# The geopolitical ecology of conservation: discourse and power in counter wildlife trafficking programmes in Peru

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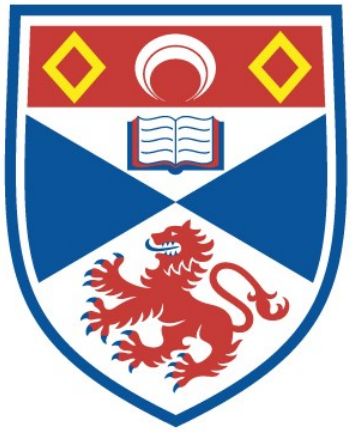
A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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## Abstract

The illegal wildlife trade (IWT) has risen as an emergent threat for conservation. Academia and governments have often ignored IWT in the Americas, but growing interest in counter wildlife trafficking (CWT) in Latin America has created space for non-state actors to influence agendas through CWT programmes. The dynamics and implications of such programmes elucidate the power international discourses and structures have in shaping relationships with nature and between actors in new ways. Extending the theory of geopolitical ecology through a novel engagement with decolonial and feminist approaches, my thesis follows the influence, maps the institutions, and explores how people engage with wild animals in markets to understand the geopolitical ecology of international conservation through CWT programmes in Peru. Data was collected through document and policy reviews, ethnography, and semi-structured interviews with government officers, CWT professionals, and people in three of the main wildlife markets in Peru. Empirically, I find that CWT discourses focused on crime and enforcement-first approaches shape and reshape CWT programmes implemented in Peru, from international conferences to street markets. Even though the Peruvian government maintains a strong discourse on "promoting the sustainable use of wild animals," enforcement-first actions become a primary focus through the support of non-state actors and in combination with national conditions. In markets, place-based experiences of engaging with wild animals vary, but a strong experience of living in worlds with wild animals contrasts with law-enforcement focused action that aims to separate humans from animals. Policing for conservation in markets elicits conflicting perceptions, at once seen as important and unjust, contributing to mistrust towards the government. In unravelling the geopolitical ecology of conservation, I theorise large conservation non-state organisations as large geopolitical institutions, and CWT programmes as a form of cosmopolitical ordering. This brings new perspectives for considering the decolonisation of international conservation.



Keywords: Geopolitical ecology, illegal wildlife trade, conservation.

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*“Creo que el mundo es bello,*
*que la poesía es como el pan, de todos.*

*Y que mis venas no terminan en mí*
*sino en la sangre unánime*
*de los que luchan por la vida,*
*el amor,*
*las cosas,*
*el paisaje y el pan,*
*la poesía de todos.”*

- Como tú, yo, Roque Dalton.

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This PhD was written partly during the December 2022 to February 2023 civil unrest period in Peru. I want to acknowledge the 49 people killed and the countless people harmed by the Peruvian military and police.

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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| CITES | Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora |
| CITES CoP | CITES Conference of the Parties |
| CMS | Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species |
| CWT | Counter wildlife trafficking |
| DAR | Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales |
| EC | European Commission |
| FEMA | Fiscalías Especializadas en Materia Ambiental (Specialist Environmental Prosecutor Offices) |
| GEF | Global Environment Facility |
| HWC | Human wildlife conflict |
| ICCA | Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas |
| IFAW | International Fund for Animal Welfare |
| II IWT Conference | II High-level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas |
| IGO | Intergovernmental organisations |
| IPBES | Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services |
| IPLC | Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities |
| IUCN | International Union for the Conservation of Nature |
| IWT | Illegal Wildlife Trade |
| LFFS | Ley Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (National Forestry and Wild Fauna Law) |
| MIDAGRI | Ministerio de Desarrollo Agrario y Riego (Ministry of Agriculture Development and Irrigation) |
| MINAM | Ministerio del Ambiente (Ministry of the Environment) |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NPC | Neotropical Primate Conservation |
| OSINFOR | Organismo de Supervisión de los Recursos Forestales y de Fauna Silvestre (Forestry and Wild Animal Resources Supervision Organism) |
| REDD+ | Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation |
| SERFOR | Servicio Nacional Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (National Forestry and Wild Animal Service) |
| SPDA | Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental |
| UNODC | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USFWS | United States Fish and Wildlife |
| US-INL | United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs |
| WCS | Wildlife Conservation Society |
| WWF | World Wildlife Fund |

# Chapter 1

# Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction

The journey for this thesis began in March 2019, when two events converged the international and the personal. At the international level, a scandal reached international news claiming that park rangers receiving training and support from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) had committed human rights violations in several protected areas across Africa and Asia (Kashwan et al., 2021; Warren & Baker, 2019). The Buzzfeed report claimed park rangers funded, equipped, trained, and supported by WWF had detained local residents arbitrarily, as well as violently beat, tortured, sexually assaulted, and even killed residents for suspicions related to "anti-poaching" efforts (Warren & Baker, 2019). These reports were collected from Chitwan and Bardiya National Parks in Nepal, Lobéké National Park in Cameroon, Kaziranga National Park and Pench Tiger Reserve in India, among others. From a programmatic perspective, the most concerning claim the report made was that WWF continued supporting the rangers' organisations even after receiving the accounts of human rights abuses and further protected the park rangers from legal consequences.

At the personal level, I started working in a programme aimed at tackling illegal wildlife trade (IWT) in South America, based in my home country of Peru. After learning about the WWF scandal, I was concerned by the possibility that the same discourses and structures that had led to human rights violations elsewhere could be reproduced in the programme I was working in and in my country. It prompted me to think about how

conservation justifies such forms of violence in the multiple scales it influences and what kinds of organisational positions, structures, and mechanisms were needed to avoid it or ensure accountability.

A year after the initial Buzzfeed news report, an inquiry on the accusations of human rights violations stated that although WWF was aware of the abuses and continued to provide support to the institutions and rangers involved, it was released of responsibility because it did not intentionally encourage abuse and took "sufficient actions" (WWF, 2020, p. 82). In a United States Congressional hearing in October 2021, members of the House Committee on Natural Resources and a former U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment accused WWF of implementing "fortress conservation" while WWF refused to accept responsibility (Abulu & Sutherland, 2021). By the writeup of this dissertation in 2024, WWF's donors and other allies who supported the interventions that led to human rights violations, such as the European Union and United States government agencies, were largely left out of this scandal. Four years after the story broke out, WWF remains one of the most powerful conservation organisations in the world.

In my experience as a conservation practitioner, the Buzzfeed report changed somewhat how conservation is approached in practice (Ford-Learner et al., 2024). For example, donors are increasingly paying attention to and requesting safeguarding and social safeguards mechanisms in funding calls. Nonetheless, this and other reports of violence in conservation raise significant questions about power dynamics in international conservation's global search for success in protecting nature. This is especially important considering recent calls for conservation to "decolonise" and to encourage the leadership and engagement of Indigenous and peasant peoples and rural or local communities.

In a similar way, this thesis converges the international and the embodied in a cross-scalar analysis of counter wildlife trafficking (CWT) programmes being implemented, worked, and reworked in Peru. I understand CWT programmes to be organised efforts to tackle IWT, often involving the influence of non-state actors mobilising funds to carry out this work. While existing literature on conservation and CWT

has revealed a global turn towards militarisation and securitisation (Duffy, 2021a, 2022b), which produces and maintains violence on the ground (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; de Jong & Butt, 2023; Lunstrum, 2014), limited attention has been paid to calls for decolonisation within global conservation CWT efforts. Thus, this thesis aims to contribute to debates on discourse and power in international conservation, asking questions about how much power international structures of environmental management and framings of environmental issues hold over influencing or defining conservation actions at different scales. When I refer to international conservation throughout this thesis, I refer to the broader workings of the global conservation sector, as exemplified by large international non-governmental organisations such as WWF which have offices in several countries around the world and channel large sums of money into their programmes.

The main argument I develop is that funding and legitimacy in conservation structures at the international scale facilitate geopolitical discursive and material CWT actions that are then mobilised into national and local levels. As these actions are mobilised, they encounter different priorities, conditions, and ontologies that shape, reshape, or contest international discourses to produce varied and conflicting effects for both natures and people. I argue that thinking through CWT programmes in Peru allows scholars to critically engage with the decolonial turn in conservation in novel ways, as such global CWT efforts challenge practitioners and scholars to think beyond traditional conservation spaces, actors, and perspectives. Ultimately, attention to these dynamics allows scholars to understand international conservation as a geopolitical and cosmopolitical practice.

To support my arguments, I develop and extend the theory on geopolitical ecology by applying decolonial and feminist approaches at the international, national, and local scales. Geopolitical ecology is a recently developed framework which studies the role of big geopolitical institutions in defining and controlling the environment and nature (Belcher et al., 2020; Bigger & Neimark, 2017). Based on traditions of political ecology, following the framework of geopolitical ecology, and combining it with elements of decolonial scholarship on conservation and political ontology, my thesis follows structures of CWT action through the international, national, and local scales. This

allows me to bring fresh insights into the ways in which framings of natures come about, shape action, are transported, reshaped, and contested as they seek to make impacts and sustain themselves.

In this introductory chapter, I follow these opening remarks by introducing the research aim and questions which guide my thesis. Then, in section 1.3. I introduce the main context on international conservation and CWT in Peru which situates my research and present the main gaps in the literature. In section 1.4. I describe the main empirical, theoretical, conceptual, and methodological contributions of my research. Lastly, section 1.5. describes the structure of my thesis and summarises the main arguments of each chapter.

## 1.2. Research aim and questions

My research aims to develop the geopolitical ecology of conservation using CWT efforts in Peru as a case study. To do so, I propose the following questions for my research:

1. How are global discourses on wild animals, their use and trade, unfolding and being negotiated in Latin America and Peru through global CWT action and international conferences?
2. How do mainstream CWT framings and practices interact with national and international conditions to produce the CWT action currently implemented in Peru?
3. How do local experiences, ontologies, and politics shape perspectives of wild animals, their trade, and efforts to tackle such trade in places where wild animals are commercialised?

I focus my research specifically on efforts to tackle the illegal trade in wild land animals due to growing conservation interest and funding dedicated to them, and due to

the harmful social impacts resulting from them in other geographies. Additionally, I look at how these international CWT efforts are negotiated, shaped, reshaped and eventually land in open street markets in Peru to unravel a broader, cross-scale picture of the geopolitical ecology of conservation programmes.

## 1.3. Counter wildlife trafficking for conservation in Peru

As global environmental crises threaten business as usual, an increased sense of urgency to address them pushes policymakers, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), scholars, and activists into higher targets and commitments for environmental and conservation action (Corson & Campbell, 2023; Simpson & Pizarro Choy, 2023). Multiple multilateral agreements such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), set targets and priorities for protecting nature, bringing various actors together in pursuit of – sometimes contradictory – goals and targets (Krauss, 2021; Parks & Tsioumani, 2023; Waldron et al., 2013). This in turn directs international and national efforts for conservation through increased attention, funding, and action (Halpern et al., 2006; Waldron et al., 2013), allowing non-state organisations to heavily influence international and national decision-making related to the protection of nature (Brockington et al., 2012; Kashwan et al., 2021; Larsen, 2018). In this context, dominant institutions in the sector - such as big international NGOs - can increasingly push forward particular representations of nature, environmental concerns, and solutions that benefit them and further their goals (Escobar, 1998; MacDonald, 2010b).

Scholarship on political ecology has revealed that during the last decade, conservation efforts have paid increasing attention to tackling IWT around the world (Duffy, 2022b; Massé & Margulies, 2020), concerned by the effects of overuse and trade on the populations of several flagship species (Hinsley et al., 2023; ‘t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019), especially in Asia and Africa. Though detrimental to species’ survival if

overexploited, wildlife use and trade (legal or not) is widespread and forms the basis of many rural people's livelihoods (Bodmer & Lozano, 2001; Booth et al., 2021). Nonetheless, political ecologists have uncovered how conservation efforts to stop wildlife "poaching" have taken a turn into increasingly militarised and securitised practices (Duffy, 2014a; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016), reshaping the conservation sector and the interventions that are prioritised (Duffy, 2022a; Duffy & Brockington, 2022; Massé et al., 2020). Moreover, due to the illegality of IWT, and its links to criminality, scholars and CWT professionals are increasingly concerned for its effects on sustainable development (Gore et al., 2019), international conflict (Douglas & Alie, 2014), and related crimes such as corruption (Musing et al., 2019; D. P. Van Uhm & Moreto, 2018), drug trafficking (D. van Uhm et al., 2021), and organised crime (Anagnostou & Doberstein, 2022; Wyatt et al., 2020). Through these links, new actors and sources of funding have gotten involved in conservation (Duffy, 2021a, 2022b), reshaping the sector in new ways.

From 2010 to 2016, over USD$ 1.3 billion were committed towards CWT projects in Africa and Asia only, primarily from the Global Environment Fund and countries such as Germany and the USA (The World Bank, 2016). Applying the recent framework of geopolitical ecology, Massé & Margulies (2020) analysed the foreign assistance provided by a USA conservation agency and revealed a trend towards funding CWT projects with a strong law enforcement focus to address issues of international security. This increased funding and attention is important because CWT efforts have been found to produce and maintain conservation violence in targeted locations (Büscher, 2016b; de Jong & Butt, 2023; Trogisch, 2021), as the WWF report exemplified previously. Most of the literature exploring the violent effects of CWT efforts has focused on case studies in Africa, but as CWT programmes are rolled out in other regions, their surfacing in emergent geographies merits exploration. Moreover, this has coincided with a global interest for engaging local communities and promoting Indigenous rights in conservation, in a turn towards "decolonisation" (Aini & West, 2018; Corbera et al., 2024; Krauss, 2021). Nonetheless, approaches towards decolonising conservation often focus on area-based strategies (Artelle et al., 2021; Domínguez & Luoma, 2020), and seldom engage with broader discussions on which conservation structures should be decolonised and how.

In Latin America, debates on Indigenous cosmovisions and territoriality have broken into state politics in various ways (Espinosa, 2019; Gudynas, 2009; Merino, 2016), bringing new light into how nature is conceptualised and governed (Hope, 2021a; Vela-Almeida et al., 2020). Peru is considered one of the top biodiverse countries in the world, home to thousands of wildlife species and abundant landscapes (Myers et al., 2000; Petrossian et al., 2024). It is also culturally diverse, with over 50 distinct recognised ethnic groups[1] and complex histories of racialisation from which intricate identities emerge (de la Cadena, 2001, 2005). Wild animal use and trade has been recorded in Peru since ancient times (Crabtree, 1990; Lathrap, 1973), and it continues until today for reasons related to food and sustenance (Mayor et al., 2019, 2022), pet keeping (Leberatto, 2016; N. Shanee et al., 2017), clothing (Kasterine & Lichtenstein, 2018; Rochabrun, 2024), among others (Mendoza et al., 2022; Moorhouse et al., 2023). Though researchers and conservationists have shown concern for the impacts of illegal domestic use and trade for decades (Gastañaga et al., 2011; Mendoza et al., 2022; N. Shanee, 2012), there are growing worries about a rise in illegal international trade in Peru (Morcatty et al., 2020; Nijman et al., 2019b).

While wildlife use and trade in Peru have been studied widely, especially in Amazonian regions, little attention has been paid to the workings of CWT efforts. Some studies focusing on the dynamics of IWT refer to a lack of state resources and capacity (Leberatto, 2016; Shanee, 2012; Shanee et al., 2017), or lack of interest from state authorities to tackle IWT (N. Shanee & Shanee, 2021). Additionally, Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson (2015) compiled a list of NGOs and their motivations for addressing illegal wild pet trade. Nonetheless, given the increase in attention and funding towards CWT efforts globally, no studies to date have drawn the connections between local or national action and the geopolitics of the international conservation sector in Latin America or Peru specifically. Moreover, though some conservation scholars and practitioners recognise the traditional uses of wildlife (Cooney et al., 2018; Petitpas & Bonacic, 2019), and though many have recognised the relational connections between people, nature and their territories in Latin America (de la Cadena, 2019; Hope, 2021a; Oslender, 2019),

[1] Peruvian government Database of Indigenous and Original Peoples: https://bdpi.cultura.gob.pe/pueblos-indigenas

there is little attention paid to ontological and relational connections with wild animals in the context of CWT efforts.

Therefore, though tackling IWT expands as a priority for conservation around the world, the links between different scales of action in emerging geographies such as Peru have not been studied in academic work to date. I draw inspiration from Massé & Margulies (2020, p. 12), who highlight how shifting framings of conservation in US foreign policy produce "material effects on the ground via the kinds of projects they support (or not) through international grants." Thus, this thesis draws links between international conservation decision-making spaces and structures, and Peruvian structures, conditions, and action. In doing this, it empirically unravels the ways in which current global concerns and priorities for CWT as conservation action navigate various scales, eventually landing in specific places in Peru to manage particular ways of relating to wild animals. CWT action in Latin America has received limited academic attention, but I demonstrate how, in a complex landscape with limited resources for action, what is prioritised and how can have significant impacts on how nature is managed. I examine the geopolitical-ecological and cosmopolitical dynamics and implications at play in how broader conservation spaces and structures facilitate and secure the legitimacy of non-state conservation actors in CWT, in conflict with other ways of understanding, experiencing, and relating to wild animals. I also reveal how this produces conflicting impacts for those targeted by CWT action. To my knowledge, this is the first academic study assessing the international connections to counter wildlife trafficking action in Peru and its links to the geopolitical ecology of conservation.

## 1.4. Contributions

This thesis presents several empirical, theoretical, conceptual, and methodological contributions. Firstly, it provides novel empirical research on CWT action as part of international conservation efforts in Peru. Existing academic literature

has introduced Peruvian regulatory frameworks as background (Bodmer & Lozano, 2001; Mayor et al., 2022), engaged with local institutional impediments for effectively tackling IWT (N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017; N. Shanee & Shanee, 2021), or assessed the possible involvement of NGOs in addressing IWT (Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson, 2015). Nonetheless, no research has examined international and national CWT efforts in Peru in depth and through a multi-scalar approach. Thus, this thesis produces the first multi-scalar critical examination of counter wildlife trafficking programmes in Peru, from international decision-making spaces and structures to local perceptions and impacts in markets where wild animals are (illegally) traded. My results bring new insights into the conservation sector internationally and in Peru, presenting empirical findings on the geopolitical ecological mechanisms, dynamics, structures, and discourses that produce and reshape CWT efforts in Peru and their impacts.

Theoretically, by engaging with decolonial and feminist approaches, I expand the theory on geopolitical ecology through introducing ontological conflicts, institutional structures, and reshaping conditions into the analysis of how environmental management is geopolitically-ecologically shaped and negotiated across scales. In chapter two I introduce the frameworks of the political ecology of conservation, geopolitical ecology, decolonial conservation, and political ontology and the pluriverse as approaches which all reveal important insights for understanding the geopolitics of conservation in Latin America. I combine aspects of these throughout my thesis because in isolation none of them can contribute to building a holistic comprehension of the nuances of wild animal use and trade in Latin America and Peru specifically in light of increasing conservation CWT efforts. In this light, I extend and contribute to each of these bodies individually but further expand the approach of geopolitical ecology by re-examining who can be considered a geopolitical actor and what are the spaces and processes through which conservation becomes geopolitical. Moreover, by critically questioning the ontological conflicts arising from the geopolitical ecology of international conservation in Latin America, I expand the theory on the geopolitics of conservation in a novel way considering the decolonial turn. In this way, through this thesis I develop a novel theoretical framework capable of theorising the international conservation industry as explicitly geopolitical and cosmopolitical.

Conceptually, I contribute to conversations about the decolonisation of conservation by arguing for the division of the concept of conservation between a practice, an outcome, and an industry. This, combined with my theoretical approach towards taking ontological differences seriously, provides an original approach towards critically assessing the potential for decolonising international conservation. Ultimately, I aim to critically analyse the extent to which conservation can be decolonised to construct more just practices for the communities targeted by conservation programmes or represented in conservation discourse.

Methodologically, I develop a novel methodological approach by drawing from follow the thing (Cook, 2004; Cowen, 2020) and policy mobility (Peck, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010) methodologies and critical discourse analysis (Catalano & Waugh, 2020; van Dijk, 1993; Weiss & Wodak, 2003). Described in chapter four, I name this approach "following the influence", which allows me to trace the framings, priorities, concerns, and strategies related to IWT as well as their material structures and impacts across scales. Such methodologies have been used before to trace state policies, mostly related to economic and urban development policies. My methodology, which draws the links between state and non-state action, internationally, nationally, and locally, bridging discursive and material factors, is therefore novel.

## 1.5. Structure

In this first chapter, I introduced the focus of my thesis, outlined my research aim and questions, and described my contributions to the academic literature. In my second chapter, I put forward the theoretical frameworks that underpin my research, namely scholarship on the political ecology of conservation, approaches towards decolonising conservation, the emerging framework of geopolitical ecology, and the decolonial frameworks of political ontology and the pluriverse. I then identify the main debates and gaps in the theory to argue for a combination of various aspects of those approaches,

expanding the theory on the geopolitical ecology of conservation by introducing decolonial and feminist approaches. In this way, I produce a novel theoretical framework by analysing international conservation as explicitly geopolitical and cosmopolitical. Lastly, I introduce my research questions.

Chapter three offers detail on the empirical context of my research, situating the study of conservation, wildlife use and trade, counter wildlife trafficking interventions, and the political moves to decolonise nature in Latin America/Abya Yala and in Peru. Through this, I make the case that conservation has grown as a highly heterogenous global sector, with strong presence in Latin America and Peru, that nonetheless converges in specific priorities in what is sometimes called "mainstream conservation." Lately, this mainstream conservation has shown increased interest in regulating illegal wildlife use and trade through counter wildlife trafficking efforts. Abya Yala and Peru are becoming of interest for international CWT efforts for conservation, but the region also harbours long traditions of wild animal use and trade. However, Abya Yala is also a region in which powerful moves for the decolonisation of nature and recognition of Indigenous cosmovisions have reached state politics. In this light, international CWT efforts in Peru present a complex context where to assess the geopolitical ecology of international conservation and its potential for decolonisation.

This is followed by chapter four where I describe my positionality and the cross-scalar and multi-sited methodology I followed throughout my research. I name this methodological approach "following the influence," since it follows discourses, framings, priorities, strategies, and concerns associated to IWT, as well as their material impacts across scales. This methodology follows the discursive and material influence of both state and non-state actors between various levels of action to trace the ways framings and priorities travel through and are reshaped by international conservation structures and other conditions and become material actions and impacts. I apply this combination of methodologies of ethnography, document and policy review, and interviews on three scales or sites: in international conferences on wildlife trade, in national CWT efforts by state and non-state actors, and in local markets where wildlife is commercialised. I then describe how I analysed my empirical data by using a

combination of inductive and deductive coding and critical discourse analysis approaches.

The following three chapters present my empirical findings and develop my theoretical contributions. Chapter five delves into the structures of discourse and legitimacy in international wildlife trade conferences. This chapter applies event ethnography to two international wildlife trade conferences: the II High-level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas and the 19th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna. By examining the structures of attendance and participation and the main framings on IWT presented, I argue that attention to international conferences as spaces where conservation discourses are reiterated, shaped, and reshaped allows theorising large international non-state actors as geopolitical institutions. This allows them to define and manage IWT within the structures of international conservation to further secure support and legitimacy and justify law enforcement CWT action as a single response. In Latin America, it produces CWT action focused on law enforcement beyond protected areas, targeting Amazonian regions, and emphasising the international illegal trade in jaguar parts.

Chapter six unravels how national legal and institutional structures in Peru condition how international CWT action lands and is received in the country through the support of CWT programmes. Through a review of Peruvian policy on wildlife use and trade and interviews with state and non-state professionals working in CWT efforts, I argue that geopolitical ecology should pay attention to the conditions which reshape geopolitical framings as they seek to influence material effects in the places where they land. While the Peruvian state regulates legal and institutional frameworks that promote the sustainable legal use of wild animals, an overburdened and under-resourced system relies on the support of international CWT programmes. Such programmes focus on supporting strengthening policies and policing due to international priorities and management structures directing efforts towards short-term, measurable results. In this way, the material impacts of the geopolitical ecology of international conservation are facilitated, shaped, and reshaped by contextual conditions which problematise how international framings become material effects.

In chapter seven I unravel what markets reveal about how wild animals are experienced in Peru and how CWT action produces impacts on the ground. Through ethnography and interviews in three of the biggest open markets where wildlife is sold in Peru, I argue that international CWT programmes are a cosmopolitical ordering which enforces what animals are and what kinds of relationships with them are acceptable for conservation. Empirically, various place-based experiences of wild animals emerged through my interviews which blurred the lines between what domestic and wild animals are. These entangled human-animal relations, combined with various levels of knowledge on wildlife regulations and CWT efforts, creates complex perceptions of CWT in markets where IWT is an everyday practice. Ultimately, policing practices elicit conflicting definitions and management practices which contribute to maintaining long-held distrust towards the state.

Lastly, chapter eight provides a conclusion for this dissertation. This chapter outlines my main contributions to the academic literature. Then, I bring together the key empirical findings, arguments, and gaps presented in the previous chapters. Reflecting on my empirical results and theoretical contributions, I carefully consider if international conservation, as an industry, can be decolonised in Latin America. Finally, I present some recommendations for future research and practice.

# Chapter 2

# Theoretical framework

## 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I introduce the theoretical frameworks that form the base of my research, which I then contribute to and extend through a cross-scalar analysis of counter wildlife trafficking programmes in Peru. This thesis develops and extends theory on geopolitical ecology by engaging with decolonial and feminist approaches, building primarily from the fields of human and political geography, conservation studies, and anthropology. This endeavour relies on four main bodies of theory: the study of the political ecology of conservation (Duffy, 2022b, 2022a), the turn towards decolonising conservation (Corbera et al., 2024; Hope, 2021a), the recent development of geopolitical ecology (Bigger & Neimark, 2017; Massé & Margulies, 2020), and the study of political ontology and the pluriverse (Blaser, 2009a, 2009b). These four sub-fields come together in their attentiveness to the discourses at play in the power dynamics over relationships between humans and with nature. When combined, they have the potential to critically analyse conservation across scales. Ultimately, I aim to develop a framework capable of critically examining the extent to which conservation can be decolonised to contribute to more just practices for the communities targeted by conservation programmes or represented in conservation discourse.

While political ecology has a long history of studying how CWT actions for conservation continue, produce, and facilitate violence (de Jong & Butt, 2023; Koot & Veenenbos, 2023; Massé, 2019), such studies have largely disregarded the Americas and Peru. Moreover, despite its attention to the structures that facilitate geopolitical power

in environmental management (Belcher et al., 2020; Bigger & Neimark, 2017), research in geopolitical ecology has often ignored how non-state actors and conservation decision-making spaces, processes, and structures influence framings of nature. In addition, focusing on the struggle between different ontologies or world-making practices, political ontology has studied how human societies relate to nature beyond the separation between nature and culture (Blaser, 2009b; Hope, 2021a; Oslender, 2019), but its analysis has seldom addressed wildlife management in conjunction with international conservation. Although conservation has found itself in a decolonial turn, many decolonial approaches often address decoloniality as a metaphor or only consider interventions in Indigenous territories (Corbera et al., 2024; Hope, 2017). In this context, the multi-scalar nature of CWT efforts and its links with place-based traditions of wildlife use and trade present significant challenges for both the geopolitics and the decolonisation of conservation that merit further consideration.

I bring together these four theoretical bodies to conceptualise the complex geopolitical ecological connections between international conservation, national conditions, and place-based experiences of wildlife in Peru. Though these approaches have theorised these connections independently and partially, there has been little exchange between them with regards to my empirical research and none of them can approach my case separately. The decolonial and feminist approach to geopolitical ecology I develop through this thesis therefore makes a significant contribution by taking into account ontological conflicts and institutional structures across scales to provide an innovative way of analysing the turn towards decolonising international conservation.

To identify the "geohistorical and bio-graphic" location of this research and address the power relations associated with the production of this knowledge (Mignolo, 2009 cited in Sundberg, 2014, p. 36), I find it crucial to explicitly mention that the "loci of enunciation" of this research rests primarily in urban, Western thought (Mignolo, 2009, p. 2). As a researcher from Latin America, my positionality is based on my lived experience in a colonial urban setting, Lima, Peru. Similarly, my training has been in Western and Eurocentric epistemologies both in Latin America and Europe, starting with Conservation Biology in Peru, and Conservation Studies and later Geography in the United Kingdom. I have also worked extensively in conservation practice, in the

management of conservation programmes in Peru, regionally, and internationally. These experiences inform how I understand and formulate theory, drawing links between disciplines, contexts and scales.

In this chapter, I begin by reviewing relevant literature on the political ecology of international conservation, how it was shaped by neoliberalisation, and its recent turn to militarisation and securitisation, especially related to tackling the illegal wildlife trade. This is followed by an appraisal of the recent turn towards decolonial approaches in conservation and cognate disciplines, as well as the alternatives posed to decolonise mainstream international conservation. In section 2.4. I review literature on the geopolitics of conservation, including critical and green geopolitics and global conservation governance, but particularly focusing on the recent subfield of geopolitical ecology. Then, I examine the literature on political ontology and the pluriverse, frameworks predominantly developed in Latin America, as well as interrogate ontological relations with animals through Haraway's concept of companion species. To conclude, I identify the main gaps I aim to contribute to through my research, make the case for my novel theoretical framework, and set out my research questions.

## 2.2. The political ecology of international conservation and the illegal wildlife trade

Political ecology emerged as an approach in the 1980s to differentiate a political ecology from an apolitical one, as a political ecology recognises the "relationship between economics, politics, and nature" (Robbins & Paul, 2012, p. 13). It strives to study the power dynamics and struggles present in environmental use, access, and change (Sultana, 2021a; Svarstad et al., 2018), often analysing them at the local level through case studies (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021). This subfield has, however, been critiqued as "so diverse in its objectives, epistemologies, and methods that (...) it is in fact many diverse areas of scholarship lacking any single coherent theoretical approach

or message" (Walker, 2006, p. 384). Political ecology has been used widely for its flexibility and theoretical complexity (Sultana, 2023a), as well as its deep analyses at the local scale and focus on justice (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Forsyth, 2008; Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2020). However, it has also been criticised for its limited political engagement (Walker, 2007), limited engagement with policy (Walker, 2006), lack of engagement with biophysical ecology (Walker, 2005), and for remaining mostly White, cis-male, and bound to Western colonial epistemologies and cosmologies (Bigger & Dempsey, 2018; Sultana, 2021a). Nonetheless, this sub-field is key to my thesis because of its ability to enquire on past and ongoing nature-society relationships, to recognise "the political implications of action" (Sultana, 2021b, 2023a, p. 729), and increasingly for questioning and extending scholarship in ways that decentre Eurocentric perspectives (Bebbington, 2015; Loftus, 2019; Robbins & Paul, 2012).

Focusing on struggles over people's differentiated access to nature, political ecologists have sought to investigate and explain the discursive and material power dynamics at play in environmental management and conservation (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021; Svarstad et al., 2018). While many conservationists consider that conservation pursues ecological outcomes through evidence-based practices (Adams & Sandbrook, 2013; Kareiva & Marvier, 2012), conservation is not apolitical as even conservation practices that are not necessarily politically motivated are embedded in global processes and dynamics that relate to power relations between groups and over nature (Naughton-Treves & Sanderson, 1995; Peluso, 1993). The processes and actors that produce conservation interventions have been a core focus of political ecology (Bixler, 2013; Escobar, 1998), primarily critically examining conservation as a "deeply political realm" (P. A. Walker, 1998, p. 143). Political ecology examinations have illuminated how conservation actions are rooted in political dynamics, having the potential to materially change not only nature, but also the lives and relationships of people involved in their interventions (Holmes & Cavanagh, 2016; Vaccaro et al., 2013). In exploring the discursive and material power dynamics between actors within conservation (M. Khan, 2013), political ecology has helped unravel the ways in which conservation actors may be weak against some - such as more powerful state institutions – in certain contexts but can also hold relatively greater power over other

actors – such as local or Indigenous communities (Akampurira, 2023; Sandbrook, 2017). Therefore, a political ecology framework pays attention to how power dynamics are present in how conservation decisions are made (Forsyth, 2020), which strategies are prioritised (Duffy, 2014a), who makes such decisions (Bixler & Shmelev, 2015; Holmes, 2011), who they benefit or harm (Bluwstein, 2018), and their political outcomes (Escobar, 1998; Fletcher, 2010).

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, political ecologists became interested in the mechanisms through which conservation was becoming increasingly neoliberalised and its impacts for both nature and people (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Dressler & Roth, 2011; McAfee, 1999). The study of neoliberal conservation analysed the growth of a form of conservation that was becoming mainstream (Fletcher, 2014; Sullivan, 2006), which aimed to introduce nature into market dynamics through processes of deregulation, re-regulation (Neves & Igoe, 2012), commodification, privatisation, and re-territorialisation in order to protect it (Arsel & Büscher, 2012; Igoe & Brockington, 2007). Most important to my thesis are the studies on the social impacts of the neoliberalisation of conservation and on the ongoing processes of decentralisation that concede power over conservation to non-state actors (Holmes & Cavanagh, 2016). By focusing on case studies, political ecologists revealed forms of self-marginalisation (Büscher, 2009), exclusion, and criminalisation (Ojeda, 2012) facilitated by neoliberal conservation projects. On the other hand, examination of processes of decentralisation in conservation revealed governments releasing control over nature and increasingly collaborating with NGOs and private actors in the management of nature (Holmes, 2010, 2012), instead of Indigenous and local communities (Büscher et al., 2012).

Key to discussions about the decentralisation of environmental management is how "following general neoliberal principles of state roll-back, the state's role in conservation has been widely reduced (…). It has been replaced by corporate actors and especially by NGOs" (Holmes, 2011). Political ecologists of conservation have traced the ways in which states ceded environmental governance to non-state actors, primarily big international NGOs, as well as its effects in reconfiguring power dynamics and strategies (Adams et al., 2014; Corson, 2010). Apostolopoulou and Adams (2015) use Greece as a case study to show how, following this transfer of conservation responsibilities from the

hands of the state into NGOs, new institutional and governance arrangements and forms of financialisation of nature were put forward. This further led to institutional arrangements and strategies aimed at producing mechanisms appearing to be based on "wholly technocratic questions of efficiency and cost-benefit ratios from which political considerations and debates are largely effaced" (Fletcher, 2014, p. 330). A larger set of conservation actors with growing reach and presence in international decision-making therefore complicated understandings of the politics of environmental management.

Many political ecologists have shown interest in tracing how big international conservation NGOs emerged as major actors in global environmental politics and their influence in governance at multiple scales. Recognising the shift towards a more business-friendly conservation, MacDonald (2010b) explores the conditions that facilitated the restructuring of conservation. By following institutional changes and changes in narratives and priorities, he unravels how conservation NGOs became tied to neoliberalism to "extend their influence and to develop the organization as a site of greater authority, power and prestige" (MacDonald, 2010b, p. 541). In this context, political ecologists have studied how dominant institutions, often benefitting from international presence and institutional legitimacy (Berdej et al., 2019), can exert power through discourse, by pushing forward representations of nature, its problems, and the methods to address them in ways that that advance their interests (Chambers et al., 2020; Escobar, 1998; MacDonald, 2010b). Shanee (2013) explores how grassroots conservation initiatives in Peru often rely on religious and moral principles to highlight nature's intrinsic rights to exist and aesthetic values, but external conservation organisations introduce and promote in these groups the promise of economic profit from conservation. By focusing on power dynamics present in environmental management, political ecology has been applied to study the ability of the conservation sector to reproduce discourses in order to appeal to a wider public, raise support and foster alliances, justify its work, or attract further funding for their operations (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021; Duffy, 2022a).

Crucial to this thesis, a focus on how power mediates relationships between various actors within conservation has elucidated the links between conservation organisations and elites and other powerful actors. Brockington et al. (2008) narrate how

conservation organisations have historically benefitted from close links to elites and powerful actors due to many of them being founded in proximity to colonial imaginaries. Moreover, European conservation NGOs contributed to the spread of colonial control through wildlife conservation (Bluwstein, 2018; P. A. Walker, 1998), an example being the Society for the Preservation of the Fauna of the Empire, which played a part in grabbing and securing land through establishing reserves in Africa in the 1900s (Kashwan et al., 2021). Continuing from this legacy, Western-based conservation organisations and multinational agreements still benefit from those links to heavily influence international and national decision-making related to the protection of nature all around the world (Brockington et al., 2012; Kashwan et al., 2021; Larsen, 2018). Collins et al. (2021) apply decolonial scholarship to the study of the political ecology of contemporary or neoliberal conservation to argue that conservation practices currently carried out in the Global South govern nature-society relations through colonial structures. They explore conservation case studies which highlight the ways "the ecological and social conditions of possibility of contemporary conservation have been produced through colonial logics and practices many of which are even amplified today" (Collins et al., 2021, p. 976). As Collard et al. (2015, p. 325) describe it: "Conservation organisations cannot be separated from imperial formations."

Considering the natures that conservation means to maintain are "made, materially and semiotically, by multiple actors (not all of them human), and through many different historical and spatial practices (ranging from landscape painting to the science of ecology)" (B. Braun, 2002, p. 3), interrogating the power dynamics between those actors has been a central focus of the political ecology of conservation. In particular, scholarship on the political ecology of conservation has focused on which actors make decisions over conservation actions, or which actors might be impacted by it at various scales and in different ways (Escobar, 1998; Holmes & Cavanagh, 2016). As in other development sectors (Bebbington, 2004, 2005), the study of political ecology applied to conservation reveals the power asymmetries between the non-state actors providing funds and expertise (Igoe et al., 2010; Krauss, 2018), corporations that wish to be seen as green (MacDonald, 2010a), governments receiving support (Dongol & Neumann, 2021; Nightingale, 2005), and the often marginalised Indigenous, peasant,

rural and local communities whose environments and livelihoods are targeted (Dressler & Roth, 2011; Nygren, 2004). Margulies (2018) explores how conservation organisations in the Wayanad District, India, provide financial, physical, and intellectual support to the local government in order to influence environmental management decisions to further their organisational objectives, while also participating in and supporting state exclusion and inequality. Political ecologists have also explored how funding in conservation programmes creates power asymmetries, where priorities are directed by the party that provides the most funding (Krauss, 2018). This attention to differences in power between actors is key to my thesis, since it provides tools to study actors' differentiated ability to accrue benefits over other actors and to cause harm intentionally or unintentionally.

Political ecology has studied the discursive and material processes through which nature conservation creates, facilitates, or maintains conflict and violence (Büscher & Fletcher, 2018; Massé, 2016). More recently, this has prompted interest in "green militarisation" or the "militarisation of conservation," where increasingly military-style approaches and collaborations are used for protecting nature (Duffy, 2014a; Duffy et al., 2019; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016; Trogisch, 2021). This has also led to the "securitisation of conservation," where nature conservation has been increasingly linked with issues of security such as a concern for conflict, terrorism, and international crime (Duffy, 2021a, 2022b; Duffy & Brockington, 2022). Notably, Rosaleen Duffy has explored how the convergence of security concerns into conservation has impacted how conservation action is prioritised, particularly emphasising law enforcement strategies (Duffy, 2022b). Moreover, she traces some of the ways in which the structures of international conservation have facilitated the conservation sector's turn into securitisation through the increasing framing of IWT as an issue of security and criminality (Duffy & Massé, 2021). Duffy (2022a) further explores the international dimensions of the shift to more forceful and securitised approaches in conservation, looking at how they were facilitated by the structures of global conservation and international fears of global instability (Duffy & Brockington, 2022). This recent turn towards issues of security and criminality in the international conservation sector is changing the networks of actors involved in conservation, as well as the strategies deployed for conservation purposes (Duffy, 2022b; Masse et al., 2020). Looking at how

these develop reveals the influence of discourses and structures in international conservation, and how these are worked and reworked by national or local conditions and politics. It also raises questions regarding how, where, and to what ends these discourses and structures continue, are maintained, or reframed.

A concern for political ecologists has been to understand the impacts of the conservation sector's increased focus in addressing the illegal wildlife trade. Illegal wildlife trade can be defined as "all unlawful activities associated with the commercial exploitation and trade of wildlife specimens (living organisms or harvested parts thereof)" ('t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019, p. 203), as well as their derivatives or products (Esmail et al., 2020; Phelps et al., 2016). This includes "all wild fauna, flora (including timber) and fungi" ('t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019, p. 203). This broad definition can also include "extra-legal use of wild fauna or flora (or derivatives) and its associated activities (i.e., harvesting/poaching, smuggling, selling and possessing)" (Arroyave et al., 2023, p. 165). It also includes all scales of illegal fishing and logging, though different trade chains may display vastly different dynamics (Nellemann et al., 2016). Therefore, IWT involves a market for wildlife as a commodity, a legal framework that makes such trade illegal, and a governance framework that ensures the enforcement of such laws (Blomley, 2003; Duffy, 2014a, 2016). It also involves conceptualisations from specific decision-makers of what is worth protecting, who is tasked with protecting it, and what the appropriate measures for doing so are (Arroyave et al., 2023; Humphreys & Smith, 2011).

