims and local communities as moral trespassers, harming the gorillas. Conservationists may find the characterizations useful for protecting gorillas and motivating local communities to change their behavior. Local communities may find the characterizations much less plausible. A common refrain is that conservationists care more about animals than people. When WCVI does characterize locals as victims—of lack of development, with needs of basic survival—it uses the characterizations to show local values and morality are inferior and can be dismissed for “enlightened” Western values.

GFF seemed more plausible and usable. It invited community collaborators to characterize moral agency on their own, and to include themselves as agents and adjudicators within the moral dispute. It provided an opportunity for them to show that they face environmental challenges not
out of ignorance or primitive cultural values but out of contemporary moral challenges. They showed the stress of balancing local needs with global pressures. They depicted wariness about continued imperial invasions by Western organizations (well-intentioned or otherwise) and overpowering national (and often corrupt) governments.

Folk Filmmaking democratizes the authority to make moral claims, including more local voices than allowed through the constraints of WCVI. Some locals claiming moral grievance—for example gorilla hunters or cocoa plantation owners—may be unable to rationalize their moral claims. During film production or audience discussions later, they may be unable to justify their arguments to disputants or fellow community members, but they can at least use Folk Filmmaking to characterize themselves as moral agents, perhaps harmed and harming at once. At its most simple, rather than assuming local morality is on a lower level than Western conservation, Folk Filmmaking invites both moral communities to enlarge pre-existing assumptions about moral agency. It shows how the moral affronts committed by conservation efforts—whether via cultural colonialism, corruption and abuse of power, or prioritizing the needs of animals over those of humans—may be as much of a problem for conservation as any conflict of values over how to treat nature or appreciate wild animals and other elements of the natural world.

Re-identifying moral victimhood in the case of Cross River gorilla conservation re-identifies moral culpability as well. WCVI teaches that threats to the environment are threats to the gorillas. Though the threats are pernicious in their global aspects (especially cocoa), the scale of WCVI’s problem orientation is local. WCVI describes hunters and loggers, trappers and encroaching farmers, as the main threats to gorillas. The onus is on the local forest users to justify their actions.
Folk Filmmaking can broaden culpability and describe it differently. In GFF, locals make moral mistakes rather than act out of harm or aggression, greed or malice. Obi makes a foolish teenage choice, Pa Gorilla acts out of pride and against the warnings of his community. The hunter in *Conservation Education* hunts for his children, Pa Mbororo is distressed when his trap harms a gorilla. Shakira cannot figure out who is morally culpable for cocoa. Even if those morally culpable are the same in both WCVI and Folk Filmmaking, the defendants’ motivations and reasons are granted much more depth and consideration by Folk Filmmaking. Their actions become understandable and contextual. With GFF, our films showed that gorillas are not being slaughtered because of some moral vacuum or barbaric community but because of something else. The alternate orientation changes not just moral culpability but resulting moral prescriptions as well.

1c. With regard to defining moral reasoning

WCVI tells local communities to follow Western conservation reasoning. It precludes local methods and forms of argumentation, overriding local reasoning. It also invites the global community to support such education efforts: save wild animals by educating distant local communities. Local communities may find it implausible to follow methods of reasoning that support other groups’ interests at their expense.

Folk Filmmaking may prove more plausible and usable. It can help locals share their methods of reasoning and moral thinking in context and on their own terms. Instead of villainizing the surrounding communities as threats, Folk Filmmaking can feature them and their moral dilemmas, helping the audience to understand and empathize with the locals as they struggle with conservation challenges. The global community now feels a stake in the plight of gorillas. Local
communities need ways to present their reasoning, to justify their actions, and to make moral claims that diverse and foreign moral communities can at least understand, if not accept.

Tobin and Jaggar describe how methods of moral reasoning will need to be most plausible and feasible, and they will need to hold the most normative force, for “those whose lives stand to be the most disrupted”.683 For moral justification to work, the disputants need a method of reasoning they can all follow, endorse, and employ. Just as the international attention to the gorillas makes local communities accountable, the global community’s involvement makes them accountable to local communities. The international community, represented by conservationists, need to justify their concern and behavior too. To engage each other, both groups need a method of moral reasoning that they find plausible and usable for communication.

Film may offer one resource. Conservationists already find film useful, employing it in their WCVI efforts. They invited me to produce films specifically for local communities. Local communities, too, may find film a useful way to express themselves. People across the world represent themselves through cinema. During our GFF, as detailed in the previous chapter, communities represented themselves and their reasoning on film in a variety of ways.

Folk Filmmaking may better align with local strategies of reasoning but this does not mean that it will equally represent all methods. It may prove more plausible or usable to some locals than others. It may miss or leave out certain methods for various reasons, depending on who is present during the filmmaking and which reasoning the filmmaking team endorses (or can even recognize and understand).

683 Tobin and Jaggar 433
Moral communities are diverse within the Cross River headwaters as well (though probably less diverse than between Cross River and the West). Religion helps define various moral communities. At the hillsites in Nigeria, Christianity is extremely popular and includes various sects, from Pentecostalism to Catholicism. At the hillsites in Cameroon, Muslims and Christians of various sects live alongside each other. In most cases, the Abrahamic religions rest atop local beliefs, cultures, and customs that connect locals and their communities despite religious affiliation or differences.684

Strangely, religion plays a small role in our films while playing a large role for many in the communities, not least our GFF team members. Both of our main collaborators in Cameroon, Bernard and Impeccable, are devout, practicing Christians. Bernard would quickly offer prayers or share a gospel song on his cellphone; we often heard him singing songs of praise through the hut walls. Both Bernard and Impeccable attended church wherever we went. I attended service in Nigeria with Francis. In Conservation Education, Francis references God and religion in his classroom lectures. In Human or Gorilla?, Impeccable argues with references to God and religion in her community speech, but those two example may be the extent religious values appear in our films. GFF gave religion very little screen-time or explanation as a method of reasoning.

I am not sure why Bernard and others did not include religion more in their scripts or casting. Other collaborators dismissed Abrahamic religions right away (e.g., Augustus has made satires of the church). I am not sure of the influence I may have had, or the general impression locals may have of the disconnect of conservation and the church. In the Cross River headwaters, the conservation groups and the Christian missionaries, though the only Westerners present in many

villages, rarely mix. Presenting religious elements may also raise confusion: Will Cross River Christians’ claims be dismissed as colonial or tainted somehow? Are they still local if they are referencing a foreign religion, or a Nigerian craze?

That our GFF did not better incorporate or explore religion may prove a failing of our inclusiveness with Folk Filmmaking. Religion may just be the most obvious method of reasoning among many that we missed. Our method may have proved less usable to the most definitive, contemporary moral authority for many in these communities.

