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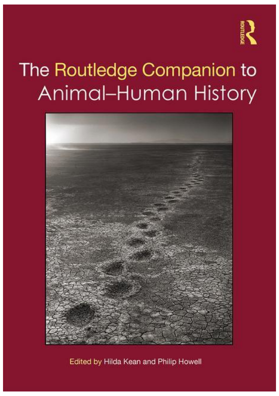

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WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AS CULTURAL MEMORY

Jan-Erik Steinkrüger

At the beginning of her introductory book on geographies of human–animal relations, *Placing Animals*, Julie Urbanik writes:

> Animals surround me right now as I write these words. Inside are three cats; sculptures of elephants, cats, water buffalo, frogs, birds, and an octopus; photos of cheetahs, elephants, seals, giraffes, and all sorts of birds; and a painting of coyotes.[1]

As I write these lines I recall her words and in a similar way I am surrounded by my two cats, I can hear a dog barking on the street, and can see the zebra mask my wife and I brought back from our last vacation. This is, however, just one sense of the animals surrounding me, since these are only the ones physically in the here and now, forgetting all the past animals I carry with me. So I remember our first dog, who used to pick me up at school when I was six or seven. I also think of the time my budgie was eaten by the neighbour's cat, the feathers still hanging out of her mouth when I got home. I think of the bunny my wife had as a child, although I never met it. I am not only surrounded by animals here and now, but also in memories, my own as well as in those stories told to me.

Just like my personal memory, our cultural memory teems with animal life. Animals are used as symbols on statues, monuments and paintings, representing the qualities associated with an animal species, or continents, countries, and cities, or just depicting a once-loved animal companion next to its human counterpart. Some nonhuman animals are commemorated in their own right: individuals like Hamish McHamish – a ginger cat who lived nomadically in the Scottish town of St. Andrews, visiting the houses and businesses on South Street – or Greyfriars Bobby in Edinburgh, who is depicted in a statue and immortalised in children's books.[2] Other animals are commemorated as collectives, for their services to humans, such as animals in war or at work, such as pit ponies, and some as reminders of the extinction of species.[3] The Mass Extinction Monitoring Observatory (MEMO), for instance, located on the Isle of Portland on England's south coast, shows carvings of all the plants and animals that have become extinct in modern times, and is probably the largest and most expensive project of this kind today.[4] A memorial that combines all of these perspectives on animals, however, is the *Halfautomatische Troostmachine* ('semiautomatic comforting machine') built on the site of a former zoo bear pit in Maastricht. Planned in 1997 and realised in 2001 by the artist Michel Huisman, it features a bear statue on a bench outside the pit depicting Jo, the last bear who lived in the pit and was moved to Utrecht in 1993. In the former compound, which was part of a small zoo, extinct animals are depicted in the moat surrounding the figures of a woman and a dead giraffe. Thus the *Halfautomatische Troostmachine* simultaneously commemorates the individual bear Jo, the former zoo of Maastricht, the treatment of animals in zoos, and the extinction of animal species.

Hilda Kean has examined in detail the depiction and commemoration of animals as sculptures, in memorials and other forms of memory-work, though mostly in an urban context.[5] What interests me in this chapter, however, is the extent to which not only statues, monuments and other memorials but also wildlife conservation programmes might be considered a form of cultural memory. Looking at a broad range of wildlife projects from national parks to the reintroduction of animal species, the conservation of animals shows an obvious similarity to archives in the attempt to preserve an inheritance for later generations. Besides these clear parallels between natural and cultural heritage, a commitment which is explicitly demonstrated in UNESCO's 1972 *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, I would like to instance the many entanglements of wildlife conservation in forms of cultural memory.[6] Animals are involved not only in archives of genetic information, but also narratives of humans and human–animal relations. Before looking into the relevant historiography, and toponymy, landscapes, and the role of the animal as a mediator of cultural memory, I will briefly introduce the work of Jan and Aleida Assmann, who despite having never written on animals, have nevertheless introduced a broad conception of cultural memory that is fundamental to the following argument.