The term "wildlife" can be an elusive concept. Though many agree that it includes all living organisms, the term "wild" can be difficult to pin down (Tian et al., 2023). For example, Andersson et al. (2021, p. 4) define wildlife as "aquatic and terrestrial animals, plants, and fungi *that can grow in the wild and are not heavily domesticated*" (emphasis added). Other scholars focus on the terms "free-born animals" or "animals who are not adapted to domestication" (Goyes & Sollund, 2016), which bring different perspectives to the concept of "wild." This echoes debates about what is considered and produced as "wilderness" or "wild" (Tian et al., 2023; Wadewitz, 2011; Wyatt et al., 2021), who decides which non-human life fits within which category, and for what means (Cronon, 1996; Massé, 2016). Interestingly, some research categorises some species as "wildlife" which other people would consider domesticated or cultivated. For example, Andersson

et al. (2021) mentions coca plants as wild, while Tian et al. (2023) mention guinea pigs as wild, while both species are considered cultivated and domesticated in South America. Nonetheless, “wildlife” and “illegal wildlife trade” are terms used broadly in conservation and related sectors globally (Duffy, 2021; Nellemann et al., 2014).

Throughout this dissertation I prefer the term “illegal wildlife trade” instead of “wildlife trafficking” because it emphasises the binary between legality/illegality in wildlife trade, making it more neutral. Moreover, it shifts from the term “trafficking”, which assumes criminality and draws connections with other criminal activities such as human trafficking and drug trafficking (D. P. Van Uhm et al., 2021). This is a deliberate choice that recognises that though state laws regulate and sanction certain interactions with animals, the legality of each instance of wildlife use and trade may be uncertain for many reasons and may conflict with other traditional, customary, or informal laws, beliefs and uses.

Much of the scholarship on the impacts of counter wildlife trafficking has focused on the effects of so-called “anti-poaching” efforts in parts of Africa, often at the local scale and mostly in protected areas (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Duffy et al., 2015), by scholars of political ecology (Koot & Veenenbos, 2023; Massé et al., 2021) and green militarisation (Lunstrum, 2014; Massé et al., 2018). These have uncovered how legacies of coloniality and practices of dehumanisation and racialisation in the treatment of “poachers” facilitate violence on the ground and elsewhere (Büscher, 2016b; de Jong & Butt, 2023). Scholarship has explored the local impacts of the implementation of CWT strategies on the ground and the narratives created through these efforts (Lunstrum, 2017; Massé, 2019; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016), challenging and critiquing their approaches and success (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Duffy et al., 2015). A key exception is Massé (2022), which explores growing national policing and enforcement institutions “for green purposes” in Mozambique. Through political ecology and critical police power frameworks, he found that increased attention towards addressing wildlife crime strengthens CWT as a form of socio-ecological ordering. Despite negative effects in other regions, and although state and non-state institutions have engaged in CWT efforts in Latin America, there is little political ecology research that explores the impacts of these efforts in the region.

Despite these important bodies of work, in Peru the dynamics and impacts of CWT action have been mostly ignored by scholarship on political ecology. Most studies on CWT in Peru use conservation biology approaches to explore the challenges to enforcing the law to tackle IWT, primarily in urban markets (N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017). From an approach in conservation studies, Daut, Brightsmith, and Peterson (2015) identified and analysed the motivations behind NGOs involvement in controlling the domestic illegal wild animal trade for pets in Peru. However, studies of political ecology in Peru remain limited to extractive industries and development issues. Topics related to the growth of CWT, its power dynamics, financialisation, or links to broader international environmental politics have not yet received attention in Latin America or in Peru. Wildlife use and trade is central to Indigenous, peasant and rural livelihoods and traditions all over the world (Booth et al., 2021; D'Cruze et al., 2021; Duffy et al., 2016). While Latin America is viewed as a growing region for emancipatory Indigenous politics (Merino, 2021b), legal and institutional frameworks related to wildlife trade, as well as powerful conservation efforts, present conflicting politics on the extent of autonomy over the use of wildlife. This means that paying attention to how these conservation approaches travel and become mainstream in Peru due to increased international funding and interest can provide insights on power dynamics within international conservation, as well as the sector's attempts to resolve context-specific issues through international strategies.

Scholarship on the political ecology of conservation has been criticised for being primarily produced through frameworks developed in the Global North and by scholars situated in the Global North (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Sultana, 2021a). However, building on decolonial scholarship (Blaser, 2009b; de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Tuck & Yang, 2012), alternative approaches are bringing forward radical options for more equitable and just relationships with nature that are based in solidarity (Simpson & Pizarro Choy, 2024), abundance, and autonomy (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020; Collard et al., 2015; Krauss, 2021). Such alternatives do not negate conservation's imperial past nor current environmental damages but propose plural ways to engage with and be part of nature without relationships of domination and extraction (Collins et al., 2021; Corbera et al., 2021; de Jong et al., 2024; Heynen & Ybarra, 2021). In developing the understanding

of conservation's past and enduring links to elites and colonialism, as well as how they impact its current discursive and material practices, political ecology has proved to be a fruitful approach to study the rise of international conservation. However, most of its scholarship remains studied through Global North frameworks, prompting a current turn to explore decolonising conservation, which I review in the next section.

## 2.3. A decolonial conservation

Decolonial research and praxis aim to decentre European or "Western" thinking, worldviews, systems, and structures brought to other parts of the world through processes of colonisation, which displaced, supressed, and invalidated other ways of doing, thinking, and living (Walsh and Mignolo 2018; Sundberg 2014). It refuses "white supremacy, anti-blackness, the settler colonial state, and a racialised political economy of containment, displacement and violence" and would entail envisioning "a society beyond criminalisation, extraction, militarised borders and violence, by demanding and embodying structures and relationships centred on principles of restorative and transformative justice and relational accountability" (Daigle & Ramírez, 2019, p. 80). Current decolonial literature has built its knowledge base, methods, scholarship, and cosmologies from centuries of decolonial efforts pushed forward and struggled for through social movements and resistance (Escobar, 2020; Robinson, 1983; Rojas, 2016). Due to this, some decolonial scholars contend that decoloniality must always be bound in praxis (Naylor et al., 2018), actively pursuing its commitments to undo colonial systems instead of becoming "a metaphor" for settler moves to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Scholars of conservation have explored how contemporary or mainstream conservation emerged from, contributes to, and continues colonial processes of governance (Collins, 2024; Corbera et al., 2024; Ybarra, 2017). Political ecologists have explored the ways in which geopolitical perceptions and colonial dynamics are

entrenched in global environmental management, from climate action to conservation (Collins et al., 2021; Krauss, 2018; Sultana, 2022, 2023b). Moreover, many have traced the multiple ways conservation has always been tied to colonial ideas and elites (Brockington et al., 2008; Kashwan et al., 2021; West et al., 2006), and others describe conservation as a neo-colonial practice that maintains control over previously colonised spaces and bodies under the guise of protecting biodiversity (Isaacs, 2019; Kashwan et al., 2021). Nonetheless, conservationists and scholars of conservation have approached efforts for diversity and decolonisation by calling for more agency within conservation from groups who are not from the Global North or that do not subscribe to Western modern cosmologies such as Indigenous, peasant, local or rural groups (Artelle et al., 2019; IUCN, 2020; A. Kothari, 2021). This section reviews literature on such efforts.

Scholarship on conservation has recognised epistemological and ontological differences between actors for decades. Even when not engaging explicitly with decolonial theory, conservation science and cognate disciplines such as ecology, have followed the call for recognising and valuing diverse experiences of nature beyond ecology research and Western worldviews (Evans, 2021). For example, even though he does not mention ontology specifically, in his recount of the history of conservation Adams (2004) recognises the opposition between nature and people caused by the Nature/Culture binary, and the specificity of Western worldmaking in shaping and understanding this history. Closely related to conservation, Trisos et al. (2021) use the language of "decolonising ecology" to recommend actions such as land acknowledgements and amplifying voices and thought from the Global South. Additionally, Pascual et al. (2021, p. 571) argue for a pluralistic thinking in biodiversity policy, recognising that "what scientists, conservationists and policymakers call biodiversity is interpreted and used in different ways, all of which are potentially relevant and legitimate." Many scholars and practitioners have argued for the inclusion and appreciation of Indigenous and local knowledge of nature (Monfreda, 2010; Schulz et al., 2019a, 2019b). For example, Ducarme et al. (2020) recognise different peoples do not have the same understandings of nature and thus explore how different languages translate the word "nature" to examine its repercussions for conservation.

Scholars and practitioners of conservation have begun to explore the ways in which conservation practice has homogenised experiences of nature (Ducarme et al., 2021; A. Kothari, 2021; West et al., 2006), and efforts have been put forward to make conservation practice more plural. Currently, international conservation practice has made moves towards recognising, incorporating, and validating multiple ways of experiencing and living with nature (Brittain et al., 2021; Hope, 2017). For example, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), a prominent boundary organisations shaping global understandings of nature and conservation, is working towards the explicit recognition of different ontologies in their work and debating a more pluralistic framing of "nature's contributions to people" (Díaz et al., 2016). Though this framing still maintains "nature" and "people" as separate (Kenter, 2018), this evidences IPBES' efforts to include diverse knowledge systems within decisions for nature. Another key development in international conservation is the recognition of ICCAs (Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas) as "territories of life conserved by indigenous peoples and local communities"[2] with the support of organisations such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Moreover, many of the largest international conservation organisations have made commitments to respect human rights, Indigenous rights, and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (Ford-Learner et al., 2024), often mobilised through social safeguard mechanisms (Krause et al., 2013; Krause & Nielsen, 2014).

Despite such progress, some might argue there is much to analyse and do to decolonise conservation (Corbera et al., 2024; Domínguez & Luoma, 2020). For example, Merino and Gustafsson (2021) assess how Indigenous peoples in Peru are portrayed as "protectors of nature" by environmental actors, though this rallies little support for their demands for autonomy, self-determination, and territorial rights. Hope (2017) emphasises how mobilisations of Indigeneity and relationality with nature in Bolivia shapes sometimes conflicting claims to conservation from the international to the national levels. These works suggest that current efforts in international conservation are insufficient for decolonisation beyond metaphors since they rely on the performativity of

[2] https://www.iccaconsortium.org/discover/

rights discourses instead of commitments to Indigenous lifeworlds (Rivera-Núñez, 2024; Simpson & Bagelman, 2018). I argue that this is because conservation is significantly different than other development sectors in that its primary mandate always emphasises the protection of nature and not people, presenting difficulties for transformative systemic changes that value people's liberation.

Not everything is lost, since more localised conservation organisations have succeeded in fostering conservation programmes based on decolonial approaches or principles. A crucial example is John Aini and Paige West's ongoing collaboration in New Ireland, Papua New Guinea (Aini et al., 2023; Aini & West, 2018; West & Aini, 2018). Their work through the NGO Ailan Awareness brings together Western scientific epistemologies on sustainable management with "a deep understanding of and respect for the spiritual and ritual practices that must ensue for Indigenous communities to respect and maintain the negotiations and restrictions that are put in place in conservation areas" (Aini et al., 2023, p. 357). Hope (2021a) zooms into the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS) in Bolivia to trace how conservation structures and practices inform political struggle to understand how nature is repoliticised in Indigenous territories. She found that Indigenous communities in the TIPNIS mobilise and reframe both conservation science, policy, and practice and their own ontologies of their territory, though they find little support from conservation state and non-state actors. N. Shanee et al. (2015) also found a lack of support from the state and international NGOs for local community or private conservation areas in north-east Peru (N. Shanee, 2013, 2019).

A key debate remains within discussions of the coloniality of conservation and the need for a pluriversal approach: can conservation be decolonised or is it too entangled in colonial structures? While recognising that colonial structuring tendencies permeate conservation practice, Collins et al. (2021, p. 973) understand a "decolonised conservation" to be "that which meaningfully engages with the realities and contexts of societies in which it operates." Recognising people's relations to nature and the more-than-human, Aisher and Damodaran (2016) argue for a more place-based conservation that attends to the flourishing of all, including humans as species. Krauss (2021, p. 948) understands a decolonial conservation as one that must "attain the breaking down of

colonial structures" while "addressing the matrices of power which underlie and result from them." Moreover, Corbera et al. (2024) identify six principles that can inform the decolonisation of conservation: recognition (and intersectionality), reparation (and redress), epistemic disobedience, relationality, power subversion, and limits. Additionally, drawing from Simpson and Bagelman's (2018, p. 566) work on decolonising urban political ecology, decolonisation could mean asserting "self-determination through the direct assertion of land-based practices rather than seeking permission or awaiting rights or recognition to be awarded from the settler colonial state." Furthermore, learning from de la Cadena's (2019) analysis of environmental-ontologic conflicts in Peru, perhaps a decolonial conservation would be one where non-human nature is *not only* an external concept to protect from human action. She argues that, though actors in Peru come together in alliances to protect nature, many are not protecting the same natures for the same reasons.

Scholars have also proposed specific strategies, steps, or recommendations for the decolonisation of conservation research and practice. Mabele et al. (2023), for example, argue for the revision of eponyms (scientific species names based on people's names, often those associated with colonial and imperialistic exploits) as a decolonial ecology and conservation praxis. Instead, they vouch for "recognizing the societal value systems of those who interact most with species" to disrupt colonial epistemological systems (Mabele et al., 2023). Terry et al. (2024) engage decolonial praxis from Africa to imagine diverse futures for humans and nature beyond colonial and capitalist catastrophising in an effort to mobilise change for more sustainable futures. Through an analysis grounded on the Philippines, Theriault (2017) expands posthumanist geographies by thinking through ontological multiplicity, attending to the ways Indigenous ontologies are addressed by state interventions seeking their cooperation in conservation. In doing so, he reveals that Indigenous world-making practices impact processes of territorialisation and ecogovernmentality from several different actors, including the state. The task of decolonising conservation is deeply entrenched in both research and praxis, and as such it cannot be tackled by insular actions.

Regarding alternatives to colonial conservation, Collard, Dempsey and Sundberg (2015) propose that conservation movements should be based in three core principles:

reckoning with colonial-capitalist ruination, acting pluriversally, and recognising animal autonomy. Furthermore, in an ongoing body of work, Büscher and Fletcher (2020) propose a "convivial" conservation, a set of principles with the potential to encompass progressive forms of conservation that do not separate humans from nature and instead promote "affective affinity and other ways of relating with non-humans irreducible to destructive capitalist ratio" (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020, p. 91; Krauss, 2021). A "convivial" approach to conservation highlights efforts for place-based radical equity, structural transformation and environmental justice for achieving conservation actions that respect diverse ontologies in different geographies (A. Kothari, 2021; Massarella et al., 2021). Specifically related to wildlife crimes, Rodríguez Goyes has proposed the field of southern green criminology for decolonisation, to study how and why people in different contexts in the Global South engage with crimes related to human relationships with nature (Rodríguez Goyes, 2023). He argues that we can find "solutions to the environmental crises generated by the Western development project by learning from the practices and beliefs" of Indigenous peoples and other marginalised communities, which can provide the "basis of a crime prevention strategy grounded in an alternative cultural vision of living harmoniously with nature" (Goyes et al., 2021, p. 473; Rodríguez Goyes, 2019). Relating specifically to Indigenous and peasant territories in Abya Yala, Rivera-Núñez (2024) refers to a "post-conservation" as going beyond mainstream conservation approaches to recognise Indigenous and peasant autonomy. These approaches to conservation chiefly move attention from focusing solely on humans or on non-human nature, and beyond Western epistemologies, to imagine plural futures for human entanglements with nature.

I contribute to the debates on the decolonisation of conservation through thinking about conservation not as a unified concept but dividing it into conservation as a global *industry* (drawing inspiration from Duffy, 2022b), as a *practice* or *intervention* (Sandbrook, 2015), and as an *outcome* (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020). Thinking through what we refer to as conservation might help academics and practitioners identify who can influence or participate in it, as well as where our decolonisation efforts must lie. Throughout this thesis, I use the term "international conservation" to refer to conservation as a global industry. That is, the wider structures and mechanisms of the

global conservation sector which relies on a large network of non-state actors who receive funding to carry out their objectives. An example are the wider workings supported by and supporting big, international non-governmental conservation organisations. Moreover, following from the literature above and especially from Daigle & Ramírez (2019), Collard et al. (2015), and Corbera et al. (2024), I understand a "decolonial conservation" as an outcome, a state to strive for where humans and non-human nature, as well as their relations, flourish and are maintained long-term while undoing colonial and capitalistic systems.

These guiding approaches allow me to grasp the plurality of conservation research and practice inside and outside of traditional conservation spaces, beyond traditional conservation structures, practices, and goals, and in conversation with the histories and contexts where conservation aims to make its mark. Since addressing the illegal wildlife trade is a conservation practice that is not necessarily land-based, it exceeds both protected conservation areas and Indigenous territoriality. Nonetheless, wildlife use and trade emerges from relationships with nature in the form of animals, which conservation aims to influence and change. Therefore, looking at CWT complicates debates in decolonising conservation since it brings together issues of governance over nature in all spaces, relationality with animals, and Indigenous autonomy beyond territories. Essentially, it prompts us to think about the limits of a decolonial conservation within current structures. Even if Indigenous, rural, peasant or local autonomy is realised, which kinds of relationships and uses of wild animals will remain acceptable within global efforts for the protection of nature? To understand the wider framework that decolonial agendas must transform, I turn to the field of geopolitics and, specifically, to the recent subfield of geopolitical ecology.

## 2.4. The geopolitical ecology of conservation

Geopolitics is the study of "the spatialisation of international politics by core powers and hegemonic states" (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 192). Scholarship on green or environmental geopolitics explores the ways in which nations and institutions navigate, negotiate, manage, and regulate environmental knowledges, features, processes, and solutions around the world (Luke, 2000; O'Lear, 2020; Sundberg, 2011). Green geopolitics was born of an interest in the transboundary nature of environmental issues to bring attention to the historical interconnections of environmental impacts across boundaries considering "the ecological dimensions of politics at the biggest scale" (Dalby, 2003, p. 452). It challenges traditional positions on global politics by decentring a vision of nature as the site over which political decisions are made, but as "a nature that we are collectively reassembling" (Dalby, 2014, p. 15). Also challenging traditional positions in geopolitics, the study of critical geopolitics looks at the "ways in which hegemonic geopolitical narratives are established in wider society" as well as the "embodied experiences of scalar politics by a range of people and publics" (Ó Tuathail, 1999; Sharp, 2013, p. 20). As Sharp (2000, p. 361), suggests by reflecting on Ó Tuathail's scholarship, "for critical geopolitics, space is power" as descriptions of places are "a 'will to power', a move to contain possible interpretations and limit meaning in a cartograph."

The emergent framework of geopolitical ecology was put forward by Bigger and Neimark (2017, p. 14) as a conceptual framework that combines political ecology and geopolitics to "account for, and gain a deeper understanding of, the role of large geopolitical institutions (…) in environmental change." It combines the attention that political ecology provides to examining power in environmental governance with critical geopolitics reflections on critically challenging readings of conventional geopolitical reasonings (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021; Bigger & Neimark, 2017; Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). In particular, their work focuses on "how large geopolitical institutions (…) emerge as key environmental actors and better understand how such institutions define, control and manage nature" (Bigger & Neimark, 2017, p. 20). They analyse the material impacts

of the discourses put forward by the US military and the kinds of actions it justifies in a strategic mobilisation for dominance in "emerging spaces of conflict." The authors highlight the increasing importance of explicitly linking critical geopolitics and political ecology to "understand the larger institutional processes at work to discursively and materially produce global natures" (Bigger & Neimark, 2017, p. 14).

Geopolitical ecology has mostly been applied to understand the influence of United States government agencies in driving global environmental change. While Bigger and Neimark (2017) explore the consequences of the US Navy's framing of climate change and engagement in renewable energy, Belcher et al. (2020) look beyond the US military's discursive practices as a "green" actor into the institutional and material infrastructures that allow the hydrocarbon use that makes US imperialism possible. Additionally, Surprise (2020) explores the influence of US state agencies in driving geoengineering. While this emergent framework has explored in depth the USA's impact in driving environmental change for security reasons related to the climate crisis, it has not been applied to understanding the influence of other geopolitical institutions and has limited engagement with other types of environmental impacts. Furthermore, its focus on broad geopolitical abstractions often misses how such environmental change influences impacts on other geographies and at other scales. Nonetheless, Graddy-Lovelace & Ranganathan, p. (2024, p. 1) see promise in the framework's capacity to disrupt narratives by arguing it "reveals the ecological formations driving state-led territorial and economic expansion via militarized security, corporate-led resource extraction, and the conquest of land." Using the same term, though not sharing the same theoretical framework or genealogies, Batterbury et al. (2020) explore the geopolitical interests that shaped the decolonisation process of New Caledonia. By starting their analysis from the ground and expanding it to the geopolitical, they provide an account of how international interests can influence national environmental politics and management. Altogether, these works highlight that contemporary global environmental management presents new questions regarding the power dynamics between disparate actors in the world stage. This is promising for exploring which actors hold discursive and material power and can examine which methods or structures facilitate maintaining, securing, or attaining such power.

Geopolitical ecology is, therefore, a useful framework to enquire on the "multi-scale environmental politics and the discursive-material co-constitution of global institutional geopolitics" (Bigger & Neimark, 2017, p. 14). For the purposes of my dissertation, I am interested in the global institutional geopolitics at play in international conservation such as the establishment of alliances, securing spaces in international networks, and influencing the allocation of foreign aid. As foreign aid or assistance largely contributes to conservation budgets - especially for conservation actions that cannot be commodified (Ravikumar et al., 2017; The World Bank, 2016) -, how it is allocated also aims at "defining, controlling and managing nature." The influence and power of funding streams has been explored in other fields, for example, the World Bank's influence in health policy (Tichenor et al., 2021), and framings of the rural poor conveyed through development interventions between European funding agencies into peasant communities in Peru (Bebbington, 2004). Bebbington (2004) traces how changes in international funding structures towards increased financial accountability and proof of progress led to changes to which actions were funded and how peasant communities were framed by development organisations. Scholars have also explored how neoliberal policies "travel" through professionals and organisations in other sectors of development (Bondi & Laurie, 2005; Larner & Laurie, 2010). Thus, paying attention to geopolitical practices such as the creation of networks of alliances between institutions and the allocation of funding are crucial to understand the role of geopolitical institutions in international conservation action.

The literature on policy mobility highlights conferences and events as arenas for exchange, where policies and strategies are negotiated and transformed by legitimised actors (Peck, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010). The study of global conservation governance has focused on providing in-depth examinations of international conservation conferences and multilateral agreements as spaces where various legitimated actors structure and disseminate discourses about nature to influence the governance of global natures (Corson et al., 2019; Corson & MacDonald, 2012; Dempsey, 2016; MacDonald, 2010a). Most scholarship on international conservation conferences has focused on unravelling how priorities shifted towards market-based strategies in the Convention on Biological Diversity (Campbell et al., 2014; Corson &

MacDonald, 2012; D. Scott et al., 2014; Suarez & Corson, 2013), the World Conservation Congress (Fletcher, 2014; MacDonald, 2010a; Monfreda, 2010; Peña, 2010; Peter Brosius & Campbell, 2010), and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS) (Corson et al., 2019; MacDonald, 2013). Only a couple of studies have focused on the politics and the role of non-state actors in the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Challender & MacMillan, 2019; Duffy, 2013). Masse et al. (2020) focus on the 2018 London Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference to unravel current trends in the securitisation of conservation. As international conservation grows in strategies and geographic scope, more studies are needed on spaces where decisions are made regarding the governance of global natures. As conferences on illegal wildlife trade are heavily influenced by conservation actors but not directly linked to traditional conservation spaces, turning academic attention to them can help understand how geopolitical power dynamics shift ways of ordering and governing nature.

Though nature conservation has grown as an international sector involved in global environmental management, geography and cognate disciplines have limited explicit engagement with the geopolitics of international conservation. In their work on the geopolitics of protected areas, Ramutsindela et al. (2020, p. 260) argue "the geopolitics of conservation entails the deployment of the idea of the environment to save biodiversity but also to influence states and citizens to behave towards the biophysical environment in specific ways." Additionally, Hodgetts et al. (2019) reviewed scholarship from various disciplines that refers - explicitly or not - to geopolitics in conservation to understand "how geopolitical practices (relating primarily to territory and security) and theories (that explain and influence those practices) affect and inform wildlife conservation" (Hodgetts et al., 2019, p. 257). Crucial to my thesis, Massé and Margulies (2020) began the conversation on the "geopolitical ecology of conservation," investigating how the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) increasingly provided foreign assistance for law enforcement and militarised actions for conservation between 2002 and 2018. In analysing the discourses that marked fluctuations in funding, they found that in responding to shifting framings of IWT as a national security threat, the USFWS produces global socionatures and "material effects on the ground via the kinds

of projects they support (or not) through international grants" (Massé & Margulies, 2020, p. 12). While their research provides a deep examination of the discourses mobilising the increase in funding from one of the main funding agencies for global conservation, it does not explore the "material effects on the ground" that such conservation projects produce, nor how the funding becomes material effects through implementation.

Continuing the work carried out by Massé and Margulies (2020), I extend the geopolitical ecology of conservation to analyse the ways international framings, through CWT programmes, influence the trajectory of conservation action against wildlife trade at different scales in Peru – from international governance to national conditions and local markets. Through this cross-scalar analysis, I explore the influence of international conservation framings in controlling relationships with nature and with alternative ontologies. As Sharp (2013, 27) suggests, "the penetration of individual economies by external agencies through the provision of aid (...) and the power of western-dominated international organisations further erodes state sovereignty in the South and reinforces the very limited nature of sovereignty available." In conservation, Corson (2010) studied the power relations between environmental NGOs, the US Congress and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), which "led to the rise of biodiversity conservation within the USAID environmental portfolio and has been reinforced by it" (Corson, 2010, p. 595). Additionally, Krauss (2018) presents an analysis of how geopolitical perceptions of Colombian communities as poverty stricken and remote guide conservation efforts that disregard local priorities. While funding provided by international agencies is crucial for maintaining conservation programmes running, the framings and motivations guiding these programmes in novel topics and geographies merits evaluation. This raises questions about the different tools and areas of influence that geopolitical actors can employ to further their goals within networks of international conservation.

While geopolitics as a field brings together geography and international relations to understand international politics, scholars of feminist geopolitics have criticised patriarchal or masculinist traditions in geopolitics for focusing predominantly on textual or discursive power typically displayed in mass media by hegemonic states (Sharp, 2011, 2020). Feminist geopolitics seek to challenge analyses in geopolitics which centre a narrative of the exploits and thoughts of men (Sharp, 2000), instead centring embodied

positions by bringing together multiple scales of analysis to examine power relations (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2004). In doing so, the subfield reveals "there is no clear division of public-private, international-domestic" (Sharp, 2020, p. 1166). Much feminist geopolitical scholarship focuses on multi-scalar forms of power, oppression, and resistances linked to matters of security (Hyndman, 2004; Massaro & Williams, 2013; Williams & Massaro, 2013). Sharp (2023, p. 1655) brings this into focus through her analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposes how even mundane practices in the everyday are always "entangled with constructed scales of national and global identities and processes" (see also Dowler & Sharp, 2001). In doing so, she points to a future in feminist geopolitics that goes beyond focusing solely on gender or the feminine, but in analyses that centre embodied perspectives that reject the binaries that bound "the political," including disarticulated (S. Smith, 2018), non-human, or more-than-human agents (Hyndman, 2021; Sharp, 2021, 2023). In analysing the international discourses and structures which drive CWT in Peru, feminist geopolitics offers a way to investigate the multiple scales at which such processes impact everyday experiences with wild animals and how these novel encounters reinforce or challenge geopolitical norms.

Though I do not aim to fully delve into animal geographies, my thesis intersects with and touches on scholarship contributing to the subfield of political animal geographies and thus I would be amiss to not discuss it. Scholarship on animal geographies forebrings non-human animals as "subjects of, and subjects to, political practices" (Hobson, 2007, p. 251), therefore theorising animals as subjects in understandings of politics across contexts and scales (Fleischmann, 2023; Lorimer, 2010). For example, Collard (2020) follows wild animals from the habitats they are captured from into becoming exotic pets to trace how wild animals become "lively commodities," meaning "live commodities whose capitalist value is derived from their status as living beings" (Collard & Dempsey, 2013, p. 2684). Of course, not all wild animal trade involves live commodities and all animals, their parts and products can similarly be commodified "beyond the threshold of death" to serve a variety of interests, including capitalism, settler colonialism, and conservation (Bersaglio & Margulies, 2022, p. 15; Gillespie, 2021). Drawing from feminist "fleshy" geopolitics and political animal geographies, Dickinson (2022, p. 2) advances understandings of "which non-human

actants, entities and derivatives can be analysed via a political-animal approach" in considering how the properties of caviar as disembodied animal challenge broader considerations of geopolitics. Through her analysis, Dickinson brings attention to how the international trade in wild animals can contribute to the study of geopolitics (see Hobson, 2007). Unlike political animal geographers, in bringing together these frameworks I am not centring the non-human animal but the human perspective. In my analysis I bring forward what the animal is for humans and how humans shape their relations with wild animals where diverse actors become (geo)political through the act of speaking for and about animals. Nonetheless, I contend that when speaking about animals, diverse actors may not refer to the same concepts and experiences, and thus I bring political ontology into my analysis to explore these conflicts.

## 2.5. Latin American Political ontology and the Pluriverse

Within Latin America, debates and agendas for decoloniality are transforming how natures are known, valued, and treated. In this thesis, they signal the relevance and significance of CWT measures for governing and directing alternative trajectories for conservation, as well as agendas to decolonise the field. Scholars from various fields, primarily anthropology, have become interested in ontology in what has been termed an "ontological turn" that explores topics such as valuing Indigenous ontologies, critiquing, and challenging Western epistemology, and critiquing binary conceptualisations (Blaser, 2013a; Bormpoudakis, 2019; Rojas, 2016). An ontology is "an inventory of kinds of being and their relations," and thus the study of ontologies looks at "what kinds of things do or can exist in [understandings of the world], and what might be their conditions of existence, relations of dependency, and so on" (J. Scott, 2015).

Based on Latin American decolonial traditions and widely advanced by Latin American scholars (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Rojas, 2016), the field of political ontology explores "the conflicts that ensue as different worlds or ontologies strive to

sustain their own existence as they interact and mingle with each other" (Blaser, 2009a, p. 877, 2013c). It brings into its analyses the capacity of Western modernity to incorporate or "tame" other ontologies into its logics, transforming them until they become unrecognisable (Blaser, 2009a). In the study of environmental management or conservation, scholars have engaged the field of political ontology to enquire on the conflicts that emerge from establishing protected areas (Trentini, 2023), managing interactions with wild animals such as guanacos (Petitpas & Bonacic, 2019), introducing agroforestry practices (N. C. González & Kröger, 2020), managing hunting (Blaser, 2009b; Gombay, 2014; Nadasdy, 2007), and harvesting coral (Pauwelussen & Verschoor, 2017).

Scholars of political ontology examine the political consequences of the encounters between different ontologies, analysing differences as more than just cultural perspectives of one single, objective "Truth" (Blaser, 2009a, 2013c). Throughout this thesis I refer to "alternative ontologies" as ontologies or cosmologies other than Western modernity, which can be Indigenous or not (Gudynas, 2015). That means ontologies that do not consider a linear progression in time, do not make an ontological distinction between nature and culture, or do not categorise difference hierarchically but enact a different relationality between beings, nature, and place (Blaser, 2009a, 2010; Merino, 2016). In particular, the ontological split between Nature and Culture is repeatedly referenced by some scholars as foundational in Eurocentric or Western modern ontologies and epistemologies born from the European Enlightenment period, where it is thought to separate rational, modern humans from those primitive and superstitious (Blaser, 2009b; Sundberg, 2014). However, Bormpoudakis (2019) highlights that individuals who partake in Western modern societies around the world might also expose perspectives that exceed the Nature/Culture divide. While Western modern ontologies might not always be internally consistent or coherent, I consider how international conservation results from, inherits, and maintains Western modern ways of enacting the world that conflate within such characteristics. This raises concerns that international conservation, as other global and totalising modern discourses such as the Anthropocene, might serve to "discredit and delegitimize ways of understanding contemporary conditions that are less thoroughly grounded in the narratives of Western modernity" (Simpson, 2020, p. 55). The onto-epistemological underpinnings of

international conservation, thus, merit further examination when discussing policy mobilities and geopolitics through the global management of nature in a decolonial turn.

Research in anthropology has always been interested in how Indigenous people experience and relate to nature and wildlife (P. Stahl, 2014), exploring how those relations reflect in their everyday interactions with wildlife and with programmes designed to manage such interactions (Blaser, 2009b; Petitpas & Bonacic, 2019). While I find this work important, I do not centre the definition of "alternative ontologies" solely on ontologies enacted by Indigenous peoples in order to not limit the concept to essentialised notions of what can be defined solidly as either "Indigenous" or "not Indigenous" (Chandler & Reid, 2020), or further marginalise the worlds enacted by communities who live in the intersection of Indigenous, Black, Queer, and other marginalised identities (Daigle & Ramírez, 2019; Gudynas, 2015). As much as I aim to avoid feeding visions of an exoticised "Other," I also seek to avoid "Saming:" merging all groups seen by Western modernity as "Indigenous" and denying them the right to difference within that category (Blaser, 2014; Schor, 1989). Therefore, I contend that there are many alternative ontologies which may be enacted by various peoples, Indigenous or not. They may blend some aspects of traditional Indigenous worlds adapted and changed through time and interactions with other worlds and they may not be enacted solely by communities that self-identify as Indigenous (Merino, 2021a). De la Cadena (2001, 2005) sheds light on the complex ethnic politics and histories of Peru, where the concepts of Indigenous, mestizo, or indio carry complex histories of language, colonialism, racism, state intervention, and struggle that are difficult to map out clearly – further discussed in the next chapter. The purpose of the distinction between "Western modern" and "alternative" ontologies is not to describe and identify discrete ontologies, but to trace how diverse actors navigate the blurry lines between ontologies which produce forms of relating to wildlife that might be frowned upon by international conservation spheres. This blurry in-between space is important because it speaks to everyday relations with nature in the entanglement of ontologies resulting from post-colonial endurance.

The concept of a "pluriverse" is mobilised in decolonial scholarship to reject the colonial idea of a single "universe" which holds a single "Truth" and several cultures,

instead creating space for ways of living in the world that have been ignored or invalidated by Western thinking (A. Kothari et al., 2019; Rojas, 2016; Sundberg, 2014). De la Cadena and Blaser (2018, p. 4) flesh out this concept by arguing a pluriverse is made of "heterogeneous worldings coming together as a political ecology of practices, negotiating their difficult being together in heterogeneity". Therefore, multiple "worlds" come into being through the enaction of different ontologies, constructed through lived interactions (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Reiter, 2018). The analytic potential of the pluriverse has been explored in scholarship of International Relations (Querejazu, 2016), geography (Hope, 2021a; Oslender, 2019; Reiter, 2018), anthropology (Escobar, 2020; A. Kothari et al., 2019), and sociology (Rojas, 2016). Decolonial scholars of diverse traditions have embraced this concept since it rejects Western conceptions of the existence of a universe that can be understood and explained by science and governed by those same terms, a singular reality that is translated or interpreted to human understanding by different cultures (Blaser, 2009a; Escobar, 2020; Sundberg, 2014). Instead, it proposes a pluriverse where different worlds are enacted and diverse ontologies can be equally true and entangled, while also delinked from the structures that form colonial subjects (Escobar, 2020; Reiter, 2018). Reiter (2018) argues that the pluriverse goes beyond critiques and differences in Western thought around epistemology or hermeneutics since it recognises the existence and validity of different ontologies and the worlds they build, worlds that transcend the ontological boundaries of the Western universe and therefore exist as distinct ontologies, worlds or cosmovisions (Merino, 2016). This concept is, therefore, crucial to look beyond epistemologies and opening up conflicts between various experiences of the world to deeper analyses without taking their ontological status for granted.

The pluriverse is often described by the Zapatista vision of "a world of many worlds," a world where many worlds can coexist at the same time (Blaser, 2010; de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Escobar, 2020). The Zapatista Fourth Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle provides a theorising for the enactment of such worlds: "Many words are walked in the world. Many worlds are made."[3] (my translation). This highlights the

[3] https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1996/01/01/cuarta-declaracion-de-la-selva-lacandona/

practice of walking as the performative action of co-producing realities by "walking" (enacting) knowledge "through everyday praxis" (Rojas, 2016; Sundberg, 2014). As Reiter 2018, p. 1) claims, constructing the pluriverse is an "effort to move beyond one-dimensional solutions to diverse problems and the imposition of universalist claims about the very nature of humanity," and thus "break the bonds of dominance" between the universalist Western modernity and colonised ontologies (Oslender, 2019; Rojas, 2016). This aligns with decolonial theory and praxis, since it seeks to construct a world in which Western modernity can be seen as one Naturalist ontology entangled in a sea of other ontologies (Blaser, 2009a; A. Kothari et al., 2019). Through an analysis of ontological conflicts related to Afro-Colombian communities, Oslender (2019) argues the pluriverse currently exists since multiple ontologies are currently being enacted into multiple worlds, though the Western modern ontology has the political power to limit their recognition or adapt other ontologies within its systems and reaches (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018). Due to its roots in Abya Yala and its decolonial possibilities, the concept of a pluriverse is useful both to enquire on the political ontology of conservation as it lands in and is reshaped from Peru, and to imagine futures for it.

Despite its political possibility, the pluriverse is not without theoretical complexity or critiques. A significant challenge to the construction of a conflict-free pluriverse is the possibility of coexistence between worlds that view themselves as universalist (Oslender, 2019), or what Simpson and Pizarro Choy (2023) refer to as the "incommensurability tension," a tension between ontologies that cannot be completely translated to each other. As Blaser (2009b) argues that Western modernity maintains itself as the dominant ontology in academia and government because it suppresses and contains the enactment of other worlds, Oslender (2019) contends that other ontologies would similarly not be able to view other worlds as true, but as just cultures that offer different perspectives. How can these worlds mutually accept each other as multiple unquestionable truths when they all believe they hold the one "Truth"? De la Cadena (2019, p. 53) offers a potential solution through what she refers to as "uncommonalities," "interests in common that are not the same interests." Similarly, Hope (2021a) explored how Indigenous movements in Bolivia navigate multiple articulations of Indigeneity and Western conservation in their search for autonomy. In this way, the possibility of a

pluriverse as a decolonial future is challenged by the incommensurability of diverse ontologies encountering each other, but it can be navigated through interests in common where parties converge in solidarity.

Looking specifically at Latin America/Abya Yala, political ontology and the possibilities of a pluriverse extend enquiries on the politics of control over relations with territories and nature. Alternative ontologies have been historically marginalised in Abya Yala by the dominant Western modernity since the colonisation of the continent starting in 1492 and have been kept marginalised through systems of government and legal systems (Rojas, 2016). From Ecuador, Gudynas (2015) argues that even though efforts have been made in Latin America to accommodate current legal systems to respond to demands that stem from ontological conflicts, these have often fallen short since such demands exceed the bounds of Western modernity. Marisol de la Cadena, a Peruvian anthropologist, explores the 2009 Baguazo conflict in Peru, arguing that it resulted from an ontological conflict between what the Peruvian state and the Awajun people recognise as "territory" (de la Cadena, 2019). Likewise, Oslender (2019) argues that Indigenous and Afro communities in Colombia have a relational connection to their territories that is different from the state concept of land titling or land property. Though Ecuador and Bolivia have incorporated plurinationality and post-development notions such as buen vivir or sumac kawsay into their legal frameworks, scholars critique their possibilities as true alternatives for decolonisation and pluriversal futures (Merino, 2016, 2021b; Radcliffe, 2012; Vela-Almeida, 2018). When looking at the structures and discourses of international conservation, paying attention to Abya Yala allows me to forefront the current tensions between global discourses on Indigenous participation or decoloniality, and the ongoing structures and frameworks that restrict or facilitate how those discourses materialise (Escobar, 1984, 1998; C. E. Walsh & Mignolo, 2018).

To further analyse the ways alternative ontologies engage relationally with wild animals in non-hierarchical ways and bridging the Nature/Culture divide, I draw from Donna Haraway from the field of Science and Technology Studies. In her scholarship, Haraway (2003) theorises the relationships between humans and non-human animals by introducing the concept of "companion species," understood as species that "become with" one another (Haraway, 2006). By looking at entanglements between

humans and non-human animals, she looks beyond the bounds of domestication to think with and through animals. Doing so, she argues that companion species deepen understandings of multispecies relationships within naturecultures which are context-dependent and historically situated (Haraway, 2007). Though Haraway argues for multispecies relationships more broadly (Haraway, 2006, 2018), most of her analyses focus on her personal experiences with animals broadly considered domestic, such as dogs. Lorimer (2010) extends this framework by arguing Asian elephants can be considered companion species in Sri Lanka, creating possibilities for alternative ways of understanding human-wild animal relations. To apply this framework in Peru, I take inspiration from Marisol de la Cadena's exploration of territory to similarly question the ontological conflicts arising "over what [animals are] and what kind of relations make [them]" (de la Cadena, 2019, p. 37). These frameworks are useful in my analysis for two key reasons. Firstly, because they provide tools to enquire on the kinds of relationships that emerge from people's everyday interactions with wild animals beyond the domestic/wild divide. Secondly, they allow me to situate the framings on wild animals and CWT driven by conservation programmes without taking their ontological status for granted (Blaser, 2013c). Crucially for my thesis, these frameworks help understand what kinds of relations between humans and non-humans exist, what they may look like, and what challenges they can pose for an international conservation.