1d. With regard to recommending course of action

WCVI recommends a course of action that local communities may find neither plausible or usable. It demands not just accepting new values but making enormous lifestyle changes. WCVI addresses local moral concerns with the changes by promising future benefits—from eco-tourism, infrastructure development, REDD payments for carbon sequestration.685 Though most local communities still rely on nature, WCVI recommends alternative, “non-consumptive” approaches to engaging nature. It teaches local communities to stop using nature for resources, livelihoods, and survival. In recommending this course of action, it offers ideas of replacement. Tourism is one stock answer, a common solution offered to solve the economic problems of impoverished communities across the world, particularly those in beautiful areas such as the Cross River headwaters.

WCVI proposes such alternatives despite their implausibility. Though gorillas bring in enormous amounts of money to other countries, conservationists maintain that tourism poses too

---

685 Dunn et al. 2014
great a risk to Cross River gorillas. Their concern does not prevent arguments about other
ecotourism opportunities in the region. In the same speech where he called for local communities to
adopt Western conservation values, James Entwistle offered:

...For the past couple of days, I have been reveling in the natural beauty of your marvelous
state. I have been learning about Cross River’s rich tourism opportunities, particularly on the
eco-tourism side. I just came from northern Cross River, where I visited a drill monkey and
chimpanzee rehabilitation facility. I also took a gorgeous walk through a forest reserve at the
Drill Ranch and a lovely tour of Cross River National Park. 

Not only is tourism currently untenable for the region—with Boko Haram, the legacy of Ebola, and
the dearth of tourist infrastructure, not to mention the lack of the gorillas’ draw—it will require
investment and development the community lacks for even its own needs.

Other courses of action proposed by WCVI include livelihood alternatives, especially for
hunters. Recent efforts include snail farming, beekeeping, and pig rearing. They often require a
dependence upon conservationists to source the necessary materials and resources. They also create a
reliance upon outside markets and training contacts holding previous experience. Such actions may
be plausible and usable in the long-term but they require significant, immediate changes in
economic relationships. They may be plausible and usable to only a few community members.

macroeconomic growth and providing local livelihoods. In: Young, H. and Goldman, L. (eds.) Livelihoods, Natural
http://www.leadership.ng/news/483919/environment-conscious-us-tells-nigerians
688 Dunn et al. 2014
689 Ibid.
Folk Filmmaking recommends no clear course of action except further discussion. We are not yet sure how our GFF will turn out; we have yet to begin the distribution phase. Only then will we see how communities respond to the films and the films’ invitation for more moral conversations. Considering that conservationists already hold meetings and screenings, and that communities hold meetings and discussions among themselves, the course of actions should prove plausible and usable to both disputants.

2. Non-Abusive of Power and Vulnerability by any Disputant

2a. With regard to delineating the moral domain

WCVI tends to flatten local concerns and issues in the face of the greater global concern for gorillas. WCVI focuses moral scrutiny, if not guilt, on local communities, both within the communities themselves (by telling them they need to change) and from the outside (by orienting the threats to the gorillas as local behavior and lack of conservation values). In so doing, WCVI abuses power and vulnerability: those with less global power, local Cross River communities, bear the burden of guilt for killing off Cross River gorillas. The local communities also bear most of the costs and burdens of conserving the gorillas. Meanwhile, conservationists, those with more global power, control the moral narrative of what is wrong and why. They speak for the gorillas, and in so doing, control the money, energy, and goodwill directed the gorillas’ way. They also receive the glory and acclaim for saving the gorillas. Their role in the issue—including histories of colonial hunting and resource extraction, colonial and continual exclusion of local communities from the forests, global economic pressure on the region for timber and cash crops such as cocoa, alliances with and empowerment of corrupt or abusive local governments—remains absent, downplayed, or obscure.
By focusing on enlightening Cross River communities, WCVI’s goal becomes changing local communities’ beliefs, behavior, and values, i.e. their culture. It challenges their conception of nature, their relationship to gorillas and the forest, their understanding of their own environment and how to relate to it. WCVI’s impact is abusive in its erasure and in its inequality. Westerners impose their own values and conceptions of nature while not having the same imposition and challenges put back upon them. They do not need even need to learn or engage local gorilla knowledge in order to override it. WCVI’s misallocation of the problem, focusing on the threats to gorillas from local cultures instead of global pressures upon the communities and the forests, shows how it takes advantage of local vulnerabilities.

While it seeks to be morally neutral, Folk Filmmaking also risks favoring those already in power. Jaggar and Tobin describe how “ideas and values that feature in dominant interpretations of the world are more likely to appear universal and culturally neutral than ideas and values used by the members of subordinated cultures, which are likely to appear particular and idiosyncratic.”\textsuperscript{690} This is true of descriptions of nature, wildlife, and morality, where “by definition, dominant understandings of crucial moral terms are more likely to prevail, while the understandings of less powerful cultures are more likely to be seen as mere local preferences, incapable of objective validity.”\textsuperscript{691} It is one of the many ways in which conservationists’ power is invisible to them, and they do not even realize the moral problems with their efforts. Folk Filmmakers, familiar with dominant interpretations and understandings, will have to be sure not to assume or privilege them by accident. They will need to

\textsuperscript{690} Ibid.: 393
\textsuperscript{691} Ibid.: 394
recognize and help interpret distinctively local understandings of nature, wildlife, and morality, among other things.

Folk Filmmaking risks other abuse as well. Akin to WCVI, it may be selective in presenting local views, just picking views that cohere with its own agenda. It may require helping portray values the filmmakers do not endorse. Inequality among local communities can result in abuse as well, with a sub-group seizing the narrative and claiming to speak for the whole “authentic” “community” (e.g. as with men claiming authoritative patriarchal interpretations of Islam).

Folk Filmmaking can fall subject to abuse of power in these and other ways but it can also help reveal abuse. Simply by presenting African accounts of gorillas, our GFF can help show the great epistemic injustice that, to this date, has kept such accounts out of almost all media. Presenting these accounts well can help share local ideas, unusual to the wider audience, as equally strong and valid ways of understanding and relating to nature.

WCVI is characterized by close ties between conservation biology and Western environmental ethics, in which ecological and moral ideals are defined by Edenic, pristine ecosystems. The values of WCVI idealize deep, old growth forest with remote, wild gorillas; such natural purity becomes the default normative standard or goal. Folk Filmmaking can invite very different visions. It can deconstruct the idea of conservation as a universal moral value, at least a conception of conservation aiming at a distinct nature valuable in its separation from humans. By questioning the very assumptions of conservation (those fortified by WCVI), Folk Filmmaking can disrupt the narrative of those in power and help reveal very different moral delineations of environmental issues. Ideally, folk film audiences (local and global) will identify with the diverse

---

692 except, perhaps, of conservation-positive local accounts such as those presented by Congolese in Virunga
characters presented, rather than only with the wild animals and nature, as in most conservation media.