Cultural memory

It is due to the works of Jan and Aleida Assmann that research on memorialisation and commemoration has gained the importance and analytical depth it possesses in recent German cultural and historical studies.[7] Drawing on the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' concept of 'collective memory' and the historian Aby Warburg's concept of 'social memory' (and thus arguing for the importance of collectives, in contrast to an individual's mental capacity), Assmann and Assmann coined the term 'cultural memory'.[8] 'Cultural memory' for them is also a reply or an alternative to Pierre Nora's famous *lieux de mémoire*, whose overemphasis on the role of national commemoration betrays the lack of a deeper theorisation of memory.[9] In their contribution, Assmann and Assmann distinguish three levels of memory associated with different times, identities, and forms of memory. Firstly, there is the level of *individual memory* as 'a matter of our neuro-mental system'.[10] It is one's own inner capacity to remember and, as Jan Assmann writes, the only form of memory recognised under the term until the 1920s. So my personal memories of my childhood dog would count as such, though I mostly remember the stories my mother and sister told of him, which could thus be considered *communicative memory*, the second of the Assmanns' levels. This equates to Halbwachs' 'collective memory': here, memory is not merely an individual mental capacity but bound up with communication and socialisation – as my childhood stories suggest. It is what, dialectically, makes a social group as well as being necessarily made by a social group. Jan and Aleida Assmann particularly associate this process with the timespan of oral history, communicated in an intergenerational dialogue.[11] But Halbwachs differentiated his idea of 'collective memory' from traditions, which Jan and Aleida Assmann posit as a separate form of collective memory, placing *cultural memory* as a third, cultural or fully 'social' level. It is Warburg's concept of social memory that they credit for first identifying and interpreting the kind of cultural objectifications taking place at this level, as symbolic carriers of memory *through* multiple generations.[12] So whereas individual memory is embodied and collective or communicative memory is bound up with everyday interaction and communication, social or cultural memory tends to become disembodied and institutionalised:

> It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent: they may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another.[13]

There are several aspects of this argument worthy of elaboration. Firstly, Assmann and Assmann's concept of cultural memory is underpinned by a semiotic understanding of culture, in which social groups constantly refer to and define themselves through a shared set of codes materialised in texts, monuments, pictures or even landscapes. Cultural memory, therefore, 'exists in the forms of narratives, songs, dances, rituals, masks, and symbols; specialists such as narrators, bards, mask-carvers, and others are organized in guilds and have to undergo long periods of initiation, instruction, and examination'.[14] Aleida Assmann also goes on to emphasise the inability to remember everything: 'When thinking about memory, we must start with forgetting. [. . .] In order to remember some things, other things must be forgotten. Our memory is highly selective. Memory capacity is limited by neural and cultural constraints such as focus and bias'.[15] Like other scholars on social memory, she considers forgetting as normal and remembering as the exception. Just as an individual who may remember certain events, places, and so on, but cannot remember all the other events and places in his or her past, cultural memory runs through a selection process of what to remember and what to forget. Thirdly, Aleida Assmann usefully distinguishes between passive and active forms of remembering and forgetting. Whereas passive forgetting is a non-intentional act of falling out of sight by loss or misplacement, active forgetting is the intentional act of trashing and destroying:

> Acts of forgetting are a necessary and constructive part of internal social transformations; they are, however, violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or a persecuted minority. Censorship has been a forceful if not always successful instrument for destroying material and mental cultural products.[16]

In a similar vein the border between passive and active memory is the distinction of passive storage of the past as potential cultural memory – which she calls *archive* – and the active usage of the past as cultural memory – which she calls *canon*:

> The institutions of active memory preserve the *past as present* while the institutions of passive memory preserve the *past as past.* The tension between the pastness of the past and its presence is an important key to understanding the dynamics of cultural memory. These two modes of cultural memory may be illustrated by different rooms of the museum. The museum presents its prestigious objects to the viewers in representative shows which are arranged to catch attention and make a lasting impression. The same museum also houses storerooms stuffed with other paintings and objects in peripheral spaces such as cellars or attics which are not publicly presented.[17]

In summary, cultural memory for Jan and Aleida Assmann plays an important role in the working of the signifying system of a society or culture. In its different forms it produces and reaffirms the collective identity of a group by giving it its (official) history. Cultural memory, however, is a necessarily selective process of active and passive forgetting and remembering, which raises the question which past is actively remembered and which actively or passively forgotten and why. Although Assmann and Assmann mostly focus on human history these questions also apply to a more than human history. From the perspective of an animal–human historian we can, for instance, ask which animals – either collectively or individually – are actively remembered, and which are, actively or passively, forgotten.