## 2.6. Conclusion

In a context of decentralisation of conservation into the hands of non-state actors (Holmes & Cavanagh, 2016; Larsen & Brockington, 2018), political ecologists have revealed an increasing turn towards militarisation and securitisation in conservation (Duffy, 2022b; Duffy et al., 2019; Duffy & Massé, 2021), especially related to tackling IWT in protected areas in Africa (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014; Massé, 2018). Though there has been interest in studying IWT in Peru as a threat to species

conservation for quite some time (Gastañaga et al., 2011; Maldonado et al., 2009; Mendoza et al., 2022; N. Shanee et al., 2017), almost no attention is paid to CWT efforts in the country and how they interact with long held plural traditions of wild animal use and trade. This intersects with growing academic interest in decolonial theory and decolonisation (Tuck & Yang, 2012; C. E. Walsh & Mignolo, 2018), within which Latin America often leads debate. In conservation and cognate fields, there is exploration into what decolonisation could look like in practice within their frameworks and contexts (Aini et al., 2023; Corbera et al., 2021; Mabele et al., 2023). This prompts me to ask how increasing global interest in tackling IWT as a dimension of conservation action lands or is reworked in Latin America and specifically Peru, and how Peruvian politics, practices, and debates inform global conservation assumptions and discourses related to decoloniality. Moreover, while much of the political ecology scholarship on tackling IWT for conservation focuses on protected areas, I instead develop a geopolitical ecology framework with an empirical focus on three scales: international conference spaces, national policies and action, and local wildlife markets.

Looking at the international scale, the framework of geopolitical ecology was developed recently to account for the ways geopolitical institutions emerge as actors in global environmental management through defining, controlling and managing nature (Belcher et al., 2020; Bigger & Neimark, 2017). This brings attention to the increased role of global environmental management as a site of geopolitical struggle over dominance in a context of interlocked climate and environmental crises and ensuing action (Dalby, 2015; Graddy-Lovelace & Ranganathan, 2024; Surprise, 2020), but also raises the questions addressed in this thesis about how natures are known and protected. In conservation, scholars of global conservation governance have mostly studied the international scope of conservation decision-making by looking at international conservation agreements and conferences as spaces where priorities emerge (Corson et al., 2019; MacDonald, 2010a). Given that scholars of the geopolitical ecology of conservation have shown that concern for IWT is shifting the ways conservation action is prioritised and funded globally (Massé & Margulies, 2020), I ask how international interest in rolling out CWT action lands in Latin America and specifically Peru, where movements for ontological recognition and plurality are emerging in various ways

(Blaser, 2010; de la Cadena, 2019; Hope, 2021a). This opens up new questions about the ways the dynamics of international conservation spaces, processes, and structures shape priorities for conservation action in specific places and under particular framings, thus necessitating a theoretical framework that brings together geopolitics and decolonial theories and approaches. In this way, I enquire on the power that various actors have in shaping framings or understandings of nature across scales, as well as how this involves conflict between different knowledges and worlds.

Studies based on decolonial theories and in political ontology have studied human societies beyond attributing differences to cultural disparities (Blaser, 2009a, 2013a), but understanding that diverse peoples enact distinctive ontologies which account for plural worlds – making a pluriverse possible (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018; Escobar, 2020; Reiter, 2018b). While some research has focused on relationships between humans and territories (de la Cadena, 2019; Hope, 2021a; Oslender, 2019), crucial to my thesis are the analyses on relationships between humans and animals beyond the ontological divide between nature and culture (Haraway, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2018). Relating to wild animals, Petitpas & Bonacic (2019) have focused on guanacos and Lorimer (2010) on Asian elephants, but little has been revealed about the relationships between humans and local wild animals in the context of international conservation efforts to tackle wildlife trade. I thus ask what are the ontological conflicts that come to be when international discourses enacted through CWT programmes encounter place-based experiences of worlds with wild animals.

Primarily, the theoretical frameworks presented in this chapter come together by their attentiveness to discourses (R. Bixler & Shmelev, 2015; Campbell, 2007; Escobar, 1984), framings (Bigger & Neimark, 2017; Massé & Margulies, 2020), representations (Sharp, 2023), and stories (Blaser, 2013c; de la Cadena, 2019). Crucially, these frameworks highlight that "the language used to represent remains of vital importance" in shaping the world and in thinking through power dynamics (Sharp, 2023, p. 1665), especially across scales and in various places. Moreover, these frameworks provide special attention to human relations between different groups (Collins et al., 2021; Krauss, 2018) and with nature and space (Blaser, 2009b), as well as the power dynamics at play in such relations (Duffy & Brockington, 2022; Kashwan et al., 2021). In bringing

together frameworks that study the interplay of different conservation structures but still keeping in mind the case-study tradition of political ecology and my experience as a conservation practitioner, I aim to not lose sight of the conditions which structure conservation practice and the "material factors that cause the actors to give birth to such interplay in the first place" (M. Khan, 2013, p. 467). This allows me to explore the role of geopolitical actors in the geopolitical ecology of conservation, including how this geopolitical ecology is influenced by international, national and local conditions, discourses, ontologies, structures, and politics.

The framework I develop through this thesis builds from the extensive political ecology analyses of conservation and the role of IWT in the securitisation of the sector (Duffy, 2022b; Duffy & Massé, 2021; Duffy & Brockington, 2022). Nonetheless, while the international scope of the conservation sector has been explored through political ecology approaches (Brockington et al., 2008; Duffy, 2022a; Holmes, 2011; MacDonald, 2010a), explicit engagements with geopolitical approaches, concepts, and theories has been limited (Hodgetts et al., 2019; Massé & Margulies, 2020; Ramutsindela et al., 2020). In applying a geopolitical ecology framework to CWT programmes in Peru - and to the conservation sector more generally - my thesis brings to the forefront the geopolitical entanglements that permeate the international conservation industry from the global to a local scale. This approach allows the analysis of conservation as an industry embedded in geopolitical structures, processes, and networks with the potential to reshape and influence all resulting interventions and impacts. An explicit engagement with geopolitics can further shed light on how conservation is not solely an apolitical, evidence-based practice in the service of nature. Instead, it facilitates an examination of how international conservation brings together global structures, processes, and actors to define, control, and manage nature through various strategies, in differing settings, and with resulting -expected or unexpected- (geo)political consequences at all scales.

This examination is especially important in a context where scholars and social movements are calling for increased engagement with decolonial approaches towards conservation research and practice (Collins, 2024; Corbera et al., 2021; Domínguez & Luoma, 2020; Krauss, 2021). Despite this, the decolonial approaches and concepts applied to conservation to date vary greatly in their use of concepts and frameworks for

decolonisation (Aini et al., 2023; Collins et al., 2021; Hope, 2021a), and some may risk applying decoloniality to conservation merely as a metaphor (Merino & Gustafsson, 2021; Pascual et al., 2021; Rivera-Núñez, 2024; Trisos et al., 2021). To avoid these issues, I draw from the decolonial framework of political ontology to focus my attention on what worlds the international conservation industry makes possible and what worldings it ignores or suppresses. By paying attention to the ontological conflicts underpinning international conservation networks, spaces, and programmes, political ontology provides a structure to explore the decolonisation of conservation across scales and in various settings. Through questioning the standing that different ways of experiencing nature and wild animals have within conservation programmes, political ontology provides tools to analyse where decolonial agendas and politics feature in -or disrupt- conservation at the international and national levels, in conservation programmes and laws, and beyond the borders of territories.

Combining theories of geopolitical ecology with political ontology offers a unique theoretical framework to analyse international conservation, as it allows a critical examination of the decolonisation of a conservation sector that is geopolitical in nature. This is developed throughout the thesis in a multi-sited and cross-scalar approach. Namely in chapter five this framework is developed with attention to global conservation governance and the securitisation of conservation in international conferences. In chapter six it is further advanced with attention to theories of legal geographies to analyse the conditions through which international CWT programmes are taken up or reframed in Peru at the national scale. Lastly, chapter seven develops this framework with attention to debates on feminist geopolitics and the concept of companion species to unravel the ontological conflicts between CWT programmes and place-based experiences of wild animals.

Taken together, this novel framework allows the exploration of the international conservation industry as a complex system where various actors become embedded in geopolitical structures through their involvement in and influence over decision-making over nature. In this way, basing my framework on geopolitical ecology contributes to building a “counter-narrative that sheds light on what drives dominant and dominating geopolitical discourses” (Graddy-Lovelace & Ranganathan, 2024, p. 2). It further allows

me to trace how the "complex web of relations between humans and nonhumans" (Blaser, 2013b, p. 14) at various scales intertwine with broader trends presented and represented in international conservation spaces, networks, and strategies. Moreover, this combined framework directs attention to understanding "decolonisation" as one of many geopolitical discourses reiterated through international conservation, making it possible to reveal the extent to which decolonial agendas from Indigenous and peasant peoples, as well as local and rural communities, travel within and impact international conservation. This framework may be applied to analyse the extent of the decolonisation of an international conservation sector with geopolitical reach, how conservation might be decolonised, or if it is even possible to decolonise international conservation when taking diverse ontologies seriously.

In combining geopolitical ecology and political ontology, I develop a framework which provides the analytical tools to examine the international conservation industry as explicitly geopolitical and cosmopolitical. This opens up ways to ask and answer new questions about the processes that produce and maintain CWT action and conservation. In researching CWT action in Peru, I ask:

1. How are global discourses on wild animals, their use and trade, unfolding and being negotiated in Latin America and Peru through global CWT action and international conferences?

2. How do mainstream CWT framings and practices interact with national and international conditions to produce the CWT action currently implemented in Peru?

3. How do local experiences, ontologies, and politics shape perspectives of wild animals, their trade, and efforts to tackle such trade in places where wild animals are commercialised?

Through these theoretical frameworks and guided by these research questions, I explore on how international framings of wild animals and their use and trade are influenced, facilitated, shaped, reshaped, produced, and reproduced as they make their way into CWT action in Peru nationally and locally, and their consequences across scales. I do so by considering within my analysis a variety of geopolitical actors within

international conservation, reflecting on the conditioning factors for the landing and reshaping of framings, studying the material effects on the ground that result from CWT programmes, and bringing these together with an attention toward the ontologies that emerge. In this way, this thesis brings together several actors, scales of action, institutional structures, and physical locations to explore a decolonial and feminist geopolitical ecology of conservation. Moreover, I seek to advance ongoing discussions about decolonising conservation in a context of a growing globalised, international, and geopolitical conservation sector. To set the background for my empirical focus, I introduce the context for my thesis in the next chapter.

# Chapter 3

# Situating Conservation and Counter Wildlife Trafficking Action in Peru

## 3.1. Introduction

It is crucial to consider conservation and wildlife regulatory frameworks within their historical and social context, for legislation responds to specific purposes in specific places, which in turn affects how these regulations are being followed and enforced, or not (Duffy et al., 2016; Rodríguez Goyes & South, 2017). With rising concern for biodiversity decline, conservation organisations play a key role in shaping efforts to address wildlife management, including driving action to tackle the IWT globally with the main aim of stopping biodiversity loss (Duffy, 2021, 2022; Masse et al., 2020). Such efforts have longer histories in some geographies, such as some protected areas in sub-Saharan Africa (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014), than in others like the Americas (Kurland & Pires, 2017; A. Reuter et al., 2018). Though international conservation action might presuppose similar goals, issues, strategies, and discourses everywhere, in this chapter I review literature on conservation, wildlife trade, counter wildlife trafficking, and decolonial natures in Latin America and in Peru.

The colonisation of Latin America by Europeans from the Iberian Peninsula from 1492 onwards is broadly thought to be one of the historical processes -together with the exploration and colonisation of Africa- that marked the start of the expansion of European empires across the globe and the era of violent colonisation that ensued (Hall, 2018). These first explorations and establishment of the European colonies - mainly controlled by the Spanish and Portuguese crowns - are also credited for the worldwide

expansion of racial capitalism, a system that exploits peoples until today (Robinson, 1983). In solidarity with the causes of Indigenous movements in the region, throughout this work I use interchangeably the terms Latin America and Abya Yala to refer to most of the land known as Mexico, Central America, and South America, the lands primarily colonised by the Spanish and Portuguese, in an effort for epistemic decolonisation (Muyolema, 2001).

In this chapter I offer more empirical detail for my thesis, introducing the rise of responses to IWT as part of conservation globally and in Peru, and arguing why bringing attention to CWT in Peru is important for broader conversations about decolonising international conservation. To do so, I begin by introducing the rise of conservation as a global and colonial project. Then, in section 3.3. I introduce current and emerging discussions of wildlife use and trade, exploring the concerns and approaches taken for researching IWT, and examining wildlife use in Peru more closely. Following this, I return to the research on counter wildlife trafficking action and explore it in more detail globally and in Peru. After that, I introduce the recent turns into the decolonisation of natures in Abya Yala, focusing on state frameworks in Ecuador and Bolivia, and contrasting them to progress made in Peru. I finalise this chapter drawing conclusions of how this informs my thesis.

## 3.2. Conservation and colonial natures

Conservation can be broadly understood as any action intended to protect, preserve, or maintain biodiversity or natures *in* or *ex situ*, though the motives, values, goals, practices, and methods to achieve it vary greatly (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Brockington & Duffy, 2011; Sandbrook, 2015). Human societies have always cared for nature for various reasons such as food sources, sacred sites, or relational links (Brockington et al., 2008). There is evidence recorded since before the 4th century BCE of several types of protected or reserved areas created with the purpose of preserving

their natures (or part of them), an example was the maintenance of hunting grounds in Europe and beyond (Adams, 2004). However, the first protected area is widely considered to be the Yellowstone National Park in the United States of America, established in 1872, as it exemplifies the model of conservation that became mainstream from then on (Brockington et al., 2008). Nonetheless, conservation action encompasses more diverse strategies than only protected areas (Lele et al., 2010). Salafsky et al. (2002) divide conservation actions into four categories: direct protection and management, law and policy, education and awareness, and changing incentives. Brockington et al. (2008) elaborate on this categorisation, noting some conservation strategies do not map clearly into only one category but may include actions related to many of them. For example, Payments for Ecosystem Services may fit into the 'changing incentives' category but can also require actions related to 'education and awareness' and 'law and policy'. Still, many scholars agree that the current mainstream model of conservation was constructed primarily through establishing national parks as spaces dedicated solely to the protection of nature (Hutton et al., 2005), with no human inhabitants and in which the only permitted human use of the space was tourism and recreation (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021).

Protected areas became one of the most paradigmatic tools in international conservation (Brockington et al., 2008; Evans, 2021), and a tool that allowed the construction of an idea of pristine nature which obscures the relationships and dynamics producing protected areas (Igoe et al., 2010; West et al., 2006). This form of human-less conservation parks was initially exported by empires to colonised places around the world, starting with the Royal National Park in Australia in 1879, the Banff and Yoho National Parks in Canada in 1885 and 1886 (Adams, 2004), and the Tongariro National Park in New Zealand in 1887 (Brockington et al., 2008). During the early 1900s they would also be expanded to Asia and Africa, where imperial forces set aside land deemed important by the colonists, and limited and supressed local uses (Adams, 2004; Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021; Prendergast & Adams, 2003). In this way, the idea of a pristine, wild nature free of (certain) human interactions was an imperial imposition (Collard et al., 2015), considering protected areas in post-colonial nations were once the territories of Indigenous peoples who were displaced and dispossessed during colonial

processes (Akampurira, 2023; Kashwan et al., 2021). The creation of many national parks, like the ones in the United States of America in the 19th century, were influenced by elites, business interests, and philanthropy from prominent capital powers, exemplifying how from its inception conservation has often had an affinity to the interests of Western elites (Brockington et al., 2008). Indigenous and native peoples still face violent processes of displacement and dispossession today in the name of conservation (Lunstrum, 2016; Ojeda, 2012; Ybarra, 2017), questioning the extent to which an international conservation can move past these colonial practices and embrace the decolonial turn.

In the 20th century, economic growth and its subsequent degradation of nature brought the growth of environmental and conservation NGOs (Igoe et al., 2010). The 1950s and 1960s saw the rise of environmentalism and conservation organisations, such as the WWF and The Nature Conservancy (Adams, 2004); which later in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in the rapid expansion of large conservation NGOs in size, geographical influence, and budget (MacDonald, 2010b). Their roles also expanded, from their previous tasks of knowledge production to focusing more on fundraising and project implementation. Like other sectors within the broad umbrella of development, conservation too went through a process of professionalisation and bureaucratisation. As the funding chain became more preoccupied with accountability and proving impact, NGOs were pressed to spend significant time managing funds and producing reports for funders (Bebbington, 2004). The increased global presence of conservation organisations meant they were able to create, implement, and influence international legal instruments (Corson & Campbell, 2023), such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which in turn provided them with legitimacy, funding and allowed them to further grow internationally (MacDonald, 2010b). Duffy (2013) makes an important distinction between environmental and conservation NGOs, noting that the latter have specific histories and trajectories where they present themselves as politically neutral saviours of the environment but often “render dissenting Southern viewpoints invisible” (Duffy, 2013, p. 227). This sets the stage for an international conservation sector with the legitimacy to influence wildlife management at a global scale.

Some scholars have noted that international conservation has gone through cycles of attention towards various approaches. Around the 1980s and 1990s, the acknowledgement of the presence of rural communities in areas of high conservation interest led to attention towards community-based conservation (Hutton et al., 2005), which aimed at integrating local people within conservation, usually through economic incentives (Duffy et al., 2016; Kashwan et al., 2021). Around the same time, interest in economic valuations of nature grew between the 1990s and 2000s, such as "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity" (TEEB) initiative and the United Nations Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) programme (Adams et al., 2014; MacDonald & Corson, 2012; Peña, 2010). From the 2010s on, however, anxieties related to the climate and environmental crises are prompting decision-makers, researchers, and conservation professionals to call for increased action and more ambitious targets (Corson & Campbell, 2023). The 30 by 30 plan - proposed at the 2021 One Planet Summit and approved at the 15th Conference of the Parties of the CBD in 2022 - sets a target of 30% of global land and waters to be conserved through effective area-based conservation measures by 2030 (Sandbrook et al., 2023; Schwab & Rechberger, 2019). Kashwan et al. (2021) show concern about how protected area and law enforcement-based interventions maintain their popularity and seem to be expanding in conservation, as they might consolidate racialised structures of violence. Nonetheless, some conservation approaches have been supportive of Indigenous, peasant, rural, and local peoples and have the potential to help them maintain their livelihoods and secure justice (Collins et al., 2021; Montgomery et al., 2024; Sarkar & Montoya, 2011), as well as showing commitment to respecting and promoting human rights (Corson et al., 2020).

Conservation is certainly no monolithic endeavour (Lele et al., 2010; Sandbrook, 2015), and different actors have different approaches, motives and goals that influence their work (Büscher & Fletcher, 2020; Sandbrook et al., 2019; Zinngrebe, 2016). As conservation grew and diversified, distinct paths began to take root in different spheres with their own views of what conservation should look like (Evans, 2021; Hutton et al., 2005). A prominent debate emerged between the "new" and "old" models of conservation. The "new" conservation "promotes economic development, poverty

alleviation and corporate partnerships" (Soulé, 2013, p. 895), focusing on utilitarian values of nature to humans while adjusting to the world economy (Büscher et al., 2012; Collard et al., 2015). Its aims primarily emphasise protecting nature while achieving economic development (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021), highlighting nature's benefits to human populations in the form of resources and services managed through economic systems which provide financial sustainability to their preservation actions (Lalasz et al., 2011). On the other hand, the "old" or "traditional" conservation claims nature is best protected in its most pristine form, mainly inside of protected areas away from human intervention, for nature's own intrinsic value and with funds provided by states or philanthropy (Soulé, 2013). This form of conservation is also related to the concept of the "fortress" model of conservation that promotes the protection of nature in enclosed areas (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021; Bluwstein, 2018). Nonetheless, the positions conservation researchers and practitioners have on what conservation is, what its aims are, and its approaches do not map neatly in two categories (Vaccaro et al., 2013), but include a spectrum of views on the role of people, science, markets, and even perspectives of nature in conservation (Holmes et al., 2016; Sandbrook et al., 2019).

There are significant similarities between the concepts of militarisation and securitisation of conservation -introduced in chapter two- and the fortress model of conservation described above, though they each have nuances. A fortress conservation model refers to a form of maintaining nature by excluding human habitation and activity from a landscape or seascape (Brockington, 2002), conserving protected areas by often forcibly expulsing, displacing, and dispossessing communities connected to the territory (Bluwstein, 2018; Mahalwal & Kabra, 2023). Usually, this conservation model must constantly strive to secure the boundaries of the area to prevent or stop people from using nature, instead prioritising the maintenance of a landscape without people (Büscher, 2016a; Pemunta, 2019). To achieve this, conservationists have increasingly resorted to (green) militarisation, referring to the "use of military and paramilitary (military-like) actors, techniques, technologies, and partnerships in the pursuit of conservation" (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 817). While fortress conservation is a strategy to keep nature safe within fences in protected areas, militarised conservation "extends well beyond protected areas and into the land and communities surrounding them" (Duffy,

2016, p. 238). As such, militarised practices have increased in conservation (Duffy et al., 2019; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016), mainly in relation to anti-poaching efforts, institutionalising a "war to save biodiversity" (Duffy, 2014a, 2016). The securitisation of conservation brings these dynamics to a global level, as conservation issues become redefined as and entangled with global security concerns (Duffy, 2022a; Duffy & Massé, 2021). Securitisation "centers on framing an issue as above politics and requiring emergency action, including extralegal options" (Duffy, 2022b, p. 31). It seems to mark a diminished focus within global conservation discourse on militarised strategies on the ground and moves toward broader law enforcement everywhere -including transnational law enforcement. This shift is salient in the case of IWT (Duffy & Brockington, 2022; Massé & Margulies, 2020), but also of climate action (Boyce et al., 2020; Grove, 2010; Mirumachi et al., 2020; von Lucke et al., 2014). These developments in the international conservation industry exemplify the differences between the fortress model of conservation, focused on conserving a human-less nature within protected areas; the rise of militarised conservation, using military techniques to secure protected areas; and the securitisation of conservation, embedding conservation within global security issues.

A "mainstream conservation" can be fleshed out from the patterns and strategies of the biggest and most powerful international conservation organisations and donors (Brockington et al., 2008), the ones that mobilise large amounts of funds and influence projects in several countries around the world (Brockington & Scholfield, 2010). From them, we can deduce mainstream conservation leans into a law-enforcement and protected-area-based conservation (Kashwan et al., 2021). Some scholars argue that mainstream conservation falls within what is understood as neoliberal conservation (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Holmes & Cavanagh, 2016), as presented in the previous chapter. It mostly aims to build bridges and collaborate with powerful actors such as governments and big corporations (Brockington & Duffy, 2011), and to a much lesser extent with Indigenous and local communities (Brockington, 2008; Holmes, 2011), leaning into global capitalist or market-based interventions (Brockington & Scholfield, 2010; Büscher et al., 2012). Habitually, mainstream conservation actors claim to deliver multiple objectives: the protection of nature, development or economic benefits for local

actors, and the inclusion of local communities in environmental management (McShane & Wells, 2004; Roe et al., 2020), though many question how far these goals are met around the world (Neves & Igoe, 2012; Peter Brosius & Campbell, 2010; Wells et al., 2004). Throughout this thesis I argue that the international conservation industry follows, makes and remakes the mainstream approach to conservation. As significant resources and efforts are directed to mainstream conservation, the forms this conservation will take will result on differentiated effects at various scales.

Latin America is home to rich and diverse natures and is considered to harbour priority biodiversity hotspots for conservation action (N. Myers et al., 2000). Importantly, it is home to many ecosystems of interest for conservation, including the Amazon rainforest, often referred to as "the lungs of the world" (Kawa, 2014). The first allusion to a protected area in Abya Yala is related to colonisation, when lands were set aside in Chile during the 18th century for the Spanish crown (Elbers, 2011). Later, in 1861 the Brazilian emperor Pedro II ordered the protection of a forested area due to its importance in providing water to the city of Rio de Janeiro. In Costa Rica, the first attempt to legally establish a protected area dates from 1863, with the aim of protecting valuable timber species and ensuring water supply for cities. Variants of official protected areas and national parks, as well other forms of state conservation action, followed from this enmeshing the history of conservation in Latin America with justifications for the local use of nature. Franco et al (2016, p. 239) describe how, during the 19th century, Brazilian intellectuals highlighted an economic model based on the rational use of nature as an "important step to get past the backwards colonial legacy."

Considering high rates of deforestation and forest degradation, Abya Yala is becoming an important target region for many kinds of conservation action. As elsewhere, protected areas form an important part of conservation efforts in the region (Boillat et al., 2010; Suárez et al., 2009; Trentini, 2023). In areas with various levels of protection, neoliberal practices such as carbon offsets or REDD+ projects seek to make profits from forest conservation (Bastos Lima et al., 2017; R. Myers et al., 2018; Ravikumar et al., 2017). Other strategies such as Payments for Ecosystem Services and other Nature-based Solutions have also taken root to protect nature and mitigate climate change (Grima et al., 2016; Mercado et al., 2024; Wallbott et al., 2019). Many

conservation initiatives aim to protect threatened species of particular interest. An example is the Jaguar 2030 Roadmap, which aims to foster cooperation between jaguar range nations to implement joint action for the conservation of the species (Hyde et al., 2022; Ruelas Espinosa & Dunlap, 2023). Importantly, the region also fosters Indigenous conservation efforts or ICCAS (Hope, 2021a; Rivera-Núñez, 2024), such as the Nación Wampís in Peru or the Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomaprieta in Colombia[4].

Due to a wide variety of geomorphic formations and climactic variability, Peru fosters a multitude of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems that support a wide variety of biodiversity. It is considered one of the top 10 most biodiverse countries and part of biodiversity hotspots and key biodiversity areas (Kullberg et al., 2019; Móstiga et al., 2023). Conservation in the country is complex, as the various ministries and state agencies have vastly differing opinions and power of decision over emerging issues (Zinngrebe, 2018), with various Ministries presenting differing approaches regarding land use or the use of nature (Sarkar & Montoya, 2011). Protected areas and titled Indigenous territories often overlap with state concessions for extractive industries such as mining, energy, and logging (Bax et al., 2019; Cuba et al., 2014). In some cases, Indigenous peoples in Peru have allied with international conservation NGOs for the purposes of securing their rights to the use of their territories (Sarkar & Montoya, 2011). Still, though Indigenous peoples have been lauded as protectors of nature (Bennett et al., 2023; Blackman et al., 2017), this has not necessarily translated into further support from conservation or environmental actors for Indigenous rights and autonomy in the country (Merino, 2018b; Merino & Gustafsson, 2021). Consequently, conservation in Peru follows many of the trends seen elsewhere: often designed and managed externally (Chambers et al., 2020), centred on area-based conservation efforts (Fajardo et al., 2014), leaning towards market-based approaches (Entenmann & Schmitt, 2013; Pokorny et al., 2012; S. Shanee et al., 2020), struggling with securing conservation outcomes (Schleicher et al., 2017; Weisse & Naughton-Treves, 2016), and maintaining fluctuating relationships and conflict with Indigenous or local communities (Luciano, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2019).

[4] https://www.iccaconsortium.org/category/latin-america-en+members-en/

As managing wildlife use and trade is becoming of key importance for conservation (Duffy, 2022b; Massé & Margulies, 2020), the next section introduces key issues related to legal and illegal wildlife use and trade globally and in Peru.

## 3.3. Wildlife use and trade

Scholars of conservation have raised concern over how wildlife overuse and trade has resulted in the decline and even extinction of many wildlife populations (Hinsley et al., 2023; Morton et al., 2021a). This has prompted conservation organisations around the world to increasingly lead and promote programmes to tackle IWT as a driver of wild animal population declines (Duffy, 2021; Masse et al., 2020). However, wildlife has historically been used by societies around the world for subsistence, recreation, or cultural reasons, and it has benefitted and still benefits and sustains human populations, ensures their livelihoods, and contributes to food security (D. Cawthorn & Hoffman, 2015; Van Vliet et al., 2012). Wildlife and nature have thrived under communal and subsistence use in many places through history and Indigenous peoples, peasant, rural, or local communities remain successful custodians of natural spaces around the world (Bennett et al., 2023; Blackman et al., 2017; IPBES, 2019). The legal international wildlife trade provides livelihoods and income to many, having been estimated to an average value of USD$ 220 billion annually over 1996 to 2016 (Andersson et al., 2021), while the CITES World Trade report estimates the legal international trade in CITES-listed animals at USD$ 1.8 billion annually between 2016 and 2020 (CITES Secretariat, 2022). Still, some scholars believe that growing, globalised market connections facilitate the use and trade of wildlife in contravention of legal frameworks (Farhadinia et al., 2019; Gluszek et al., 2021), causing concerns in global environmental governance spheres - including conservation- to neutralise its effects (Goyenechea & Indenbaum, 2015; Massé & Margulies, 2020).

Wildlife trade, legal or not, is considered to be widespread and ubiquitous. Prominent intergovernmental organisations such as CITES and the IUCN report that about 23% of known bird species and 27% of known mammal species are traded, as well as species from all continents (Scheffers et al., 2019). Even though common narratives frame Asia and Africa as harvest points and Asian markets as the predominant consumers (Esmail et al., 2020; J. D. Margulies, Wong, et al., 2019), Europe and North America and are no stranger to illegal trade as points of harvest, transit, and especially demand and consumption (Arroyo-Quiroz & Wyatt, 2019; Gutierrez & Duffy, 2023; Scheffers et al., 2019; D. Van Uhm, 2016). Though positive and negative conservation impacts have been identified for wildlife trade (CITES Secretariat, 2022), many are worried the negatives may outweigh the positives. The overexploitation of nature and wildlife is found to have deleterious impacts on the current decline of nature (Morton et al., 2021a), affecting 72% of species listed as threatened or near threatened by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (Maxwell et al., 2016). Studies have found overexploitation contributes to decreasing population numbers in some species (Morton et al., 2021b; Symes et al., 2018) and has even driven others to extinction (Eaton et al., 2015; Flecks et al., 2012; Hinsley et al., 2023).

### 3.3.1. The illegal wildlife trade

As mentioned in the previous chapter, illegal wildlife trade is defined by its contravention of legal frameworks and therefore may encompass activities that cause no -or limited- harm to the sustainability of wildlife populations (Cooney et al., 2018), whilst not include activities that follow regulatory frameworks but threaten wildlife populations and ecosystems (‘t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019). In this way, legality does not ensure sustainability (A. Hughes et al., 2023), though wildlife management regulations often aim to make use sustainable (Petrossian et al., 2024). Moreover, laws and regulations vary at different scales, and between authorities (‘t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019). For example, harvesting a species in a specific geographical area might be illegal while its transportation and consumption in other areas remains legal (Phelps et al., 2016). Illegality is specific to regulatory frameworks and geographies and may include the

commercialisation of banned species or of a specimen harvested from a banned area, abuse of harvest quotas, transformation of banned wildlife into products for sale, or commercialisation of protected species even if they were harvested as bycatch (Nellemann et al., 2014; Phelps et al., 2016).

Due to the clandestine nature of IWT, it is difficult to assess its dynamics, scale, routes, drivers, and patterns (Esmail et al., 2020), and currently there are no methods available that can effectively and precisely estimate IWT patterns ('t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019). Research or reports on IWT often rely on secondary information sources and seizure data (Hitchens & Blakeslee, 2020; Rosen & Smith, 2010). Seizure data is widely used, though it may be partial since it is dependent on methodologies, detection and reporting biases linked to enforcement capacity (D'Cruze & Macdonald, 2016; Hutchinson et al., 2023; Leberatto, 2016; 't Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019). For example, TRAFFIC's Wildlife Trade Portal[5], launched in 2020, provides an open repository of wildlife seizure data from all over the world. The data on Peru for the 2015-2024 period shows that almost half of the reported incidents involved illegal trade in timber. On the other hand, international legal wildlife trade is significantly better reported since customs or CITES authorities keep records of exports (Andersson et al., 2021; Foster et al., 2016; Sinovas et al., 2017). CITES Parties report the issuance of CITES permits for legal export of listed wildlife specimens (CITES Secretariat, 2022; Harfoot et al., 2018), so this information is often used to estimate and provide insights into possible trends in illegal trade (Shepherd et al., 2020; Sung & Fong, 2018). Nevertheless, this data also has some limitations such as the inconsistent use of terms and reporting (Andersson et al., 2021), and discrepancies that make it impossible to effectively compile information and calculate trade volumes (Berec et al., 2018), in addition to legal data not providing direct information about illegal trade.

To understand the dynamics and patters of IWT, researchers often investigate the processes and networks related to it. Wildlife trade chains describe how wildlife is harvested or extracted, transported, transformed, and eventually exchanged for profit or benefit and contain three main steps: source or suppliers, intermediaries, and

[5] https://www.wildlifetradeportal.org

consumers (Phelps et al., 2016; ‘t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019). These chains can be simple, especially in very local markets, but they can become increasingly more complex depending on the scale and context of the trade, and the frameworks regulating it (‘t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019). For example, Collard’s (2020) Animal Traffic follows how animals are captured, sold as exotic pets, protected in conventions, or saved in sanctuaries to understand the value that being alive provides to animals that become commodities. Focusing on different links of the trade chain is important because actors’ drivers and motivations are complex and resist reduction into simple narratives of poverty, stereotypes, or criminal activity (Bashari et al., 2018; J. D. Margulies, 2020). Instead, they are rather immersed in an intricate web of current global structures and personal circumstances (Arroyave et al., 2023; Duffy et al., 2016). For example, Prinsloo, Riley-Smith, and Newton (2021) found that people imprisoned for their involvement in IWT in Namibia had financial, social, nutritional, or functional reasons for their actions. Most were aware their actions constituted a crime but had diverse reasons to engage in IWT regardless. Studying the specific circumstances that drive IWT at different scales and for various actors may contribute to better understanding of the dynamics of IWT and perhaps more successful solutions (Challender et al., 2022; Gutierrez & Duffy, 2024), as will be explored in the next section.

As mentioned before, the overexploitation of wildlife for trade poses threats to wildlife populations and ecosystems, leading to the loss of natures and the benefits they provide to humans (Booth et al., 2021; Van Uhm, 2016). However, scholars believe that IWT also has implications for environmental security and sustainable development (Duffy et al., 2019; Gore et al., 2019), and is consistently and increasingly linked to organised crime, international security, conflict, and convergent crimes such as laundering and corruption (Douglas & Alie, 2014; Musing et al., 2019; Wyatt et al., 2018). For example, many scholars highlight how legal and illegal markets converge in IWT chains to meet demand for certain species, where illegally obtained specimens or banned species are laundered to be sold or transported as legal (Dickinson, 2022; Rosen & Smith, 2010; Wyatt, 2009). Some sources claim armed groups in conflict zones may be funded partly by IWT (Nellemann et al., 2014), though the extent of those claims is contested (Felbab-Brown, 2018). Though organised crime and converging criminal

activity have been found in the trade of some species (Anagnostou & Doberstein, 2022; Shepherd et al., 2020), research on other wildlife trade chains has found no evidence of being motivated by organised crime (Arias, Hinsley, Nogales-Ascarrunz, et al., 2021; Paudel et al., 2020). Though multiple illegal wildlife trade chains exist, each with their own dynamics, scholars have found an increasing interest towards issues of crime convergence and security in IWT in research and in conservation practice (Duffy, 2021; Duffy & Massé, 2021; Masse et al., 2020).

Due to the variety in actors and perspectives in wildlife management, different approaches are taken in research and practice to the issue of legal and illegal wildlife trade. Some actors conceptualise wildlife trade as an issue of natural resource management, highlighting the need to determine the sustainable harvest rate of wildlife specimens to regulate their use so it does not exceed the natural renewal rate of their population in its habitat (H. S. Gordon, 1954; 't Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019). Such an approach links IWT to issues of governance of the commons (Adams et al., 2003), focusing on the need to establish sustainable management systems to avoid the overexploitation of wildlife by any one person or group (Cooney et al., 2018; Pires & Moreto, 2011). A practical example of this is CITES, a multilateral agreement that introduces several recourses to ensure the international trade in wildlife species is not detrimental to the species survival (CITES, 2021b; CITES Secretariat, 2022). This is also the approach taken by the Peruvian government, as will be explored further in chapter six.

Another way to approach the issue of wildlife use and trade is the concern for the welfare and rights of wildlife (Baker et al., 2013; Dubois & Fraser, 2013; Petrossian et al., 2024). This is especially salient in the trade of live animals since it involves prolonged stress and suffering for individuals (Bush et al., 2014), or in the use of wildlife for other non-essential purposes such as sport hunting and entertainment (Petrossian et al., 2024). This links to the study of green criminology and species justice (Sollund, 2022; Taylor & Fitzgerald, 2018), which consider wildlife's intrinsic right to not be harmed or abused (Stoett & Omrow, 2021; Wyatt, 2014; Wyatt et al., 2022). These approaches broaden discussions of IWT to cover the harms resulting from wildlife trade regardless of regulatory frameworks that make it legal or illegal (Goyes & Sollund, 2016; Gutierrez & Duffy, 2024; Taylor & Fitzgerald, 2018). For example, Hutchinson et al. (2021) argue that

the CITES values species unequally and therefore has a speciesist approach, allowing some species to be overexploited and harmed more than others.

Lately, IWT is progressively seen as an issue of criminality and transnational security (Gore et al., 2019; Kurland & Pires, 2017; Nellemann et al., 2016; van Uhm, 2018). As mentioned before, illegal trade is a form of crime and there are growing concerns that it is carried out increasingly by professionalised organised crime groups (Anagnostou & Doberstein, 2022; Gluszek et al., 2021), and therefore that it strengthens criminal networks (Martínez & Alonso, 2021; Wyatt et al., 2020). A focus on IWT as part of wildlife crime (Hutchinson et al., 2023) brings to light problems such as the convergence of crimes (Anagnostou, 2021; Masse et al., 2020), including corruption (Musing et al., 2019; D. P. Van Uhm & Moreto, 2018; Wyatt et al., 2018), and drug trafficking (Van Uhm et al., 2021). In the past decade, conservation research and practice has focused on IWT as an issue of crime and security (Duffy, 2022b; Duffy & Massé, 2021; Duffy & Brockington, 2022), leading to a shift in conservation priorities towards law enforcement (Duffy, 2021; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016; Massé & Margulies, 2020).

### 3.3.2. Wildlife use in Peru

There is a strong tradition of using wild animals in Peru. Wild animals have been used in various ways since humans arrived in Abya Yala and their use has persisted, even transformed, to this day (Bodmer et al., 2004; Leberatto, 2016). Few South American animals are considered to have been domesticated in the region between 3000 to 5000 BCE and later traded, namely llamas, alpacas, guinea pigs, and Muscovy ducks (P. W. Stahl, 2003). From them, only Muscovy ducks are considered as domesticated in the Amazon (P. Stahl, 2014). Other animals considered wild were also used and traded. Notably, the Ecuadorian Spondylus shells were widely exchanged throughout South America due to their economic and ceremonial importance since before Inca times (P. W. Stahl, 2003). Moreover, insights from zooarchaeology suggest that fish, shellfish, and other sea products were transported and traded between societies in coastal and Andean regions of Peru as early as 1800 BCE (Crabtree, 1990). Archaeologists have also

found evidence of fish bones and religiously significant animals like anacondas and caimans traded from Amazonian regions into the Andes (Lathrap, 1973).

Currently, common uses of wild animals, their parts or derivatives in Peru include bushmeat, as pets, as adornments, jewellery, brujería (witchcraft), traditional medicine, and tourist attractions (Leberatto, 2016; N. Shanee, 2012). As it will be discussed throughout this dissertation, wild animal use is legal in Peru if following government requirements and requesting licences and permits. Lack of knowledge or understanding of the current legal frameworks, inconsistencies in the granting of permits and law enforcement, and a historic use of wild animals in Peru means that people may be confused about in which instances it is legal to use wild animals or may not perceive it as a "heinous" or "criminal" activity (Leberatto, 2016, 2017; N. Shanee et al., 2017). Much of the research done on the topic of the legal or illegal use of wild animals in Peru relates to species or quantities used, while the perceptions on and rationale behind the trade in wild animals has received little attention with some exceptions.

The most common use of wild animals in Peru is as carne de monte (bushmeat) for subsistence (Leberatto, 2017), meat from wild animals traditionally consumed and traded especially in rural areas (Moorhouse et al., 2023; Schulz et al., 2019b). Richard Bodmer has extensively studied the hunting of wild mammals and trade in wild meat, as well as their sustainability and impacts for rural development, since the 1980s in the Peruvian Amazon (Bodmer, 1995; Bodmer et al., 2004; Bodmer & Lozano, 2001; Mayor et al., 2019, 2022). Estimations done in 1996 recount that most wild mammal meat hunted in the Loreto region is used as subsistence food or sold locally in villages, instead of transported to Iquitos or other places for sale (Bodmer et al., 2004). Wild animals hunted and traded as carne de monte include the lowland tapir, peccaries, primates, pacas, deer, alligators, and tortoises (Bodmer et al., 2004; Bodmer & Lozano, 2001; Leberatto, 2017). According to surveys, most wild mammal meat sold in markets in Iquitos is from peccaries or pacas, and is mostly dry salted (Bodmer et al., 2004; Moorhouse et al., 2023). Some primates are also sold as bushmeat in the Loreto and Ucayali regions, where the adults are killed for meat and infants are taken for the pet trade (N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017). As some traditions are left behind and settlements become more urban, locals consume less of certain wild animals and more domestic species,

though some species remain as traditional food items (Moorhouse et al., 2023), such as peccaries or tortoises (Mayor et al., 2022).