Challenging dominant interpretations can also be dangerous for locals, whose counter-narratives may be read as backwardness or ignorance. By participating in Folk Filmmaking, locals risk their accounts being co-opted, misinterpreted, or even used against them. The onus is on the Folk Filmmaker to prevent this. The Folk Filmmaker needs to assure her local collaborators can use the opportunity of Folk Filmmaking to validate and legitimate alternative narratives.

Folk Filmmaking can work well in this way. Consider GFF’s success in delineating a moral domain concerning bushmeat. When conservationists addressed bushmeat, they sensationalized the gruesome aesthetics to raise an alarmist call for action.693 They invited proud hunters to pose with their kills, locals to pose with their baby primate pets (captured after hunters slewed the parents), market-sellers to display their cuisine. Then they sent the images out to a distant, decontextualized audience as displays of barbarism.

GFF presented bushmeat in a more fair and nuanced way. In Obi & the Juju Forest and Nzhu Jimangemi, providing bushmeat to the community brings glory and celebration. Chop Gorilla presents bushmeat as a source of livelihood and as a delicacy. The film features a bushmeat hunter, a bushmeat seller, and a literal bushmeat gourmand. None of the GFF accounts necessarily justify bushmeat hunting or consumption any more than conservationists’ decontextualized bushmeat photographs justify its immorality. Rather the films add moral dimensions and nuance to the issue. They show cultural value and relevance. They raise questions of nutrition, livelihood, and

community that WCVI and other conservation rhetoric often dismiss. GFF offers more inclusive moral delineations, helping moral reasoning over bushmeat hunting to follow more fairly. The inclusiveness of Folk Filmmaking helps it avoid abuse.

2b. With regard to characterizing moral agency

WCVI’s characterization of moral agency tracks the power dynamics between Western and Cross River communities. Its characterization further empowers Western conservation at the expense of local communities. The tracking may become most explicit when applied to moral arbitration. The local scale of WCVI’s problem orientation obscures the relationship of the West to the plight of gorillas. It leaves out colonial hunting of gorillas and logging of forests, contemporary global appetites for cocoa, timber, and other resources. By eliding their own moral culpability, Westerners grant themselves the position of objective moral judge. They authorize themselves to determine conservation values and educate local communities in these values because the communities are the ones lacking and in need.694

WCVI’s certainty of its correctness further establishes conservation values as the guide for responding to the harm against gorillas. If gorillas are dying, parks should be created, conservation NGOs established and funded, local communities sensitized and educated. Nigeria and Cameroon adopted international legislation and invited conservation organizations into their communities. They created parks and allowed Western organizations to help govern them. Conservationists encourage Westerners to visit and volunteer. WCVI abuses its external power to appear impartial,

694 Tobin and Jaggar describe how this works for Maasai and female genital cutting, p. 431
asking local communities to trust its moral characterizations while also vilifying these very communities and honoring the moral status of the gorillas over them.

Offering a local perspective and reflecting on the global presence in the Cross River region helps challenge the invisibility of the West in relation to conservation issues. GFF helped broaden moral agency to incorporate both local moral concerns and global moral culpability (e.g. gorillas are being killed because Westerners want chocolate), characterizing moral agency in a much more nuanced and less abusive way.

Our films seemed to explode the idea of a clear moral arbitrator. The conservationists began to look goofy and out of context (exemplified by my character in *Chop Gorilla*). The educated schoolgirl proclaiming conservation values appeared no more convincing than the struggling hunter. The local hunters proved as able to offer reasons and make moral claims as the rangers chasing them (and enforcing someone else’s will). Local moral arbitrators appear in the films—a fon or a native doctor, an elder or a teacher—but their authority is visible because of their role in the community; none have the invisible authority of WCVI (authorized in part because it is from the West). While not asserting who should arbitrate, GFF helped contextualize relevance to the conversation, showing how strange it appears for a whiteman to arrive and decide values and how important it is to include community members as arbitrators too. It invites fresh thinking on power and the problem. Perhaps, as major stakeholders, the locals should be the ultimate deciders. They can employ foreigners simply as consultants. GFF leaves open but invites the question: what moral standing is required to participate in the deciding?
2c. With regard to defining moral reasoning

In WCVI and in the West, conservation ethics purport to be universal, unassailable, and inevitable. Their reasoning is not up for question or debate. It dominates and precludes other forms. It takes advantage of the vulnerabilities of local communities—their inability to refer to their knowledge within a body of literature or global forum.

Engaging local communities in the Folk Filmmaking process, inviting them to use their moral reasoning to construct the films and guide the characters’ actions, helps Folk Filmmaking avoid abuse. The communities with less power are sharing their reasoning and working within it, the communities (including the Western Folk Filmmakers) with more power are put out of context and left to learn, interpret, and to try to understand. Rather than exoticize Cross River communities and their thinking, GFF helped to otherize Western thinking. Folk Filmmaking can show the strange ways Western moral reasoning may appear out of context, especially when imposed upon questioning or unconvinced distant communities. Simply seeing incongruence and awkwardness in the application of Western reasoning can help audiences begin to wonder about them as well. The first dose of moral reasoning—that supporting conservation—loses its invisibility.

Rather than assume the Folk Filmmaking method would include a diversity of perspectives, during GFF we made sure to work with different people for different projects, from children to elders, hunters to mothers, students to farmers. We changed the lead characters, alternating between men and women, rural and (relatively) urban, in pursuit of fairness and inclusion. Our aims at inclusion seemed to work in the filmmaking process. I am not sure how well it will work as audiences watch and discuss the films, continuing their moral deliberation in response. Big Men and other powerful, outspoken community members may dominate the discussions and the
corresponding community reasoning. Abuse of power may still dictate methods of moral reasoning but Folk Filmmaking does not inherently privilege a certain method of reasoning the way WCVI does.

2d. With regard to the practical actions each approach ends up justifying

WCVI’s practical outcomes include Cross River communities adopting Western cultural values. The practice addresses one moral concern (gorilla conservation) while ignoring others (cultural imperialism and eradication). The benefits it promises include risk of abuse as well. Forest-use can be relatively democratic, with all sorts of community members entering the forest and finding resources they can take advantage of: men trap bushmeat and cut timber, women and children harvest various wild plants, including eru and bush mangoes. Providing snail farms, beehives, and piglets may isolates economic power with a much smaller group. The income now comes from a few individual’s possessions rather than an open forest.

Eco-tourism offers little better. It maintains a relationship of servitude. Relying on tourism as an economic base produces a “nation of busboys and chambermaids.” As a model of economic development, tourism comes with a multitude of problems, including but not limited to foreign investment, low paid service jobs including sex work, continued inequality, and exoticization of local cultures. Already in the beach community of Limbe, home to WCS Cameroon’s regional office and one of the few sites for tourism in Cameroon, tourist opportunities include “visiting the pygmies” up

---


river in the forest. When I visited gorillas in Uganda, our group was also pawned into attending a pygmy dance.