Historiographies and historical narratives of wildlife conservation

In Jan and Aleida Assmann's understanding of cultural memory the line between history and memory ultimately dissolves: historiography as an active act of doing history and transferring the past into the present in a selective process serves as a key form of cultural memory. As Jan Assmann emphasises, however, not all history is memory, but only history in relation to the question of identity:

> Memory is [historical] knowledge with an identity-index, it is knowledge about oneself, that is, one's own diachronic identity, be it as an individual or as a member of a family, a generation, a community, a nation, or a cultural and religious tradition.[18]

History evolves to memory when it serves as the history of someone and becomes part of an identity discourse as in discourses of national identity: 'Nation-states produce narrative versions of their past which are taught, embraced, and referred to as their collective autobiography. National history is taught via history textbooks, which have been appropriately termed "weapons of mass instruction"'.[19] The official version of history is not only written and taught, but alternative versions of the past become overwritten and ignored.

Even wildlife protection may become part of a national narrative, as Julie M. Weiskopf shows with the example of postcolonial, national discourse in Tanzania during the 1960s. As a newly founded state with about 120 ethnic groups, the socialist government of Tanzania and its educational institutions focused on creating a unified national identity after colonialism and searched for embodiments of it by taking cultural components from across the country and making them properly 'Tanzanian'. As in other nation-building processes, officials identified regional customs such as dances to form a canon of Tanzanian traditions. In Tanzanian national discourse wildlife was appropriated in a similar manner. It was framed as a national heritage by taking 'a region-specific resource and reimagin[ing] it as the collective and shared property of every member of the nation'.[20] To do this the Swahili word *urithi*, which means 'heritage' as well as 'inheritance' was employed, referring to Tanzanian's wild animals. The protection of wild animals was made a legacy and an obligation from precolonial times: 'National *urithi* endowed Tanzanians with ties that reached across generations, as the country's current wildlife was the legacy of previous generations' good management. [. . .] Wildlife as national *urithi* thus gave the present generation shared ancestors'.[21] The protection of wildlife involved not only the natural but also the national, cultural heritage of Tanzania. It was not an end in itself, but was also a national duty. The narrative of wildlife protection as part of Tanzanian national identity not only reaffirmed the national identity, however, but legitimised Tanzania's efforts in wildlife conservation in its national parks and game reserves.

As the example of Tanzania shows, wildlife conservation may be entangled into the historiographies of nations, as part of their identity discourse. Wildlife conservation, however, is not only part of (other) histories, but has histories of its own. The conservation of wildlife, therefore, may not only be part of a national cultural memory, but the historiographies of wildlife conservation themselves can be considered a form of identity discourse. Almost all conservation projects from national parks to species reintroduction programmes present their history in brochures and on their webpages; many of them being written not by academic historians, but by those working in the field. For Lawrence Rakestraw, this is often in the projects' self-interest: 'Professional conservationists are historically minded, since resource management combines the past, present, and future in its planning and administration'.[22] To successfully manage even the most modest conservation project, one has to know the impact of previous events to plan for the future. The publication of the history, though, serves another purpose: conservation projects 'try to justify their own actions or those of their agencies'.[23] The intention of telling history is either to confirm the success of conservation or to underline the necessity for further support and continued funding. To do so, conservation is either placed in the narrative of successful, ongoing protection efforts, or, alternatively, it is set in contrast to a previous status.

The emphasis of tradition is what Jörn Rüsen considers a *traditional type* of historical narrative and historical consciousness:

> When historical consciousness furnishes us with traditions, it reminds us of origins and the repetition of obligations [. . .]. Traditional orientations present the temporal whole, which makes the past significant and relevant to present

> actuality and its future extension as a continuity of obligatory cultural life patterns over time.[24]

Such is the case in the above example of Tanzania, where today's wildlife protection is narrated as an ancestry obligation from precolonial times. The second line of argument of demarcation is what Rüsen calls a *genetic narrative*. In these narratives it

> is change itself that gives history its meaning. [. . .] The future surpasses, indeed "outbids", the past in its claims on the present – a present conceptualized as an intersection, an intensely temporalized mode, a dynamic transition. This is the quintessential form of a kind of modern historical thought shaped by the category of progress [. . .].[25]

The most radical form of these traditional narratives of wildlife conservation is the myth of a premodern or precolonial time of a natural state in which human and nonhuman animals coexisted peacefully. Such a narrative is used in the example cited above of Tanzanian national discourse, when referring to a precolonial tradition and obligation of wildlife protection. The naïve hypothesis behind this depiction is that indigenous societies per se have or at least had a higher degree of ecological sustainability. This assumption, however, is questionable, as it is founded on idealised and romanticised ideas of indigenous societies, abstracting from their histories and inner differences.[26] For Catherine Nash the deconstruction of such simplified, traditional narratives is one of the central tasks for (critical) environmental histories:

> Environmental history can offer a powerful critique of modern capitalism and colonialism but also challenge the romanticisation of pre-modernity and pre-colonial societies and so counter the primitivising claims of some environmental philosophies. Like the postcolonial project of criticising the material and cultural oppression of colonialism without positing a model of a true and static pre-colonial culture that can be recovered, environmental history can critique modern environmental damage while challenging the notion of a pristine nature in harmony with pre-modern native people.[27]

In this myth of pristine harmony, nature and culture before the advent of modernity and colonialism are considered static and effectively timeless. In this traditional narrative of conservation there is thus no (noteworthy) ecological or environmental or indeed animal–human history before the era of modernity, and nothing therefore to commemorate. Nature and with it animals and their relation to humans become ahistorical.

Whereas traditional historical narratives underestimate or deny change – or argue for a return to a previous state – *genetic* historical narratives of conservation overestimate change by mistakenly equating it with progress. The teleological orientation here is evident. Today's efforts on behalf of wildlife protection and conservation, in such genetic narratives, are often seen as important milestones and precursors for positive future developments. Such is the case for example in Robert Brown's *Conservation Timeline*, which summarises the 'milestones' of conservation since the 1990s:

> Throughout the 1990s to the present, conservationists and national leaders worldwide have become increasingly aware of the mounting threats to wildlife and habitats, including human population growth, resource extraction, habitat fragmentation, climate change, and loss of biodiversity. Efforts to address these threats and live sustainably will continue for decades to come.[28]

Besides the teleological, thoroughly modernist undertone in the line of argument in Brown's and similar historiographies of wildlife conservation the emphasis on societies' attitudes and awareness towards the environment is striking. For Jeanne Kay both are basic and recurrent themes in conservation historiography, based on the assumption that attitude and awareness determine the use of and ultimate impact upon those environments. For her, this widespread assumption runs counter to empirical evidence and is simply based on wishful thinking: 'Scholars who are concerned conservationists may dislike the idea that the best one can hope for by way of sound planetary management is that it will follow resource deterioration, and even then, some cultures will fatalistically adjust to deteriorated resources'.[29]

As shown with Rüsen's differentiation of traditional and genetic historical narratives, historiographies of wildlife conservation typically use the past either as a positive role model or as a preliminary stage for today's and future conservation efforts to legitimise wildlife conservation. Both examples of historiographies described – Tanzanian national discourse on the one hand, and Brown's milestones on the other – mirror the presence in historical periods, especially in the colonial era, in which wildlife population declined due to overuse and mismanagement. It is only in the contrast to these negative historical predecessors – or a problematic interim period in Tanzanian national discourse – that the necessity of conservation becomes tangible. Only the positive and negative historical narratives together form an argument for conservation and build a canon of cultural memory of wildlife conservation. With the example of national parks in mind, Justin Reich shows, though, that it is sometimes rather the absence than the presence of the past that is associated with nature and wildlife conservation: '[T]he historiography of the national parks, while focusing on how parks *preserve* landscapes, continues to underemphasise how these places *create* new landscapes'.[30] The role humans played in the creation of 'wildlife' is neglected and with it the animal–human history becomes a non-history of a pristine nature.

Naming places of wildlife conservation

Historical narratives of places are often reflected in their toponomies. As Whelan argues, the names of places 'act as a spatialization of memory and power, making tangible specific narratives of nationhood and reducing otherwise fluid histories into sanitized, concretized myths that anchor the projection of national identity onto physical territory'.[31] Toponymy, the study of place names, has increasingly brought attention to the politics of place-naming practice in the last decades building on concepts from postcolonial and gender studies.[32] In focus are the 'nationalisation' of street names by erasing colonial street names, for example in Singapore, or the renaming of streets from East Berlin's communist past after the German reunion during the 1990s.[33] Whereas street names and even stadium names have been in focus, the names of animal conservation areas, and the usage of animal names has scarcely been noticed. Just like other place names, however, the names of national parks, nature reserves, and wildlife sanctuaries enact and evidence power relations.