Many animals considered wild are kept or traded as pets in Peru. Mainly, there is a strong cultural practice of keeping parrots in captivity as pets, sustaining an illegal domestic market for these species (Daut et al., 2015; Shanee, 2012) that threatens the populations for certain species in the Peruvian Amazon, such as *Ara ararauna* and *Ara macao* (J. A. González, 2003). Other species such as small river turtles, snakes and monkeys are also sought as pets (Leberatto, 2016; Moorhouse et al., 2023; N. Shanee, 2012). Nationally, Noa Shanee worked extensively in the conservation of primates in the Tropical Andes of Peru from the 2000s to 2010s. Much of her research focuses on the illegal trade and the effectiveness of law enforcement in Amazonian markets through market surveys, questionnaires and interviews with government employees and rural communities, and analysing seizure data (Mendoza et al., 2022; N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017). In her research and practice she found that primate infants are often captured to be used as pets, live in tourist attractions, and in circuses (N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017). Though keeping wild animals as pets is possible if the owner has a permit, much of the pet trade is informal or illegal (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015; Leberatto, 2017). The legal and institutional frameworks which regulate the use of wildlife for pets, consumption, and other uses are further unpacked in chapter six.

Some animals are used for fabrics and materials for clothing. A notable example is vicuña wool, which is a luxury fibre sold internationally. Trade in this wool is legal when shorn live and follows strict traceability mechanisms, which makes it a widely considered successful community-based legal wildlife trade and even the reason why vicuñas avoided extinction (Wakild, 2020). CITES and various state and non-state conservation efforts were successful in avoiding the extinction of vicuña populations and establishing the species as a profitable protected resource (Kasterine & Lichtenstein, 2018; Wakild, 2020). Peccary pelts have also traditionally been a significant legal wild animal product, sold internationally as a by-products of subsistence hunting (Bodmer et al., 2004). Spotted cat skins were also a significant product traded internationally from Amazonian regions to North America and Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, which led to an overexploitation that prompted the inclusion of Neotropical wild cats into Appendix I of

CITES (Mena et al., 2021). It is important to note that much of the wild animal trade for skins or fibres is aimed at luxury international markets (CITES Secretariat, 2022), which opens questions about the distinctions between a trade that is sustainable for a species population and a trade that is fair for people. The case of vicuña wool received attention in 2024 when a journalist report uncovered how communities who legally shear vicuñas in Peru earn a miniscule, almost imperceptible, percentage of what luxury brands earn for garments made from the wool obtained (Rochabrun, 2024).

Research points to hunting and harvesting wild animals in Peru as a more opportunistic economic activity, rather than organised poaching (Leberatto, 2016; Pires et al., 2016; N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017). Pires et al. (2016) found that people involved in the commodity chain of wild animals engage with relative ease and without high levels of sophistication or coordination between links. They explain that the trade in parrots "seems like a common activity, involving common and affordable bird species as well as common people" (Pires et al., 2016, p.16). Leberatto conducted extensive field research from 2012 to 2016 interviewing people involved in the illegal wildlife trade chain in Peru to understand their perceptions of it from a criminological perspective, looking at what drives people to engage in criminal or illegal activities (Leberatto, 2016, 2017). He found that hunting, harvesting or trading wild animals is rarely a primary economic activity, but often a secondary activity that supports rural residents' incomes, which they will engage in if they find the opportunity (Leberatto, 2016, 2017). The hunting of wild animals seen as dangerous such as snakes, big cats or the spectacled bear is often linked to human-wildlife conflict, with people killing these animals due to fear or in retaliation for destroying crops or hunting farm animals (N. Shanee, 2012). The individual animals hunted for these reasons or found by chance while doing other activities such as fishing or hunting other animals, may later be traded and become part of the IWT (Leberatto, 2016).

The intra-national market for wild animals within Peru is significant and, although it has been shaped by historic international demand, also exists separate to it due to traditional customs and ongoing demand (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015). Wild animal trade is not restricted locally, as animals are habitually captured in their habitats and transported to wildlife markets all around the country for trading

(Gastañaga et al., 2011; N. Shanee, 2012). This market is an important source of livelihoods for many Indigenous and rural people who subsist on the hunting and trade of wild animals and who will be negatively affected by restrictions (Bodmer et al., 2004; Pires & Moreto, 2011), especially when alternative sources of income or subsistence are insufficient (C. Espinosa, 2008). Some scholars identify Indigenous and rural communities as hunters and harvesters of primates for trade in the Amazon, though they do not credit their participation in other links of the commodity chain (Leberatto, 2017; N. Shanee et al., 2017). These intra-national dynamics are further explored in chapter seven when I focus my analysis in markets where wild animals are traded.

International wildlife trade has also been common, with wild animals, their parts or products exported in high quantities. Initial policies allowing international trade of wild animals to satisfy global markets before trade regulations established robust commercial chains (Bodmer et al., 2004; Mena et al., 2021; Wakild, 2020). Primates were exported to the USA for biomedical research and the pet trade before a ban in 1973 (N. Shanee et al., 2017), though illegal capture and trade for biomedical research continues (Maldonado et al., 2009). International trade in bird species helped establish national markets, since the animals captured for international demand that were not eventually exported were then sold nationally, creating a domestic demand (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015). Peru was found to be the largest exporter of live reptiles in the world according the CITES records between 2012-2016, primarily exporting Podocnemis river turtles to Hong Kong and China (Can et al., 2019). However, even within legal international wild animal trade, rural hunters, harvesters, or managers often earn a small proportion of the final profits in long commodity chains (Bodmer et al., 2004).

The CITES Wildlife Tradeview[6] platform provides some insights on CITES-listed legal international trade in Peru between 2015 and 2024, though it seems reports are not available for 2020 and from 2022 to 2024. The vast majority of CITES-listed wildlife exported from Peru in this period were destined for Hong Kong and China (3,172,601 specimens), while the following importing countries were the United States, Italy, and Germany (213,765 specimens). Comparatively, fewer specimens were imported into

[6] https://tradeview.cites.org/en

Peru, primarily from El Salvador (46,396) and the Netherlands (8,928). Most exported and imported legal wildlife were traded live (3,329,207 exported and 55,364 imported), while most exported specimens were traded as skins, specimens (usually meaning dead animals), stems, and garments. The most exported species was the yellow-spotted Amazon river turtle *Podocnemis unifilis* (2,945,255 specimens), categorised as Vulnerable by the IUCN Red List. These turtles are traded as pets, hence the high live trade. Other species exported legally in high numbers include *Arapaima gigas* (276,378), categorised as Data Deficient, and two species of peccaries (126,911), *Tayassu pecari* categorised as Vulnerable and *Pecari tajacu* as Least Concern. These four species are listed in Appendix II of CITES. There is variation through the reported years, but most specimens exported were sourced from ranching or captive breeding. For example, in 2021 only 3.9% of the specimens exported were reported as sources from the wild, while 96.2% were reported as some form of ranching or captive breeding.

The role of tourism seems to be important in the use of wild animals in Peru. Wild animals are sometimes used as tourist attractions (N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017), either kept in informal/illegal zoos or tourist centres for people to look at, hold or take photos with. Another way in which tourism may affect wild animal trade is when tourists ask to buy or see certain species, which drives middlemen, hunters or harvesters to intentionally seek them (Braczkowski et al., 2019; Pires et al., 2016). Some tourists or researchers enlist the help of local residents to find areas where they can watch, trap or hunt animals (Leberatto, 2016, 2017). Bodmer and Lozano (2001) note that in the 90s the illegal trade of mammalian parts and products in markets in Iquitos was small but was directed towards personnel from the U.S. military who looked to purchase jaguar products. The perceived rise in the illegal international trade in jaguar and other wild cat parts and products is becoming of increasing concern for researchers and NGOs (Guynup, 2023; WCS, 2019), and becoming a growing target for action as analysed in chapters five and six. Increasing concern for the impacts of (mostly illegal) use and trade in wildlife populations has prompted increased efforts to address it, which is the focus of the next section.

## 3.4. Counter wildlife trafficking

In conservation practice and related sectors, interventions to address the illegal wildlife trade are often referred to as combating or countering wildlife trafficking (CWT) (USAID, 2020; Wildlife Conservation Society, 2024). CWT efforts have long histories around the world (Lunstrum, 2014; Massé, 2019), varying from international to local scales (Cooney et al., 2021; N. Shanee, 2012), involving a wide diversity of state and non-state actors (Arias, Hinsley, & Milner-Gulland, 2021; Arroyave et al., 2023), and implementing an assortment of strategies with varying levels of success (Rytwinski et al., 2021; Wilson-Holt & Roe, 2021). In the last decades, CWT has grown as a key priority for the conservation of nature and is part of international efforts. For example, it is a target for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' 15th goal Life on Land. Target 15 of goal 15 is to "Enhance global support for efforts to combat poaching and trafficking of protected species, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities" (United Nations, 2024). This section introduces CWT efforts at various levels as part of international conservation action and beyond.

### 3.4.1. CITES

At the international level, the main multinational agreement providing a regulatory framework for a sustainable, legal international wildlife trade is the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) ('t Sas-Rolfes et al., 2019). Due to the increasing awareness of the effects of the demand for elephant and big cats' parts on their wild populations (B. W. Walsh, 2005), in 1960 the Seventh General Assembly of the IUCN advised governments to "restrict the import of animals in accordance with the export regulations of the countries of origin" (Wijnstekers, 2011, p. 31). These new discussions about the international regulation of wildlife trade for conservation later led to the drafting of CITES in 1963, which was agreed on in 1973 and entered into force in 1975 (CITES, 2021b). Today the convention has 184 signatories

legally bound to implement the convention text to manage and protect over 40000 species (CITES, 2021b).

CITES regulates wildlife trade by listing species in one of three Appendices depending on the threats they face and the degree of protection needed (Goyes & Sollund, 2016), and voting on proposed changes in these appendices during meetings of the Parties – named Conferences of the Parties (CoP) (CITES, 2021a). Appendix I lists species threatened with extinction and imposes strict regulations for their international trade. On the other hand, Appendix II lists species which are not currently threatened with extinction but may become threatened if their trade continues unregulated, thus it imposes less strict regulations. Additionally, Appendix III lists species regulated by one or various CITES parties which require other parties to cooperate in controlling their trade. To implement this, each party to the convention must designate at least one Management Authority, which issues permits, and at least one Scientific Authority, which advises on the protection of species subject to trade (Wijnstekers, 2011). CITES only regulates international trade, providing recommendations or provisions for parties, but ultimately leaving the institutional and legal decision-making for compliance to national governments (CITES, 2021a; Goyes & Sollund, 2016).

CITES has achieved success in the regulation and conservation of several species, such as slowing down the decline of species of wild animals and plants (CITES Secretariat, 2022) or allowing for the recovery of species like the giant otter and the vicuña (Recharte Uscamaita & Bodmer, 2010; Wakild, 2020). However, the convention has not always been effective (Goyes & Sollund, 2016), and some scholars have criticised the unintended omissions, limitations, or negative impacts of its measures (Cooney & Jepson, 2006; Weber et al., 2015). One of CITES's key blind spots is that not all wildlife trade can be addressed through it, since the convention only pertains to international trade and, therefore, interventions on intra-national trade must be dealt at the national level (Pires & Moreto, 2011). Moreover, compliance with and enforcement of CITES depends on national capacity and resources, meaning all countries are not equally positioned to adequately implement the convention (Wyatt, 2021). Furthermore, scholars have found CITES remains biased towards decisions based on geopolitical power (Challender & MacMillan, 2019; Duffy, 2013), and often in favour of charismatic

large mammals or economically valuable plants (Gehring & Ruffing, 2008; Hutchinson et al., 2021). As the primary wildlife trade convention, CITES is increasingly getting involved in other issues around the topic including sustainable livelihoods and demand reduction (Cooney & Abensperg-Traun, 2013; Lewis, 2009; Wiersema, 2017). While significant gaps must be resolved within and beyond CITES, it remains an important effort towards developing legal obligations on wildlife trade, guiding further research and CWT interventions.

### 3.4.2. Counter wildlife trafficking interventions

As concern for IWT increases and interest grows, various actors come together to develop efforts aimed at tackling it at various scales. The World Bank (2016) categorizes interventions to tackle IWT into six categories: policy and legislation; law enforcement; protected area management; communications and awareness; promotion of sustainable use and alternative livelihoods; and research and assessment (see also Massé & Margulies, 2020). Like CITES, many conservation researchers find that most CWT interventions and research are biased toward a small number of charismatic species such as elephants, tigers, and rhinos (Milner-Gulland, 2018; Phelps et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2014). Scholars of IWT also point out that CWT efforts often pay little attention to the illegal trade in plants other than commercial timber species (Margulies, Bullough, et al., 2019; Phelps & Webb, 2015; Wyatt & Hutchinson, 2023). Broadly, strategies to control IWT around the world have been characterised by taking generic, top-down approaches to policy and enforcement that tackle IWT as an issue of crime (Challender & Macmillan, 2014; Esmail et al., 2020; Jepson, 2016). Since IWT networks are complex and adapt quickly to pressures (Leberatto, 2016), CWT scholars and practitioners must constantly assess interventions to balance their effects (Phelps et al., 2016).

The most publicly known and studied counter wildlife trafficking operations are the law enforcement interventions carried out in protected areas in some countries in Africa (Büscher, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014), where park rangers seek to stop the illegal

hunting -or “poaching”- of animals of high trade value (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014; Massé, 2019). As mentioned in the previous chapter, these exemplify the direction of CWT towards increased securitisation, militarisation, and criminalisation (Duffy, 2016; Masse et al., 2020; Massé & Margulies, 2020), despite calls from some scholars and practitioners for a more local (Jepson, 2016), community-based (Biggs et al., 2016; Cooney et al., 2017), and democratic management of wildlife as a solution to IWT (Challender & Macmillan, 2014; Pires & Moreto, 2011; Roe et al., 2020). Instead, political ecologists have highlighted how CWT interventions have increasingly focused on law enforcement efforts using military practices and language to secure protected areas (Dongol & Heinen, 2012; Duffy et al., 2015; Masse et al., 2020). Moreover, these interventions often include heavy surveillance, intelligence-gathering, and technology development (Duffy, 2014a; Massé, 2018). Some scholars highlight that even interventions which work with local communities focus on surveillance, training community members to gather intelligence for law enforcement (Masse et al., 2020; Pires & Moreto, 2011).

Scholars have revealed how these increasingly law enforcement-based interventions have developed hazardous outcomes in many target areas. “Poachers” and other “offenders” are often dehumanised, racialised and vilified to legitimise conservation action and justify conservation violence to the state, NGOs, and the public (Büscher, 2016b; Lunstrum, 2017; Massé, 2019). Moreover, many of the enforcement actions target the most vulnerable actors in wildlife trade chains, namely harvesters, people already marginalised, or those who are not driving or substantially benefitting from trade chains (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Challender & Macmillan, 2014; Dickinson, 2022). Wildlife is a source of livelihoods and food security for millions of people ((Booth et al., 2021; Roe et al., 2020), especially for Indigenous and rural peoples for whom it can be their only access to cash income to access services (Duffy et al., 2016). Roe et al. (2020) point out that blanket bans and similar legislation could affect people’s rights to self-determination, their rights to freely engage in cultural traditions, and interfere with their free, prior, and informed consent on laws and policy that affect their livelihoods and autonomy. Scholarship on green militarisation illustrates enforcement efforts sometimes bring conflict between local communities and

conservation actors, which can result in retaliation from affected communities towards conservation interventions and wildlife (Lunstrum, 2014; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016; Massé, 2019). Furthermore, the effects of increasing militarisation in CWT interventions affects all the people involved, even rangers who must adapt to match their increasingly militarised law enforcement role, living under conditions of fear for their security and stress for meeting the expectations of "saving wildlife" (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Massé, 2020; Moreto, 2016). While much of the evidence of the potential negative impacts of CWT actions comes from areas of Africa, as these interventions become more commonplace around the world their distinct issues merit evaluation.

Increasingly, funding or foreign aid is being diverted from other conservation priorities and appointed towards CWT, often in the form of law enforcement actions to address IWT as a matter of security (Duffy, 2022b; Duffy & Massé, 2021; Duffy & Brockington, 2022), which shifts the mainstream strategies implemented for conservation (Duffy & Humphreys, 2014; Massé & Margulies, 2020). This has been driven by concerns for the links between IWT, criminality (Gutierrez & Duffy, 2024; Van Uhm & Moreto, 2018; Wyatt et al., 2020), conflict (Douglas & Alie, 2014; Trogisch, 2023), and threats to security (Felbab-Brown, 2018; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016), calling on the attention of various actors within and beyond the conservation sector (Duffy, 2022b; Duffy & Humphreys, 2014; Massé et al., 2018). This recent turn in conservation is also having effects on the ways conservation actors approach their work discursively, using narratives and imagery of war or presenting nature as savagely threatened and destroyed by racialised individuals to gain support, legitimacy, and raise funds (Duffy et al., 2019; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016; Massé, 2019). Major donors for CWT interventions include private foundations, such as the Disney Corporation or Google; governments, such as the UK and USA (Massé & Margulies, 2020); international organisations, such as the European Commission and the World Bank; or NGOs such as Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and WWF (Duffy & Humphreys, 2014). Increased attention and funding also widens the pool of actors participating in CWT interventions, including non-state actors such as privately hired park rangers (Masse & Lunstrum, 2016) or security companies (Duffy, 2022b), devolving authority into the hands of actors with less accountability to vulnerable populations. This is a key concern for my thesis as the nexus

of funding, actors, and conservation discourses exposes the multi-scalar (geo)political ecology of wildlife management.

An emergent issue within CWT is the potential for the development of zoonosis due to the transport of pathogens related to wildlife use and trade (Borsky et al., 2020; Rosen & Smith, 2010). During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the predominant narrative was that the virus was initially carried by a pangolin or bat, later finding its way to infecting humans through an interaction related to a market where wildlife was sold illegally in Wuhan, China (Aguirre et al., 2020). This has not been proven with certainty, but nonetheless the potential of wildlife trade to produce the next pandemic has become a growing concern, prompting calls to increase efforts against it (Aguirre et al., 2020; Moorhouse, D'Cruze, et al., 2021; Roe et al., 2020). This compounds with racialised perspectives of Asian individuals as the primary drivers of global IWT (J. D. Margulies, 2020; J. D. Margulies, Wong, et al., 2019). Looking to the future, scholars and practitioners interested in stopping wildlife trafficking also flag Traditional Chinese Medicine (Moorhouse, Zhou, et al., 2021), the increase in Chinese geopolitical power and influence in developing countries (Farhadinia et al., 2019; Morcatty et al., 2020), and the expansion of international transport routes as key issues in the potential expansion of IWT (Esmail et al., 2020; Gluszek et al., 2021). Another issue of concern for research and practice is the role of social media, the dark web, and other online platforms in facilitating every step of IWT chains and in avoiding detection by law enforcement (Milner-Gulland, 2018; TRAFFIC, 2019). Monitoring of online markets is becoming a frequent practice to understand and tackle trends and patterns in IWT online (Hansen et al., 2012; Nijman et al., 2019a; Sung & Fong, 2018). These are some of the established interventions and future concerns which shape mainstream CWT around the world, and which are applied, reshaped, and negotiated in emerging CWT action in geographies such as Latin America.

### 3.4.3. CWT in Latin America and Peru

Crucial for this thesis, the Americas have been often omitted from conservation research, funding and action related to CWT (The World Bank, 2016), though IWT is a common issue in the region (Douglas & Alie, 2014; Goyenechea & Indenbaum, 2015). P. Reuter & O'Regan (2017) argue that IWT in Latin America/Abya Yala has not yet reached the crisis levels or press interest that Southeast Asia and Africa display, where it has been widely researched. However, some scholars state that trafficking in the region may exhibit the same factors that propelled the crises in Asia and Africa (Goyenechea & Indenbaum, 2015) and the growth of IWT is of concern (Esmail et al., 2020; Gluszek et al., 2021). For example, A. Reuter et al. (2018) suggest that Abya Yala is home to species that resemble others highly trafficked elsewhere such as big cats and bears; and fear they will become "replacements" as the populations of trafficked species begin to dwindle. Furthermore, societies in Latin America harbour local traditions of wildlife use for subsistence and local practices, and markets selling wildlife and its products are common (Arias, Hinsley, Nogales-Ascarrunz, et al., 2021; Goyes & Sollund, 2016). Therefore, Latin American wildlife is traded substantially both in-countries and internationally (Arroyo-Quiroz & Wyatt, 2019; Gluszek et al., 2021; Goyes & Sollund, 2016), making it a growing target for CWT action.

Most, if not all, nations in the world contain various regulations to control wildlife use and trade within their legal frameworks (Petrossian et al., 2024; Tian et al., 2023), and Latin American countries are no exemption (Goyes & Sollund, 2016; Kretser et al., 2022). As an example, in both Peru and Colombia subsistence consumption of wild animals is allowed as a traditional custom, but trading is illegal (Arroyave et al., 2023; Mayor et al., 2022). Different authorities have responded in various ways to IWT – for example, in addition to laws, Colombia has a national strategy against IWT since 2012, and Peru since 2017. Nonetheless, an increasing global interest in curbing IWT has prompted the influx of funding for CWT efforts in the region. Though some research done in Abya Yala claims the illegal trade in some species in the region, such as jaguars and parrots, is not representative of organised crime (Arias et al., 2020; Arias, Hinsley, Nogales-Ascarrunz, et al., 2021; P. Reuter & O'Regan, 2017), other scholars, governments and NGOs show

concern towards the increasing organisation and professionalisation of criminal trafficking groups and networks in the region (Gluszek et al., 2021). Moreover, scholars of IWT believe that Asian markets are driving an expansion of illegal wildlife extraction and trade in Latin America (Gluszek et al., 2021; Morcatty et al., 2020; A. Reuter et al., 2018). There are further concerns that states in the region do not have the resources, capacity, or interest to address it (Arroyave et al., 2023). The extent to which these concerns and other narratives drive conservation efforts into CWT projects in Latin America in practice remains to be evaluated. Likewise, there is little understanding of how growing international concern for IWT in the region is received or reshaped in Abya Yala, where state efforts to recognise the plurality in relations with nature and territory are gaining traction.

As mentioned previously, Peru is showing clear interest and leadership for tackling illegal wildlife trade, approving its "National Strategy for Reducing Illegal Wild Fauna Trafficking for the 2017-2027 period" and its "2017-2022 Action Plan" in 2017 (referred to from here on as National Strategy). Additionally, the country hosted the First High-level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas in October 2019 and including organised crime as an aggravating circumstance for IWT in 2022. Government-led management of all wild plant species and most wild animal species falls within the responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture Development and Irrigation (MIDAGRI) through its National Forestry and Wild Fauna Service (SERFOR) and in coordination with other governmental institutions such as Customs and the National Police. Within Peruvian legal frameworks, the Ley Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (National Forestry and Wild Fauna Law, LFFS) regulates the legal use and trade of wildlife, "paying attention to actors traditionally excluded from the access to forestry and wild fauna resources" (Petrossian et al., 2024). The national legal and institutional frameworks for managing wildlife will be further analysed in chapter six.

The Peruvian government approved the National Strategy and its Action Plan in August 2017, making it an official policy dedicated to CWT. Under the monitoring and supervision of SERFOR, it aims to "reduce illegal wild animal trafficking with coordination between state authorities with jurisdictions on the issue, with border states and with participation of citizenship and private sector." This document specifically aims to tackle

the trade in wild animals, and does not include most fish, fungi, or plants. The National Strategy is applied to all wild fauna species that "reproduce on land" and "marine and continental mammals," as well as "Actinopterygii from the Syngnathidae family (*Hippocampus ingens*)" (seahorses). The National Strategy also enlists the support of multiple government agencies to manage and control wildlife use and trade, including regional governments and the National Police. However, in her professional experiences as part of CWT efforts in Peru, Noga Shanee highlights that often law enforcement agencies lack personnel, capacity, and interest in IWT and thus is not effective in controlling the issue (N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2007, 2017). The National Strategy also considers actions such as supporting rescue centres to house animals recovered from trade, and communication strategies to raise awareness about IWT. For all of these actions, it consulted and requested the support of both state and non-state actors.

In the last ten years, Peru has received increased attention from CWT efforts from international non-state actors. Government authorities and conservation NGOs have paid significant attention to the illegal trade of species for the domestic pet market, and to a lesser extent the international market (Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson, 2015; J. A. González, 2003; Leberatto, 2016). Furthermore, there is recent interest in researching and tackling the trafficking of wild cats in the country (Guynup, 2023; Mena et al., 2021), due to Peru being one of the leading countries for reported seizures of wild cats in South America (Morcatty et al., 2020). Several international conservation NGOs work in Peru, often closely with the Peruvian government in matters related to wildlife management, including large international NGOs such as WCS, WWF, Conservation International (CI), and Oceana (Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson, 2015). Other smaller, local, and national NGOs also work in supporting CWT through diverse strategies, such as Derecho, Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (DAR), Sociedad Peruana de Derecho Ambiental (SPDA), or Neotropical Primate Conservation (NPC) (N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee & Shanee, 2021). Although IWT is widely studied in Peru, CWT actions from both state and non-state actors have received little research attention, a gap that this thesis aims to contribute to primarily in chapters six and seven. Considering the negative effects CWT actions have had in other geographies, the increasing funding and attention directed towards IWT in

Abya Yala, and the long-held traditions and customs related to wildlife and nature in the region, closer evaluations of CWT in Abya Yala are merited. This, in particular, in conjunction with growing discussions about decolonial agendas related to nature, as discussed in the next section.

## 3.5. Decolonial frontiers for nature in Abya Yala

Abya Yala is widely recognised as a region where diverse peoples and ontologies exist together, and where Indigenous and alternative ontologies are gaining political ground (Hope, 2017, 2021a; Merino, 2021b), but these different worlds come into conflict more with national and international actors aiming to control nature and territories (Merino, 2021b). Latin American legal frameworks and organisational structures are often in tension due to clashing cultural systems born from colonial and postcolonial histories, language and ontological differences (de la Cadena, 2019; De Pedro Ricoy et al., 2018). Moreover, Abya Yalan Indigenous and Peasant societies have adapted and morphed through colonial appropriation, destruction and domination, and distinct identities have been born through resistance (Hope, 2021a; Robinson, 1983). In Abya Yala, discussions about Indigenous sovereignty, pluralism, and the use and protection of nature have been predominant in the past decades, raising important examples of attempts at decolonising nature from the state.

### 3.5.1. Legal reforms in Abya Yala

Constitutions are key legal instruments that set the framework of a nation's legal system. Two countries in Abya Yala, Ecuador and Bolivia, introduced constitutional reforms to include Indigenous and alternative ontologies, and their relationships with nature, within the bases of their legal systems and institutions (Gudynas, 2009, 2011). Additionally, as of 2024, Chile is undergoing a constitutional process with strong

Indigenous participation, though the first attempt at a potential new constitution was rejected in a referendum in 2022 and so the deliberations continue (Larrain et al., 2023). In Bolivia a constitutional assembly of popularly elected delegates was a promise for the representation of Indigenous peoples and the country's poor within a legal system that had been primarily ruled by the white criollo or mestizo elites (Postero, 2020). Similarly, the 2007-2008 constitutional process in Ecuador carried high expectations from social movements for addressing the limits of neoliberal multiculturalism, demands for citizenship, and the rights of poor, Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian groups (Gudynas, 2009; Radcliffe, 2012). These constitutional reforms introduced key paths for decolonising nature in the region, though their limitations provide insights on the challenges of achieving complete decolonisation.

These constitutional reforms and other legal reforms introduced three important aspects for thinking about the decolonisation of nature in the region: plurinationality, buen vivir, and the rights of nature. Plurinationality presents an option that can accommodate different notions of governance, legal frameworks, and ontologies within state-making (Merino, 2018a). A plurinational state aims to ensure "the equal recognition of culturally distinctive ethnic groups living in the country" through the decentralisation of government to represent cultural geographies (Vela-Almeida, 2018, p. 128), requiring a transformation of the state to value all cultures and ontologies in radical democracy, granting citizenship to all, and respecting territories and forms of justice (Radcliffe, 2012). Buen Vivir is a contemporary reconstruction of traditional Abya Yalan principles of reciprocity and relationality which guide the respect for humans, non-human nature and the world (Acosta, 2012; Merino, 2016). It stands out as an alternative to sustainable development and was included in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, the Ecuadorian Sumac Kawsay is based in Kichwa knowledge and the Bolivian Vivir Bien is based on Aymara and guaraní ideas (Gudynas, 2011). The movement for recognising the Rights of Nature is growing around the world, focusing beyond the individual and often encompassing the rights of collectives such as natural communities or ecosystems (Chapron et al., 2019; Espinosa, 2019). Many moves towards granting rights to nature have been based in alternative ontologies such as the recognition of the rights of Te Awa Tupua in New Zealand, the Atrato River in Colombia or the Ganges and Yamuna rivers in

India, albeit these cases have not been included in their countries' constitutions (Brara, 2017; Chapron et al., 2019).

In Bolivia, plurinationality and Vivir Bien were written in the Constitution during its reform in 2009 under Evo Morales' first term in office (Postero, 2020). In the 2009 Constitution, Indigenous peoples are conceived as nations within the Bolivian state, including measures such as their right to self-governance through the constitution of Indigenous First Peoples' Peasant Autonomies, intercultural education and health, including plurinationality within branches of government, and establishing native language requirements for state employees, among others (Merino, 2018a). Autonomies are part of the state's governance and expressly refer to ancestral territories. These moves are important for decolonisation; however, their implementation heavily restricts the recognition of Autonomies over the full extension of Indigenous territories and the state maintains control over all natural resources, allowing access by transnational capitals and making Autonomies dependant on participatory consultation processes (Merino, 2018a). Bolivia did not include Rights of Nature in its 2009 Constitution, though it did include people's right to a "healthy, protected and balanced environment" (Gudynas, 2015). Instead, the country passed the 2010 Law of the Rights of Mother Earth and then the 2012 Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well (Chapron et al., 2019). These laws responded to demands made by social movements to resolve the contradictions between the environmental and extractivist principles set in the 2009 Constitution through the recognition of rights of Mother Earth such as the right to life, diversity of life, water, clean air, balance, among others (Gudynas, 2015).

In Ecuador, plurinationality and Sumak Kawsay were introduced in the 2008 Constitution, allowing for the creation of Indigenous territories with autonomic governments and differentiated justice systems according to local practices (Merino, 2018a; Radcliffe, 2012). However, as in Bolivia, the territories open to become Indigenous autonomic territories are bound by borders pre-established by the state, instead of actual Indigenous demands, and the state also maintains control over natural resources and can allow their exploitation even inside protected areas, with rights to consultation for Indigenous peoples, but not consent (Merino, 2018a; Radcliffe, 2012).

Furthermore, such autonomic governments have greater administrative power but are not completely autonomous from the central government (Vela-Almeida, 2018). The Rights of "Nature or Pachamama" were also included in the 2008 Constitution in Ecuador (Radcliffe, 2012). The process of including the Rights of Nature in the Constitution was pushed for with the support of the USA-based organisation Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund (Espinosa, 2019). The debates for the inclusion of the Rights of Nature combined favouring discourses around anti-neoliberalism and nationalist feelings, interest for legal progress and decolonisation, as well as meanings, arguments, and categorizations stemming from Western science and liberal and Catholic traditions (Espinosa, 2019). In the constitution, the recognition of rights of nature was also accompanied by conflicting categorisations of nature as property and as natural resources of importance for development (Espinosa, 2019; Radcliffe, 2012).

The way in which buen vivir and plurinationality have been mobilised in Ecuador and Bolivia to achieve national sovereignty over natural resources for economic development might challenge the neoliberal status quo discursively and by constructing a more proactive state, but some scholars argue it does not challenge broader colonial legacies and often goes against the principles of buen vivir in their constitutions (Merino, 2018a; Radcliffe, 2012; Vela-Almeida, 2018). In Bolivia, the state's control over natural resources and its reliance on extractivism contradicts the aims for plurinationality and buen vivir as avenues for Indigenous self-determination and the enactment of alternative ontologies (Hope, 2021b; Merino, 2018a). Moreover, the 2012 Framework Law restated the rights of Mother Earth but placed them within an "Integral Development" which follows Western developmentalism rather than an alternative and radical buen vivir (Gudynas, 2015). In Ecuador, Merino (2018b) argues that the inclusion of buen vivir, plurinationality and the rights of nature in the constitution has not slowed down extractivism and instead the government has relied on oil, gas and mining exploitation for funding its social programmes, causing conflicts with Indigenous and local communities. The post-neoliberal "economic liberation" sought after by Abya Yalan governments blends anti-imperialist claims of state autonomy from foreign governments, namely the United States, but maintains a reliance on market development through extractivism (Postero, 2020; Vela-Almeida, 2018). Constitutional

reforms for plurinationality, as well the granting of rights to Nature, Pachamama, or Mother Earth have not effectively redirected the economical course of control over Indigenous, peasant and local peoples and their territories (Merino, 2018b), or helped the causes of environmental and social movements at the local scale (Gudynas, 2015; Hope, 2021b).

To date, scholars have pointed out that demands made by Indigenous, Afro and rural peoples and social movements have been co-opted by the state into interpretations that allow states to retain "for itself the ultimate sovereignty over all territory and resources" (Radcliffe, 2012, p. 246). Postero (2020) highlights that while Indigeneity and decolonisation were important topics during the electoral and constitutional processes in Bolivia, their later implementation only invoked Indigenous history and culture as racialised performances that legitimise state power but do not ensure Indigenous self-determination or reduce reliance on market-capitalism. After all, when plurinationality and interculturality have been implemented in policies in Abya Yala they remain entrenched in late-colonial government systems, neoliberal developmentalism and international law (Merino, 2018b; Radcliffe, 2012). Merino (2018b) argues that state legal efforts for Indigenous rights in Abya Yala have focused on institutionalising tolerance and social inclusion towards Indigenous peoples, but they do not always show a commitment towards Indigenous self-determination, autonomy and the enactment of Indigenous or alternative ontologies. While not yet articulated effectively by states as a project that parts ways with Western extractivism and mercantilism (Hope, 2017, 2021b; Merino, 2016), buen vivir remains a powerful ongoing and constructive dialogue between current and ancestral knowledges in the process of decolonisation (Acosta, 2012). It can be especially useful as a political platform that can articulate and negotiate Indigenous principles against current development models and open political possibilities (Escobar, 2020; Merino, 2016).

### 3.5.2. Decolonial natures in Peru

Peru is a multi-ethnic and multicultural nation, though ethnic identities are complex after long histories of coloniality and state building. According to the 2017 Peruvian Census, 25.8% of respondents self-identified as part of Indigenous or Originary peoples and 16% of respondents speak an Indigenous or Originary language as their mother tongue, with the highest proportion of self-identified Indigenous people being from the Andean Quechua and Aimara peoples, and the Amazonian Ashaninka people. Still, the country has faced periods of erasure and obfuscation of Indigenous identities resulting in Indigenous peoples and long-held traditions being often vilified and othered by the government, reproducing colonial dynamics in the service of international, colonial, neoliberal models (Collins et al., 2021; Merino & Gustafsson, 2021). While ethnic social movements emerged in the 1970s in other Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador and Mexico, in Peru such efforts remain limited in terms of valuing Indigeneity within state structures (de la Cadena, 2001; Orihuela, 2020). Unlike Bolivia and Ecuador, the Peruvian government remains neoliberal and mostly detached from Indigenous roots (Collins et al., 2021). Within an international and Latin American context where Indigenous peoples and movements are discussed as key to the future of environmental and conservation governance, Peru is a paradoxical example.

In Peru, neither plurinationality or buen vivir have been constitutionalised or broadly included in law and policy, meaning Indigenous peoples and traditions are not widely valued through government systems. However, the most prominent association of Indigenous peoples, the Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDESEP), has introduced the concept of buen vivir into their activist work for some time. Moreover, Awajun communities mobilise it as tajimat pujut, a vision of development based on living well as an individual, as a member of a community, and with the natural environment (Merino, 2021a). The Wampís Nation included it in its declaration of autonomy of 2015, in hopes of enacting plurinationality and tajimat pujut into national discourse and practice (Merino, 2021a; Nación Wampís, 2015). However, to date the Peruvian government has not responded to the Wampís Nation declaration. Though plurinationality and constitutional reforms have come up in social movements in the

past five years, the Peruvian government shows no signs of considering them as political options. Instead, the state vehemently supresses protests and social movements, acting with alarming violence against those that involve peasant, rural, and Indigenous people, as exemplified by the vicious state response against the 2022-2023 demonstrations which left 49 civilians dead at the hands of security forces (Amnesty International, 2023).

Regarding the rights of nature, Peru does not recognise the rights of nature at the national level, but two municipalities and a provincial judicial body have recognised elements of nature as subjects of law. Very recently in March 2024, the Marañón River was recognised as a subject of law, with the rights to flow, guarantee a healthy ecosystem, biodiversity, among others. A judicial body in Nauta, in the Amazonian Loreto department, heeded the request for protection of the river filed by the Kukama Huaynakana Kamatahuara Kana Indigenous Women's Federation against the reoccurring oil spills caused by the Petroperu-managed Oleoducto Norperuano pipeline. The sentence also created the legal figure of the Guardians of the Marañón river, comprised of Indigenous organisations and state agencies, to represent the river. Previously, two municipalities, both located in the Andean department of Puno, recognised Mother Water and the River Llalimayo as subjects of law (Ordenanza Municipal 006-2019-MDO/A and 018-2019-CM-MPM/A, respectively). It is crucial to note that while the ruling for Mother Water was explicitly based on Quechua Indigenous traditions and cosmovision, the one for River Llalimayo did not refer to indigeneity, though it did mention the progress made in Ecuador and Bolivia, Sumak Kawsay, along with arguments for conservation.

Together, these examples show that, although the Peruvian central government does not widely recognise Indigenous traditions and ontologies as part of state structures, multiple traditions and ontologies are valued and enacted within the Peruvian territory in different ways. While some Indigenous peoples are seeking recognition and autonomy within their territories, other groups request the support of the state to enforce the rights of parts of nature as subjects of law, identifying as Indigenous or not. Moreover, these cases indicate that although there are efforts for change within Peruvian society, the Peruvian central state at large remains unmoved towards decoloniality, instead supporting a neoliberal and authoritarian agenda.

Scholars have highlighted how indigeneity is “an articulated identity - imposed, inhabited, contested and negotiated by different groups of people” (Hope, 2017, p. 75; Radcliffe, 2017), and navigated differently when in contact with actors at different scales such as governments or international development or conservation organisations (Andolina et al., 2005; Hope, 2021a; Merino, 2021b). Despite the lack of support from the Peruvian government, indigeneity in Peru is no different (Merino, 2021a; Merino & Gustafsson, 2021). Andueza et al. (2023, p. 10) argue that the relationship between Amazonian peoples and Peruvian society is that of “a choice between a relative autonomy marked by marginalisation, and those of an often violent racialised integration into national society mediated by the different iterations of extractive economies”. Thinking about this integration into national society and the complex mixing of identities referred to previously in this section, I point to Schulz et al. (2019b). They account how a mestizo community in the Amazon, although not Indigenous to the territory, shares many traditional uses, spiritual and cultural values related to peatlands with an Indigenous Urarina community. These complex relationships between natures and alternative ontologies are crucial to my thesis given the ongoing traditions and engagements with animals beyond territories and indigeneity, and within a growing market economy. As such, these complex connections between the structures of the Peruvian national government, their valuing or rejection of alternative ontologies, the support of international conservation, and the enacting of alternative ontologies can bring important insights to the potential for decolonising CWT.

## 3.5. Conclusion

As international conservation receives increased attention, support, and funding to tackle the most pressing environmental or biodiversity issues (Corson & Campbell, 2023), various conservation actors emerge and intersect as a response (Corson et al., 2019; Holmes, 2011). Lately, interest in the illegal use and trade of wildlife as a driver for the decline of wildlife populations has prompted the development and strengthening of

counter wildlife trafficking actions all over the world (Duffy, 2016; Ybarra, 2017). In this way, CWT strategies are becoming not only commonplace but a key priority for conservation action (Duffy, 2022b; Massé & Margulies, 2020). The histories of these CWT actions direct the practices that become commonplace around the world and reveal the potential impacts these might have on people targeted by their interventions (Kashwan et al., 2021; Masse et al., 2020). Similarly, the contexts where these actions are deployed set the conditions where international conservation action will land, be accepted, reshaped, negotiated, or contested by various actors.