By working directly with and for with local communities, Folk Filmmaking may be more likely to offer better practical outcomes. It may foster resolutions of the dispute that are most appropriate for, respectful of, and convincing to local communities. Though Folk Filmmaking provides few clear recommendations, it helps eliminate the space between those adjudicating the moral case and those involved in the dispute in question. The solutions or moral prescriptions emerging from the method should both be less abusive and carrying more normative force.

Folk Filmmaking also does not leave the moral challenge to the local communities alone. It keeps the process of moral debate open and cross-cultural. It orients the challenge of moral justification to the outside, broader community. With our GFF, Westerners may begin to think about chocolate and their own involvement instead of barbaric ape-hunters. Cross River communities may feel less stigmatized or coerced. Ideally, by talking through the issues and challenges more carefully and sensitively, ideas and answers can emerge from the shared space in between moral communities. Such resolutions may not be clear to either side from their own perspective alone.

3. Practical Feasibility for the Disputants

For the final condition, I consider all the analytical categories at once. The films we produced with GFF showed we were able to delineate the moral domain, characterize moral agency, and define moral reasoning all in a manner that proved feasible to at least some of our local
collaborators. They recommend a course of action that, if we can sort out the distribution of the films, should prove feasible as well.

The above examples also show many concerns with the feasibility of WCVI as a fair and just method of moral reasoning in the Cross River context. Despite WCVI efforts, local communities still want conservation to serve their development needs. They still expect it to prove its worth. Their position is very much different from understanding and endorsing conservation as a moral cause. They do not believe conservation is justified unless it addresses other interests. Their demands, and other local conflicts with conservation, show that WCVI does not present moral conclusions feasible to the local communities. They need outside benefits and bribes tagged on to be convinced to accept its arguments.

Despite its shortcomings, WCVI has much to offer, especially in contexts and communities where its ideas and moral reflections are unfamiliar or even unknown. The issue is how conservation values are taught, which often tracks closer to indoctrination than education. Consider the example of values education in the United States, where legislation separates church and state. Public schools can teach religion as an idea but not as the truth. Conservation educators, too, may need to teach conservation values as situated and contextualized ideas but not necessarily as unassailable moral truth. They can contextualize their values in the cultures and environmental histories of the West. They can teach local gorilla stories and accounts of relationships with nature as well, including a greater diversity of local beliefs and values. Students can engage the ethical questions critically, reasoning them out on their own.

Folk Filmmaking will not always, or even often, be a plausible or feasible method for either conservationists or local communities. It will only work when filmmaking resources and an
interested and sympathetic filmmaking team are available. It is much more of an alternative approach, a method of moral reasoning that can work with the right ingredients and context, resources, and people. It is never usable by all but if done well, it provides an opportunity open to many interested. It is plausible and feasible in its accessibility: film allows a local disputant to present herself and her views in a manner more comfortable and natural, e.g. sitting and speaking, in her own space, in her own words. As such, it can help ease challenges to participation, especially when guided by a warm, proactive, and friendly filmmaker. A Folk Filmmaker can also be attentive to who is dominating and oppressing others in the filmmaking process and attempt to remedy this in various ways. Much of the success of a Folk Filmmaking project will depend on who is involved and how well they can navigate the many challenges.

At very least, Folk Filmmaking recommends a practical response both feasible for and fundamental to addressing moral disagreement: further and more inclusive discussion. Producing and screening the films raises the moral issues, re-identifies them, and shares new perspectives. In so doing, it begins the process of better adjudicating the moral disagreements across communities diverse in culture and power. It provides an impetus for better discussion and an account and relic of at least the initial moral issues and concerns. Folk Filmmaking is certainly not the only way for resolving cross-cultural disputes, it is merely a tool to add in the right context. It less offers a solution than helps guide more careful adjudication.

Folk Filmmaking may often be well-suited to the context of international wildlife conservation. Charismatic wildlife and beautiful natural spaces invite passionate people hoping to do the right thing. They also lend themselves well to cinema. Conservationists constantly compose
moral messages to wide audiences. Environmental issues often elicit cross-cultural moral debate. Environmental media is common and often employed; films are a popular tool for raising concern and awareness, for garnering support and resources, and for local and global education efforts. Species Action Plans include media components and extensive plans and budgets for outreach and engagement with local communities. Conservation education budgets can be tweaked. Funders can orient less towards imposing values and more towards learning about and from local communities. Initiatives can be redesigned to educate in both directions. Folk Filmmaking could occur within such projects, as a branch of media production or outreach and education. It could also be used and supported as a method of conflict resolution.

Folk Filmmaking may not prove morally feasible to conservationists. Our GFF may have failed to meet its mandate, at least in Nigeria. I sent our first two films, Obi & the Juju Forest and Conservation Education, to the director of WCS Nigeria (he was back visiting family in the United Kingdom when I left Nigeria for Cameroon). Though we had planned and arranged the project together, I never heard from him again. I suspect he did not approve of the films. Less than a year after I left, WCS Nigeria brought in a new filmmaker:

On the 10th of March 2015, WCS received a filmmaker, Mr. Joan Poggio and traveled to WCS field sites to film ongoing field conservation activities as part of a PUMA funded grant received through the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP). During his trip with WCS Cross River Landscape Director, Inaoyom Imong, 

700 Dunn et al. 2014
school conservation club in Buentebe secondary school Wula was visited and filmed. Other activities filmed during the visit were interviews with a reformed hunter who is now a bee-keeper with support from WCS, 3 active hunters in Okwangwo and a visit to a bushmeat market. Others include CAMM meeting, interview with conservation stakeholders and anti-poaching and gorilla monitoring patrols by the Mbe eco-guards. We hope that, the resulting film can be used to educate forest communities on ongoing conservation activities in the area.\textsuperscript{701}

Folk Filmmaking may not be a feasible method for conflict resolution. Conservationists may be reluctant to relinquish control of their message, especially through powerful forms of media. Without conservationists’ support and collaboration, Folk Films may not reach many of the local communities they are meant for. They may also not reach the conservationists themselves. If neither moral community watches the films, they cannot be of much help.

How well the GFF worked in Cross River will be best determined during the distribution phase of the project. At that stage, we will receive feedback on what locals think of the films and the moral discussions. From the above analysis, GFF seemed a good fit but the distribution phase will be the true test.

Part III

OBJECTIONS & RESPONSES

Challenges to the Folk Filmmaking Method

1. Are These Really African Accounts?

_The films are made by or for you. They do not work to represent local communities, their knowledge, or their interests._

Rouch argued that he avoided making political films about Africa as “it is imperialistic to project your political values onto Africa. That kind of film must be done by Africans.”