Looking at the toponymy of wildlife conservation areas, many are named after their founders, sponsors, former landowners or chief of states. Such is the case for Kruger National Park, named after Paul Kruger (1825–1904), the president of the Transvaal Republic from 1883 to 1900, who proclaimed parts of today's national park a government wildlife park in 1898. Jane Carruthers has shown that despite the official narrative of Kruger as a nature enthusiast, he not only lagged behind public opinion on wildlife conservation, but had to be forced into the establishment of the refuge. In her interpretation, this was part of an Afrikaner Nationalist political strategy for an increase in international acceptance of the apartheid regime to name the park after Kruger and make him the key actor in its founding history.[34] As shown by this example such toponyms not only commemorate certain individuals, but often reflect and reaffirm the power relations within colonial regimes or of a politically and financially dominant reigning class; in the case of Kruger National Park both at once.

From a postcolonial perspective even more interesting are conservation sites named after ethnic groups that formerly owned or occupied the territory before it was proclaimed a nature conservation area. In these cases, it is important to note by and after whom and in whose language a park was named, since often different ethnic groups might have been traversing the same territory beforehand and ethnical borders might have blurred between them. By highlighting one indigenous group, the presence of others is overwritten and neglected; crossings and overlaps between groups become ignored or sanitised. A most peculiar case is that of Yosemite National Park. The name was given to Yosemite Valley by L.H. Bunnell of the Mariposa Battalion in 1851 in honour of the tribes they were about to drive from the valley. 'Yohhe'meti', however, was not an autonym by a group themselves, but a xenonym for a multi-tribal group of renegades given to them by surrounding Mewok tribes and translating to 'those who kill' or 'grizzly bears', '[f]erocious translations for a tribe that most ethnographers describe as essentially peaceful – but a tribe that would, when confronted, fiercely defend its homeland' as Tracy Salcedo-Chourré writes.[35] By using xenonyms instead of autonyms it is not so much the indigenous group itself, but its perception by others which is remembered, again defined by the perpetrator not the perpetrated; it is the subaltern spoken of, not spoken with.

The naming of wildlife preservation areas just like other places becomes a theatre for the negotiation of difference and power relations. They commemorate the ruling and forget those expropriated, expelled or even killed in the process. Nonhuman animals, however, are scarcely mentioned in the names of these areas. Their histories have so far been also neglected, their pasts have been written out of such naming, a counter discourse still pending.

Conservation landscapes as cultural memory

Besides names of landscapes, the image of landscapes and the landscape itself serve as signifiers in a cultural system, as Denis Cosgrove and James S. Duncan have argued in several of their works.[36] Duncan writes for instance that 'The landscape [. . .] is one of the central elements in a cultural system, for as an ordered assemblage of objects, a text, it acts as a signifying system through which a social system is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored'.[37] Consequently, landscapes may also be anchors for memory.[38] As many studies have shown, our individual memory works spatially rather than temporally: 'We remember events and people by locating them in particular places, landscapes, and organizations of space rather than by reference to time or date'.[39] Similarly our cultural memory remembers spatially: the pictures of certain landscapes become inscribed into our cultural heritage. Especially our perception of nature is still formed by romanticism's ideas of the ideal natural landscape without humans (and thus without history). These also influence how we perceive and therefore realise nature conservation sites.

A prime example for the conjunctions of landscape and cultural memory in nature conservation is Serengeti National Park, which has been a UNESCO natural world heritage site since 1981. Roderick P. Neumann sees the establishment of Serengeti National Park as 'a process of nature production rather than nature preservation'.[40] To fulfil a European idea of African nature, the area which was to become Serengeti National Park had to be cleansed of the people who lived there and effectively sanitised; in sum, 'the idea of nature as a pristine, empty African wilderness was largely mythical and could only become a reality by relocating thousands of Africans whose agency had in fact shaped the landscape for millenia'.[41] It was not only the people, however, but also their history and their relationship to nonhuman animals which had to be neglected.

The myth of the Serengeti as untouched nature dates back to its first descriptions by Oscar Baumann (1864–1899), an Austrian traveller and one of the first Europeans to set foot in the region, in the 1870s. In it he describes the landscape as vast wilderness, 'unaware that the orchard-like appearance of the open savanna was a remnant of [. . .] traditional burns of the grasslands'.[42] In contrast to his description and common belief even today the open savanna was never just a natural landscape, but a cultural landscape, 'no less a product of human agency than the Rhine Valley, the Bavarian Alps, or any other iconic region revered by German hikers and mountaineers'.[43] Ikoma, Ikizu and Nata, who had occupied the Western Serengeti's short-grass savanna for centuries until drought and disease as well as Maasai raids and Western colonisers had driven them off the land in the second half of the nineteenth century, attracted wildlife and controlled tsetse and ticks with these fires and shaped the landscape: 'This human ecology had linked hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, farmers and wildlife for millennia even though Europeans deemed it to be inefficient and wasteful. Indeed, humans and animals had coevolved on the Serengeti plains'.[44]

As Neumann highlights, early preservation ideas also subsumed the people as part of the primeval nature:

> Within an evolutionary view of culture (then widely accepted among educated Europeans) hunters and gatherers and pastoralists were considered to

> be living more off the fruits of Nature than their own labour. People of these cultures, therefore, would not necessarily disrupt the landscape aesthetic.[45]

Ironically it was the evidence of their influence on the landscape, which led to their movement.