Abya Yala is a region which fosters great biodiversity and ecosystems of interest for conservation action (Kawa, 2014; Myers et al., 2000; Trentini, 2023), where growing concern for IWT is encouraging CWT action by state and non-state actors (Arroyave et al., 2023; Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson, 2015; Gluszek et al., 2021). Moreover, the region has made important moves towards the incorporation, valuation, and recognition of Indigenous perspectives into state structures, mainly in Ecuador and Bolivia (Hope, 2017, 2021a; Merino, 2021b; Radcliffe, 2012). In this context, Peru is a paradigmatic example since it retains values and traditions related to wildlife use and trade (Mayor et al., 2022; Moorhouse et al., 2023) and has a high percentage of Indigenous populations demanding recognition by the state (de la Cadena, 2019; Merino, 2021a). However, due to complex histories of racialisation and oppression, the country does not value and recognise Indigenous peoples or alternative ontologies within its national state structures (de la Cadena, 2001; Merino, 2020; Merino & Gustafsson, 2021). In Peru, wildlife use and alternative ontologies exceed Indigenous territories and protected areas (Leberatto, 2016; N. Shanee, 2012), presenting challenges for a state and a conservation sector that attempt to manage wildlife use. At the same time, international conservation pursues its mandate of protecting nature within a decolonial turn which claims to respect and promote Indigenous rights and local autonomy. Thinking through CWT programmes in Peru is relevant for thinking through the decolonisation of international conservation more broadly, offering innovations for the study of conservation by taking ontological conflicts seriously across scales. In the following chapter, I present the methodology I used to study the multiple scales and actors related to counter wildlife trafficking for conservation in Peru.

# Chapter 4

# Methodology

## 4.1. Introduction

My methodology aims to explore the geopolitical ecology of conservation, specifically looking at how international discourses and structures drive counter wild animal trafficking action in Peru and how such action shapes, reshapes, interacts, and conflicts with other discourses, politics, conditions, and ontologies related to wild animals and environmental management in the country. It is grounded in qualitative research and based on methods used in other traditions of human geography. Since there exists no methodology designed to study geopolitical ecology, I based my methodology on other research on the political ecology and geopolitical ecology of conservation such as Duffy (2021, 2022), Duffy and Brockington (2022) and Massé and Margulies (2020). "Following the influence" takes inspiration from "follow the thing" approaches (Cook, 2004; Cowen, 2020), though the "things" being followed are discourses on framings, priorities, and concerns linked to IWT and their material impacts across scales. In contrast to other follow the thing methodologies which follow something material (Collard, 2020), or policy mobility methodologies which follow state policies (Peck and Theodore 2010; Peck 2011), I combine it with critical discourse analysis to follow how discourses and priorities from both state and non-state actors become material actions through international conservation structures, and their impacts. To do this, I further draw from methods in the literature on the anthropology of conservation (Larsen & Brockington, 2018) and other work carried out in CWT (Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson, 2015; Koot & Veenenbos, 2023).

Expanding from the work done by Massé and Margulies (2020) in analysing foreign assistance through the USFWS, Duffy's (2021) work on the political ecologies of international conservation, my research follows discourses, framings and actors as a "method of inquiry". As such, it follows discourses on framings, priorities, and concerns linked to IWT in a multi-directional approach as they are produced, co-produced, communicated, and recontextualised across scales in the interactions between actors. It follows the narratives that shape and are shaped through CWT programmes and the relations they form, how institutions will bend for funding and support, or how they will bend discourses to achieve their own goals. It follows structured that condition such discourses from the priorities that shape CWT programmes to the impacts of their implementation.

It is crucial to note that since my research follows discourses in CWT programmes from the international to the local in Peru, the scope of my research centres "wild animals" as described in Peruvian policy. Therefore, the scope of this thesis is species "of wild fauna, understood as all that reproduce on land (...), as well as marine and continental mammals, and the Actinopterygii from the Syngnathidae Family (*Hippocampus ingens*)" (Estrategia Nacional para Reducir el Tráfico Ilegal de Fauna Silvestre en el Perú). Peruvian policy on wild animal management will be further reviewed and analysed in depth in chapter six. Other wild animals are sometimes mentioned and included throughout this dissertation, also problematising the picture of wild animal management, but the above definition guides most of my analysis to provide consistency on the discourses, policies, and programmes studied.

This research was conducted both in Spanish and English, meaning that documents, interviews, presentations, and media in Spanish were not translated to English for the purposes of collection and analysis, and the same for data originally in English. Data in other languages was accessed mainly in English, due to it being the most commonly available translation, though there was little non-Spanish or English data. In general, data was not translated. This is due to two factors: the first being that I am fluent in both languages and I find no difficulty in working in them; the second reason is to avoid incomplete or incorrect recollections resulting from translation. The gaps and incommensurabilities of translation are widely studied (De Pedro Ricoy, 2017; Trisos et

al., 2021). Additionally, throughout this dissertation, information collected in Spanish is mostly presented translated to English, except in chapter seven where it is presented in its original language with an additional translation to English. The English translations, especially in chapter seven, may not fully capture the sentiments expressed by my participants in Spanish. I find it crucial to bear in mind that a perfect translation may be impossible, and I discuss more on this in chapter seven. Presenting information in its original language is both a political and methodological stance. While Spanish in Peru is the language imposed by the colonial power, further translation into English and into academic writing additionally subsumes the experiences relayed to me to the hold of imperialism in academia (L. T. Smith, 2012). Therefore, I seek to leave at least part of this research in its original language to honour and give justice to it.

In the following sections I first introduce my positionality. This is followed by the methods I used to explore three aspects of CWT action in Peru: following the influence (section 4.3), mapping CWT programmes (4.4), and engaging with wildlife (4.6). These relate, respectively, to analysis of international conferences (chapter five), the convergence of the international and the Peruvian context (chapter six), and its convergence in local markets (chapter seven). However, these aspects are not discrete nor are they steps that follow cleanly from one another, they exist in constant states of influence and co-production as they change and are changed by discourses and action. As such, the sections below are also not discrete and subsequent steps but inform and cut across each other to reveal a larger picture. Lastly, I present my methodology for analysis, namely the use of inductive and deductive coding and critical discourse analysis.

## 4.2. Positionality

I bring these approaches into conversation through my own experience in the world of funding, nongovernmental organisations, and conservation and environmental

programmes. Like other research on conservation NGOs and programmes (Larsen, 2018; Ruysschaert & Salles, 2018), my research is informed by my own personal experience of working in NGOs in the monitoring and management of environmental programmes, mostly conservation programmes in Peru, for five years. I worked in the management and monitoring of a national park in Peru, of a regional CWT programme in South America and of a national programme for green growth in Peru, among others, in both national and international organisations.

I fall differently within the insider-outsider spectrum, as Bandauko (2024) names it, in each part of my research (Philo et al., 2021). Having worked in conservation and environmental programmes for over five years, I am a partial insider to the national and international conservation sector. Being familiar to its structures and networks and having a deep understanding of the day-to-day experiences of its work, though no longer being employed in it, facilitated my research. Moreover, being from Lima, Peru, and having lived there for the first 30 years of my life, I have partial shared experiences and cultural background with my Limeño interviewees. Nonetheless, I also have a partial outsider position in Iquitos, where I share the language and broad national history and culture, but I had never visited before, so I was unfamiliar with the specific local context.

This all is also affected by my middle-class background and higher-education profile, which positions me in high-regard and as an authority figure in most Peruvian settings. As Bandauko, I was regarded as a Peruvian national who was "doing research to better the lives of [her] own people" (Bandauko, 2024, p. 5). Who the "people" in question are and which interests I served, was an open question to everyone involved. It seemed to me that every different group I talked to (NGOs, state authorities, market frequenters) embraced me as one of their own and assumed my research would benefit them. Moreover, it seemed to me that my position as a highly educated young woman allowed me to present myself as non-threatening to interviewees and, as such, trustworthy. These intersections of my identity facilitated parts of my research, such as access to interviewees, while also making other parts difficult, like experiencing harassment.

I, however, disagree with Bandauko in that "outsider perspective[s], stemming from distinct backgrounds or experiences, affords [outsider researchers] a critical lens to objectively analyse the phenomena at hand" (2024, 2). Through this positionality statement, I do not seek to “uphold the existing academic culture of narcissism” (Gani & Khan, 2024, p. 8) nor “reassert ethnographic authority” (ibid, p. 9). Instead, I present them as reflections and limitations (Horton, 2021). I believe my outsider perspectives provide me with other experiences to contrast and analyse research contexts, without making these lens more objective or “true”.

## 4.3. Following the influence

“Follow the influence” is based on “follow the thing” methodologies and it corresponds primarily to my findings in chapter five. As conferences and events are spaces where discourses are negotiated and transformed, I followed the discourses and influence in international conferences through event ethnography (Davies et al., 2015; Hammersley, 2007), which allowed me to “ask how meaning around a specific topic or issue is made, contested, negotiated, and eventually traded off at these sites” (Marion Suiseeya & Zanotti, 2023). Following calls from scholars to discuss CITES and other wildlife trade conferences as spaces for “institutional and transnational geo-politics and multi-scalar institutional and illegal processes” (Hobson, 2007, p. 264), I attended available events and side-events related to Peru and Latin America/Abya Yala at two conferences to gather further information on discourses and donor relationships (Masse et al., 2020). I attended the 2nd High-Level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas (Colombia, 5-6$^{th}$ April 2022) and the 19$^{th}$ CITES CoP (Panama, 14-25$^{th}$ November 2022) as an observer (table 1). These conferences are the two large-scale international decision-making spaces dedicated to global wildlife trade and their events are infrequent (parties and countries come together every two to three years), though due to the COVID-19 pandemic there were two events during the period of my thesis

research. Studying these two conferences together allows me to trace the discourses that are transferred from one to the other, as well as who transfers them and how (Corson et al., 2019; Dempsey, 2016).

As a methodology, ethnography is used to "understand the social meanings and activities of people in a given 'field' or setting" through "association with, and often participation in, this setting" (Brewer, 2000, p. 11). I borrow from methods such as event ethnography and collaborative event ethnography that have been widely used to study the discursive and material implications of conferences for global environmental governance (Campbell et al., 2014; Corson et al., 2019). Collaborative event ethnography seeks to examine "how actors who are normally dispersed in time and space come together at international conferences to facilitate, structure, and disseminate conservation paradigm shifts" (Corson et al., 2019, p. 57). It usually involves a team of researchers who attend one or several events, typically international conferences, and collaboratively gather data and reflect on it (Campbell et al., 2014; Duffy, 2014b; Peter Brosius & Campbell, 2010). However, since I was attending the conferences alone, I had to scale down my scope. The number of events included in the analysis is not as important for the event ethnography methodology, rather focusing on a deep analysis of how such events bring together actors who seek to influence the governance of nature and which discourses are ultimately accepted and repeated within other events and elsewhere (Campbell et al., 2014; MacDonald, 2010a; MacDonald & Corson, 2012). Drawing from Massé et al.'s (2020) research at the 2018 IWT Conference in London, I focused on a set of questions to explore the ways in which illegal wild animal trade and CWT action is negotiated and governed between non-state actors, donors, and governments. These questions were:

1. Who is allowed to participate in the meetings and shape decisions?
2. How is illegal wild animal trade and its solutions framed in these spaces and by whom?
3. What are the impacts or implications of these framings and decision-making structures at different levels and for different actors?

Table 1. Conferences attended.

| Name of conference | Dates | Location | Attendance |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2nd High-Level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas | 5th to 6th April 2022 | Cartagena, Colombia | Online, through streamed videos |
| 19th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora | 14th to 25th November 2022 | Ciudad de Panama, Panama | In person, as a student observer |

The 2nd High-Level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas was hosted in Cartagena, Colombia, on the 5th and 6th of April 2022. Due to the conference expecting mostly high-level officials from the region, and because of COVID-19 precautions, it was closed for in-person observers. However, most of the Conference was streamed on the Colombian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development's YouTube channel. I gathered the official Conference programme and other official event documents and watched the Conference's streamed videos, taking detailed notes as my main data for online event ethnography (Schulte-Römer & Gesing, 2023). For this conference I was better able to produce verbatim quotes from participants, as I could take the time to listen carefully and make sure I captured exact wording. The streamed videos amounted to a total of 29 hours of content, divided in two Conference rooms. As such, I can only analyse what was officially shown in these livestreams (Hammersley, 2007; Schulte-Römer & Gesing, 2023), which were the official presentations in those main conference rooms as well as the questions and discussions.

The 19th CITES CoP was hosted between the 14th and 25th of November in the Panama Convention Center in Panama City, Panama. I was able to attend the event in person as a student observer for the duration of the whole event. Due to how large this event was, in addition to the questions introduced before, I prioritised meetings and events that involved (1) decisions on wild animals prioritised by the Peruvian government, (2) funding schemes and grants, and (3) the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities into CITES or discussions about livelihoods. For this, I attended the conference all days from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm, attending meetings and side events at most time slots. For this conference I also gathered the official programme and

documents and took detailed notes of the event, though such fieldnotes are less detailed and the exact language was more challenging.

## 4.4. Mapping counter wildlife trafficking programmes

This section relates to my findings in chapter six. My journey of unravelling the picture of current action against the illegal wildlife trade in Peru takes as a starting point the Estrategia Nacional para Reducir el Tráfico Ilegal de Fauna Silvestre en el Perú (National Strategy for Reducing Illegal Wild Fauna Trafficking in Peru) for the 2017-2027 period and its 2017-2022 Action Plan. This document details what is meant by "wild fauna" and "trafficking" within government policy frameworks and priorities and situates the Servicio Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (SERFOR) in charge of implementation and monitoring. My research, then, focuses on the same definition of "wild fauna," and on what lies outside its limits and why, and the action mobilised around the work under SERFOR's responsibility. Using the National Strategy and the Ley Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre as starting points, I traced related legal and institutional frameworks through those policies and using the Sistema Peruano de Información Jurídica (Peruvian Judicial Information System, SPIJ). The SPIJ is an online database of national policies, offering free access to most Peruvian legislation from 1904 on, though it has some limits. However, all current policies on wild animal management were free to access, so I did not find any difficulties regarding access.

During March 2022, I accessed SERFOR's institutional website and downloaded all 303 documents labelled "reports and publications" published between January 2012 to February 2022 (figure 1). I read the documents to evaluate if they communicated views on wildlife trade. The documents not related to wildlife trade were deleted, leaving 84 documents. Most documents online were administrative documents such as formats, permits and interinstitutional agreements, which were not included in the sample. From them, 14 documents referred specifically to the management, trade, and conservation

of animals and 38 documents referred to forests and plants, including timber and non-timber species. All 14 documents about animals were analysed through thematic analysis, though only three were dedicated specifically to wild animal trade (Appendix I).

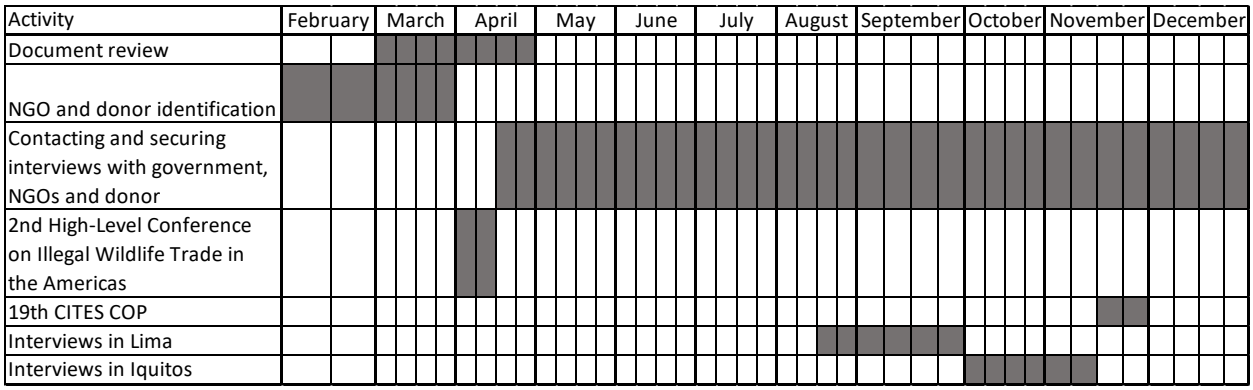


Figure 1. Gantt chart of data collection during 2022.

Between February and March 2022, I identified NGOs that influence or inform the work on tackling wild animal trade done by SERFOR, through the documents collected before, SERFOR's Facebook page and SERFOR's news website. From them, I contacted personnel from government authorities and NGOs linked to CWT action in Peru through emails, especially ones who receive funding from donors. Further interviewees were identified by snowball sampling. Between May and September 2022, I carried out semi-structured interviews with professionals working in CWT action in Peru to understand the discourses underpinning their work and the way they shape programme implementation and the relationships with donors, government, and the public (Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson, 2015; Moreto, 2015). Altogether, between June 2022 and January 2023 I carried out 18 interviews in total: four interviews with Peruvian government officers (two from the central government and two from the Loreto Regional Government), 13 interviews with NGO professionals from seven different organisations (WCS, DAI, DAR, SPDA, Panthera, IFAW, NPC), and one with a representative from a funding agency (table 2). Further interviews were scheduled with government authorities, but they were cancelled and rescheduled many times until they did not take place. Most interviews were carried out online (17) while one was carried out in person in Lima. They lasted between one to two

hours, according to participants' availability and their willingness. All interviews were held in Spanish as it was the native language of all interviewees. All interviewees were provided a copy of my Participant Information Sheet (Appendix II) in Spanish previous to the interview and were given a chance to ask questions.

Table 2. Number of interviews by category and institution.

| Number of interviews | Category | Institution |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Government | SERFOR, OSINFOR, Loreto Regional Government |
| 13 | NGO | WCS, DAI, DAR, SPDA, Panthera, IFAW, NPC |
| 1 | Donor | Anonymous |

I also identified donors linked to SERFOR's CWT work from published documents, news articles, websites and from the interviews held with conservation professionals. From the analysis done on SERFOR documents related to wild animal use, 7 donors were identified as supporting the development of the documents: KfW Development Bank, United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), European Commission (EC), CAF – Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, government of Finland, United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (US-INL), and the Comunidad Andina de Naciones through its BioCAN programme. However, from the initial identification of NGOs, several other donors were identified as supporting their CWT programmes and their broader work such as: USAID, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), and the Walton Family Foundation, among others. During May and July 2022, I contacted donor agencies and carried out one semi-structured interview with a representative of a donor institution for perspectives underpinning their funding (Duffy, 2022a; Massé & Margulies, 2020). The donor agency cannot be named because it would breach the anonymity of the interviewee. Other donor agencies were contacted but were reluctant to participate in my research citing diplomacy reasons. Further information about donor relations and priorities were triangulated from interviews with other actors and public information online.

Reflecting on the limitations of my methodology (Hitchings & Latham, 2021), failing to secure more interviews with government officers and donor representatives meant that the analysis for chapter six focused on legal and institutional frameworks, rather than on the personal experiences and perspectives of state employees. This forced me to explore in more depth the structural conditions that shape CWT action, but it difficulted triangulation with the plentiful information provided by non-state CWT programmes. In looking at legal and institutional frameworks as well as interviews with professionals, I seek to follow Larner and Laurie (2010) in "combining and comparing publicly accessible materials with the more private stories that make up personal biographies and careers."

It is also important to note that, having worked in conservation in Peru, the organisations I focused on, the events I attended, and the people I interviewed were not unknown to me. As I will mention later, in 2019 I contributed to organise and then attended the I High-Level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas, while also organising side-events for the 18th CITES CoP in Geneva, which I did not attend. Moreover, some of the people I interviewed I met years before starting this research, while some used to be my colleagues and others were people I knew worked within the sector. This is to say that I do not fit the role of a researcher who "parachutes" within a certain site and looks at it as a "new" context (Hitchings & Latham, 2020). Conservation in Peru has been my career for a long time and the specificities of the sector are very well-known to me. I have first-hand experiences and knowledge beyond what was explicitly gathered during data collection and some of my interviewees often viewed me as an "insider" and did not feel the need to explain everything to me, assuming I already understand.

## 4.5. Engaging with wildlife

The third aspect of CWT action I explored are some everyday spaces where CWT action aims to leave its mark: markets where wild animals are sold. These methods

correspond to the data presented in chapter seven. Most research at wildlife markets in Peru focuses on wildlife surveys (D'Cruze et al., 2021; Mendoza et al., 2022), while the everyday perceptions and understandings of people visiting or working on these markets remain understudied (Leberatto, 2016, 2017; Moorhouse et al., 2023, 2024). In some markets in Peru, people often buy and sell wildlife species and their parts or products openly (Gastañaga et al., 2011; Leberatto, 2016; Mayor et al., 2019; N. Shanee et al., 2017), which makes possible an analysis of their views on wildlife trade.

Between August to December 2022, I approached participants at three of the main wildlife markets in Peru: the Central market in Lima and the Belen and Modelo markets in Iquitos (figure 2). These three markets were chosen because they are routinely identified as the main wildlife markets in Peru (Mayor et al., 2022), mentioned in the National Strategy and in research (Bodmer et al., 2004; D'Cruze et al., 2021; Mendoza et al., 2022). I carried out short semi-structured interviews with people visiting or working in the markets (van Vliet et al., 2014). These interviews aimed to collect data on everyday understandings of or engagements with wild animals and IWT in Peru, as well as their knowledge and perceptions on CWT actions and actors.

Fieldwork in the Central market in Lima was carried out between August and September 2022. Fieldwork was carried out in the Belen and Modelo markets in Iquitos during October and November 2022. During my fieldwork, I visited the markets 3-4 days a week, including weekends. I mostly visited the markets during the morning, between 9 am and 2 pm, since sellers often close their stalls and leave before lunchtime. In Lima I stayed during the afternoon until 5 pm because the market remains open until later.

Interviews varied in time duration, according to participants' willingness to share their views, time availability, or their knowledge on the topics. The first two visits to each market I did not approach participants, I only walked around the market getting acquainted with the space and dynamics. During these months of fieldwork in markets, I kept a fieldwork diary where I registered fieldnotes of situations I observed or which I found interesting because of the way they complemented or informed the data collected through interviews (Hitchings & Latham, 2020). I presented these notes in the form of ethnographic vignettes in section 7.3.


Figure 2. Map of Peru. In red, the cities where market field sites are located.

Altogether, 72 interviews were conducted in markets: 29 in the Central market, 21 in the Belen market and 22 in Modelo. Interviews lasted between 4 minutes (around five interviews) to approximately 90 minutes (around four interviews), though most interviews lasted 8 to 10 minutes. These fast interviews allowed me to get first impressions and reactions to my questions, though not all interviewees wanted to dive deep into their reflections on each topic discussed. Almost 75% of my interviewees were identified as

women, while the rest were identified as men. In the Central and Belen market women made around 55-60% of the interview pool, while in the Modelo market they made up 76% of interviewees. I believe this bias towards women reflects the makeup of the market, since it is a place devoted to activities related to the domestic sphere. Moreover, almost 80% of my interviewees were in the market working instead of visiting. It was easier to secure interviews with people who were working in the markets since they mostly stayed in the same place throughout the day and were in no rush to leave the market. I did not interview anyone actively trading wild animals to my knowledge, nor did I attempt to.

I described all ethical information to participants before each interview and offered participant information sheets, though many did not take them. Interviews were recorded with an audio recorder if interviewees consented (57 interviews). If they did not consent to be recorded, I asked for consent for taking detailed handwritten notes (15 interviews). I approached all interviewees in Spanish and all interviews were held in Spanish, no one I approached mentioned declining being interviewed because of language. No deception was employed in the study, as all interviewees were aware of the purpose of the investigation. Interviews were then transcribed and anonymised using codes. In order to protect participants' confidentiality, I connected them to the markets or cities where I interviewed them.

It is important to note that these interviews did not mean to only target people who are directly involved with the wildlife trade, nor did they mean to collect data on the exact processes, methodologies, strategies, or dynamics of the illegal wild animal trade in Peru. Since a lot of the trade in wild animals in Peru is opportunistic (Leberatto, 2016), the people I interviewed might have participated before or might still participate in the illegal wildlife trade in different ways, even as silent bystanders who do not report what they see to the authorities, but I had no way of knowing this and I did not ask about it directly. The main purpose of these interviews was to explore how people who see the use and trade of wild animals or frequent places where wild animals are traded perceive, understand, or experience wild animals and their use and trade. This was done to explore the ways these perceptions coincide or differ from the discourses mobilised in counter wildlife trafficking action. Due to this, my interview questions focused on people's

perspectives on wild animals, their use, and their protection. Moreover, there are ethical risks and concerns related to interviewing people directly engaging in criminal activities or asking participants questions directly related to their involvement in criminal activities.

Interviewing people on topics related to illegal activities was no easy task in one of my field sites. The heavy policing in the Central market seems to have made people more cautious and suspicious of strangers. After several weeks of interviews in the market, regular vendors recognised me and looked at me with suspicion. On one occasion, I approached a group of people inside a galería (an indoors space with several small stores, like a small shopping mall) asking if they would agree to be interviewed. One person in the group told me they could not respond to my questions "because the owner [of the galería] does not allow it". That was a major challenge since people working in the galerías or (illegal) pet vendors were less likely to agree to participate in my research. Due to the topic of my project, the people who agreed to talk to me were likely the ones who felt they had nothing to hide or were not engaging in illegal activities. People who possibly participated in illegal trade or were more aware of wild animal trafficking in the market could have refused to participate in my research due to fears of being exposed (Leberatto, 2016). However, since I did not interview nor attempted to interview anyone actively selling wild animals, I do not believe this significantly limits my findings because my research is aimed at understanding public perceptions about wild animals and their use in markets. This was not a problem I encountered in Iquitos.

## 4.6. Weaving the picture of CWT action

### 4.6.1. Thematic analysis

I used critical discourse analysis to understand the ways discourses related to IWT are interrelated with material processes and structures, as it deals "primarily with

the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 252). To prepare my data and bring my various sources of information together I applied a thematic data analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). I used the software NVivo 12 for coding all the texts, interviews and fieldnotes. To do this, I used a combination of inductive and deductive coding approaches (Boyatzis, 1998). I used a deductive coding approach for CWT strategies (Boyatzis, 1998), which were coded according to the IWT intervention categories developed by the World Bank (2016) and explained by Massé and Margulies (2020) (table 3). This was done to allow for comparisons with the literature on the expansion and impact of CWT within conservation. The rest of my data was coded using an inductive coding approach (Boyatzis, 1998), finding emergent topics through the careful reading of the texts, interviews, and notes, and using constant comparison and recoding to capture the trends and discourses (V. Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Table 3. IWT intervention categories developed by the World Bank (2016), as explained by Massé and Margulies (2020).

| **Code** | **Description** |
|---|---|
| 1. IWT intervention | IWT-intervention categories developed by the World Bank (2016), described by Masse and Margulies (2020). |
| 1.1. Policy and legislation (PL) development | Inter-sectoral policies and regulatory frameworks that incorporate wildlife conservation and management considerations; strengthening laws and customs/trade facilitation process. |
| 1.2. Law enforcement (LE) | Coordination mechanisms and establishment of operational units, intelligence-led operations, and transnational law enforcement coordination to tackle higher-level operatives; increased capacity of customs officials, transportation, and detection technologies. |
| 1.3. Protected area (PA) management to prevent poaching | Protection of natural habitats for species; on the ground support to PAs to address poaching (i.e., rangers, equipment etc.); investments to increase community, private, and state reserves and surrounding areas protected forests under land use |

| | |
|---|---|
| | policies that mitigate wildlife poaching and promote wildlife management best practices. |
| 1.4. Communications and awareness (CA) to raise IWT awareness and reduce demand for illegal wildlife products | Outreach and communications efforts to raise awareness and reduce demand across range, transit, and end-use countries demand reduction efforts and campaigns to increase awareness, change consumer behaviour toward consumption of illegal wildlife products, and reduce market participants in the illegal trade. |
| 1.5. Promotion of sustainable use and alternative livelihoods (SL) to increase community benefits and avoid human-wildlife conflict | Incentives for communities to live with and manage wildlife and to avoid human-wildlife conflict; income derived from wildlife management in support of sustainable development and integrated natural resource management practices; alternative legal livelihoods to those involved in the illegal trade. |
| 1.6. Research and assessment (RA) | Decisions support tools, research, analysis, databases, stakeholder coordination, knowledge management, and monitoring. |

Through the coding process, I initially created descriptive codes, which represented the various themes that emerged in my data. As I kept coding and more clear themes emerged, I started re-reading the text, grouping the codes, renaming the codes, and recoding the text if necessary. Naturally, the codes that emerged for the different groups of data were different (i.e. between conservation professionals and people interviewed at markets), but I tried to keep similar language to allow for comparison. Once all of my data was coded, I further read through it to make connections between themes, actors, and spaces using critical discourse analysis.

### 4.6.2. Critical discourse analysis

As a methodology for analysis, critical discourse analysis "examines critically the relationship between language, ideology, power and social structure" (Catalano & Waugh, 2020). This method of analysis is ideal for my research because it places attention to how material relations imbue discourses with power, as well as to how discourses affect practices (van Dijk, 1993). To "mediate between communication and

structure" (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p. 9), I use a post-structural Foucaldian understanding of discourse, meaning that throughout my research I understand discourse as a system that produces meaning within a specific episteme (Foucault, 1972). This system is subject to rules and categories that are produced and reiterated to produce meaning in ways that produce truths seen as objective within the system (Foucault, 1972), "so discourse enters into and influences all social practices" (Hall, 2018, p. 155). Given that communication, narratives, or framings reproduce the discursive system, they both emerge from the rules of the system and reinforce the conditions for the system (Hall, 2018). Therefore, discourse is productive because as it produces knowledge (Foucault, 1980), it becomes "both the organizing factor in a system of global power relations and the organizing concept or term in a whole way of thinking and speaking" (Hall, 2018, p. 143). In this way, the production of discourse is inevitably linked to power (Foucault, 1980), since "the knowledge which a discourse produces constitutes a kind of power exercised over those who are 'known'" and "those who produce the discourse also have the power to make it true" (Hall, 2018, p. 159).

In this research I look at the discursive system to follow its formation and uncover its categories, rules, and political structures (Escobar, 1984; Foucault, 1972). In this way, I used critical discourse analysis to pay attention to "how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power" (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p. 14). By applying methods based on ethnography and critical discourse analysis (Suiseeya, 2014), I am able to acquire knowledge of the social world "from intimate familiarity with it" (Brewer, 2000, p. 11), as well as analyse "the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). As such, critical discourse analysis allowed me to approach the different forms of data I gathered (interviews, fieldnotes, conference programmes, etc.) to draw out the language used to construct framings, connecting it to who used the language, enquire on what is represented through it, in which context, and to what ends. In this way, this approach allowed me to identify how framings were linked to specific places, institutions, ontologies, and politics, and therefore how certain framings emerge and permeate as powerful and legitimate. I, therefore, evaluated, presented, and critiqued the discourses

which emerged most often, as well as the ones which were linked to other issues or effects across scales.

## 4.7. Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the methodology I used to study the geopolitical ecology of CWT programmes in Peru. I developed this "follow the influence" methodology relying on traditions in the social sciences, follow the thing and policy mobilities methodologies, as well as my personal experience in conservation practice. It further combines methodologies of ethnography, document and policy review, and interviews. This novel combination allows me to follow the influence of framings on IWT in conservation across diverse scales, actors and spaces, paying attention to concerns of power throughout.

Through these methods, I analyse how discourses on wild animals and CWT travel and transform through international conservation networks, the geopolitical actors involved in their movement, and their cosmopolitical consequences. Though I do not argue that these are decolonial methods (L. T. Smith, 2012), I believe they contribute to debates and inform approaches for decolonising conservation by engaging in epistemic disobedience and challenging colonial ontological and epistemological systems in the international conservation industry (Corbera et al., 2024; Mabele et al., 2023; W. Mignolo, 2011). In this way, I contribute to tracing some of the systems that facilitate the further marginalisation and dispossession of Indigenous, peasant, rural and local communities in international conservation (Collins et al., 2021), as well as challenge assumptions on the Nature/Culture divide present in conservation action (Lorimer, 2010; Petitpas & Bonacic, 2019).

I present and analyse my data in the three following empirical chapters which represent three scales of analysis and three field sites: international/conferences, national/state agencies and NGOs, and local/street markets. Each empirical chapter

begins with verses in Spanish from poems by Peruvian poets which exemplify sensibilities towards animals in Peruvian arts and cultures. I do not aim to fully analyse these poems within my research methods (Eshun & Madge, 2021), instead I use them to highlight that relationships between human societies and non-human animals are complex and run deep as they are embedded into everyday lives in Peru and beyond.

Chapters five and seven include ethnographic vignettes that present the context of my fieldwork sites (Hitchings & Latham, 2020): international conferences and open street markets, respectively. These vignette sections provide further embodied information about the places and situations where my research took place (Horton, 2021). They introduce concepts and perspectives that I considered key for analysing my interview data, but which were not directly or clearly expressed in interviews. They also bring further insights into my personal connections to and understandings of those spaces, informing my positionality in such settings and complicating my insider-outsider perspective (Bandauko, 2024; Philo et al., 2021). In these ways, I present a more informed view of the settings where my research took place, as well as how I am positioned within them.

The following empirical chapters are structured as academic articles, opening with an introduction and a review of the literature that was relevant to construct the theoretical and empirical arguments. These are then followed by a discussion of my empirical findings supported by examples of the data I collected. I present and critique the data that emerged most often in each distinct cluster of data gathered for each scale, as well as the findings that linked to framings or issues across scales. Mostly, I present the quotes or evidence that exemplified most clearly the most commonly reoccurring themes conveyed by participants. Occasionally, I present data that challenges or critiques the positions that most participants agree on to exemplify the variety of positions participants may take.

My empirical findings are presented in several different ways. As mentioned above, insights from my fieldwork notes are presented through ethnographic vignettes. In other sections I present direct quotes from participants, some of them are tailored for clarity. Sometimes this meant cutting words to follow the thread of the ideas conveyed

by participants in Spanish. For example, when a participant was explaining multiple ideas, and the meanings might be confusing in written form. At other points quotes were edited to give further context and do justice to the understood meanings in the English translations. In chapter six, I often edited quotes to ensure anonymity, as participants might have communicated information that could divulge their identity or organisational affiliation. On occasions, I paraphrase or do not provide direct quotes. I do this in the case of the CITES CoP, as I was taking notes while attending the event and I captured the meanings as best I could. Similarly, I paraphrase when presenting data from participants who did not agree to be recorded. When many participants mentioned similar views and the direct quotes available did not provide additional information or context about the theme conveyed, I present a summary of participant views. These ways of presenting my data ensured that the information presented was clear while efficiently supporting my arguments.

# Chapter 5

# Following the influence and making the global in international conferences

*"Esta mañana han comprado un pájaro*
*como se compra una fruta*
*un ramo de flores."*

- Acerca de la libertad, José Watanabe.

## 5.1. Introduction

How does a turtle floating lazily on a log become an object of international deliberation in a luxury convention venue? Why does a jaguar pacing around the Amazon rainforest become the rallying cry for the conservation of nature in the Americas? The answers might lie in the increasing complexity and, as I argue inequalities, of managing and conserving the environment at a global scale as different public, private and non-profit organisations seek to influence environmental governance (Corson et al., 2019). In a context of concern for multiple interlocked global environmental crises, it perhaps is no surprise that international processes and structures "discursively and materially produce global natures" (Bigger & Neimark, 2017, p. 14). This meaning that nature is produced as a global concept requiring global management and action. Thus, working to

merge a multitude of local natures into global discourses, alienating them from the repercussions of their local management for the sake of global decision-making. As the turtle is made a species crucial for the survival of a whole ecosystem, their unique relationships become blurred, obscured, and amalgamated. The turtle is now part of a discourse, but for what? Who gets to participate in the discourse? And who does it serve?

This chapter responds to calls for political ecology research to understand how IWT is framed at the international scale and its impacts on CWT action (Duffy, 2013; Masse et al., 2020; Massé & Margulies, 2020). As such, it extends the study of political ecology and geopolitical ecology by focusing on the role of large non-state actors in how international discourses on IWT unfold and are negotiated. This chapter explores two international conferences that have been largely ignored in the study of conservation governance for CWT: CITES CoPs and the High-Level Americas Conferences. I further focus on the budding context of an understudied region with its own historic, cultural and legal context, which attracts increasing interest for global CWT action: the Americas, and in Peru specifically. It is based on event ethnography at two international conferences, as described in chapter four, section 4.3. Assessing these events – who participates, what they discuss, and the agreements they reach – allows me to analyse the implications of discourses mobilised in global, regional, and then national scales (Duffy, 2013; Masse et al., 2020), as well as what they say about conservation governance and its role in wild animal trade.

Drawing from Bigger and Neimark (2017) and Massé and Margulies (2020), this chapter focuses on the study of geopolitical ecology which examines how international institutions such as donor agencies and NGOs leverage legitimacy to define, control and manage natures through CWT programmes in international conferences. As such, it investigates how discourses and strategies related to IWT are mobilised in international wildlife trade networks driving CWT action in Latin America/Abya Yala and Peru and serving to retain and secure power and legitimacy. The main argument I present is that legitimised actors mobilise accepted discourses on IWT as a conservation, security, and population threat through the structures of international conservation, justifying law enforcement action as a single response. These discourses are then received and recontextualised by powerful international actors in Latin America to increase their

legitimacy and influence within these international spheres, focusing on the Amazon as a global nature and the jaguar as a flagship species. This is done at the expense of Indigenous or local actors, who are discursively used as a justification for action but rarely allowed space for meaningful participation and decision-making. Through this, I extend the theory on geopolitical ecology by theorising large conservation non-state actors as large geopolitical institutions within international conservation networks.

This chapter proceeds by defining in more detail the theoretical frameworks I use for my analysis, namely the literature on political and geopolitical ecology of conservation, global conservation governance, and decolonial approaches. Secondly, I analyse the conferences I attended, the participants, and the topics they focus on. To build my argument, I first examine the processes and structures that mediate participation in these events and what this means for decision-making and influence. Then I identify the main discourses that seek to govern global wild animal trade mobilised during the events, how they are framed, and to which ends. After, I zoom into the discourses that guide CWT action in Latin America, and how they speak to global narratives on the IWT. I conclude this chapter by outlining how attention to international conferences in geopolitical ecology can elucidate what these spaces mean for the geopolitics of international conservation and for CWT in Peru, as well as how my findings problematise debates on decolonial conservation.

## 5.2. The geopolitical ecology of wildlife trade conferences

The negative consequences of CWT actions for conservation on targeted communities have been studied extensively at the local level, mostly in the context of anti-poaching efforts in Africa, by scholars of political ecology (Koot & Veenenbos, 2023; Massé et al., 2021) and green militarization (Lunstrum, 2014; Massé et al., 2018). Scholarship has explored the impacts of both the implementation of CWT strategies on the ground and the narratives created through these efforts (Lunstrum, 2017; Massé,

2019; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016), challenging and critiquing their approaches and success (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Duffy et al., 2015). CWT efforts in Africa and Asia have been found to facilitate the turn towards the militarisation of conservation (Duffy, 2014a, 2016; Duffy et al., 2019; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016) and the securitisation of conservation (Duffy, 2021a, 2022b; Duffy & Brockington, 2022). Moreover, they have been found to prioritise issues of crime leading to law enforcement approaches (Massé, 2022), ignoring alternative conservation issues and solutions (Gutierrez & Duffy, 2024). However, even though there is increasing interest on how efforts to tackle IWT may lead to further violence and injustice against already marginalised communities, the study of CWT actions has largely ignored Latin America (Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson, 2015), where traditions of wildlife use and trade widely persist in many places despite growing conservation action (Arias, Hinsley, Nogales-Ascarrunz, et al., 2021; Leberatto, 2016; Petitpas & Bonacic, 2019).

While political ecology has explored the local impacts of conservation, the fields of green or environmental geopolitics have studied the ways in which environmental knowledges, features and processes have been negotiated, managed, and regulated by nations and institutions around the world (Luke, 2000; O'Lear, 2020; Sundberg, 2011). Bigger and Neimark (2017) combined political ecology and critical geopolitics to coin "geopolitical ecology", to study how large geopolitical institutions discursively and materially define, control, manage and produce global natures, impacting environmental change (Belcher et al., 2020). Following from this, Massé and Margulies (2020) applied this framework to conservation, assessing how a powerful geopolitical institution, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, produces global socionatures through framings of IWT as a national security threat channelled through foreign aid. Moreover, using a political ecology approach, Duffy (2021) further explores the international dimensions of the shift to more forceful and securitised approaches in conservation, looking at how they were facilitated by the structures of global conservation and international fears of global instability (Duffy & Brockington, 2022).

The material ways in which global natures are defined, controlled, managed and produced to tackle IWT can be seen in the various multilateral agreements, conventions, laws, policies, and strategies around the world. I, however, am interested in how

discourses and framings of global natures and IWT form acceptable truths within international spheres, which then delimit the bounds for material actions to control and manage them. In following a Foucauldian understanding of discourse, I view international wildlife trade networks as systems that produce meaning within a Western modern episteme according to rules and categories that legitimise both the acceptable truths that result from them and the actors that hold power within the system (Foucault, 1972). These rules and categories allow discourses to be produced and reiterated without challenges and thus hold the status of objective truths, masking their political backgrounds (Foucault, 1980; Hall, 2018). Hence, to break free from the hold of the self-fulfilling discursive system one needs to follow the formation of the discourse in IWT and assess the rules and political structures behind it (Escobar, 1984; Foucault, 1972).