He argued that an ethnographer distorts the facts simply by being there. She can ask a question but by doing so she affects the answer. Folk Filmmaking avoids these concerns by not seeking some pure, objective representation of a culture. The films are meant not to record local knowledge but to emerge from the collision of local knowledge with that of the outside. In this way, too, they show why the collaboration between knowledge communities during filmmaking is of benefit. The collision of knowledges is explicit throughout.

In ideal conditions, local communities would have the tools, training, and resources to produce their own work. Increasingly they do, with Nollywood being the nearby, overwhelming example. Filmmakers in Nollywood, by nature of their urban location and the equipment they

---


703 _Ibid._: 219, 220

704 Other examples include Paper Rocket productions on the Navajo Nation; Goolarri and PAKAM, indigenous Aboriginal Australian media organizations with two national television networks NITV and ICTV
wield, can access outside media. They mimic and challenge it, they respond and they represent themselves. They are working across cultures in many respects.

Folk Filmmaking helps do the same with local communities, still far from having the chance or resources to create their own media at a similar level. The more marginalized communities Folk Filmmaking focuses on will tend to lack both the tools to present their own accounts and the exposure to the diversity of outside media helping them to work across knowledges. Making films together, with an outsider, benefits these communities by providing them with the tools and skills to craft their knowledge well. It also helps by offering the cultural collision early. Bringing local knowledge into conversation with outside knowledge at the production stage helps assure the final films are accessible to outside audiences.

Filmmaking inevitably replicates power. Who has access to cameras? Who has training to wield them? Who has developed a cinematic language, exposure to their sorts of media and naturalized their messages? Who controls access to the distribution outlets? All of this presents serious challenges to non-imperial Folk Filmmaking. As long as Folk Filmmakers seek out local communities dealing with imposed international media, while lacking the tools to create their own media in response, Folk Filmmakers can help. When these communities have access to the tools and resources they need (or when international efforts move along), the communities will probably have less need for Folk Filmmakers. Until then, Folk Filmmaking can at least help disrupt outside power rather than perpetuate it.

In short, Folk Films are not only local accounts. They are films made with local communities not about them. They aim to express local accounts in conversation with a greater moral debate and question. They are reflective and transparent about this aspect. They present themselves not as pure
examples of local knowledge but as a local response to an outside question or issue, constructed in a way to be understood at both a local and global scale.

2. Why Make a Folk Film instead of an Ethnography or Documentary?

A distinct difference between Folk Filmmaking and efforts of visual anthropology or the greater field of documentary comes from its approach to truth. Since Dziga Vertov, Jean Rouch, and the pursuit of cinéma vérité, scholars of cinema have debated what it means to capture and present truth on screen. The scientific value of ethnography depends upon the reality of what is filmed, the truth of it. For example, critiques of Flaherty’s classic work include (among many other concerns) problems with his staging of events and scenes. Folk Filmmaking sidesteps these concerns by neither trying to stage reality à la Flaherty or “seize improvised life” à la Vertov. Instead, it invites the truth of performance. It allows locals to depict themselves as they wish, to take control of their image production and over narratives featuring them. They choose the subject, the narrative arc, the characters. Ideally, the filmmaking craft eventually moves onto them too. Folk Filmmaking helps initiate this exchange of power and control.

Rather than capture the truth of these communities, they are invited to share in presenting it. Their knowledge is theirs to reveal and to describe, not something to be discovered in the footage. Rouch anticipated this change:

In the field, the observer modifies himself; in doing his work, he is no longer simply someone who greets the elders at the edge of the village, but— back to Vertovian

---


terminology—he ethno-looks, ethno-observes, ethno-thinks. And those with whom he deals are similarly modified; in giving their confidence to this habitual foreign visitor, they ethno-show, ethno-speak, ethno-think.

It is permanent ethno-dialogue that appears to be one of the most interesting angles in the current process of ethnography. Knowledge is no longer a stolen secret, devoured in the Western temples of knowledge; it is the result of an endless quest where ethnographers and those whom they study meet on a path that some of us now call “shared anthropology.”

He is willing to impose a narrative arc and to edit at the expense of anthropological documentation to keep the drama of the ritual alive. Castaing-Taylor notes this as a difference between provoking the truth rather than recording it. Folk Films, too, seek to provoke truth. In some ways, fictional stories may better track the nature of Cross River accounts, of storytelling and embedding knowledge in narrative, myth, and metaphor. In other ways, the needs of the narrative, the many moving pieces, the scripting and performing, may obfuscate and alter the forms of expression. But fiction makes an important shift in power and autonomy from the filmmaker to the collaborators, at least in the Folk Filmmaking context. In a Folk Film, the characters and collaborators take control of the movie.

3. These films do not work.

This concern can be raised in many iterations. I address a few in turn:

707 Rouch 2003: 100, 101
708 Ibid.: 216, 217
709 Rouch 2003: 141
3a. It is a myth that traditional or local knowledge can be conducive to conservation. If conservationists had to come, it is too late. The moral debate already happened.

This objection begins with the premise that it is not even worth trying to adjudicate the moral dispute, the sides are already clear. Gorillas are dying off because local ethics do not value them. Conservationists had to come because local communities were not up to the task of protecting their animals. Proponents of this position argue that traditional societies did not conserve, at least not in the sense that is necessary to save gorillas now. They contest the celebration of and excitement about collaborations between traditional societies and conservationists. Critiques include that local cultures cannot conserve game; if they did conserve wildlife it was by accident, not intent. They add that spirituality is not reality, building foundations on belief rather than science is dangerous. They also note that, even where traditional, local cultures may promote conservation, national law tends to both supersede and disenfranchise them, limiting their participation in conservation.

---


anyway.\textsuperscript{713} Making films based in local knowledge will offer nothing, there is no hope of working together.

All of these concerns miss the point. Whether or not they are true, collaborations on conservation depend less upon details of traditional cultures or their application in the 21st century than upon mutual respect. Incorporating local knowledge into conservation, whether via Folk Filmmaking or any process, is important because it allows local communities power and presence in the politics of conservation.\textsuperscript{714} Conservation needs to be justified to these communities first and foremost. If conservation does directly conflict with local culture and values, it only has more onus to justify its invasion into their communities.