One of the most influential for the popularisation of the image of the Serengeti was Bernhard Grzimek (1909–1987), zoo director of the Frankfurt Zoo and most famous in Germany for his television programme *Ein Platz für Tiere* (*A Place for Animals*) which aired from 1956 to 1987. With his television shows and documentaries, Grzimek 'probably raised more money for conservation, educated more people about nature, and twisted more arms of more African bureaucrats than any man in history'.[46] It was his Academy Award winning documentary *Serengeti darf nicht sterben* (*Serengeti shall not die*) in 1959, which drew international attention to the Serengeti National Park. From 1957 to 1959 Grzimek and his son, Michael Grzimek (1934–1959), launched a series of surveys on animal migration patterns in the Serengeti National Park after the British colonial government had decided on a reduction of the park's size to make space for a permanent homeland for Maasai herders. The surveys resulted in a demarcation based on Grzimek's results.

> This process was documented in their book and Oscar-winning documentary film [. . .] which remained unfinished when Michael Grzimek died in a small plane crash in early January 1959, a tragedy that helped to draw even greater European sympathy for the animal protection cause.[47]

Serengeti Shall Not Die became one of the first documentary movies on the Serengeti and also one of the first movies explicitly promoting wildlife conservation. It set the tone for a whole genre:

> The narrative suggests that animals can be saved only by establishing parks, aided by the efforts of people like Grzimek, who perform difficult and selfless acts in harnessing science and technology for the task. [. . .] The image of the Serengeti landscape (and any African park) in these films is entirely wild and natural, without history or social context. They describe a landscape broken into ecological zones – plains, water holes, and hills – but devoid of names or information that would differentiate one place from another either in time or space. [. . .] These potently symbolic images of the Serengeti as one of the "last nooks of paradise", a wild Africa, existing in its pristine state since the dawn of time, proved influential in creating the global perception of the Serengeti landscape.[48]

In contrast to this globally influential narrative of an environment without history and without people, stand the collective memory of Ikoma, Nata, Ikizu, Ishenyi, and Ngoreme, who used to live in parts of today's park and still live at its western border. During her field work with a group of Ikoma, Shetler notes:

> In contrast to Grzimek's images, the elders see a differentiated social landscape that also includes wildlife. [. . .] Standing on the higher places, they looked

> across the landscape and named the areas settled by different clans, often associated with hills. They uncovered the remains of rock walls that were once fortresses to protect the people from Maasai raids in the late nineteenth century.[49]

Humans in Grzimek's narrative of the Serengeti are only shown either as hunter-gatherer people endangered and part of the pristine nature like the animals or as outside threats to the animal population 'reinforcing the belief that African peoples had no place in a landscape designated by God to protect the animals'.[50] Cultural heritage is mentioned scarcely at all in his movies, barely noting German colonial history in the region and entirely lacking reference to its black African history.[51] Thomas Lekan concludes:

> Grzimek sought to break with colonialist exoticism and racism in his depictions of the African wilderness. However, his tendency to privilege the eternal cycles of 'nature' over the vagaries of human history reinscribed rather than confronted Germany's troublesome environmental legacy in East Africa, and this in turn aided the expulsion of the Maasai and others from the Serengeti and exacerbated the asymmetries of power and wealth created by the tourist economy in the region.[52]

In Grzimek's wildlife documentaries, as in many afterwards, temporality is reduced mostly to the annual cycle of the seasons and the never-ending cycle of death and renewal eliding 'the vagaries of linear, human time, particularly the colonialist violence and postwar struggles that had shaped this region before the Grzimeks' arrival'.[53] The Serengeti shown in Grzimek's movies has never become the way it is, but always was this way, in an Africa without history. It is a pristine nature, in which neither indigenous humans nor nonhuman animals had history before colonialism.