I bring this literature together with the study of global conservation governance (Campbell et al., 2014; Corson & MacDonald, 2012; MacDonald, 2010a), which focus on conferences as spaces that allow actors to come together to "facilitate, structure, and disseminate conservation paradigm shifts" (Corson et al., 2019, p. 57). In these conferences, governments, NGOs, private corporations, funding representatives, representatives of Indigenous peoples and local communities, and other legitimised actors, seek to participate in discussions and influence the governance of global natures (Campbell et al., 2014; Dempsey, 2016; Peck & Theodore, 2010). As such, conferences become paradigmatic arenas where discourses and priorities attempt to break through into material impacts through resolutions, laws, funding, or implementation, remaking and securing the legitimacy of the actors involved. Much of this research has focused on international agreements and conferences based in conservation, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity or the World Conservation Congress, and in the neoliberalisation of nature (Corson & MacDonald, 2012; D. Scott et al., 2014; Suarez & Corson, 2013). However, these studies have often neglected the increasing role of CWT in conservation, and the role of international wildlife trade meetings in shaping discourses, priorities, and the legitimacy of participants (Challender & MacMillan, 2019; Duffy, 2013; Masse et al., 2020).

Since both what is said and what is excluded provides information on the political structures behind the international wildlife trade networks I explore, I also focus my

analysis in a decolonial approach that aims to decentre the hold of Western modern systems over other ways of living (C. E. Walsh & Mignolo, 2018). Therefore, I borrow from the field of political ontology which studies "the conflicts that ensue as different worlds or ontologies strive to sustain their own existence as they interact and mingle with each other" (Blaser, 2009a, p. 877, 2009b; Escobar, 2015). As such, I identify international wildlife trade spheres as part of a Western modern ontology and refer as alternative ontologies to ontologies that do not consider a linear progression in time, do not make an ontological distinction between nature and culture, or do not categorise difference hierarchically but enact a different relationality between beings, nature, and place (Blaser, 2009a, 2010; Merino, 2016). Paying attention to Abya Yala through a decolonial approach, then, serves to forefront the tensions between discourses on participation or decoloniality, and the institutional structures that allow -or not- those discourses to materialise (Escobar, 1984, 1998; C. E. Walsh & Mignolo, 2018). Here, I want to make a note. Throughout this chapter I use the term "IPLC", which is an acronym for "Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities". I use this acronym because it is widely used in the conservation sector and in the conferences I attended (Cooney & Booker, 2018; Dawson et al., 2024; ICCA Consortium, 2023), thus I explore their discourses within their language. However, I recognise that it conflates various groups of people within one simple category, disregarding distinct identities and relations which make them unique. Elsewhere in my thesis I use the longer description of "Indigenous peoples, peasant, rural, or local communities."

The conferences I attended, though separated by space and time, serve as landing sites for the continual co-development and unfolding of international discourses and practices regarding the trade of wild animals as global natures, with material impacts on CWT actions in the places where wildlife is used and traded. In bringing together these different literatures I aim to explore the political and geopolitical ecology of conservation through international wildlife trade conferences, and what this means for counter wildlife trafficking action in Latin America/Abya Yala and Peru. Particularly, I extend the study of geopolitical ecology by arguing that international non-state actors can be considered large geopolitical actors within these spaces. This emphasises the importance of paying attention to how the structures of international conferences, as

sites where discourse is reiterated, produce recontextualised framings of global natures posing challenges to a decolonial conservation governance.

## 5.3. Attending the conferences

The II High-level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas (II IWT Conference) was held in the city of Cartagena, Colombia, on the 5th and 6th of April 2022. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was postponed and then held partly online. I could not attend in person, but I imagine what it might have felt like to be there since I worked in the organisation of, and then attended, the first IWT Conference in the Americas while working for one of the NGOs funding and supporting the event. The first IWT Conference was held in a luxury hotel in Lima, Peru, in October 2019 and led to the signing of the Lima Declaration. Similarly, the II IWT Conference was held in the luxury Hotel Charleston Santa Teresa, organised by the Colombian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Cartagena Municipality, with funding and support from the UK Government and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). For two days, mainly high-level representatives of governments and international organisations from the Americas and beyond attended the 15 panel events and 8 side events, and mingled in hotel halls. A few representatives from Indigenous peoples or local communities (IPLC) and private corporations were also in attendance. Both the topics of the panel events and the guest list were prepared by the organisers, which in my experience means that it was a mix of what is considered of interest by them and their supporters and funders. While attending online only allowed me to see what was being broadcasted, I was able to write very detailed notes and directly transcribe quotes from speakers.

Image 1. Committee meeting at the 19th CoP.

I attended the 19th CITES CoP (19th CoP) in person as a student observer from the 14th to the 25th of November 2022, in the highly technified Panama Convention Centre in Panama City. It was organised by the CITES Secretariat and the government of Panama, focusing on being the "Americas CoP" and portraying charismatic animals in its logo: the jaguar, crystal frog, hammer shark and quetzal. The week before I had been interviewing people in Iquitos, so when arriving at the convention centre I was surprised to see the area heavily guarded, having to pass through three security checkpoints to enter the event. Walking around the expansive halls with blasting air conditioning, I watched smartly dressed attendants hurry to the committee and group meetings, plenaries and 119 side events (image 1). Representatives of the parties, as well as observers including NGOs, intergovernmental organisations (IGOs), private businesses, representatives of IPLC, and researchers from all around the world took their seats in the

carefully organised rooms. These meetings and plenaries were prepared and proposed by the CITES Secretariat and parties in advance, to be then debated and voted on during the CoP event (Challender & MacMillan, 2019). On the other hand, side-events were proposed by registered CoP participants, and then the Secretariat decided on which events were accepted according to time or space availability. As a student observer I was allowed to sit at any open events and meetings to listen but not participate or take the floor. At side events, I was able to ask questions.

It is important to note the similarities and differences between these conferences. The High-level Conferences on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas were a commitment made during the 2018 London IWT Conference, in order to boost government cooperation for tackling IWT and increase awareness of IWT in the continent (Masse et al., 2020). Additionally, the II IWT Conference was positioned as a regional preamble for the 19$^{th}$ CoP, even when the first focuses specifically on illegal trade, while the latter focuses on legal international trade. Due to this, the II IWT Conference highlighted topics of interest on illegal wildlife trade at all scales specifically for the Americas, deliberately chosen by the organisers. CITES CoPs focus on legal international wildlife trade and are much larger in number of attendees, broader in geographic scope and more structured in their protocols and discussions. Some topics were similar between conferences which was not surprising considering that many speakers and participants attended both events, but also because they point to trends in priorities and framings on wildlife trade.

## 5.4. Who makes decisions?

Multilateral agreements and intergovernmental conferences are based on the participation of states and focus on their ability to govern their nation's territories, and in conservation there has always been heavy participation of non-state actors in direct or indirect ways (Corson et al., 2019). Furthermore, as arenas for the co-production and legitimation of discourses, these conferences are prescribed by procedures that shape

the acceptable truths within their order (Foucault, 1972). A significant part of these procedures are the ones that control participation and decision-making since they enable the viewpoints and positionalities that will define discussions. By looking at who is allowed space in these events, and how they can participate, we view glimpses of the political rationales behind the definition of IWT and CWT in these arenas.

### 5.4.1. Attendance and participation

The two conferences I attended have different avenues for participation. Participants for the Americas IWT Conferences are chosen and invited by the organisers, prioritising the attendance of high-level government representatives from environmental agencies, the judicial system or law enforcement from countries in the region, and representatives from international organisations, private businesses and IPLC. On the other hand, participants at CITES CoPs are delegations from parties to the Convention and observers who request entry to the event from either their national parties or the Secretariat (CITES, 2021a). Only parties have voting rights and they have a vote each, while observers might request to speak or hold side-events.

The Peruvian government participated in both conferences. At the II IWT Conference, representatives of the Peruvian government were officials from SERFOR and two public prosecutors. One congressman was also invited as a panellist at a side-event on the inclusion of IWT within the organised crime law in Peru. At CITES, Peruvian representatives were from SERFOR and the Ministry of the Environment (MINAM). No representatives from Indigenous peoples or grassroots organisations from Peru participated in either conference, but many representatives were present from Peruvian programmes of international organisations. From this it is clear that these arenas for discussing wildlife trade privilege viewpoints from national governments and international organisations, and less so other non-state actors.

Being allowed entry to these conferences is, however, not enough to determine an actor's capacity to influence decision-making within international conservation governance according to their own priorities. Throughout the 19$^{th}$ CoP, it became

apparent that several African delegations were frustrated by the discussions and decisions regarding their proposals. This feeling was reflected in an amendment to the rights to vote at CoPs (rule 26) proposed by Botswana and Zimbabwe, claiming "countries without significant populations of species are determining the voting outcomes on issues whose impacts do not affect them in any way, yet burdensome on parties with significant populations" (CoP19 Doc. 4.2 – p. 1). The delegation from Eswatini even said, "allow Africa to look after our wildlife as we see fit" (fieldnotes, CITES CoP). These interventions suggest that African parties perceive their positions on wildlife trade to be disregarded in the face of huge international interest in the conservation of their local natures, which is a more acceptable discourse within these conservation networks. This evidences how the framing of global natures within international agreements blurs the burdens of conservation efforts at different scales, producing what Simpson and Pizarro Choy (2023) refer to as a scalar tension, with foreign or powerful actors deciding strategies perceived as inappropriate or unjust at national or local levels (Challender & MacMillan, 2019; Duffy, 2013).

Influencing decision-making in conferences is not limited to an actor's ability to cast votes or speak publicly. Publicity, media support and support from powerful parties means that decisions for or against specific topics may become "unrealistic options for many parties" (Challender & MacMillan, 2019, p. 107). At the 19$^{th}$ COP, the support for the listing of 60 shark species (CoP19 Prop. 37) gathered substantial support from some parties, observers, and media, as evidenced by the extensive media coverage at the time and the multiple side-events related to the proposal. Inside the convention centre, people wearing shark costumes offered flyers promoting the proposition while the event held five side-events dedicated to sharks. Still, during the proposal debate many parties raised concerns about it meeting scientific criteria, but most importantly about their administrative abilities to manage the processes needed for trading within Appendix II such as preparing harvest plans, customs checks, monitoring, and reporting to the Convention. Failing to meet such requirements can result in suspension from CITES, and parties would rather vote against a popular proposal than face sanctions for not having the resources or capacity to follow through (Challender & MacMillan, 2019). This complex co-production and debate of global framings on nature in international

conferences expands understandings of geopolitical ecology since it evidences how concerns about local or national implementation are blurred within international decision-making. Support from powerful actors can lead to the redistribution of legitimised discourses about "global natures" with little concern about the realities of their local implementation, and disregarding experiences that might challenge such broadly accepted truths.

### 5.4.2. Placing non-state actors in the conferences

Even though both conferences were meant to host primarily state representatives, many NGOs and IGOs were in attendance, organising side-events, and credited for implementing and supporting CWT programmes (Challender & MacMillan, 2019; Duffy, 2013). Several conservation, animal welfare, crime prevention, and development international organisations were present at both conferences such as WWF, WCS, International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), and UNODC. Other non-state attendants included the Pet Advocacy Network and the Association of Musical Instruments at CITES, and financial and transport companies at the II IWT Conference. However, very few representatives from Indigenous, local community or grassroots groups were present at either conference. Although vendors offered souvenirs and regional art at the CITES CoP venue, almost none were invited in decision-making procedures or as speakers. Looking at the avenues for participation of non-state actors allows for an analysis of what positionalities are prioritised and legitimised within such arenas.

The attendance structures of international conferences make it so that significant financial resources are needed to attend, limiting participation. This is why some CWT programmes pay for state participants' travel costs, such as the international NGO Panthera supporting the attendance of Peruvian public prosecutors to the II IWT Conference. Support such as this serves to cement viewpoints and alliances, since the selected participants must be already invited to the conference and have good relationships with their funders. Furthermore, some international non-state actors may

have significantly more resources to participate in such spaces. At the 19th CoP, some observer delegations were more numerous than most countries' delegations. For example, looking at the participant list, international NGOs such as WWF registered 25 participants and TRAFFIC, 28; while country delegations varied from one participant in the cases of Nicaragua or El Salvador, and 39 from South Africa or 49 from USA. More registered participants do not necessarily mean delegations have more influence, since participation processes are strict, but economic resources and previous alliances with other participants further the legitimacy of institutions within these spaces, allowing actors to be part of discussions and set the agenda.

Attending an international conference can be a pricey and administratively complex endeavour for non-state actors. For CITES CoPs, observers must first be approved by their national party's CITES Management Authority and then go through the CITES Secretariat accreditation process, providing documents and paying a fee of USD$600 for the first participant and USD$300 for each additional participant. I am not aware of participation fees for the Americas IWT Conferences, but the guests were selected by the organisers. Visa, travel, and accommodation costs for the duration of the conference also drive-up prices. For this considerable investment, all the while not being allowed to participate fully (no voting rights and potentially no speaking time), organisations or groups with limited funding must assess carefully which events they will attend. To complicate this matter, it is important to consider that the 19th CITES CoP had a week of overlap with the 27th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change CoP in Egypt and the 15th Convention on Biological Diversity CoP was to be held in Canada ten days after. This means that groups must prioritise which environmental events to attend, and other CoPs often attract more attention than CITES.

The II IWT Conference was particularly interesting in its inclusion of non-state actors. While unsurprisingly international NGOs such as WCS and IFAW dominated the speaking time, only a few representatives from IPLC spoke at two events. On the other hand, many representatives of private businesses spoke at a variety of events such as two side-events about the creative and fashion industries, and two panel events about the financial and transport sectors. These private actors were representatives of fashion labels, airlines, airport corporations, banks, internet marketplaces, among others.

However, their inclusion was different from the participation of private actors described in the study of neoliberal conservation, where actors are included in conservation as profiters or co-managers (Apostolopoulou et al., 2021; Büscher et al., 2012). These new actors were not encouraged to participate in the marketisation of nature, but in its securitisation to stop its commercialisation. For example, an event organised with banks highlighted their involvement on identifying and tracing laundered finances related to IWT. They were not included as facilitators or profiteers, but as informants urged to conduct surveillance within their sectors and act as aids in law enforcement efforts for the investigation and reporting of IWT for its sanctioning. This evidences the further involvement of non-state actors in the securitisation of IWT (Duffy, 2022b; Duffy & Brockington, 2022), framing it as a serious organised crime (Masse et al., 2020), as I discuss later.

Non-state actors may not always have methods for directly deciding outcomes within these state-centred arenas, but there are other routes for them to influence decisions. While observers do not have voting rights at CITES, they are allowed to speak at discussions, though parties take precedence. Furthermore, in my experience working for conservation organisations, individuals or NGOs that work closely with or have connections in state institutions may support drafting their proposals or positions before conferences (Challender & MacMillan, 2019). For example, the Peruvian delegation thanked WCS during a CITES side-event for helping them develop the proposal for listing matamata turtles. Moreover, at the II IWT Conference many of the speakers were representatives of NGOs, suggesting they are viewed by the organisers as legitimate experts. Another opportunity for non-state participants to introduce or highlight topics is organising side-events. These are some ways that observers with enough resources and legitimacy can use the structures of international conferences to influence decisions, contribute to setting the agenda or capture resources (Challender & MacMillan, 2019; Corson et al., 2019). This is not to say NGOs are the only ones setting the agenda, but non-state actors are highly influential in such arenas, reiterating specific framings of issues and solutions (Corson et al., 2019; Duffy, 2013).

A key manner in which certain framings and strategies may become legitimised is through funding, since it allows donors to influence such framings. While at the 19$^{th}$ CoP

there was no donor information, the II IWT Conference was clearly funded by the UK government and UNODC. At both conferences, funding bodies were often thanked for their support, most notably the USA, Norway and UK governments; the Global Environment Facility (GEF), EU, and UNODC. Specific agencies within governments were also mentioned, providing information on prevalent framings. While some agencies clearly centre wildlife and the environment (GEF, UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, United States Fish and Wildlife Service), others usually support development programmes (UKAid, USAID). Importantly, agencies focused on crime and law enforcement were also present (UNODC, US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs). Furthermore, some funders are also parties or signatories, showing differences in influence within these arenas. This supports Massé and Margulies' (2020) argument of how geopolitical priorities are mobilised through funding, and the various ways that CWT action can be framed as a development, crime, or environmental issue by powerful actors. Moreover, it further expands their argument by showing how such funding influences international conferences, producing material impacts as the decisions made in international arenas are implemented at the local level.

It is clear that conferences on wildlife trade facilitate discussions and decision-making between states and actors legitimised within existing CWT networks (Campbell et al., 2014; Corson et al., 2019). In the conferences I attended, like many other international spaces (Campbell et al., 2014; Fletcher, 2014; Masse et al., 2020), well connected and resourceful international organisations were able to participate in framing issues and priorities as experts and government allies. However, not all participants can influence decision-making equally since some align with dominant discourses on conservation and IWT, some states are both parties and funders, and some actors are more restricted by these agreements. Overall, IPLC were less likely to participate in these events, and thus their experiences and perspectives might be disregarded within discussions. Furthermore, some actors may be more able to influence these spaces due to resources, connections within CWT networks, or alignment with accepted discourses. As a step towards understanding how discourses are mobilised within international conservation spaces, these politics of participation

show that who can access these spaces both determines and is determined by existing structures and views of expertise and legitimacy. This raises questions about which geopolitical institutions are allowed to contribute to the positionalities that inform framings on IWT and the acceptable solutions to it.

## 5.5. Framing discourses and strategies for global natures

> *"The US has always defined illegal wildlife trade as a serious transnational crime that threatens security, undermines the rule of law, fuels corruption, supports organised criminal networks, robs communities of legitimate economic livelihoods, pushes species to the brink of extinction, and spreads disease."*

– Wildlife Conservation and Combating Wildlife Trafficking Division, U.S. Department of State, at the II IWT Conference.

### 5.5.1. The ongoing conservation and crime convergence

IWT can be understood through various framings by different actors, but scholars have noted the increasing framing of IWT as both a conservation issue and a crime (Büscher, 2018; Duffy, 2021; Masse et al., 2020; Wyatt et al., 2020). The conferences I attended continued the portrayal of IWT as a threat to nature that leads to extinction, and stopping it was highlighted as a step for ensuring the long-term conservation of species and ecosystems. Furthermore, they also focused heavily on crime, centring crime convergence and describing it as "really significant" in IWT (fieldnotes, CITES CoP), with many participants emphasizing the links between IWT and corruption, organised crime, financial crimes, and online trade. Thus, "protecting the rule of law" was also a common justification for stopping IWT. The reiteration of the discourse of IWT as an issue of crime

evidences that this framing has gained traction and legitimacy in international conferences (Masse et al., 2020), becoming a mainstream part of everyday conservation action and entrenching the securitisation of conservation (Duffy, 2022b; Duffy & Massé, 2021). At the global level, concerns for poaching in protected areas have driven the militarisation of conservation (Duffy et al., 2019), mainly in parts of Africa and Asia (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016; Trogisch, 2023).

Though framing IWT as both a conservation and a crime issue has been ongoing, some recognise the 2018 London IWT Conference as the international meeting that cemented the definition of IWT as a serious organised crime (Masse et al., 2020). Following from it, the II IWT Conference inherited and extended that framing with several speakers referring to the London Declaration for defining IWT as a "serious organised crime" and for establishing the commitments to tackle illicit financial flows and increase international cooperation as part of CWT action. Moreover, many speakers focused on how wildlife trafficking is transnational, and therefore a "global challenge" (fieldnotes, II IWT Conference), and how organised crime groups are driving IWT with the only goal of profiting. This might be true for some wildlife species in steps of their commercialisation chain, but there is not enough evidence to certify it as a blanket statement. All the above builds an overarching discourse of IWT as a *transnational, organised crime driven by profit*. As an NGO representative expressed during a side-event at the 19th CoP: "Criminal networks don't care about demand. There is no demand reduction for criminal networks, they only care about money. CITES talks too much of demand reduction" (fieldnotes, CITES CoP). This singular portrayal of IWT makes it difficult to discuss alternative solutions for domestic trade or trade with low levels of organisation or sophistication driven by a variety of reasons (Masse et al., 2020), as I discuss later. Priorities set in previous international meetings permeate national CWT action for signatories and legitimate security approaches, delimiting the acceptable local CWT actions for the signatory states.

The involvement of international institutions further entrenches these discourses since they reiterate their views and positionalities in these arenas. The continual participation of conservation organisations maintains the position that IWT is a

conservation issue, crucial for the protection of wildlife. Additionally, the growing participation of UNODC (organising and providing funding and speakers) serves to further cement IWT as an issue of organised crime and international security. This evidences a persistence of what Massé et al. (2020) termed the "conservation-crime convergence" which promotes addressing conservation issues with solutions tailored to tackle crime. The framing of IWT as an issue of serious transnational organised crime against conservation signals a "geopolitics through conservation" (Massé & Margulies, 2020). This reveals the importance of understanding international organisations and institutions as powerful geopolitical actors within conferences, since they influence shifts in conservation governance through funding and the legitimation of specific discourses and actions.

### 5.5.2. Growing threats to human health

The COVID-19 pandemic sparked global conversations about wildlife use and many international organisations took the opportunity to spotlight their work on IWT (Roe et al., 2020). During the conferences, many speakers highlighted the links between wildlife trade, zoonosis and pandemics through their oral interventions and in dedicated events and working groups. Especially at the II IWT Conference, wildlife trade was often mentioned as a practice that increases the risk of zoonosis, therefore increasing the likelihood of epidemics and pandemics that pose a threat to human health. Stopping IWT was framed as a step towards preventing pandemics and keeping people safe. The trade of live animals was introduced as especially dangerous, as well as the use and trade of primates, bats, rodents and birds. Speakers also proposed actions for governments to support such as disease surveillance systems, "changing high risk practices and behaviours towards wildlife and habitats" (fieldnotes, II IWT Conference), strengthening CWT action, and monitoring and better regulating legal wildlife trade. Though scholars have been making the link between zoonosis and wild animal trade for a long time, speakers in the conferences focused on the threat of such a pandemic happening again to achieve political will to tackle IWT.

Through the conferences, the COVID-19 pandemic was framed as a prime political moment to convince decision-makers of the importance of strengthening the enforcement of wildlife laws for preventing pandemics. As such, the global health crisis was framed as an extreme example of the risks that IWT poses to societies. Many speakers urged attending delegates to harness the attention towards wildlife use caused by the pandemic to persuade their governments to enhance law enforcement efforts for CWT. As a representative from an NGO said, "we don't know if the next pandemic will emerge in the Amazon, that's why we have to strengthen capacities to increase surveillance" (fieldnotes, II IWT Conference). This quote made references to wild animal use in the Amazon and trade in open markets and conveyed the blame that global communities placed on China as the epicentre of the COVID pandemic. These narratives invoke fears linked to a very recent global crisis, deliberately using it as a political move to influence specific actions and advance particular agendas. While geopolitical ecology has focused on discourses of security (Bigger & Neimark, 2017; Massé & Margulies, 2020; Surprise, 2020), the strategic use of the COVID-19 pandemic provides a new framing of human health security to consider. It prompts us to enquire about how discourses of emerging global threats to human security are mobilised by international actors to achieve national action.

### 5.5.3. Protecting Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities

Even though few representatives from Indigenous peoples, peasant, rural, or local communities, or grassroots groups attended the conferences, IPLC were mentioned often. At both conferences, events and discussions were held on topics about engaging IPLC in CWT and supporting livelihoods through wildlife trade. Most of the events at CITES did not host IPLC representatives as speakers, while at the II IWT Conference two events did. During the conferences, IWT was often mentioned as a threat to communities, an illegal activity that "robs Indigenous peoples of their resources" (fieldnotes, CITES CoP) or that harms the environment that "provides goods and services to local communities" who depend on them (fieldnotes, CITES CoP). Some speakers

from IGOs also portrayed IPLC as under threat by organised crime networks. At the II ITW Conference, IPLC representatives also spoke against IWT, mentioning that wildlife trafficking goes against their principles and threatens their territories. Nonetheless, some restrictions on wildlife trade were also framed as threats to IPLC livelihoods. For example, during the regional meeting of Central and South American parties at the 19th CoP, country delegates requested support against some proposals because they would threaten Indigenous, local, or rural livelihoods and economies. This shows how the discourse of protecting IPLC can be used to both justify wildlife trade and argue against it, especially when representatives of these communities are not part of the discussions.

Speakers at the conferences recognised that IPLC use wildlife in traditional ways, however it was linked to wildlife governance in conflicting ways. The most discussed traditional use of wildlife was Traditional Chinese Medicine, often credited for a large part of the demand driving international IWT in many species (Margulies, Wong, et al., 2019). As such, it was discussed as harmful and an important target for action. Nonetheless, at the 19th CoP some party delegations acknowledged that many communities engage with wildlife according to alternative ontologies, communicating that multilateral agreements should be careful in their interference with such relationships. Despite this, speakers in both conferences also framed traditional wildlife use as part of IWT and urged action against it. For example, at the II IWT Conference a representative of the Colombian government mentioned communities traditionally eat turtles during Easter. To counter this, the police carry out operations during that holiday to stop trade. A similar example was presented by the Bolivian government when recognising armadillos are traditionally used for cultural festivities, where police raids seize the animals. In these discussions, the ways wildlife supports IPLC wellbeing and nutrition (Booth et al., 2021) were disregarded. Though there are discourses of concern for IPLC and respect for their traditions, actors within these conferences also frame traditional use as a form of IWT. The imposition of homogeneity in the acceptable ways of relating to wild animals through CWT programmes, then, becomes “a matter of political concern” (de la Cadena, 2019, p. 53). This raises some important sites of conflict within discourses of protecting IPLC, at once communicating concern for their livelihoods and traditions, while also portraying them as a criminal threat.

Though very few representatives of IPLC attended the conferences or had access to processes to inform definitions and solutions, speakers at both conferences justified CWT action under the discourse of supporting IPLC and their livelihoods. However, seeking to include IPLC within agreements' scopes often means states will regulate their use of nature. These discussions seldom mention Indigenous autonomy or the free enactment of ontologies and traditions, only further management within states' legal frameworks (Merino & Gustafsson, 2021; Reyes-García et al., 2021). Much like with the inclusion of finance and transport corporations, most discussions about engaging IPLC within CWT were related to Indigenous, peasant, rural or local people participating in surveillance and providing information and intelligence on illegal activities to states. Engaging IPLC in CWT as informants is not a new strategy and my data at conferences shows a continuation of this trend (Biggs et al., 2016; Cooney et al., 2017, 2018). Since most participants in these discussions were representatives of states and NGOs, conversations on CWT were narrowed to their interests and needs under a Western conceptualisation of conservation, law enforcement and crime prevention (Masse et al., 2020), neglecting IPLC's experiences, concerns, and knowledge (Kashwan et al., 2021). This is important for the geopolitical ecology of conservation because it sheds light on how different actors mobilise discourses on IWT in diverse ways to legitimise their objectives, providing avenues for the most accepted narratives and actors to further their hold in controlling natures. Moreover, this signifies an important link with the field of political ontology, since it uncovers ways in which alternative ontologies are tamed to fit the logics of Western modernity through conservation, maintaining the ontological separation between people and natures.

### 5.5.4. Strategies for countering wildlife trafficking

By far, the most referenced CWT strategies in both conferences fell under the category of law enforcement, such as offering training programmes for law enforcement officers and increasing police operations. These actions aim to increase detection of IWT to disrupt the trade chain. Within these discussions, several NGOs claimed to be part of

such intelligence operations, and as mentioned before, other actors were also called to collaborate. This was coupled with legal reforms to increase sanctions, maintaining that they will deter IWT. To aid operations, the development and use of forensic and technological tools was introduced as a growing approach for controlling trade, as well as the use of tools and methodologies developed for investigating other illegal activities. As a UNODC representative claimed at the II IWT Conference: "For IWT we need to employ similar tools, strategies and methodologies than for human, weapons and drug trafficking." Relatedly, increasing cooperation between national agencies and internationally was often proposed as a strategy for CWT, highlighting requests for further intelligence, skills, and best practices sharing, law enforcement cooperation, and providing funds. These strategies stem from the single framing of IWT as a serious, transnational organised crime, furthering the legitimation of enforcement-first approaches in conservation (Masse et al., 2020). These strategies also favour the legitimacy of the institutions allowed to be part of such collaboration networks (Kashwan et al., 2021; Larsen, 2018).

Such enforcement approaches have been prioritised in CWT lately (Duffy, 2022b, 2022a; Massé & Margulies, 2020), though they have not been as successful as expected in stopping trade (Challender & Macmillan, 2014; Paudel et al., 2020). Therefore, communication and awareness actions are receiving more attention in international arenas, in particular demand reduction strategies. Demand reduction aims to change buyers' attitudes and behaviours to shrink or stabilise markets for wildlife (Veríssimo et al., 2020), and there is growing interest in achieving voluntary change through education, campaigns, and behavioural economics interventions (Thomas-Walters et al., 2020). These strategies were discussed at both conferences in several proposals and events. This shows increased interest in these approaches but were less popular than law enforcement. For example, during a demand reduction event, a government representative sceptically asked how governments can implement such strategies (fieldnotes, II IWT Conference). This might suggest that some governments may continue investing efforts in familiar approaches that fall within their perceived capacities, such as law enforcement. This may be because demand reduction approaches do not follow clearly from the accepted discourse of IWT as transnational organised crime, but they

also point to a gap in implementation where non-state actors can offer their services to develop solutions that states are unequipped to provide (Duffy & Brockington, 2022).

These CWT strategies stem from accepted discourses about IWT, but also from the need to create spaces of legitimation for the inclusion of non-state actors. Delegates from international organisations who are savvy in engaging with such international governance structures can find spaces to insert themselves in the issue. As an NGO representative said during a side-event at the CITES CoP: “Traffickers are several steps ahead, but with NGOs and scientists we can solve [IWT].” This portrays an “us versus them” situation, where NGOs are allies for states against traffickers, and should be included in decision-making and implementing solutions (Duffy, 2022a; Duffy & Brockington, 2022; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016). At the II IWT Conference, an NGO representative stated that NGOs are key in efforts to tackle IWT because they are flexible and innovative, so they should assist governments in creating political will and offer technical support. It may be true that NGOs are well-placed to support CWT, but uncritical discussions about inclusion in global governance may benefit already legitimated international organisations and allow them to hold and maintain unquestioned positions of power over other actors (Duffy, 2013; MacDonald, 2010b).

In summary, I have argued that international wildlife trade conferences serve as arenas where a discourse of IWT as part of multiple global threats against conservation, security, health, Indigenous Peoples, and livelihoods. I have shown this is achieved through structures of participation which provide actors already legitimated in these networks space to reinstate and cement their place within CWT networks. In defining global natures within securitised framings of threats to conservation, the rule of law, health, and livelihoods, they also introduce prioritised law enforcement, international cooperation, and demand reduction actions. These also work to further legitimise and increase the influence of the states and powerful international organisations involved. The inclusion of Latin America as a target region within these spheres is more recent and still ongoing, hence in the next section I analyse how the region’s complexities are absorbed into such discourses and networks.

## 5.6. From the world to Abya Yala and back again

Since the growing CWT action implemented by states and international actors in Abya Yala originates from the same legitimised international networks, it similarly privileges and promotes ways of thinking and doing from a "context of crime, policing, law enforcement and security sectors" (Masse et al., 2020, p. 31). However, the concerns and priorities presented by Latin American delegates also promote other issues specific to the region. As such, differing from Massé et al.'s (2020) description of the 2018 London Conference, the II IWT Conference focused less on poaching wild animals, but in the movement and commercialisation of wildlife. Moreover, much scholarship on the militarisation of conservation for CWT mentions strategies such as introducing private security or technologies such as camera traps or drones in protected areas (Duffy, 2014a; Duffy et al., 2019; Duffy & Brockington, 2022), while there was no mention of these strategies for Abya Yala in these conferences. This evidences a drift from scholarship on the militarisation of conservation since most CWT discourse in Abya Yala did not mention poaching or protected areas. Instead, it presents a further entrenchment of other forms of securitisation and militarisation such as the increasing participation of ordinary private actors in conservation through intelligence and surveillance. Moreover, much of CWT action in the region appears to be based on national judiciary and police systems controlling non-traditional conservation spaces: borders, highways, land terminals, markets, and online platforms. This has further implications for the geopolitical ecology of conservation, where international conservation actors have increasing influence over the definition, management, and policing of nature in everyday non-traditional conservation spaces.

### 5.6.1. Doing what it takes to defend the Amazon

As mentioned before, discourses of threat and urgency were common at the global level. For Latin American participants, discourses linked to the current

intersecting global environmental crises were prevalent, referring to habitat destruction and the climate crisis to promote urgent, emergency action. Of particular importance was the collapsing of multiple local natures into "the Amazon", presented as a global nature of crucial importance for the world needing protection through international means. In line with this discourse, the Amazon was often described as the "lungs of the world" and a "heritage for humanity" by government officers (fieldnotes, II IWT Conference), portrayed as an amalgamation of ecosystems key for protecting an important part of global biodiversity and, significantly, for fighting against climate change and for achieving sustainability (see also Kawa, 2014). Similarly, participants stressed that stopping the trade of Amazonian species is a global endeavour that supports the goals of tackling extinction and the climate crisis and realising sustainable development. Drawing the links between the IWT and climate change might be a strategy to capture the attention and resources dedicated to the climate crisis (Corson et al., 2019). Moreover, this shows how state and NGO participants in the region leverage discourses of global natures and apply them to their own contexts to place themselves within priorities for action and further their agendas within international arenas.

Achieving political will by mobilising narratives of threat and security was also common. At a side event about programmes to tackle wildlife crimes at the II IWT Conference, a representative from a European embassy in the Americas asked the speakers if there are links between IWT and drug trafficking in the region because if so "governments [in Latin America] might be more interested [in CWT]". The speaker responded admitting that there is not enough information in South America to make that connection. Latin America as a region has long been under concerns of social instability and drug trafficking because of complex histories and entanglements with international politics and markets (Bagley, 1988; Stambøl, 2016; van Dun, 2023). Within this context, some actors may frame IWT as a continuation of networks associated with such security concerns to attract attention. This shows how institutions strategically mobilise narratives about crime convergence and concerns of instability to capture interest and achieve buy-in from governments into CWT action in Abya Yala under justifications of conservation and security.

Because not all wild animal trade is illegal and many countries view wildlife as a natural resource that can bring profits and development to their economies, many CWT measures in Abya Yala were framed in terms of ensuring legal processes, especially for Peru. This was particularly expressed by state representatives, as a Peruvian delegate articulated in CITES:

> *"Including matamata turtles in Appendix II will reduce the threats from commercial demand. It will allow exports to meet [legal] requirements and for in situ and ex situ management to be characterised by transparency, applying control mechanisms."*

Strengthening control measures for certain species was, then, framed as a strategy for ensuring that trade is sustainable and follows each country's legal requirements, as well as international agreements. Controlling these legal requirements hinges on the ability of government agencies to understand wildlife trade regulations and identify where they have not been met. As such, they require significant resources from all relevant government agencies and a stronger government reach. These calls for strengthening capacities for the control of wildlife trade serve a strategic role, since they make clear to funders and other international actors exactly which gaps need addressing and where foreign aid and cooperation can provide results (Duffy, 2022a). This evidences another way in which framings of wildlife trade are mobilised by legitimised Latin American actors within international arenas to point attention to specific ways of controlling nature according to their priorities.

These international arenas are complex spaces where priorities are negotiated between legitimated actors with differing influence, but as I have argued before, the strategic use and production of discourse can be an effective tool in furthering specific agendas. In both conferences during their oral contributions many Southern governments would often highlight their achievements, thank their donors, and mention ongoing challenges. This might be because governments with less resources must walk a thin line: they must present themselves as efficient and successful, enough so donors believe it is worthwhile to invest in their countries, but also convey ongoing urgency and needs to receive further support. Too much success might mean that they do not need

assistance, while too little success might mean they lack will and institutional strength to produce results. For example, side-events were held at both conferences presenting the inclusion of IWT within the Law against Organised Crime in Peru. At the time of the II IWT Conference the inclusion was still a proposal, but by the 19th CoP in November it had been approved. These events showed the international CWT sphere that the Peruvian government and the NGOs supporting it are committed to CWT and meeting international agreements, that their donors' funding supports concrete results, and that the supporting NGOs were effective and efficient in their use of funds. However, the events also recognised that this legal reform was a first step, and much more was needed still. These are some discursive strategies that Latin American actors with relatively less resources can mobilise in international decision-making spaces to attract resources and alliances, increase their relevance, and further their agendas in global governance. An additional discursive strategy that emerged linking specifically to species conservation was that of the jaguar.

### 5.6.2. Saving the jaguar

For the Americas, the jaguar was deemed an important species with dedicated side-events and agenda documents at CITES, and two panel events at the II IWT Conference. The use of jaguars as a flagship species to attract resources and attention towards CWT action echoes the use of other charismatic species such as elephants and tigers in other continents (see also Duffy, 2013), using strategies like creating a "jaguar day" and producing emotive media (Challender & MacMillan, 2019). In the conferences, most events and documents cite research that points to habitat loss and fragmentation as a the most significant threats to jaguar populations (Paviolo et al., 2016). Related to IWT, the most common reasons for jaguar killings are cited to be human-wildlife conflict (HWC) or hunting, the drivers being fear, retaliation for killing livestock, or local attitudes or traditional uses (Marchini & Macdonald, 2012; Moreno et al., 2015). These events also recognise that jaguar parts and products are sold opportunistically and with low complexity, mostly for domestic markets (Arias et al., 2020; Arias, Hinsley, Nogales-

Ascarrunz, et al., 2021). Nonetheless, instead of focusing on habitat protection and changing local attitudes towards jaguars to avoid population decline, wildlife trade conferences mainly focus on the international illegal trade in jaguars, especially on trade to Asia and using online platforms. Gutierrez & Duffy (2024) found that a similar prioritisation of IWT and organised crime as a conservation threat to eels has led to increased enforcement approaches instead of focusing attention to regulating other legal and more pressing threats to their conservation.

Unlike crystal frogs, and more akin to black rhinos, jaguars already have the highest level of protection within the Convention since 1975 (Kretser et al., 2022). Discussions at the 19th CITES CoP urged parties to further enforce existing measures and included some solutions outside of the Convention mandate. They called parties to "urgently adopt legislation and enforcement controls", "include the jaguar as a priority species to be targeted as part of enforcement operations", promote conservation corridors, channel investments, and increase regional cooperation for the protection of jaguars (CITES Decision 19.110 to 19.114). Additionally, the CITES Secretariat was pressed to cooperate with the Convention on Migratory Species and the United Nations Development Programme to support jaguar conservation and establish a working group. While these efforts aim to conserve the species, these proposals serve to steer parties into further attention and enforcement efforts towards illegal jaguar trade, urging additional action beyond regulating international trade. This has implications for the geopolitical ecology of conservation, showing how framing IWT as a significant threat to jaguars at the international level has material impacts for global conservation governance structures and national implementation, channelling attention into jaguar range countries.

How the main threats to jaguar populations are framed will determine the approaches prioritised to address such threats. At a side-event on jaguar conservation and trade at the CITES CoP, a member of the audience raised a question about how to stop the initial killing of jaguars, to stop the supply feeding illegal trade. A representative of an NGO replied that action must focus on urgently closing all avenues for trade so that in the future HWC is not replaced by trade as a driver for jaguar killings. This suggestion of proactively increasing enforcement in case trade becomes a problem in the future

promotes the implementation of law enforcement measures with no end date to guard nature from a possible threat not yet actualised (Bluwstein et al., 2023; Buscher, 2018). This interaction also evidences that CWT action in Abya Yala is overwhelmingly focused on the commercialisation of wild animals, not the initial removal from their ecosystems. This framing limits the acceptable solutions for the issue, providing the singular response of strengthening control measures (Challender & MacMillan, 2019), instead of facilitating other actions that could be more effective such as ensuring the connectivity of jaguar habitats or reducing HWC. Tyrrell and Clark (2014) found similar strategies were used in seeking the uplisting of polar bears at CITES, mobilising simplified and enlarged narratives of polar bear hunting and trade coupled with disregarding other actions more likely to confer conservation benefits. In this context, non-state actors are crucial in framing the issue of international illegal jaguar trade as a global conservation threat requiring law enforcement action. This has important implications for the geopolitical ecology of conservation, since it evidences how non-state actors can act as geopolitical institutions prioritising specific agendas for action both discursively in international arenas and materially through their CWT programmes.

Mobilising concerns on the links between IWT and security in these conferences, either about crime convergence, climate crisis, or extinction, were deliberate political moves from state delegates and non-state actors to garner political will, achieve relevance, further agendas, and attract funding (Duffy, 2021; Masse et al., 2020). Furthermore, the similarities, differences, and recontextualising of discourses specific to Latin America, in comparison to the ones prevalent elsewhere, show how “the global and local are co-produced in relation to each other, and how ideas from international meetings are translated to the ground and back” (Corson et al., 2019, p. 64). States and legitimised institutions participating in these meetings utilise discourse and the structures of global governance to meet their needs in CWT action implementation. In such a context, long-standing discourses and strategies that have been successful in maintaining the flow of CWT action in other regions are currently applied in Latin America by many of the same large geopolitical Western institutions, reiterating and maintaining similar global discourses and power structures.