\textit{3b. The films express moral issues but not in an effective or compelling way. They will not create change.}

Conservationists evaluate the success of their conservation education projects based on various criteria. Similar great ape education projects included evaluations based on “knowledge and attitude change”, “behavior change”, and “positive biological impact”.\textsuperscript{715} They assessed change via interviews and questionnaires, and surveys of “great ape density and abundance and hunting pressures in the locality.”\textsuperscript{716} Conservationists survey bushmeat markets to look for change and report

\begin{footnotes}
\item[\textsuperscript{714}] Ibid: 275
\item[\textsuperscript{715}] Breuer, T., & Mavinga, F. B. 2010. Education for the conservation of great apes and other wildlife in northern Congo—the importance of nature clubs. American Journal of Primatology 72(5): 454-461;
\item[\textsuperscript{716}] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
on social appropriation of conservation values to evaluate conservation outcomes.\textsuperscript{717} In the Conservation Values Education Project, they evaluated the “epiphany potential” of conservation education processes by seeing if the community changed their perception of gorillas via surveys and discussions.\textsuperscript{718}

Our GFF project, too, was expected to prove that it worked. FFI requested surveys showing that our films changed community sentiment. The objectives in our grant included conducting surveys of community sentiment concerning gorilla conservation before and after the filmmaking. (The grant was oriented more towards advocacy than academics.) WCS conducts similar surveys to evaluate their radio program. Our surveys did not happen due to the great time and expense required to visit the field sites. A Peace Corps volunteer offered to conduct the surveys but she was then reassigned to a different forest by ERuDeF. FFI was concerned about the missing surveys. Without them, they did not know if the GFF project was successful. Kindly, they also expressed that such surveys would help me fund similar work in the future. I need proof that Folk Filmmaking works.

All this is premised on the idea that the only way for the films to \textit{work} is if they prove to change minds to follow pre-determined Western values. Even if one avoids imperialism in the process, it may return in the evaluation. In these conservation education studies, community perception is weighed by how much they reorient themselves to conservation values.

This objection reiterates the enlightenment trope. Even if the community is “enlightening” itself by becoming conservation-positive, the notion still belies an orientation to a hierarchy of knowledge: the community needs to figure out that Western values are better. Folk Films may help

\textsuperscript{717} Rose \textit{et al.} 2003(a).
\textsuperscript{718} Rose, \textit{et al.} 2003(a): 3.
bring nuance and care to the conservation conversation. They may affect the thinking of the filmmakers, their collaborators, and their audience. But how can the filmmaker prove the films worked? What does moral progress look like if it is not measured by the yardstick of a superior morality? Judging moral progress by how well one culture catches up to another seems suspicious, as does giving up on moral progression because of cultural differences. Rather than retreat into imperialism or relativism, moral progress requires evaluation, it needs a method to wade through the moral mess.

Jaggar and Tobin’s conditions help assess how Folk Filmmaking might offer a better process of moral evaluation. Improving the process helps justify the moral conclusions. Some conservationists may be sympathetic to this approach. They explicitly ask: “Are we justified in our attempts to “educate” local communities to the value of biodiversity protection?”719 They note the great ethical calculus required to weigh risks and benefits, uphold local community rights, and practice cross-cultural respect, when engaging distant communities in conservation. They question by whose accounting this calculus should be judged.

If our ethics are a reflection of our values, then we have to examine our own valuation of primates along ecological, economic, scientific, and moral/cultural lines. In addition, how do we prioritize competing values when there is a disconnect between the values of the primatologist and those of local communities?720

720 Ibid.: 782
Such conservationists are trying to improve their practice. They are not giving up on wild primates nor dismissing the local communities’ values. Folk Filmmaking is meant to start its work here, at questions of this level and nature. Evaluating its success depends not on how well it works for conservation but how well it works to adjudicate moral claims. It does not create values à la WCVI. Instead, it works through a better understanding of the nature of different values and the reasoning that supports and pursues them.

Meeting Jaggar and Tobin’s conditions is one step but Folk Filmmaking still needs to be evaluated for its impact, not just its method. Surveys may help. Audience studies are an essential part of understanding visual media. They may prove an imperative final component of this research. Limitations of time and budget prevent me from undertaking an assessment of the films’ distribution and reception now but, upon finishing my dissertation, I plan to focus on this aspect and to conduct such a study before publishing about this project. I hope to help initiate the distribution of the films by returning to the Cross River headwaters.

To judge community perceptions of conservation around the Cross River headwaters, social scientists employ various anthropological and participatory methods, including community meetings; household mapping, wealth ranking, and profiling; visioning (subjects envision what they would like for their community in 5 and 20 years); and participatory village mapping. The researchers conduct interviews and focus groups; they hold community meetings. Their methods may work well for understanding reception and interpretation of the films. While these studies often

focus on economics and vulnerability—how local communities perceive and respond to change and challenges imposed by conservation—akin audience studies could focus on how the communities feel the Folk Films represent their knowledge and their concerns, and how well they help deal with the moral issues. Akin to the current studies, researchers could vary their audience groups by age, land use, and social position. Such results may provide valuable information through subject participation including a helpful guide for how the Folk Films can be evaluated.

3c. What if the results of the Folk Filmmaking prove morally objectionable? What if they invite the slaying, or even the extinction, of Cross River gorillas?

Folk Filmmaking is a practice of moral justification. If the results appear objectionable, disputants may need to go through the process of justification again, searching for where something might have gone wrong. The process of justification is essential. If it works, it will rationalize even initially objectionable results. If the resulting moral claims do lack justificatory muster, their faults should appear in the repeated process. As a method of moral adjudication, Folk Filmmaking always needs to be able to justify its process and resulting claims. If it cannot, the method may not be a good fit for the context of the moral dispute. Disputants may need to pursue other methods of moral adjudication.

CONCLUSION

Though Folk Filmmaking seemed a good fit for the Cross River context, and perhaps the greater context of moral disagreements between international wildlife conservation and local communities, I am still sorting through what aspects could improve it in practice. Applying Jaggar
and Tobin’s assessment criteria helps me better understand the motivation for and goals of Folk Filmmaking. Their conditions offer essential restraints and structure to the practice if it is to function as a tool for moral justification. I have less of a clear guide for logistical aspects, though much to learn from filmmakers working on projects in participatory production and visual anthropology. I think some changes—more time with a community, more resources and freedom to work—would only help. I am less sure about others. I do not know if it would be better to collaborate with locals unrelated to conservation or not. More impartial partners may offer a fresher start for approaching the moral questions, but they may also be much less informed about the issues and much less connected to relevant community members.

Relationships are essential to these projects. We worked with a good friend, Marcel Navti, throughout our time in Cameroon. He has no connections to conservation but friends all over the country. He was an enormous help in many logistical respects but I am not sure how well we could have executed a project about gorillas without collaborating with gorilla people.

On most films, our best content came from outside the gorilla community. Completely disconnected, Augustus offered very accessible accounts and silly everyman situations; he worked in the context of a general, public understanding for Cameroonians, far from the conservation conversation. But when we were filming with him, we had trouble accessing simple things—a gun, a ranger costume, a forest to film in—that we needed for the story. We also lacked the reflection from conservationists (local or international) that could have helped with story development.

By contrast, in Nigeria with Francis, we worked with dozens of folks connected to conservation. Some were supportive, others critical, but all spoke very directly to the experience of interacting with conservation. They were grounded in this experience; they have thought about
conservation a great deal and dealt with its impacts and effects in their daily lives. They are also the main audience for the Folk Films. GFF needed to work for these communities first and foremost. Seeking impartiality on future Folk Filmmaking projects may be a mistake.