Grzimek, and the many wildlife documentaries following his example, shaped the common belief that 'what ought to be seen in Africa were animals, not people' and that this animal wildlife is timeless and ahistorical, only bound to the circle of life and the change of seasons.[54] During the 1960s *Serengeti Shall Not Die* not only led to an increase in safari tourism especially in Tanzania and the Ngorongoro region, but also in a renaissance of zoological gardens across Europe and the founding of so-called 'safari parks' – zoo-like enterprises, in which the visitors travel through the compounds with their own car.[55] His image of the Serengeti has become part of a shared cultural memory of the Serengeti – or even of African savannas in general – paradoxically by concealing the precolonial and colonial histories of it. At the same time, however, Bernhard Grzimek and the movie *Serengeti Shall Not Die* have become part of cultural memory themselves: both are inscribed into the history of German wildlife conservation sometimes considered an important pioneer for the German green movement:

> West Germans who grew up between the 1950s and 1980s remember Grzimek fondly as the avuncular 'animal whisperer' whose extemporaneous, professorial style and passion for animal protection helped to transform

> many straight-laced boys and girls of the Adenauer era into the firebrand ecological activists of the Brandt years.[56]

At the same time the documentary and its director are inscribed into the Serengeti National Park itself as one can read on the park's official webpage:

> Dr. Grzimek had more effect on wildlife conservation in Africa, and especially in Tanzania and the Serengeti, than any other individual. Today his legacy races across those endless plains and roars at the African moon. Everyone who stands in awe at the unfolding spectacle of the Serengeti owes a debt of gratitude for the life and work of Bernhard Grzimek.[57]

Animals as cultural memory

As the example of Serengeti National Park shows, not only the historiographies and names of conservation projects, but even the landscape of a conservational area, its image and lastly our (tourist) gaze at it can be considered a form of cultural memory.[58] In this last section, however, I will argue that even the animal itself has cultural memory inscribed into it. Not only the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* already mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, but also the shared terminology of conservation and preservation, handle wildlife as if they were archive records or museum exhibits, either presented as part of an exhibition or stored in an archive – as 'genetic heritage', say – for later generations to rediscover.[59] The animal individuals presented to the audience in a national park or other wildlife conservation project – whether they are exhibited on a guided tour, presented in brochures, or on webpages – are, just like zoo animals, supposed to *stand for* their animal species in its entirety. As Stephen H. Spotte has argued for zoos, however, the relation between an animal individual as a signifier for a species and the species as a whole is questionable.[60] At the same time the animal individual not only represents its species, but the success in the species' conservation and the people involved in it.

Such is the case in the reintroduction of the Przewalski's horse. For zoologists, it is considered a prime example of a rescue which would not have been possible without the existence of zoological gardens.[61] Brent Huffman writes: '[S]everal ungulates owe their continued existence to captive breeding, including the Przewalski's horses [. . .]. These species were once extinct in the wild, but zoos have preserved them all and reintroduced them to their native ranges'.[62] Today the Przewalski's horse (*equus ferus przewalskii* Poliakov, also *equus ferus hagenbecki* Matschie) is considered to be the only extant wild horse.[63] Its specific importance for biologists lies in the species' ancestry to the domestic horse as Klaus-Dieter Budras *et al.* emphasise: 'It can be regarded as a representative of a group of related species, which were once widely distributed over Europe and Asia and from which the domestic horse derived'.[64] Przewalski's horses, whether held in zoological gardens, in semi-reserves or reserves, are therefore not only considered representatives of their own species, but of wild horses in general. As a 'pre-domestic' horse they additionally become 'a window into a lost past' or even 'pristine nature' before domestication. Przewalski's horses are therefore not only a genetic storehouse, but as a 'living fossil' represent an evolutionary heritage and at the same time a memory of the act of domestication. Paradoxically, this 'wild' ancestor of the domestic horse only survived through captive breeding and in part through crossbreeding with domestic horses. In an aporia, Przewalski's horses are thus ancestor and descendant, wild and domestic, past and future.