## 5.7. Conclusion

The study of the political ecology of conservation governance has often focused on the marketisation of nature in conservation conferences (Campbell et al., 2014; Corson et al., 2019), but less attention has been paid to how participants at international wildlife trade meetings frame IWT to legitimise their positions and influence priorities for action (Challender & MacMillan, 2019; Duffy, 2013; Masse et al., 2020). In analysing the participants, structures, and discourses at the II IWT Conference and 19th CITES CoP, I argue that how IWT is framed as a conservation and security threat by institutions participating in such conferences leads to the international prioritisation of law enforcement actions to control and manage global natures at national and local levels (Bigger & Neimark, 2017; Massé & Margulies, 2020). Furthermore, I reveal how these global discourses and structures are recontextualised to the Latin America/Abya Yala region by Latin American actors in the form of concerns for protecting the Amazon as a global nature, mobilising concerns about social instability and trafficking, and presenting the jaguar as a flagship species. Producing and mobilising these discourses serves to increase the legitimacy of Latin American states and international NGOs in these arenas, embed them within international IWT networks, and present them as targets for funding. This allows me to theorise that within the geopolitical ecology of international conservation, large international non-state actors act as large geopolitical institutions, due to the power they wield in defining, managing, and controlling global natures within these networks.

The conferences I attended were primarily meant to foster inter-state dialogue and cooperation to manage "global natures", arguing that wild animals are global resources that merit coordinated action for their protection. However, in these meetings international organisations are equally important actors who have means to set the agenda and influence decisions. Nonetheless, different states, institutions, and groups have varying abilities to influence these spaces, depending on their available resources, alignment with legitimised agendas, and alliances with powerful actors. In this way, it is important to note that while state and legitimised NGO representatives dominated these

spaces, IPLC representatives were largely absent. This evidences the marginalisation of certain experiences in spaces dominated by powerful international institutions and impacts the framings that will become acceptable within these discussions.

Discussions on wildlife trade in these international conferences were overwhelmingly framed within a conservation-crime convergence (Masse et al., 2020), presenting wildlife trade as a threat of extinction and an issue of wildlife crime. In particular, IWT is increasingly framed as a *serious, transnational organised crime driven by profit* that converges with other kinds of crime and poses a threat to security. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has provided a renewed sense of urgency through framing zoonosis as a global health threat, which several actors strategically highlighted in order to garner political will. Additionally, IWT was often framed as a threat to IPLC, though concern for their livelihoods and traditions was mixed with depictions of traditional uses as a threat to wildlife. These discourses are used to justify the implementation of primarily law enforcement strategies, as well as argue for enhanced international cooperation and an increasing interest in demand reduction. Altogether, these discourses and strategies were mobilised in ways that further legitimise state and international organisations and maintain predominantly Western modern management of natures.

Though many of global discourses and priorities were similarly applied in Latin America, some differences can be observed. Overall, the region follows parallel concerns about conservation and crime, but discourses about the militarisation of conservation in stopping poaching and securing protected areas were notably absent. Responding to discourses of global natures, Amazonian states rely on the Amazon rainforest as an ecosystem serving the narrative of a “global nature”. It is presented as key to the fight against environmental crises to emphasize the global significance of the region and attract interest. To garner political will, international support, and economic resources, participants in the region mobilise narratives of crime convergence, regulated legal trade, and commitment to conservation. This is shown in the resurging interest in jaguar trafficking, where the jaguar is discussed at every chance to foster relevance and resources for CWT action. Through this I argue that discourses widely accepted in international CWT networks are adapted to the needs of states and legitimised

institutions in Latin America to direct the flow of international CWT funding and priorities in ways that benefit them.

In following international structures, legitimated actors secure discourses of tackling transnational organised crime, and protecting global natures, human health, and IPLC. But in doing so, these arenas reduce the complexity of the different forms of wildlife use and trade and prioritise law enforcement approaches. This in turn produces rather paradoxical material actions and performances of success on the ground. While international institutions speak about cracking down on serious, transnational profit-driven organised crime, the CWT action presented disrupts non-trade-driven domestic wildlife use. While there is a concern towards the impacts of IWT on human health, the benefits of wildlife use to rural health through nutrition or livelihoods is obscured. While state representatives speak about protecting "the wildlife Indigenous Peoples depend on", they also present photos of police raids during Indigenous festivities. While one of the main justifications to stop IWT is to maintain healthy populations of species, action does not focus on tackling the drivers of the removal of animals from their habitats. Paying attention to how the structures of international conferences produce and reproduce recontextualised framings of global natures, I extend the study of the geopolitical ecology of conservation by revealing that legitimised actors mobilise accepted discourses on IWT blurring the complexities of wildlife use and driving single-focused action. These narrow conceptualisations of IWT pose challenges to a decolonial conservation governance and possibly lead to issues of injustice in the places targeted for CWT action.

# Chapter 6

# Mapping counter wildlife trafficking programmes in Peru

*"Sé que estoy enfermo de un pesado mal, lleno de un agua amarga, de una inclemente fiebre que silba y espanta a quien la escucha. Mis amigos me dejaron, mi loro ha muerto ya, y no puedo evitar que las gentes y los animales huyan al mirar el terrible y negro resplandor que deja mi paso en las calles."*

- Las cosas que digo son ciertas, Blanca Varela.

## 6.1. Introduction

How does a turtle walking peacefully on fallen leaves become a site of contestation between the Peruvian government and counter wildlife trafficking programmes and their distinct understandings of how turtles should be governed? While working in conservation programmes, I often wondered how the internal needs and priorities of the NGOs I worked for contributed to shaping the broader picture of conservation in my country. With the rising global interest in tackling IWT, political ecologists and scholars of conservation have focused on bringing to light the impacts of CWT agendas on facilitating violent interactions between park rangers and communities in or close to protected areas (Lunstrum, 2014, 2017; Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016; Massé et al., 2021). However, as CWT action becomes more securitised and extends its influence outside of traditional conservation areas (Duffy, 2022b; Massé, 2022), political

ecologists look to unravel the influence diverse actors have in driving and funding such work (Duffy, 2021; Masse et al., 2020; Massé & Margulies, 2020).

Furthering the study of the geopolitical ecology of conservation with attention to how legal and institutional frameworks manage wild animals in Peru, this chapter responds to calls to contextualise conservation (Kashwan et al., 2021) by examining how mainstream CWT framings and practices interact with national or other conditions to produce the CWT programmes currently implemented in Peru. The research presented in this chapter aims to unravel the extent to which international framings of nature, and specifically the IWT, drive action in specific countries, why and to what effects. As such, it examines how Peru responds to the challenge of wild animal governance in a context of growing international interest in CWT which drives a variety of actors to shape CWT efforts. It does so based on policy analysis and interviews conducted with government officers and professionals working in CWT programmes in 2022, as described in section 4.4 of chapter four.

This chapter explores how international priorities and discourses are mobilised into non-state CWT programmes and how they affect CWT action. In this chapter, I argue that even though the Peruvian government aims to promote the sustainable use of wild animals, CWT action in the country focuses primarily on law enforcement and policy development responding to international priorities with the support of international organisations. This is because international institutions drive specific policing and sanctioning CWT action in Peru according to international priorities, facilitated by the constraints of existing legal and institutional frameworks, as well as the structures of international funding. As such, this chapter furthers the study of the geopolitical ecology of conservation by assessing the ways in which geopolitical framings are channelled into national action, as well as how national legal and institutional frameworks change CWT implementation. This reveals that international influence is not solely directed by large state actors, but that large non-state actors, national frameworks, and political contexts mediate how these are filtered and altered. This extends the theory on the geopolitical ecology of conservation by uncovering some of the conditions which shape and reshape the influence of international framings of nature as they effect material action.

To make this argument, I first explore the literature on geopolitical ecology and put it in conversation with scholarship on the political ecology of CWT and resource geographies to unravel how international and national structures and priorities produce CWT action in Peru. Then, I analyse the legal and institutional frameworks for wild animal trade in Peru to make the case that managing wild animals as natural resources has been commonplace in the country for a long time, which conditions CWT programmes. This is followed by an analysis of the various understandings of wild animals and CWT in Peruvian laws and by professionals working in CWT in the country. Afterwards, I explore the management challenges posed by understanding wild animals as resources to be exploited. Following an analysis of the focus of CWT programmes in Peru at the time of my research, I analyse how CWT programmes interact with international priorities, funding structures, and national interests to drive CWT action in Peru. Finally, I close the chapter by providing conclusions.

## 6.2. A geopolitical ecology of CWT action in Peru

Concern for the decline of wild animal populations due to their illegal trade has led scholars of conservation biology to study the IWT in Peru. While important, these studies have focused mainly on the domestic illegal trade (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015; Mendoza et al., 2022), often in urban markets (Mayor et al., 2019; N. Shanee, 2012), and spent less time enquiring on the material challenges faced by local law enforcement in tackling it (N. Shanee et al., 2017). Other important considerations that shape CWT action in the country have largely been ignored such as the broader financialisation and politics of environmental management and their impacts on state action. Though other disciplines, most notably political ecology, have researched the politics and impacts of CWT action on the ground (Lunstrum, 2014; Massé, 2019; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016), little scholarship has focused on Latin America and none in Peru, where international interest in CWT action has increased in the last decade after being

largely ignored by states and academia. In this chapter, I extend scholarship on the geopolitical ecology of conservation by unravelling how growing international priorities and framings shape and reshape state CWT action in Peru.

At the international level, political ecologists have researched the broad ways in which an increased interest in IWT globally and its framing as an urgent security issue has led conservation NGOs into strengthening their involvement in CWT action (Duffy, 2022b, 2022a; Duffy & Massé, 2021; Duffy & Brockington, 2022). Massé (2022) accounts how interest in addressing wildlife crime has resulted in the expansion of policing and enforcement institutions at the national level in Mozambique. This is a noteworthy consequence of increasing concern for CWT, but these studies have been mostly based in Africa and Asia, where long histories of CWT efforts supported by international actors continue since colonial times. In Peru, Daut, Brightsmith, and Peterson (2015) evaluated which NGOs worked in controlling the domestic illegal wild animal trade for the pet trade to understand their motivations. Scholars have explored how neoliberal policies "travel" though professionals and organisations in other sectors of development (Bondi & Laurie, 2012; Larner & Laurie, 2010). However, research on the broader international environmental politics of CWT programmes has not extended to Peru, where wildlife use as persists in legal and institutional frameworks, as well as everyday life. This means attention to how such programmes start and further gain traction reveals how these conservation approaches travel and become mainstream in the face of increased international funding and interest.

Geopolitical ecology is a recent framework that combines the attention that political ecology provides to examining power in environmental governance with the consideration that critical geopolitics gives to critically challenging readings of conventional geopolitical reasonings (Benjaminsen & Svarstad, 2021; Bigger & Neimark, 2017; Tuathail & Agnew, 1992). Exploring the geopolitics of environmental management is not new, but it remains significant in a time of global action towards tackling environmental crises. Geopolitical ecology seeks to understand "the role of geopolitical institutions, like the US military, in environmental change" and thus analyse the larger institutional processes which "discursively and materially produce global natures" (Bigger & Neimark, 2017, p. 14). Building from this framework, Massé and Margulies

(2020) enquired into the geopolitical ecology of conservation, elucidating how framings of IWT result on shifts in the allocation of foreign aid, "affecting biodiversity conservation on-the-ground" (Massé & Margulies, 2020, p. 3). The framework of geopolitical ecology has been applied to the influence of USA state agencies in driving geoengineering (Surprise, 2020), renewable energy (Bigger & Neimark, 2017), and counter wildlife trafficking (Massé & Margulies, 2020) with security motivations, as well as the US Military's impact on carbon emissions (Belcher et al., 2020). However, this emergent framework has largely ignored other institutions influencing the geopolitical stage and its geopolitical abstraction misses how their influence impacts action in other states.

As I discuss during this chapter, many wild animals in Peru are considered resources both in legal and institutional frameworks. As Bridge (2009, p. 1120) argues, "resources are a relational understanding of the non-human world". The way something becomes a resource in a society can vary over time and space and relates to the value and utility assigned to it. Anthropologist Anna Tsing argues that in the frontiers of resource-making the illegal and legal, public and private, conservation and extraction are in a tension that keeps resource-making rolling "with its own momentum" (Tsing, 2003, p. 5105). Looking specifically at non-human lives, political animal geographers ask why certain species are worth saving or caring for through political, legal, and institutional frameworks and others are not (Collard, 2020; Fleischmann, 2023; Hobson, 2007). Collard and Dempsey (2017, p. 84) argue that the law fulfils a "significant function in ordering non-human populations, both caring for living things and facilitating the extraction of capital from them." Therefore, legal frameworks contribute to orienting how different wild animals become resources within states and this making of wild animals as resources is subject to tensions between legal and illegal (Goyes & Sollund, 2016), protected and harmed (Petrossian et al., 2024; Wyatt et al., 2022), or conservation and extraction (Tian et al., 2023; Tsing, 2003). Drawing from this literature, in this chapter I unpack how orienting wild animals as resources contributes to shaping the way international framings of IWT land in Peru.

Framings of nature and the IWT have been studied at the international level under the assumption that they produce impacts at other scales (Duffy, 2022b; Duffy & Massé, 2021; Duffy & Brockington, 2022; Massé & Margulies, 2020). On the other end, impacts

of CWT action have been studied on the ground, mostly anti-poaching practices (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; de Jong & Butt, 2023; Duffy et al., 2015; Lunstrum, 2014). However, there is a gap in understanding the ways in which international framings of IWT interact with national legal and institutional frameworks and eventually shape action on the ground. Expanding from this, there is little understanding of the ways in which international priorities and the structures of international funding and cooperation interact with legal and institutional frameworks to produce CWT programmes. Though work in geopolitical ecology claims to determine the "material effects of geopolitical discursive acts for reshaping the priorities of conservation activities" (Massé & Margulies, 2020, p. 14), I argue that this process is not straightforward and is instead mediated by various conditions at many levels. Through an analysis of the framings, priorities, and dynamics of wild animal use for state and non-state CWT programmes in Peru, I contribute to theories of the geopolitical ecology of conservation with attention to the conditions that allow international priorities to land in specific contexts and how they are reshaped in that interaction.

## 6.3. Orienting wild animal trade in Peru

Legal frameworks are of crucial importance in the management of wild animals since they orient the social orders that states aim to achieve (Collard & Dempsey, 2017; Tian et al., 2023), controlling what ways of being are possible (Harris, 2004). Debates on geopolitical ecology have mainly focused on how the definition and management of nature by large geopolitical entities produce shifts in how nature is managed globally (Belcher et al., 2020; Bigger & Neimark, 2017; Massé & Margulies, 2020). However, I contend that such global framings do not flow freely in the same way everywhere, but that they must encounter conditions which facilitate, reject, or remake them whenever they land in specific places. To begin unravelling the picture of CWT action in Peru, I look at the current Peruvian legal and institutional frameworks as a way to elucidate the

conditions that shape and reshape international framings of wild animals and their trade as they reach the country.

### 6.3.1. Legal frameworks regarding wild animal trade

People living in the Peruvian territory have always used wild animals in different ways, but this use has not always been regulated through legal frameworks. The Peruvian legal framework currently has multiple recourses to manage wild animal use, developed from the 1900s on to regulate how people use and relate to animals. The earliest example I could find of initial national laws is the 1910 Ley N°1395 exempting from taxes the import of animals for the "Zoological and Botanic Park", an instance of regulating international trade (Figure 3). In 1937, the Ley N° 8532 introduced an export tax for wild animal (*animales silvestres*) pelts, recognising that their free export up to then had established a profitable international market. A later example is the 1940 Ley N° 9147 which declares the "protection of the state over all species of wild animals (*animales salvajes*) within national territory", effectively banning the hunting of vicuñas, chinchillas, and guanacos and their live export. This law bans the export of live specimens of such species and other South American camelids that "constitute or may constitute exclusive monopoly of Peru and must be conserved by all means possible". Additionally, this law also introduces subsidies for those who "domesticate these species". This clearly indicates that the Peruvian government was aiming at stopping international breeding of such species to be the sole supplier. The 1963 Decreto Ley N° 14552, which created the Servicio Forestal y de Caza (Forestry and Hunting Service) as part of the Ministry of Agriculture to "protect, conserve, encourage and make rational and permanent use of forests and wildlife". Much of the legislation developed from preceding understandings and institutions such as this Forestry and Hunting Service which later became the Dirección General Forestal y de Fauna and now is SERFOR, still part of the Ministry of Agriculture. From the 1970s on, several policies were introduced to manage hunting and trade, also responding to Peru's adhesion to international agreements and treaties (Bodmer et al., 2004; N. Shanee, 2012). This shows that for a long time Peru has

considered the legal use of wild animals within its laws and considered wild animals as “resources” since at least the 1970s.

Currently, several legal recourses regulate the use of nature. The highest legal document, the 1993 Peruvian Constitution, states that natural resources are the nation’s patrimony, and the Peruvian State is the authority for their use (Article 66) (N. Shanee et al., 2017). Therefore, the conditions for their use and how they should be granted for private use is regulated by law. Wild animal use, then, is decided by the state, and different levels of governance have different responsibilities for managing the environment and natural resources. In Articles 192 and 195, the constitution further divides responsibility over the environment and the sustainability of natural resources between regional and local governments. The Ley General del Ambiente, Law N° 28611, was approved in 2005 and it orders the legal framework for environmental management in Peru. With specific regards to wild animals, this law classifies them within the concept of natural resources, defined as “all components of nature that are liable to use by humans for meeting their needs, and that have an actual or potential value in the market, according to the Law”. As such, they are classified as “forestry and wild animal resources” in Article 92, establishing that the State promotes their sustainable use and highlighting the fight against illegal hunting, among other topics (Petrossian et al., 2024). Chapter 2 is also relevant because it refers to ex-situ conservation, promoting the establishment of ex-situ methods of biodiversity conservation including zoos, rescue centres, temporary custody centres, breeding centres and wild animal management areas. Throughout these laws, wild animals are considered resources that can be sustainably used by people to meet their needs.

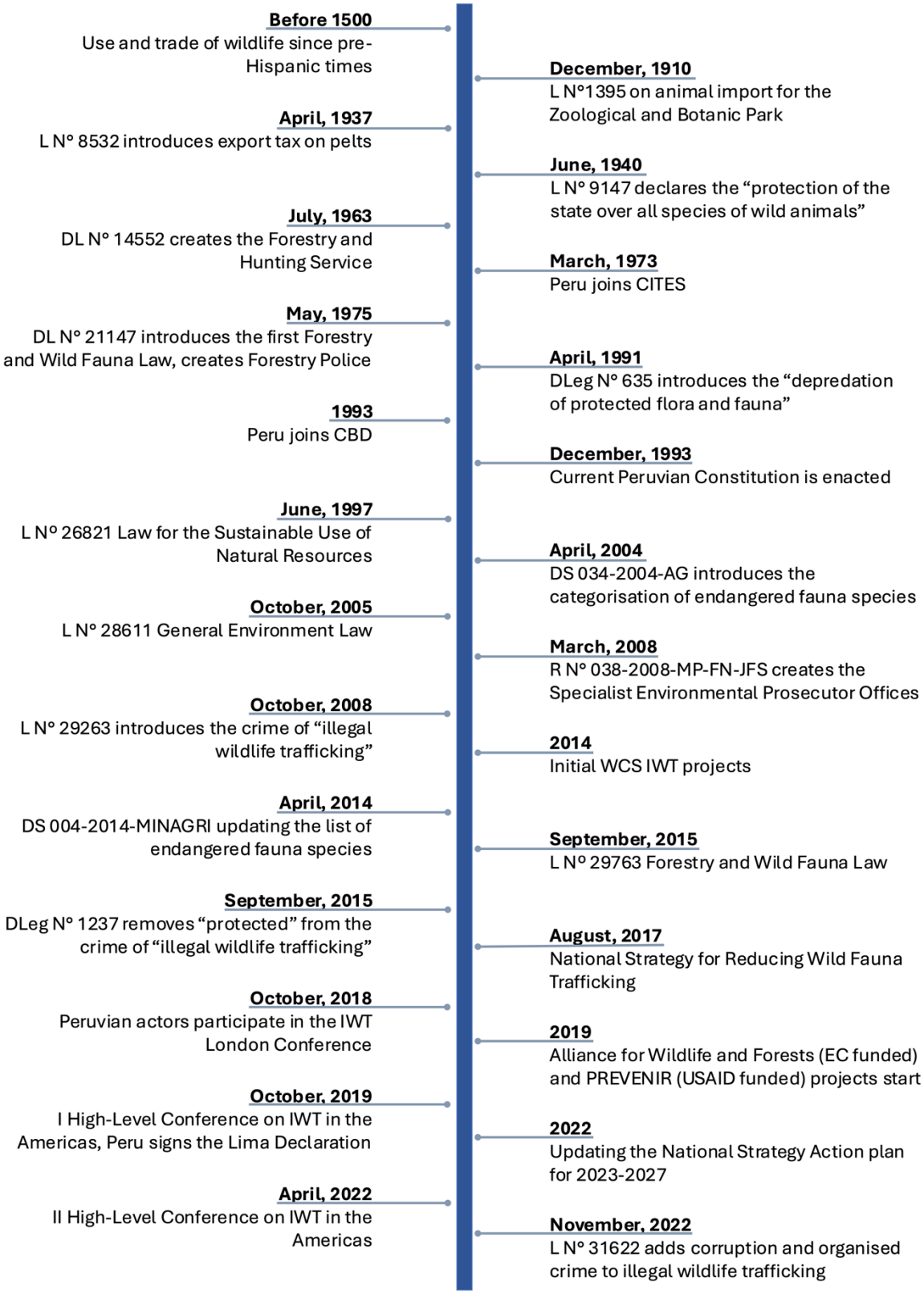


Figure 3. Timeline of Peruvian policy development and events.

Presently, the overarching law regulating the use of wildlife in Peru is the Ley Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre (Forestry and Wild Animals Law, LFFS) Nº 29763. This law took effect in October of 2015 with the approval of its four regulations, the Reglamento para la Gestion de Fauna Silvestre (Decreto Supremo N° 019-2015-MINAGRI) is the one that dictates wild animal management (Kretser et al., 2022). In its third section, the LFFS stipulates the various plans and management instruments that regulate the legal use of wild animals, including management plans for areas and facilities, and conservation, sustainable use, reintroduction, and commercial hunting plans. For example, for citizens to trade wild animals they must first have a management plan approved by the regional forests and wild animal authority, or hunted species must be included in a regional hunting calendar and hunting should be conducted in specific areas. Hunting for commercial or sport purposes must be done in an authorised area and the hunter must have a government license. The use of wild animals without authorisations is prohibited, except for subsistence hunting for "peasant and native communities and other rural populations for which wild animals are traditional food sources". However, many recognise that rural use is widespread but difficult to monitor and enforce (Mayor et al., 2022), so policing mostly targets trade, especially in urban centres.

The Peruvian LFFS contemplates two broad categories of authorised wild animal use: management areas and captivity. Management areas are public or private natural spaces where sustainable wild animal use is allowed. Captivity breeding centres can be zoocriaderos (breeding centres), zoos, conservation centres, or rescue centres. According to the Peruvian Forestry and Wild Fauna National Information System, 137 captivity breeding centres were authorised to function in June 2024, primarily zoos and zoocriaderos. In Peru, individuals can only keep wild animals in captivity for personal use if the specimen originates from an authorised breeding centre or management area or is legally imported, and the person requests a permit (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015). Moreover, species categorised as threatened, near threatened and data deficient cannot be kept, nor species listed in CITES Appendix I or in the CMS appendices, nor dangerous species (D000107-2021-MIDAGRI-SERFOR-DE). Wild animals, their parts and products, can be transported legally within the country holding an authorised transport or remission guide, according to the specimen (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015).

Furthermore, transformation, storage, and commercialisation centres which will handle wild animals from legal origin require authorisation from the regional forestry and wildlife authority. This law describes administrative sanctions for offences and stipulates coordination with the Public Ministry for criminal processes. From these laws, it is clear that Peru allows legal use and trade of wild animals under a variety of policy instruments and bureaucratic processes. Moreover, it recognises traditional and subsistence use of wild animals in the territory.

Also regulating wild animals, the Decreto Supremo 034-2004-AG provided a list of over 300 wild animal species protected by the Peruvian state (Leberatto, 2016; N. Shanee et al., 2017). This list was updated in 2014 to 535 species through the Decreto Supremo 004-2014-MINAGRI, classifying and categorising legally protected endangered wild animal species. This law establishes that "commercial hunting, capture, ownership, commerce, transport or export" of the species "of wild origin" in this list is prohibited. Furthermore, it specifies authorisations for trading species from different categories. The commercial transport, domestic commerce and/or export of first generation Vulnerable and Near Threatened species is allowed when they originate from breeding areas or management areas with approved management plans. On the other hand, trade in Critically Endangered, Endangered and Data Deficient species is only allowed when they originate from approved breeding centres with approved management and conservation plans, and specimens are at least a second generation removed from wild-caught. The "commerce, transport and export" of "non-food byproducts" of subsistence hunting by Indigenous or Peasant communities is regulated through a system of quotas. Notably, through these "hierarchies of difference" the state makes species more or less easily legally included within national markets (Collard & Dempsey, 2017).

The criminalisation of wild animal use was initially introduced in the Criminal Code in 1991 as the "depredation of protected flora and fauna". Later, through the Law N° 29263, the crime of "illegal wildlife trafficking" replaced it in 2008 in article 308 within its chapter II, Crimes against Natural Resources. This article sanctions the trade, transport, storage, import, export, or re-export of protected wild flora or fauna without permits with at least three years of imprisonment (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015; Leberatto, 2017). In 2015, the word "protected" was removed from the article,

meaning all trade in wild flora and fauna without authorisation was made punishable (N. Shanee et al., 2017). Additionally, during my research in 2022, corruption and organised crime were added as aggravating circumstances to illegal wildlife trafficking in article 309 of the Code. This had strong support and funding from international and national organisations, as I explore later in this chapter.

To enforce these laws, the Peruvian National Police has an Environmental Division initially created in 1975 as the Forestry Police, later becoming the Ecology Division. Additionally, the judicial system has had "Fiscalías Especializadas en Materia Ambiental" (Specialist Environmental Prosecutor Offices, FEMA) since 2008. Massé (2022) presents "police power in green", the expansion of conservation policing outside of conservation spaces, as something relatively new in Mozambique. However, these state structures that form a "green" intention of the Peruvian state beyond conservation areas and agencies are old and ongoing. Nonetheless, though this "police for green purposes" (Massé, 2022) exists as an institution since the 1970s, many argue that the many state agencies responsible of ordering society for protecting natures in Peru have failed to do so due to several institutional, social, and cultural reasons (N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017), as analysed later.

Internationally, Peru has been a party to CITES since 1975 and follows commercial quota systems and permits to allow limited legal exports of wild animals (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015). The Peruvian CITES Management Authorities are the Ministry of Agricultural Development (MIDAGRI) for wild land animals and the Ministry of Production for wild aquatic animals, whilst the Scientific Authority is the Ministry of the Environment (MINAM). Importing and exporting wild animals requires permits granted by SERFOR according to the LFFS, in addition to a CITES permit if the species is listed in the convention. Peru is also party to multiple other multilateral agreements regarding wild animals, including the Convention of Biological Diversity since 1993. Additionally, Peru is also a signatory of the 2019 Lima Declaration as part of the High-Level Conferences on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas, as previously discussed in chapter five. Changes in international law and agreements, such as the country's adhesion to CITES or commitments included in free trade agreements, also

have the potential to influence changes in law and institutions relating to wild animal use and trade.

From the highest levels of policy and for several decades now, the Peruvian legal framework has multiple recourses to orient wild animals as resources which humans may legally use and profit from. To achieve this, it establishes a multitude of documents, permits, licences, or authorisations that allow the legal and formal use and trade of wild animals under specific circumstances (Petrossian et al., 2024). These bureaucratic measures necessitate collaboration between government agencies for their processing, control, and enforcement. Furthermore, the legal framework has also sought to acknowledge that Peru is a multicultural country with traditions of using wild animals, so laws aim to respect people's subsistence use. Crucially, Peruvian law establishes categories of difference for wild animals and dictates which relations and actions towards them are sanctioned by the state. Some relations outside of profit (subsistence hunting) are allowed, while others (pets) are not. While most of these laws and institutional structures precede the current influx in international interest for tackling IWT, they both condition the way international CWT priorities land in the country and simultaneously are not immune to their influence.

### 6.3.2. Understanding wild animals and trafficking in Peru

In geopolitical ecology, there is little attention paid to the country-specific definitions or management practices that produce global natures. These, however, are crucial to unravel how international framings of IWT make their way into action in contexts where other understandings and priorities prevail. In the Peruvian legal framework and policy documents, there are two working definitions relevant for the use and management of wild animals. The first is in the LFFS, where "wild animal resources" are defined as:

> *"non-domesticated wild animal species, native or exotic, including their genetic diversity, which live within the national territory; as well as individuals from domesticated species that, due to abandonment or other reasons, are*

*similar in their habits to those of wildlife; except species other than amphibians that are born in continental and marine bodies."* (Article 6)

It includes "wild animal specimens (live or dead specimens, eggs and any part or derivative), individuals kept in captivity, as well as their products and services". This definition aims to be as broad as possible, including exotic or invasive species, but it excludes fish and other aquatic species. Interviewees explained that this separation was solidified in the 1997 Ley Orgánica para el Aprovechamiento Sostenible de los Recursos Naturales (Nº 26821), which defined and divided natural resources between government entities for their management. Since fish stocks are an important revenue for the Peruvian economy, aquatic animal species are considered hydrobiological resources and managed by the Ministry of Production with a focus on the fishing industry and economic development. Conversely, wild animal resources are managed by SERFOR within MIDAGRI, with a focus on sustainable use and conservation. The Ministry of Production has means of managing the sustainability of fisheries, but hydrobiological resources are managed differently than other wild animal resources. Though illegal wild animal trade might be portrayed as one global issue, the Peruvian framework categorises wild animals in different ways that orient them as resources for human use and profit.

The second policy document that specifically refers to IWT in Peru is the 2017 National Strategy for Reducing Wild Fauna Trafficking (the Strategy), developed primarily by SERFOR. It defines its scope as:

*"All species of wild fauna, understood as all that reproduce on land, from the birds, mammals, reptiles Classes, including terrestrial amphibians and invertebrates, as well as marine and continental mammals, and the Actinopterygii from the Syngnathidae Family (Hippocampus ingens)."*

This definition differs slightly from the definition of wild animal resources in the LFFS. This definition refers to taxonomic classes and includes key groups absent from wild animal resources: marine and continental mammals and seahorses. According to interviews with state and NGO professionals, including these species was contentious when the Strategy was drafted and it required some negotiation, since the Strategy was prepared by SERFOR and including these groups would trespass the scope between institutions.

However, they were later included because such species are traded internationally (legally and illegally) and are, therefore, targets for conservation action. This exemplifies how, though legal and institutional arrangements may precede international CWT interests, growing CWT action may need to navigate such conditions to influence new policies.

Despite these policy definitions, the concepts of wildlife and wild animals remain elusive and understood differently by various actors. Many participants, from NGOs and the state, claimed they follow a "broad" definition of wildlife, referring to incorporating all wild animal species as well as fish and other aquatic species. Similarly, other participants would refer to a "biological" definition of wildlife. Merging definitions by several participants, it could be understood as: "all living organisms who live freely in their habitats, including animals and plants". Conversely, state officers or legal professionals would refer to the LFFS definition. However, diverse priorities and inconsistencies emerge. For example, some government officials complained about receiving reports about pigeons or vultures, communicating that they are unimportant. Nonetheless, these birds could be wild animals according to the law, though these officials seem to consider them low priority. This incoherence matters to how we understand the geopolitical ecology of IWT because definitions of wild animals are not broadly shared and are open to interpretation. Therefore, international priorities can be more influential if national frameworks allow various categorisations to justify action or inaction.

It is significant that neither the Forestry and Wild Fauna Law nor the National Strategy define wild animal trafficking. However, two frameworks address sanctions for wild animal use in Peru. According to the Reglamento para la Gestión de Fauna Silvestre, article 191.3, the following are sanctionable:

> *"hunting, capturing, collecting, possession, acquisition, offering for sale, sale, transformation, storage, commerce, import, export or reexport of specimens, products or subproducts of wild fauna, without the corresponding authorisation."*

Key to this definition is the lack of authorisation, which sets apart the legal, formal use of wild animals from the illegal use. Similarly, other actions are listed as sanctionable if done without permits or if they do not follow institutional processes. However, these sanctionable actions are not described under one blanket term. As mentioned before, the Peruvian Criminal Code does sanction "illegal wild animal trafficking" explicitly in Article 308:

> *"Those who acquire, sell, transport, store, import, export or reexport products or specimens of wild non-timber flora and/or fauna, without a valid permit or certificate, whose non-authorised origin they know or can assume, will be sanctioned with a prison sentence no shorter than three years nor longer than five years and 180 to 400 fine-days."*

This inclusion in the Criminal Code makes the chain of illegal wild animal trade a crime and, as such, involves the judicial system in its prosecution of wild animal trafficking. This broad criminalisation could be implemented effectively to prosecute any wildlife trade action carried out without state authorisation, but it also poses some concerns for actors involved.

It is important to note how language conditions the ways in which international CWT action lands in target areas. Conflicts about the use of the term "tráfico de fauna silvestre" (wild animal trafficking) were often referred during my interviews, where non-legal professionals claimed it was difficult to understand what constitutes a crime. In Spanish, the word "tráfico" refers to movement. It may mean legal, everyday movement and it does not inherently denote a crime. Perhaps that is why the crime is explicitly named "illegal trafficking". However, if understanding trafficking as movement, the phrase "tráfico de fauna" can exclude other potentially illegal actions such as harvesting or selling. This is why professionals who were not legal experts such as biologists or conservationists, more acquainted with animal conservation than laws, found it difficult to capture the current legalistic turn in CWT. The surge in international interest in IWT as a threat against the rule of law is resulting in the use of language that is unfamiliar to other actors involved in CWT or conservation.

Relatedly, different institutions manage differing understandings and conceptualisations of IWT. A government officer communicated their frustration towards the growing interest in "tackling wild animal trafficking" in Peru:

> *"If we look at the LFFS and its regulations, you will not find 'illegal wild animal trafficking.' (...) That definition does not exist. Yet we see NGOs and government entities creating documents about trafficking."*

This government officer is not wrong, the LFFS does not specifically mention illegal wildlife trafficking, though the Criminal Code does. This quote exemplifies three points key to exploring the geopolitical ecology of IWT and how international priorities land in Peru. Firstly, it shows a key difference between international "counter wildlife trafficking" language and Peruvian law, where some of the institutions targeted by CWT programmes do not share the same lexicon. Secondly, it shows a gap in the Peruvian institutional matrix, since administrative wildlife authorities prefer to work through concepts established within wildlife law instead of criminal law. Thirdly, it evidences discontent or frustration with actors that are swayed to work outside of the boundaries of national legal definitions. As geopolitical ecology becomes interested in how IWT is defined and managed geopolitically, looking closely into a target area for CWT action elucidates how global natures are not simply accepted as they are proposed by powerful actors, but are contested and reshaped when the international and national meet.

### 6.3.3. Addressing the challenge of wild animals as resources

Legal and institutional frameworks orient wild animals in various ways, but these conditions also present challenges to how wild animals are managed in practice. As wild animals in Peru are oriented as resources, the Peruvian government has a strong interest in "promoting the sustainable use of the wild animal resource". To achieve this, Peru has a complex set of procedures and regulations that formalise and legalise trade in wild animals in ways that aim for it to produce revenue while being sustainable. In the LFFS it is described as a "productive and participative conservation approach, aiming at sustainable use and good treatment" (Article 85). This contrasts a solely protectionist or

conservationist view of wildlife as something that must be left untouched and recognises the diversity of cultures and traditions in the Peruvian territory. Though research on geopolitical ecology focuses on the ways large geopolitical institutions drive definitions and ways of managing nature, these definitions may land in places where other priorities prevail. Thus, to understand the geopolitical definition and management of global natures we must attend to the ways in which they are received. Looking at Peru's context extends this approach by looking at which challenges of materialising a wild animal trade economy are addressed, reshaped, or ignored by international CWT action in a context where ensuring the continuation of legal wildlife trade and recognising diversity in traditional use conditions how otherwise protectionist CWT action lands.

The importance of institutional arrangements in materialising a wild animal trade economy is highlighted in the challenge posed by the significant state budget and capacity needed to control and monitor sustainable legal trade nation-wide. A question arises from this: even if legal trade is ecologically sustainable, is it institutionally sustainable? From my conversations with CWT professionals and findings in the literature, significant economic and human resources are needed to sustain the bureaucratic structures controlling legal trade (Gastañaga et al., 2011). This is an issue since few state funds are allocated towards this and attempts at decentralisation from 2009 on have left regional wildlife authorities with little capacities and budget for wildlife management (N. Shanee, 2012; J. Smith et al., 2006). Relatedly, concerns for corruption both from state measures to control it and from non-state actors leave agencies overburdened and constraint by strict budget controls to avoid it. Also described by interviewees and in research is that wild animal agencies are understaffed, and precarious employment conditions or political instability leads to frequent staff changes (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015; N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017). These challenges suggest the level of state control required to manage wild animal resources is institutionally unsustainable. Nonetheless, orienting wild animals as resources is embedded within Peruvian frameworks. Attention to institutional arrangements proves crucial in the study of geopolitical ecology because though increasing financial and human resources for the control of legal wild animal trade is a

genuine state need, it might fall outside the scope and priorities of funders and CWT programmes.

The amount of effort and paperwork needed to navigate these bureaucratic structures is not only a burden for government agencies, but also for citizens who wish to make legal use of wild animals. Regulations and processes are complex and occasionally clash with each other (N. Shanee et al., 2017), making it difficult to "promote a sustainable use" as stated in laws and as SERFOR mandates. For example, a government officer told me that people in Amazonian regions consume caimans as meat and sell the heads -left as byproducts from subsistence use- as souvenirs. The heads are often confiscated though according to the current laws they could be sold if originating from legal use. Another example communicated to me by an NGO specialist is the legal commercialisation of bushmeat originating from authorised management areas, which clashes with sanitation laws that demand animals for human consumption to be slaughtered under certain conditions. A further difficulty was expressed by a government officer who expressed doubts about authorities properly explaining rights and duties to private individuals granted licences for legal and formal wild animal use. These difficulties could possibly disincentivise, or make prohibitively expensive, the legal alternatives for wild animal use which could legally and sustainably meet the demand for such specimens (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015; Leberatto, 2017). This points to the Peruvian legal and institutional frameworks being so bureaucratic and complex that it makes legal use very difficult in practice, posing a challenge to the desired promotion of sustainable use stated in frameworks.

Another significant institutional concern related to wild animal management communicated by interviewees was what to do with live animals confiscated during enforcement operations. While the Peruvian government has guidelines for keeping wild animals confiscated from illegal trade to rescue centres and zoos for their rehabilitation, possible release, or indefinite keeping, these institutions have limited capacities and support from the state. In Peru, rescue centres and zoos are most often managed by private institutions, depend on their own private funds, and they are few and are not evenly distributed in the country (N. Shanee et al., 2017). Moreover, as explained before, these institutions require titles for authorised wild animal use in captivity, meaning that

they are subject to similar regulations and constraints as other management titles. Due to facilities being overcrowded, state agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to find space to place seized animals (Leberatto, 2016). Interviewees further protested that most often than not, rescue centres work as zoos to fund themselves and they do not take proper care of the animals, sometimes even engaging in illegal activities. To address this, supporting rescue centres was a targeted activity in the National Strategy's Action Plan, as they are part of the chain of enforcement of IWT and the management of wild animals. This challenge towards wild animal management stems from the ongoing illegal trade in live animals, the subsequent enforcement against it, and the lack of state support for ex-situ conservation facilities.

Ultimately, many professionals working in CWT communicated that most of the challenges they face regarding IWT are due to the low prioritisation of wild animal management within the Peruvian government. Interviewees often mentioned that while forestry divisions are allocated more funding and staff, and have clear processes and structures, wild animal divisions have been recently building these from scratch. They attribute this to the historical economic revenue brought by timber trade, especially in high-value Amazonian species, which facilitated the creation of state structures to manage forestry. Additionally, interviewees argue that illegal logging is a visible large-scale crime that leaves behind clear evidence, while wildlife trade is normalised and very difficult to prove. These professionals expressed frustration towards the legal and institutional frameworks that, while orienting wild animals towards capitalist exchange, do not facilitate its control because wild animal trade has not been seen as large-scale, profitable, and organised. In short, this challenge emerges from the space where "conservation, production, and resource sacrifice overlap almost fully" (Tsing, 2003, p. 5102), where live animals, made resources, are protected and extracted within the same system.