We are already honing the Folk Filmmaking method by repeating it. We conducted another Folk Filmmaking project the following summer (2015) with conservationists and local communities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. What makes Folk Filmmaking plausible and usable, nonabusive and practically feasible, is context dependent. I conclude the dissertation with brief reflections on the application of our methodology to a dramatically different region, helping to further consider how and when the method fits as a practice of moral justification.
Epilogue

Improving the Folk Filmmaking Method
The limits and promise of Folk Filmmaking as a method of moral justification

A few months after finishing our work in Cameroon, Noal and I went to Central Asia to make Folk Films again. This time we worked in the context of snow leopard conservation efforts among mountain communities in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Conflict included issues with livestock predation, grazing regulations, and hunting restrictions. Folk Filmmaking in a new context raised fresh questions about the method and helped us reflect on its applicability. The Cross River gorilla case study inspired the method’s design but with the study I hoped to illustrate and support a more general methodological claim, namely that Folk Filmmaking is valuable for resolving conflict wherever supposedly global “conservation” ethics clash with local attitudes toward non-human nature. Central Asia both supported and contested this claim. I end with the questions our second project rose because they remain open.

I was invited to make films in Cross River. We invited ourselves to Central Asia. During the Gorilla Folk Filmmaking, I wondered if I could justify my own involvement in the distant conflict. I felt qualified—I had studied the issue for a year in preparation, visited primate conservation sites in eighteen countries, filmed in Cameroon before—but this did not mean I had a right to take part. I decided someone was going to make gorilla movies for the local community. Conservation education efforts were going to continue with or without me. I could at least help improve them.
I had none of these excuses in Central Asia. As soon as we arrived, I wondered if I should be there. What could I offer? Again, I had qualifications—I had been to the same villages three years before, researched local wildlife issues and wrote a book chapter, studied Central Asian conservation closely—but I had no reason to insert myself. I cared about the people and the animals and I wanted to help. Was that enough? What would grant me the right to get involved? How much did I need to care about snow leopards? How much training did I need in conservation or the local community’s issues? How much knowledge of the conflict? Did my identity matter? Did Noal, whose family hails from the region, have more right to be there than I did? As she chatted with locals in Tajik, I felt she made more sense than me. I asked her to lead the project whenever she could.

I do not know who should make Folk Films. Ideally the Folk Filmmaker initiates the project and then relinquishes control. So long as their agenda remains epistemic and social justice, Folk Filmmakers of all sorts should be able to employ the method well. But I am not sure. What qualifies one to go help? An ability to marshal the time and resources? An assignment or invitation to produce media concerning conservation? What about a simple concern for nature or justice? Or a research opportunity? If the role is akin to that of midwife, does a Folk Filmmaker need to be a stakeholder?

Tied into questions of who should make Folk Folks are who should fund them. I borrowed money to make the films in Nigeria and Francis covered many of our field expenses. In Cameroon, we worked with funding from FFI. Throughout our work I felt obligated to make at least the films around the funded topic: Cross River gorillas, even if the conservation message meandered. The funding limited our freedom.

---

We funded our Central Asia films on our own. We received a Lush Charity Pot grant to make the films but the terms were general and open. We also received support from the Boulder-Dushanbe Sister Cities (of which we are members), again with no expectations other than to extend friendship to Tajikistan. Our largest source of funding came from crowdsourcing (in lieu of a wedding registry). The unaffiliated funding allowed us great liberty in filmmaking. Our films became less about snow leopards and more about their prey. Most communities have more interactions with the mountain ungulates. Their stories and memories feature ibex, argali, and markhor. Without an agenda, we could pursue alternative narratives and projects. We created a wider variety of films that perhaps better represent local relationships with wildlife instead of conservationists’ concern for a specific endangered species.

I have no idea how to fund the next Folk Filmmaking project. Is it fair to ask conservation organizations to pay and then to contradict or at least contest their message? Who else will pay for projects about wild animals and nature? Who else cares? How should I describe what a funder is supporting? Are Folk Films research? Activism? Art?

Again, tied into these questions are who are these films for. I addressed this question first in Chapter Five as, during the gorilla Folk Filmmaking project, the audience was clear. WCS wanted movies about gorillas to screen for local communities. I had immediate audiences: the local communities who would be on the receiving end of WCS’s conservation education efforts, the WCS employees, and whomever helped me make the movies. I could aim the films at the local audiences, think of the lessons the films could provide conservationists as well, and assure my collaborators felt represented by and proud of our work. The Folk Films could justify local claims about gorilla
conservation to both local audiences and Western conservationists. Ideally, they could help a wider, global audience better appreciate the complexity of the issue as well.

I had no clear audience for the snow leopard folk films. Conservation efforts in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan include surprisingly few people, with few concerted education programs. Snow leopards range wide and far. It is difficult to distinguish clear, relevant local communities. Snow leopards also do not have the global cachet of gorillas. Further, within the global spotlight, snow leopard conservation receives more attention in more visible range-states: Russia, Nepal, India, China, even Pakistan. Frankly, the global community does not seem to care too much about the few hundred snow leopards wandering around Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

We invited the local communities to present their narratives in their own languages (Kyrgyz, Wakhi, Tajik) and we subtitled the films in Russian and English. Now I wonder who we made them for. We premiered one film at a World Snow Leopard Day celebration in the village where we shot it. We sent another film back to the family we made it with. Folk Films are always first and foremost for the collaborators. But now what do we do with them?

The ethics of distribution raise yet further conundrums. I screened *Nzhu Jimangemi* at the Society for Visual Anthropology film festival. After the screening, a series of professors encouraged me to sell the gorilla Folk Films, especially to universities. Filmmaker friends, too, told me to sell them. As soon as we finished *Chop Gorilla*, Augustus rushed to Yaoundé, got the copyright, and started selling DVDs.

I am not sure I should sell the films. Selling them as educational tools relegates them to relative obscurity and perhaps a designation of ethnography. I am wary of positioning them this way. Also, what am I to make of payment? How do I redistribute the profits to our collaborators? We
paid our collaborators throughout our projects: actors, filmmakers, and producers alike. We paid our translators, hosts, and all involved. But we provided more support and compensation than any significant sum. Is it fair to use profits now to support the next Folk Filmmaking project or to help absorb operating costs?

I am not sure selling the films is fair. Selling also seems antithetical to the cause. I should at least assure the local communities get the films for free. Can I afford this distribution without selling the films to wealthier audiences? Can I reach a wider audience by selling the films or by sharing them freely online, and providing as wide and catholic an access as possible? What are the ethics of posting them? A colleague, sharing insights after doing similar participatory work in Guinea Bissau, told me she is not comfortable putting locals’ photographs on the Internet when her subjects are not familiar enough with the medium to know what they are agreeing to:

…As we were having a meeting to discuss ethics, authorisations to use images etc., I had to explain what the internet is and the consequences to use it. People had all heard about "www.com" on the radio. I tried to get online to show websites etc., but we had no connection, even though we held the meeting in the place out of the village that had a slight cell-phone signal.