There had been no sightings of the Przewalski's horse outside of human custody since the late 1960s, so that it became categorised as 'extinct in the wild' by the IUCN.[65] With the founding of a semi-reserve in the Netherlands, reintroductory efforts began in the 1980s leading to the first releases into the wild in Hustain Nuruu Park in Mongolia during the early 1990s. Today the status of the Przewalski's horses is changed to 'endangered'. The lineage of all of the Przewalski's horses living today (around 2,000) can be traced back to thirteen individual animals. All of these animals 'responsible' for the species' survival were held in zoological gardens:

> Of the 53 animals recorded in the studbook as having been brought into zoological collections in the west, only 12 contribute any genes to the current living population. Of these, 11 were brought into captivity in 1899–1902 and the last of them died in 1939. The one wild horse that has been bred into the population since then is the mare 231 Orlitza III, captured as a foal in 1947. A thirteenth founder is stallion 56 Halle I, born in 1906 in Halle (Germany) to a wild caught stallion and a domestic Mongolian mare, which was one of the foster mothers used to nurse the Przewalski's foals during their journey to European collectors.[66]

The commemoration of these thirteen 'forefathers' also commemorates the role zoological gardens played in the reintroduction. The success of the Przewalski's horse breeding programme becomes a key argument in the legitimisation of zoological gardens' role as a 'Noah's Ark' in 'undoing the past for a better future'.[67] As Cornelius Holtorf argues, though, the role of zoological gardens is rather ambivalent:

> Zoos today are proud to make a contribution (however small) to the conservation of endangered species or species already extinct in the wild. This concerns the continuity of gene pools that have emerged over long evolutionary periods of time but, in the end, have not survived in the wild, often because of human intervention. The course of history is reversed, as it were, by reintroduction of species into their habitats where they had become extinct [. . .]. A second chance is not given to animal individuals but to the species and, thus, to evolution as a whole.[68]

Not only is the individual Przewalski's horse held in a zoo reintroduced into the wild, but it is supposed to represent the species as well as its reintroduction as well as the role the zoos played in it. Lastly it also represents the humans involved in the process. At the turn of the twentieth century, the animal trader and later zoo founder Carl Hagenbeck (1844–1913) was the chief importer for Mongolian wild horses.[69] Most of the Przewalski's horses caught in the wild and brought to European and American collectors and zoos were traded by him; many dying during the transport.[70]

The eleven Przewalski's horses, however, who were the basis of the breeding programme, also stem from Hagenbeck. For this 'contribution' to the conservation the *Verband der Zoologischen Gärten e.V.*, the German union of zoological gardens, write on their webpage on Przewalski's horses: 'Dem Przewalskipferd wäre es nicht anders ergangen, hätten sich nicht Baron Falz-Fein und Carl Hagenbeck darum bemüht, Wildpferde aus der Mongolei zu erhalten' (The Przewalski's horse would not have been any better off, if Baron Falz-Fein and Carl Hagenbeck had not strived to get wild horses from Mongolia).[71] The history in this and similar descriptions of Hagenbeck's influence on Przewalski's horse population justifies the hunt, trade and collection retrospectively: 'Though today we disapprove of these practices, they were after all for the better good'.

Conclusion

The *Halfautomatische Troostmachine,* discussed at the start of this chapter, commemorates the individual bear Jo and the appalling conditions in which he lived, the equally terrible treatment of animals in zoos (especially at the beginning of the twentieth century), and the extinction of animal species through humans. The individual Przewalski's horse, on the other hand, is used as a representation of the achievements in the conservation of an extinct animal species which is supposedly only possible through zoological gardens and their acquisitions at the beginning of the twentieth century. Whereas the first narrative critically unfolds a past, which would be otherwise forgotten, the second narrative has to conceal the role humanity played in the Przewalski's horse's extinction in the first place to highlight the human achievement. The role of the nonhuman animal in this history is reduced to the genealogical tree of the Przewalski's horses' breeding book.

With this chapter I aimed to present an overview of the many entanglements of wildlife conservation and cultural memory. As the examples of Kruger, Grzimek and Hagenbeck show, human individuals and their biographies are inscribed into conservation projects, in the projects' names, into our understanding of a 'wild' landscape, or even into the animal itself. At the same time, we can differentiate between a memory of conservation and a memory through conservation. The narrative of a tradition as well as the narrative of change in wildlife conservation used or abused history to justify conservation efforts. Indifference to this conservation was also used as part of a search for an identity in Tanzania or to give purpose to zoological gardens. Wildlife conservation, however, is not only bound to memory, but to forgetting too. To become a wildlife conservation area, the human imprint typically becomes neglected or alternatively sanitised following the seductive but erroneous notion that 'wilderness has no history'.

The aim of future research in animal–human histories could be to emphasise the role individual animals held in wildlife conservation projects and to show the shared histories of humans and nonhuman animals before and during wildlife protection. A future emancipatory political project would be to not only make accessible indigenous human histories but also nonhuman animal histories, by naming projects after individual animals and rejecting the representation of 'natural' landscapes. After all wilderness has histories, nonhuman as well an animal–human histories.

Notes

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