Anyway, one of the photographers said that in his view, the "internet is a gigantic folder that contains all the information in the world." He used the folder analogy because we were organising their pictures in folders in the laptop and they asked for explanations about what we were doing.724 I wonder about my rights to images I create. I wonder about including so many people's images in my dissertation and about sharing images I am responsible for in general. To what purpose do I

---

724 de Pinho, J.R. 2015. Personal communication. E-mail.
share them, how, and why? And do I have all their permission? What are they agreeing to when they agree to allow me to take a picture?

Central Asia helped me appreciate the challenge of these questions. In Cross River, many folks are on Facebook. They enjoy sharing things online and getting images of themselves up and out into the world. Children, lacking Internet access and some even lacking electricity, asked us to make Facebook accounts for them. Our collaborators asked me to include their phone numbers in the films so people could get in touch with them. People did not hesitate to appear on camera. They enjoyed the opportunity.

Locals in Central Asia were much more careful. Many women, especially in Tajikistan, did not want to be filmed. At dawn one morning in Kyrgyzstan, I went out with a hunter and shot a spectacular, full moon, high mountain, stalking scene. When we returned, our translator told me I was welcome to shoot the footage but I could not use it. The man had no permit for his gun. If anyone ever saw the footage, he could lose his gun, and with it, his livelihood. I was upset. I loved the footage as much as anything I shot the entire trip. But I felt no right to pursue my art at his expense. I also appreciated that he was too polite to tell me not to film but worried enough to ask me not to use it.

Throughout our Central Asia filming, locals paid close attention to how they appeared on screen. I let them dictate everything. They chose our sets, our locations, our narratives. They chose what to wear, how to act, what to say. They also challenged the filmmaking and each other’s conceptions of the culture. One community, Taldy-su, set up a yurt scene a certain way. When I showed Taldy-su’s film to the next community, in the Tien Shan, they told me the set up was wrong. Kyrgyz do not mount ibex heads. That is Russian style. If those people told you that is
Kyrgyz, they do not even know they are copying the Russians. Take that out. I did not know what to do. Should I allow one community to re-edit another community’s film? Who dictates what local culture is?

We succeed again in producing Folk Films in Central Asia but the project was not easy. People were more shy and restrained. Conservation, still less imposed and more ambiguous, proved harder to discuss. For one film, we turned to interviews instead of re-telling a narrative. For another, we could only work with children because everyone else was too busy or careful. Folk Filmmaking’s strength is in its democratic inclusiveness but including enough people of enough types can be a serious challenge.

Folk Filmmaking requires electricity, expensive equipment, and extensive transportation. It asks collaborators to contribute a lot of time. It also asks them to perform and put themselves on display. The many requirements limit who can participate and who will want to. They grant disproportionate power to outsiders who come in with equipment. The outsiders, too, come at great expense to themselves, and with their own hopes, agendas, and goals. The many ethical issues concerning Folk Filmmaking challenge its potential as a moral method.

I finish this dissertation not feeling too hopeful. I am disappointed. I got involved because I care about wildlife and wild places. I tried to address the issues in a better way. I am not sure I succeeded.

To take a break from writing, I would go run in a forest. I admired the coast grand firs, the golden-crowned kinglets, all the natural beauty. I lamented the absent mammals, the lack of wildlife sign, the emptiness. I would think about gorillas and all I was writing, and my strange conclusions that, after my work, conservation in Cross River seemed difficult to justify or re-imagine. My
scholarship and my academic effort, my pursuit of justice, contradicted my deep feelings about the value of wild, natural spaces and all they can offer people.

I want to keep making Folk Films. I want to refine the method. I want to work with more communities and I especially want to return to screen the films for everyone we made them with. I need to find ways to do all these things and to do them better. I am not sure how or why to continue but I still think the method has potential.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


—. 2010. Replies to Alcoff, Goldberg, and Hookway on epistemic injustice. Episteme 7 (02): 164-178


Ite, U.E. 1996. Community perceptions of the Cross River National Park, Nigeria. Environmental...
Conservation 23 (04): 351-357.


—, Fraser, P., Lysinge, R. (2003b). We Must Change People in Order to Save Gorillas: Conservation Values Education in Rural Cameroon. Biosynergy Institute, Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA.


SCANLON, T. M. 1999. What We Owe to Each Other. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.


—. 2014. Social Movements, Experiments in Living, and Moral Progress: Case studies from Britain’s Abolition of Slavery. The Lindley Lecture. The University of Kansas. February 11.


BBC. 2014. Ebola fears turn Nigerians off eating bushmeat. 3 November.


—. 1914. *In African forest and jungle*. C. Scribner’s sons.


Fargey, P.J., 1992. Boabeng–Fiema Monkey Sanctuary—an example of traditional conservation in

Recommendations for assessing the effectiveness of surrogate species approaches. *Biodiversity and
Conservation* 15: 3951.


Resources of Cross River State: Their Potentials, Threats and Mitigation Measures. *IOSR Journal of
Environmental Science, Toxicology and Food Technology* 8 (6): 64-71.

2012. Ethnobotany survey and uses of plants in the Lewoh-Lebang communities in the Lebialem


Franklin, D.P. 2006. Politics and Film: The Political Culture of Film in the United States. Rowman and
Littlefield Publishers, Boulder.


Freeman, M.M. & Wenzel, G.W. 2006. The nature and significance of polar bear conservation hunting
in the Canadian Arctic. *Arctic* 59 (1): 21-30.

Friant, S., Paige, S.B., & Goldberg, TL. 2015. Drivers of Bushmeat Hunting and Perceptions of


http://www.ubu.com/film/gianikian_pole.html


Minor, J. 2015. CFP AAG 2016: Media, governmentality, and managing the ‘more than human’ environment. 9 October.


policy opportunities. *Biological Conservation* 144 (3): 945-947.


Rainforest Action Network. 2015. Conflict Palm Oil. [http://www.ran.org/palm_oil](http://www.ran.org/palm_oil)


— & Fraser PJ. 2006. We must change people and societies to save primates: conservation values education in urban and rural Cameroon. Proceedings 20th Congress of the International Primatological Society, Entebbe, Uganda.


Sullivan, R. 2013. Meet the Monkeys. BBC Natural World Two. 59 min. http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b039w9p0


Torday, E. 1913. *Camp and Tramp in African Wilds: A Record of Adventures, Impressions, and Experiences During Many Years Spent Among the Savage Tribes Round Lake Tanganyika and in Central Africa, with a Description of Native Life, Character, and Customs*. JB Lippincott Company.


VPRO Metropolist. 2014. First Taste of Chocolate in Ivory Coast. 6 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEN4hcZutO0