The Peruvian legal and institutional frameworks -and government authorities- have a strong discursive focus on promoting the sustainable use of wild animals. However, materialising a wild animal economy that also respects traditional uses presents a set of challenges throughout the chain from granting rights to policing against illegality. Overburdened wildlife authorities, clashing permits, confusing duties for

rights-holders, and finding no space to house confiscated animals all present challenges towards managing the wild animal resource. Through legal and institutional frameworks that seek to promote a sustainable use, the Peruvian state produces and governs specific ways of relating to wild animals within the parameters of state reach (Wakild, 2020). As legal and institutional frameworks condition the scope of wild animal management for the Peruvian state, these challenges present avenues for action within these conditions, spaces where the state finds difficulties for achieving the priorities it sets for itself. Having presented these challenges, in the following sections I contrast them against international CWT action to unravel how conditions are addressed, reshaped, or ignored when international priorities land in specific contexts.

## 6.4. Translating the international into national action

> *"It is very clear to me that for the jaguar there are guidelines that come from the international that are implemented at the national level, and they generate the conditions at the local level."* – NGO representative.

Despite Peru historically having multiple regulatory recourses to manage wild animal trade, most interviewees believe that they were never mobilised seriously. Notably, the then-small local NGO Neotropical Primate Conservation worked to bring attention to illegal primate trade in the regions of San Martin and Amazonas since 2008 (N. Shanee, 2012). Though WCS, currently the main international organisation involved in CWT in Peru, mentioned working on CWT since 2013 or 2014 (Mendoza & Murillo, 2014), most state and non-state actors agree that CWT action increased in 2019. This surge coincides with global trends and with commitments and connections made at the 2018 IWT London Conference (Masse et al., 2020; Massé & Margulies, 2020), which later led to the organisation of the first High-Level Conference on Illegal Wildlife Trade in the Americas in Lima in 2019. Also during that year, the European Commission (EC) funded

WCS and WWF through a large grant for the Alianza por la Fauna Silvestre y los Bosques (Alliance for Wildlife and Forests) project. According to interviewees, connections to attract funding for CWT in Peru were solidified during the 2018 IWT London Conference. Since then, non-state interviewees recognise that more funding for CWT action is available for the region and note the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 as a moment when CWT "gained traction". Though legal and institutional frameworks to manage the use of wild animals existed, the development of CWT programmes in Peru reflects global trends in interest and framings of IWT and an influx of funding from outside sources.

As international interest in tackling IWT grows and funding finds its way into CWT programmes in Peru, more efforts are put into countering wild animal trafficking at various levels. My research shows that most non-state CWT programmes in Peru do not support efforts to promote a sustainable management of the wild animal resource. Moreover, in contrast to much of the literature on CWT and its impacts around the world (Massé & Lunstrum, 2016; Massé & Margulies, 2020; The World Bank, 2016), they also do not focus in stopping the hunting, capturing, or harvesting of wild animals in protected areas. Even institutions that support the management of protected areas did not mention training or providing equipment for park rangers as part of their CWT programmes. Instead, these programmes mentioned heavily providing support to government agencies to strengthen law enforcement and policy frameworks outside of traditional conservation spaces, addressing the trade of wild animals in markets, country borders, in the streets, etc. Furthermore, this is reflected in the various non-state actors that support CWT in Peru, ranging from conservation, environmental law, animal welfare, and development organisations, both national and international.

### 6.4.1. Developing policy for CWT

Policy and legislation development is a strong target for CWT programmes in Peru. Several international and national non-state organisations are focusing in supporting the Peruvian government in strengthening its legal framework, streamlining laws and policies, and drafting policies identified as necessary. Possibly one of the first and

biggest achievements in non-state actors influencing CWT policy in Peru was the development of the 2017 National Strategy and its Action Plan. Interviewees recounted how before 2015, WCS was monitoring zoonotic diseases in open markets and became concerned by open wild animal trade. WCS then secured a small grant from USFWS for the development of a strategy to tackle IWT for SERFOR. The project progressed since some SERFOR officers were interested in the topic of IWT and had previous connections with WCS staff. Through a series of workshops between government agencies and NGOs during 2016, WCS facilitated the development of the strategy. However, due to its limited funds it was heavily biased towards actors from Lima and brought together a rather small number of actors. Nonetheless, since the strategy developed involved broad government action, it was then signed as a high-level policy with national scope. This exemplifies how in-country conditions such as close connections between non-state and state actors and a lack of a previous CWT agenda from the government can facilitate the entry and involvement of mainstream international conservation and CWT networks according to their priorities.

During my research, a major priority among the CWT programmes I interviewed was updating the Action Plan for the National Strategy, since the previous Plan ended in 2022. Most of the non-state organisations I interviewed, as well as SERFOR and other state agencies, claimed to be involved and providing input into the preparation of the new Action Plan for the period of 2023-2027. It is noteworthy that while the National Strategy and previous Plan were developed with limited funding and participation, this updated Action Plan is involving many different state and non-state, international and national actors and receiving funding from various sources. This shows that interest on CWT has increased greatly in Peru since 2016, reflecting global interest in and funding for CWT (Massé & Margulies, 2020). Though the Plan has not been published (as of December 2023), many interviewees mentioned that this policy document is focusing more on behaviour change approaches, also reflecting new global priorities for CWT action. I do not think all of this should be understood as a direct response to international framings, though, but facilitated by the previous establishment of a condition where non-state actors and funding are required for these processes.

At the time of my research, an important policy topic was the inclusion of IWT within the scope of the law against organised crime. Several international organisations were supporting this such as WCS and Oceana, as well as national ones like SPDA and DAR. This support was anchored on meeting commitments from international agreements, such as tackling IWT as a serious organised crime as part of the 2018 London IWT Conference (Masse et al., 2020), and later part of the 2019 Lima Declaration from the High-Level Conference on IWT in the Americas. While the inclusion of organised crime as an aggravating circumstance for illegal wildlife trafficking was celebrated by most interviewees, some were sceptical. As an interviewee expressed:

> *"I would have liked that this law project integrated an impact evaluation of the inclusion of mining and forestry crimes in the organised crime law. That inclusion was in 2015 and after 7 years we don't know what its impact is. Has it reduced criminality and there is less organised crime? We don't know."*

Though many argue that the inclusion of IWT within the organised crime law will allow law enforcement agencies to access better tools to investigate these crimes, this participant wonders if this law has achieved its desired impacts of reducing organised crime in other crimes. The international framing of IWT as a serious organised crime and the focus on policing as CWT have influenced this policy change, despite not knowing if it will have an impact. This was facilitated by international agreements and the support of non-state actors, but also by previous conditions such as the prior inclusion of other forms of environmental crimes within the organised crime law.

Even though legislation development is a focus for CWT in Peru, some interviewees expressed frustration towards programmes continually focusing on it. One NGO participant argued that there are too many programmes developing laws and policies for CWT, but though the Peruvian legal framework is robust, "institutions are weak." Therefore, though there are many laws and policies in place, state institutions cannot mobilise and enforce the laws and citizens cannot recognise them and act within them. Still policy development is supported as part of CWT action because it complies with international priorities or provides a performance of progress in CWT action. While geopolitical ecology focuses on how international geopolitical institutions impact the

management of global natures, looking at the Peruvian context reveals that there are actors and processes that mediate how such international priorities land in the country like the roles of non-state actors, previous policy, and agreements.

### 6.4.2. Law enforcement for CWT

Reflecting international priorities, all interviewees referenced conducting or supporting law enforcement as part of their CWT efforts. Scholars of critical police power argue that policing aims to maintain specific social and economic orders through a variety of activities, processes, and institutions (Gutiérrez & Neocleous, 2023; Massé, 2022; Neocleous, 2021). Nonetheless, I divide law enforcement for CWT in two categories in my research: control and policing. Control is what my interviewees refer to as "fiscalización". These actions aim to ensure regulations and formal processes have been followed for legal activities. This can include assessing a breeding centre's conditions, ensuring shipments disclose the correct species, or customs checks on numbers. On the other hand, policing aims to halt and prosecute illegal activities through the police, military, or judicial systems. This can include investigations, raids, or police patrols. State agencies with competencies on control and policing are different: administrative agencies such as SERFOR, customs, or the Organismo de Supervisión de los Recursos Forestales y de Fauna Silvestre (OSINFOR) are responsible for control, whilst the police and judicial system are responsible for policing. In interviews, non-state participants expressed that before 2019 CWT programmes worked almost exclusively with control authorities, but now they increasingly support policing agencies. This presents a continuation of the framing of IWT primarily as a crime and the ongoing "conservation-crime convergence" (Masse et al., 2020), as well as an expansion of CWT programmes.

The increasing global framing of IWT as wildlife or environmental crime has also influenced CWT programmes in Peru. Echoing the priorities explored in chapter five, several of the major funded programmes in the country focus on addressing wildlife crimes in the Amazon region. They are funded through over USD$ 42 million from USAID,

among other funders. Previously, several non-state organisations also received funding from the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (US-INL), cementing CWT as an issue of international law enforcement. This funding further shapes CWT programmes, since they hire staff with legal or environmental crime expertise to implement these projects or develop alliances with actors working on those topics, changing the profile of the programmes. This proves and extends Massé and Margulies' (2020) argument that international framings of IWT as a security issue instead of conservation, channelled through funding, converge actors into policing and further shape CWT programmes around concepts of crime and criminality.

Though policing and control may seem separate, collaboration between institutions for policing was often portrayed as necessary due to the lack of resources mentioned before. Interviewees from control agencies mentioned receiving reports about illegal trade and requesting the help of the police to address it. They explained that, although wildlife authorities are mandated to care for wild animals, their regional offices have limited resources to respond. The assumption here is that the police is better funded and staffed in most areas, plus it has the competency to arrest. Many non-state interviewees mentioned that their organisations encourage these collaborations and participate directly in policing IWT at the request of government agencies, either providing support in identifying species in investigations, making a case for the severity of a crime, or supporting surveillance efforts. Shanee et al. (2017, p. 2) also mention that the NGO NPC "participated in law enforcement interventions on 91 occasions" between 2007 and 2015. In this way, a lack of resources for state control agencies becomes a condition for policing to develop into a mechanism in which multiple state and non-state institutions may converge for achieving practical CWT action.

Strengthening policing and sanctions against wildlife trafficking assume that stronger sanctions will deter criminal activities (Hutchinson et al., 2023; Prinsloo et al., 2021). Many of my interviewees stressed this, that to curb wild animal trafficking and promote legal trade, IWT cases must be prosecuted with strong sanctions to portray an increased cost of participating in illegal actions. This ties in efforts to strengthen sanctions with support towards law enforcement, and an interviewee recognises that increasing sanctions is often a focus of funding calls. However, a legal professional

recognises this approach might be flawed when recalling a case where a person was prosecuted for selling six taricaya turtles in a market. This participant argued that it was not proportionate to imprison someone when "an administrative fine would be a more adequate sanction". Though the context of wildlife use and trade in Peru is complex, increasing sanctions and policing is broadly supported by funders and non-state organisations as a primary solution against IWT. This provides a straightforward target for CWT programmes and it is being taken up in countries at the expense of other strategies.

A main priority in Peruvian legal and institutional frameworks is to "facilitate the legal access to wild animal resources", as stated in the Ley Forestal y de Fauna Silvestre. In line with this, state interviewees communicated that the government strongly supports the sustainable use of wild animals. As one state professional told me: "The country promotes the sustainable use of wild animals, otherwise it would be a solely conservationist approach, but that's not what we do." Nonetheless, little support is provided by the state for establishing or maintaining legal wild animal use. Often, a reason for not supporting legal wildlife trade is that it can launder or mask illegal use, since specimens from legal and illegal origin (Gastañaga et al., 2011; Hinsley & Roberts, 2018), 2011; Hinsley & Roberts, 2018). As a non-state participant explains about wild animal trade in Peru:

> *"We can't keep going this way, practically laundering species, saying they come from breeding centres when it is not true. It all requires more information, more clarity and transparency, which it currently lacks."*

In this way, international or non-state priorities may disagree with state priorities, leading to a lack of support for increasing legal use. Still, CWT programmes are not arguing for a complete ban in wild animal trade, as it is not something that the Peruvian government would agree with, instead focusing on supporting further policing and sanctions for any illegal use. This has important consequences for the geopolitical ecology of conservation since it elucidates the role of NGOs within the conservation geopolitical landscape. While Bigger and Neimark (2017) and Massé and Margulies (2020) focused on government entities as large geopolitical actors such as the US Navy or USFWS, I

contend that NGOs, especially international ones, act as geopolitical institutions in driving how CWT is understood and managed in Peru.

As some wild animals are legally conserved and bred for exchange, other wild animals are confiscated from their "illegal" trade. As Tsing (2003, p. 5101) phrases it, the state accepts the support of CWT to "save the environment in the process of destroying it." This echoes Dempsey and Collard's research on the "extinction paradox", looking at how this moment of unprecedented environmental destruction coalesces with record protection (Collard & Dempsey, 2022). Looking at Peru, my research reveals that counter wildlife trafficking makes strange bedfellows, bringing together a variety of actors and justifications into the task of tackling IWT, finally uniting and finding momentum in strengthening and enforcing laws and policies. Other priorities in the government's goal of materialising a wild animal economy, such as supporting rescue centres or promoting a sustainable use, were hardly present in CWT programmes. In states where wildlife management is underfunded and considered low priority, international funding and support can shift state action responding to specific framings. In this way, though there may be many possible targets for action in the management of wild animal use in Peru, only policing and policy development are allocated funds and support. This selective allocation of support, in turn, shapes state framings and action in Peru, evidencing a geopolitical ecology of conservation.

### 6.4.3. Analysing the structures of CWT programmes

In the process of materialising global CWT priorities in specific places, CWT programmes are also conditioned by other structures and contexts that facilitate, shape, or reshape them. Through my research it became clear that, although CWT programmes in Peru aim to respond to government needs, they also respond to many international framings on IWT and how to tackle it. As explored in chapter five, international priorities in the region highlight protecting the Amazon and the jaguar and focus on law enforcement action. A professional working at an international NGO explains the way funding shapes CWT action for jaguar conservation:

> *"The jaguar is a politically correct species and everyone talks about conserving them. (...) All the funds go into [tackling] trafficking, but which funds are allocated towards preventive measures and alternative livelihoods? None, because they are all meeting indicators about confiscating and imprisoning. But all information tells us that we don't really know how jaguar parts enter the international trade. Yet we are still putting money there instead of developing responses for those who really need it."*

This professional expressed frustration towards the way jaguar conservation is directed primarily towards CWT. Similarly, most of the CWT programmes I studied had a heavy bias towards the Amazonian regions of Peru, specifically the Loreto region, and many invoked the image of the jaguar. Though focusing on the Amazon and the jaguar as flagship priorities aims to capture interest and funds for conservation in the country (Lorimer, 2007), it also narrows action geographically, in species and in tactics. Focusing on IWT as an issue of serious organised crime, similarly to how IWT is defined in international spheres, many of these programmes target wildlife or enforcement agencies. Though the Peruvian legal and institutional frameworks view wild animal trade as an issue of sustainable resource management, the focus of CWT programmes reflect the framings and priorities discussed at high level CWT networks. Drawing back to Massé and Margulies (2020) and Duffy (2021), through this uncovers that international framings and priorities are shaping national CWT programmes in Peru.

Different structures or contexts are facilitating or shaping how these CWT programmes are landing into action in Peru specifically. A major reason identified in my interviews for the flow of international funding for CWT into Peru is because it is a country where programmes can achieve measurable action. As a professional from an international NGO told me:

> *"Peru was [a better country] to implement the South America project. [The government of] Bolivia had complex requirements for foreign NGOs (...) and the [political] environment in Bolivia wasn't easy to work in at that moment. It was easy to start the project here [in Peru]. In Colombia the public order*

*situation was not great. And in Ecuador the [jaguar] trafficking problem isn't as big or open to be a priority site."*

This NGO interviewee explains that working as an NGO in other Latin American countries around 2019 was more difficult. In particular, there were geopolitical tensions between the Bolivian government and Western hegemonic powers, which extended to how it responded to collaborations with foreign NGOs (see also Hope, 2021). Due to this landscape, Peru's openness to international support made it possible to still implement CWT projects in the region and maintain the funding. In my interviews it was apparent that most state authorities welcomed support from non-state actors, were excited and grateful for receiving support, and hoped to attract more "cooperantes" (international cooperation). A geopolitical context that makes it more difficult to implement programmes elsewhere, coupled with a lack of resources and low priority assigned to wildlife management, as well as the legitimacy of international organisations, are conditions which facilitate the landing of CWT priorities in Peru.

This openness towards international or non-state support by Peruvian state authorities, combined with increasing international interest for supporting a specific kind of CWT action can cause a flood of programmes or projects in the same spaces. Many interviewees described how targeting the same actors with similar prioritised activities created less efficient CWT programmes. As a professional from an international NGO told me:

*"We are saturating the same stakeholders with the same proposals. We are all targeting the same players who are accepting everyone's offers and they are not distributing them. We need an approach where we can have a more effective impact"*.

While state agencies are interested in accepting all support from non-state actors, and are keen to maintain good relationships with donors, many of the activities planned are similar. This professional further questions whose agendas CWT action in Peru truly responds to:

> *"But the government is not clear on what their needs are. Until they are, everything will be donor-driven and we will be responding to what the donors want to achieve around the world."*

Especially considering a single funding agency may support many projects with a specific focus, several projects may target the same state agencies to fulfil similar objectives. This can cause an inefficient use of funds when, for example, several non-state organisations aim to support policing in the Amazon and therefore conduct similar training workshops with the same state agency. Widespread attention on certain aspects of CWT action overwhelms state agencies which lack a clear strategy and resources for wild animal management. While Sharp (2013, 27) argues that "the provision of aid, the desire to attract international investment and the power of western-dominated international organisations further erodes state sovereignty in the South", I extend this by showing the specific ways in which state visions of managing the wild animal resource are cast to the side to focus solely on what wildlife authorities receive support to tackle: internationally funded priorities.

In Peru, professionals employed in non-state and state CWT action form a network which often works closely. Individuals in the sector mentioned accessing and changing roles between environmental state and non-state, national and international institutions. As a participant said, in Peru "the key to implementing projects is interpersonal rather than institutional relationships". Interviewees mentioned having experience working for one or many of the environmental state agencies such as the Protected Area Service, OSINFOR, or SERFOR, as well as for environmental or conservation non-state organisations. Furthermore, many of the organisations I interviewed stated they collaborated in events or projects with other interviewed organisations or did consulting for other CWT programmes. In this way, individuals in the sector know each other professionally and personally, building networks of trust and legitimacy between institutions (Larner & Laurie, 2010; Laurie & Marvin, 1999). Moreover, professionals at international organisations mentioned that their institutions' close relationships with international cooperation agencies, multilateral agreements, and donors, facilitated their access to funding. This also facilitated their legitimacy with the Peruvian government and in international IWT spaces. Bringing in international

knowledge, connections, and funding (U. Kothari, 2005; Nightingale, 2005), CWT programmes sustain a network from which being a part of is a facilitating condition to influence definitions and solutions for IWT in the country.

The funding and organisational structures of such CWT programmes also seemed to be critical in conditioning the CWT strategies implemented. An NGO professional explained their worries about the direction CWT is taking according to such blanket framings of IWT:

> *"Sometimes I feel that in this topic of wildlife trafficking we are all working on it and fabricating a need for it to attract more funding. I'm not saying it's not important, but why is there no need for supporting sustainable use? (...) We are creating urgency so we keep getting the money. And the same money is given to the same organisations using the same strategies."*

As there is a growing interest in and funding for interventions focused on law enforcement and wildlife crime worldwide, organisations respond by designing and implementing programmes that target those priorities. The global interest in tackling IWT has increased the signing of international agreements, laws, and the allocation of resources for CWT, with support from NGOs and funders (Duffy, 2022b; Massé & Margulies, 2020). It has also increased the number and variety of state and non-state actors involved in tackling IWT in Peru, evidencing that international funding structures facilitate the expansion of specific framings of IWT.

As CWT programmes depend on international funding, the requirements and conditions of grants affect the direction programmes take. Though interviewees recognise that increasing state resources for wildlife management is a primary need for state institutions to achieve their mandates, those needs cannot be covered through international funding because it would be considered as corruption or foreign interference. As a professional who worked extensively in state and non-state institutions explained:

> *"It isn't sustainable to replace public budget with funding or a grant, plus it might create controversy. But in the long term it's inadequate because it does not leave long-term results. (...) A donor will not fund the whole*

*government. (…) It might be a momentary support, but it can't be permanent. And sadly it is a permanent problem, even more critical at the regional level"*.

Therefore, it is evident that a holistic wild animal management in Peru requires more long-term and structural solutions. Nonetheless, fulfilling the needs of state agencies for controlling the system of wild animal management or influencing lasting changes in how people use wild animals are tasks that cannot be solved through funded CWT programmes because they cannot be easily mapped and measured. Requesting money from donors requires projects to be actionable and with clear outputs that can then be monitored and reported to their funders. This means activities must produce concrete results within short project cycles to show success and ensure further funding, as experienced in other processes of bureaucratisation in the development sector (Bebbington, 2004). In this way, the structures of international funding for CWT programmes condition projects into focusing on easily measurable impacts that fit within their donors' priorities and interests.

In studying the geopolitical ecology of conservation, Massé and Margulies (2020) argue that international framings of IWT influence the kind of conservation action that is carried out depending on if it receives funding or not. In this chapter, however, I have further developed their framework to unravel the ways national legal and institutional frameworks, as well as other conditioning factors such as geopolitical contexts and the structures of international development, facilitate, shape, or reshape the ways in which such framings influence action in a specific country. Whilst Bigger and Neimark argue that framings of nature defined by powerful geopolitical institutions produce material impacts on how nature is managed (Bigger & Neimark, 2017), I have shown the conflicting and complex ways in which international framings produce action in Peru. Ultimately, through implementing and enforcing international CWT priorities, non-state CWT programmes in Peru focus on actions that do not materialise the sustainable wild animal economy the Peruvian legal and institutional frameworks aim to produce.

## 6.5. Conclusion

Drawing from Bigger and Neimark (2017), Massé and Margulies (2020) developed the framework of geopolitical ecology to identify a geopolitical ecology of conservation. In doing so, they established a lens to explore how geopolitical actors, international assistance, and biodiversity conservation intersect and what this means for the funding of conservation programmes. Though scholars have studied how CWT action has facilitated violence in places targeted for action (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014; Massé & Lunstrum, 2016), looking at legal and institutional frameworks I have contributed to understanding how priorities and framings of IWT at international levels interact with conditions at the national scale to produce CWT programmes. Thus, I find the gaps in how geopolitical ecology is applied to comprehend how powerful institutions, including international NGOs, achieve discursive and material consequences in the definition and management of environmental change.

The Peruvian legal and institutional framework presents animals as resources and aims to ensure a sustainable use of wild animals and respect people's traditional subsistence uses. This legal framework is complex and leaves space for interpretation according to previous institutional arrangements, values, and priorities. Nonetheless, materialising a sustainable wild animal economy leads to several challenges. An overburdened and under-resourced institutional matrix is unable to manage legal wild animal use while citizens who attempt to make legal use of wild animals find difficulties. Although promoting sustainable use is a priority in law, managing wild animals is not a focus for the government and therefore wildlife authorities rely on CWT programmes to support their work.

In contrast to many studies on the impacts of CWT action, a key finding of my research is that most CWT programmes in Peru do not support anti-poaching efforts in protected areas. Instead, most CWT action focuses on supporting state agencies either in policy development or policing. The most salient topics during my research were updating the National Strategy, introducing wildlife trafficking within the law against organised crime, increasing policing and sanctions to dissuade trafficking, and focusing

on countering wildlife crimes. All these government activities had support from international and national non-state actors. While Peru has been hospitable towards international action and wildlife authorities are open to receive support, projects targets are so selective that they repeat actions and become inefficient. Moreover, personal and professional relationships maintain a CWT network which dictates mainstream action. In striving to access the influx of funding, more actors have been involved in CWT programmes that reflect international priorities and framings, and projects are developed in ways that ensure actionable and measurable outcomes instead of long-term change.

Especially since CWT action in Latin America and Peru has gained increased attention in the last decade, exploring how state and non-state actors respond to this influx of funding and interest according to their own priorities is crucial to direct this interest in productive ways. I have found that although the Peruvian state follows legal and institutional frameworks that aim to promote the sustainable legal use of wild animals, through the support of funding bodies and international organisations most CWT action is aimed towards strengthening policies and policing. At the national scale, this is because the complex Peruvian legal framework overburdens an already under-resourced system. At the international scale it is due to funding structures which follow international priorities and management structures that direct action towards measurable action. For understanding of the geopolitical ecology of conservation, this means that the relationship between funding and CWT projects is not straightforward and top-down, but other contextual conditions facilitate, shape, or reshape the ways international framings are materialised into action.

# Chapter 7

# Engaging with wildlife: Perceptions of wild animal trade in markets

*"Considerando también*
*que el hombre es en verdad un animal*
*y, no obstante, al voltear, me da con su tristeza en la cabeza..."*

- Considerando en frío, imparcialmente..., César Vallejo.

## 7.1. Introduction

Why does a turtle, weeks after hatching on a beach in the Amazon, find itself in a market to be sold as a pet? In this chapter, I foreground an analysis of places where trade in wild animals is or was commonplace to identify how current relationships with animals inform their trade and reveal how they interact with counter wildlife trafficking (CWT) framings, actions, and priorities. Though much of CWT action is prioritised and decided in high-end convention centres or modern offices (Corson et al., 2019; Masse et al., 2020), programmes often target actions at the local level. These actions in places where wildlife is used and traded have material impacts on the people who engage with wildlife for multiple reasons (Lunstrum, 2014; Massé et al., 2021; Paudel et al., 2020), in turn disciplining diverse human-non-human relations.

Even though laws and policies, and resources for their enforcement, are mobilised in Peru, wildlife trade appears unyielding (Mena et al., 2021; Mendoza et al.,

2022). In response, CWT action seems only to continue its traction, engaging national, international, private, and public actors (Daut, Brightsmith, & Peterson, et al., 2015; Shanee et al., 2017). Despite these efforts, wild animal trade continues and CWT efforts rather encounter deep-rooted understandings and traditions. In response, this chapter focuses on the under-researched area of understanding public understandings of wild animals, their trade, and efforts to tackle it in markets where wild animals are commercialised (Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., et al., 2015; Leberatto, 2016). Exploring these perspectives is key since it allows us to problematise the tolerance for this trade and the effectiveness of CWT action, looking for solutions that approach justice for humans and non-humans (Heynen & Ybarra, 2021).

My main aim for this chapter is to reveal how discourses around IWT mobilised internationally and implemented nationally conflict and interact with local discourses, ontologies, and politics. For this, I explore the ways in which wild animals, their use and CWT action are perceived in markets where wild animals are traded, developing a framework for a feminist geopolitical ecology of conservation by theorising the everyday results of CWT as a *cosmopolitical ordering practice*. This means that CWT action serves to define and control what animals *are* and what relations with them should be *acceptable*. This chapter primarily argues that counter wildlife trafficking action defines and manages interactions with wild animals in ways that conflict with local experiences that shape wild animal trade and contributes to maintaining long-held distrust towards the state. This is because place-based understandings of animals shape the acceptable ways of engaging with them: in Lima, wild animals are distant and traded as pets, while in Iquitos, they are embedded in everyday lives. Due to local experiences and values, many relate closely to animals in the domestic sphere, so avoiding interactions between people and animals is not a priority. Since the state is perceived as corrupt and inefficient, current CWT action carried out through the state fuels distrust of it. This chapter is based on fieldwork in Lima and Iquitos, Peru, further described in chapter four, in section 4.5.

In the first section, I develop a framework of feminist geopolitical ecology and put it in conversation with political ontology. Following a brief description of my embodied experiences doing fieldwork in the markets, the chapter shifts to presenting my results

divided into three sections. Section 7.4 explores how people in the markets understand wild animals and describe their experiences with them and their use. These differ between cities and from Western-modern government and NGO discourses, evidencing place-based worldings which shape which relations with animals are considered acceptable. Then, section 7.5 analyses people's knowledge and perceptions of CWT laws and actions in Peru. In section 7.6, I analyse how understandings of wild animals shape conflicting perceptions of policing for conservation to demonstrate how particular internationally-driven CWT action contributes to a distrust of the state. Lastly, section 7.7 concludes the findings from this chapter.

## 7.2. Making a geopolitical world with animals

Markets are important spaces in everyday life as they are places of encounter where people meet, purchase food or objects, and exchange value and values. Street markets in Peru are widely known as key for IWT (Leberatto, 2017; Mayor et al., 2019, 2022) and have been studied extensively for estimating wildlife trade (Bodmer et al., 2004; Daut, Brightsmith, Mendoza, et al., 2015; D'Cruze et al., 2021; N. Shanee et al., 2017) and monitoring disease (Batalla L. et al., 2015; Maguiña-Molina et al., 2021; Vinetz et al., 2005). While some research has included people's experiences with the objective of unravelling the dynamics of wildlife trade (Maldonado et al., 2009; Pires et al., 2016; N. Shanee, 2012), understandings and experiences of wild animals have been largely neglected in research on CWT. Though the experiences of people directly involved in the trade have been investigated through a criminology approach (Leberatto, 2016, 2017), everyday perspectives of the trade have mostly been ignored (for some examples see Moorhouse et al., 2023, 2024). Crucially, people's experiences of wild animals have not been explored in ways that unravel the tolerance for it and its consequences when faced with increased international support for CWT.

Massé and Margulies (2020) used the framework of geopolitical ecology to explore how framings of IWT as a US geopolitical concern increased the allocation of foreign assistance into CWT programmes, producing "material effects on the ground via the kinds of projects they support (or not)" (Massé & Margulies, 2020, p. 12). However, they do not explore such effects on the ground. Drawing from feminist geopolitics, I advance a feminist geopolitical ecology to examine the material effects of IWT framings on everyday life. Feminist geopolitics explores geopolitical discourse through an embodied position, which brings together different scales of analysis to examine power relations (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2004). As such, it "traces nascent forms of power, oppression, and resistances at and between multiple scales" (Massaro & Williams, 2013, p. 567), making it useful to interrogate geographically specific matters of security (Hyndman, 2004; Massaro & Williams, 2013; Williams & Massaro, 2013). This approach enables me to examine how global environmental governance processes impact everyday experiences but are also influenced and challenged by them (Sharp, 2020, 2023). As such, CWT in markets is an example of the "importance of ensuring that small, mundane daily practices of everyday life are understood in relation to the reconstructions of the nation and the international" (Dowler & Sharp, 2001, p. 174). Geopolitical ecology and feminist geopolitics have a common background: critical geopolitics. As such, a feminist geopolitical ecology brings together feminist geography, critical geopolitics and political ecology. Through a feminist geopolitical ecology, I enquire how the mobilisation of geopolitical framings of nature impacts people's daily lives, remaking discourses to provide results different than intended.

I place the above literature in conversation with the field of political ontology, which is concerned with exploring "the dynamics through which different ways of worlding sustain themselves even as they interact, interfere, and mingle with each other" (Blaser, 2013c, p. 552). In this way, it recognises that there is not one single independent reality to be uncovered, but multiple worlds or ontologies enacting their realities with political consequences (Blaser, 2009a, 2009b, 2013c). In the study of conservation, it proves crucial to unravelling how different actors and their worlds come into conflict in managing hunting (Blaser, 2009b; Gombay, 2014; Nadasdy, 2007), agroforestry (N. C. González & Kröger, 2020), interactions with guanacos (Petitpas & Bonacic, 2019),

establishing protected areas (Trentini, 2023), and harvesting coral (Pauwelussen & Verschoor, 2017). This literature, largely developing in Latin American scholarship and concerned with decolonial approaches (de la Cadena & Blaser, 2018), explores how the stories told through conservation expose different ontologies. Framings or stories tell us what exists in the world and the relations between what exists, which are then performed in world-making effects (Blaser, 2013c). As mentioned in chapter five, international CWT networks frame IWT as a transnational, serious organised crime driven by profit threatening conservation, security, health, and livelihoods. This story is then enacted by strengthening policy frameworks and law enforcement action, as mentioned in chapter six. In this chapter I am interested in the world that such CWT stories make and how or why they conflict with other ontologies that refuse to be subsumed under its worlding.

Blaser (2009, 2013) contends that a Western modern ontology hinges upon a sharp separation between nature and culture, a tendency to conceive difference in hierarchical terms, and a linear conception of time. My focus on wild animals leads me to delve deeper into the first two elements since animals emerge from the nature/culture divide, and the ways in which societies interact with them and manage such interactions are navigated through hierarchical differences. From the field of Science and Technology Studies, Haraway (2003) enquires into the relationship between companion species, which are species that "become with" each other. Thinking with and through animals, she argues that reckoning with animal-human entanglements beyond domestication deepens our understandings of contextualised and historically situated multispecies relationships within specific naturecultures (Haraway, 2006, 2007; Lorimer, 2010). These frameworks are useful for my analysis because they help to reveal relations with animals in their contexts and in parallel to international CWT priorities, without taking their ontological status for granted (Blaser, 2013c). Drawing from Marisol de la Cadena's exploration of the conflict between the Awajun people and the Peruvian state on territory, I attempt to reveal the ontological conflict "over what [animals are] and what kind of relations make [them]" (de la Cadena, 2019, p. 37). Through this chapter, I look at what experiences of wild animal trade in markets say about relations between animals and people and how that unravels the political ontology of mainstream conservation.

While wild animal trade has been extensively explored as an issue of conservation or crime, the literature fails to connect how localised experiences of wild animals interact with the everyday social and political impacts of international framings of IWT. In this way, I am not looking at CWT action as a practical way of ensuring security or conserving animals, but analyse it as a *cosmopolitical ordering* managing what animals *are* and which relations with them are *deemed acceptable*. For CWT programmes, wild animals and humans must exist in separate spheres with no close interactions. In analysing CWT action in this way, I draw from a feminist geopolitical ecology and political ontology to contend that the worlding practices enacted through internationally-driven CWT action conflict with place-based ontologies and produce unintended political consequences for conservation and the state. This combined framework offers a more holistic understanding since feminist geopolitics incorporates embodied perspectives often excluded from mainstream geopolitical discourse. Political ontology complements this by further providing a lens through which to question assumptions of reality mobilised through CWT action.

## 7.3. Visiting the markets

### 7.3.1. Lima: Central market

Growing up in Lima, I often visited a block in Jirón Ayacucho with my family to wander around the stalls selling animals and pet related products. Jirón Ayacucho is a street in Lima's historic colonial centre and part of the area known as the Central market. I remember the block was chaotic, loud, and busy. It was not uncommon to see vendors walking around offering animals perched on their shoulders or in cages. On the side of the road there were stores looking out into the street and two galerías – indoor spaces with small stores or stalls. I was impressed by those galerías full of cages and glass tanks crowded with animals, most often than not ill and in poor conditions. Some animals were

the usual pets: dogs, cats, and hamsters. My younger brother once stuck his finger into a glass tank, got bitten by a rat and had to get rabies vaccines. However, it was also easy to find other animals commonly considered pets in Peru but also targets of IWT, such as Amazonian parrots, turtles, and iguanas.

I did not visit Jirón Ayacucho much during the 2010s, but while preparing my fieldwork, friends and family told me that the street had changed. When I visited, it looked different. The stores are now pet shops, only selling food and accessories, but no live animals other than fish (Images 2 and 3). Nonetheless, people carrying puppies or booklets with pictures of animals offered pets on the street, some even yelling, “puppies, pets, cheap puppies!”. If you approach them, you can look through their booklets and request to buy animals from their roster of dogs, cats, and parrots, but no other animals considered “wild”. I often saw people approaching these vendors, enquiring as potential buyers, but I did not personally witness any IWT in the Central market.

Images 2 and 3. Inside one of the galerías in Jirón Ayacucho.

Despite these street vendors, attitudes toward selling animals were mixed. I saw many campaigns promoting the adoption of dogs and cats close to Jirón Ayacucho, as it is known as a place where people purchase pets. Even though there remains an interest in purchasing dogs of specific breeds, there seems to be an increasing awareness of adopting pets instead of buying them, which is discussed in the following sections. On one occasion, I saw a person offering a puppy for sale in the street. A passerby approached them and complained, saying, "you are still young, you could do something else". The seller replied, "what would you have me do? Would you rather I sell drugs?".

Municipality personnel and police officers often patrol the Central market under the watchful eye of security cameras set on lamp posts. Employees from the Municipality's Retención (seizing) team in heavy protection gear and carrying non-lethal weapons look for illegal products to confiscate. Through informal conversations, I was told that the Municipality's Fiscalización (administrative law enforcement) team surveys the area to fine or report anyone offering live animals without authorisation, which significantly reduced commercialisation. According to some, this heavy patrolling started before 2021, mostly because of journalism on animal trade in the market. However, some claim that animal trade carries on when the Municipality or police are not around. In an informal conversation, I was told that people sell cats, dogs, and "pájaros que traen de la selva (birds brought from the jungle)", recognising that selling them is illegal. Generally, Municipality employees did not seem concerned with commercialisation through booklets though it clashes with a 2019 Municipality policy establishing fines against people for "commercialising domestic animals in public areas or unauthorised establishments or environments" (Municipalidad Metropolitana de Lima, Ordenanza Nº 2200).

### 7.3.2. Iquitos: Belen and Modelo markets

I had never visited Iquitos before, but I had heard tales. In my previous work managing and monitoring a CWT project, Iquitos, particularly the Belen market, was always a topic of conversation and a target for CWT action. People often told me the

Belen market was an overwhelming place full of wild animals: turtles, caimans and snakes butchered for shoppers to see. Monkeys, parrots, and jaguar fangs are all sold openly. Granted, the people telling me these stories were mostly from Lima, more used to supermarkets than street markets. However, my experiences in Iquitos were very different.

Images 4 and 5. A street view of the Belen market (4). Motelo meat sold at a stall in the Belen market, next to poultry (5).

The Belen market spans about 10 blocks in the south riverside of Iquitos. Like many street markets around Peru, it comprises stores, indoor markets and blocks of stalls set on the pavement or road (image 4). The market is mostly divided by the types of goods sold, with areas that offer produce, meat, clothes, etc. It is up from early morning, and some stalls begin to pack up and close around lunchtime. In comparison to the Central market in Lima, there is little police or enforcement on site, though occasionally there were transit police officers guiding vehicles to avoid traffic jams. I sometimes

observed police officers shopping or eating at the market, yet I never witnessed them actively engaging in policing activities.

At first glance, I could not find traces of wild animals sold in the Belen market. From what I could recognise, it was primarily informal, everyday commerce. However, after spending some more time, I began noticing that some days, and in certain parts of the market, carne de monte (bushmeat) was offered, mostly from mammals or turtles (image 5). Walking around the areas for handicrafts, souvenirs, or brujería (witchcraft), I saw necklaces with pendants made of fangs, possibly from a big cat (jaguar or puma). Other handicrafts included colourful feathers. People walked around offering taricaya turtle (*Podocnemis unifilis*) eggs as a snack (image 6). A few times I saw caiman heads. These illicit products were not common or seen in big quantities, but they were nonetheless offered and sold openly. Some may have been of legal origin, but I could not certify it.


Images 6 and 7. Taricaya eggs on a bowl in Modelo market (Image 6). A view of a poultry pen in the Modelo market (Image 7).

Like the Belen market, Modelo is a street market that covers around five blocks of stalls set on roads and pavements, and indoor stores. It is in the central-north side of the city and a couple of blocks from the riverfront. The space is mostly roofed and organised by wooden stalls. It is also divided by the types of goods sold, but not as neatly as Belen. In contrast to Belen, I saw live animals in Modelo, mainly chickens, to be slaughtered and sold (image 7). I also saw carne de monte in Modelo, including mammals and motelo (*Chelonoidis denticulatus*). I also saw people offering charapa turtle (*Podocnemis expansa*) eggs. I did not find any handicrafts, traditional items or brujería, though I saw parrots (mainly *Brotogeris spp.*) kept in cages as household pets or offered for sale. In all the markets I visited, both informal conversations and interviews communicated that trade in wild animals is less common, and other research found similar experiences of interviewees mentioning a decrease over time (Leberatto, 2016, 2017; N. Shanee, 2012). As in Belen, I did not see any policing in Modelo.

To grasp the present dynamics of the Iquitos market, it is crucial to first understand the city's history. While Lima exists as a settlement since pre-Hispanic times and was founded as the colonial capital of the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru in 1535, urban growth in Iquitos is more recent. During the 17th and 18th centuries, European Jesuit missionaries travelled the area that is now Loreto forcing Indigenous groups to settle, adopt European customs and convert to Christianism, which began a process of violent dispossession and transformation (B. Barham & Coomes, 1994b). Later, the Rubber Boom of the 20th century brought the most acute changes (Rodríguez Goyes, 2023). Located in a strategic site, Iquitos was a prime area to settle the rubber industry to fulfil international demand (CAAAP & IWGIA, 2011). European immigrants arrived in the city to make their fortunes, while Indigenous peoples were further dispossessed of their territories and enslaved into rubber extraction (Barham & Coomes, 1994b; CAAAP & IWGIA, 2011). This influx of capital and labour fuelled Iquitos' expansion, but when the boom ceased the city could not sustain its economy (B. L. Barham & Coomes, 1994a). Since then, it has gone through several cycles of boom and collapse as it remains an important port, though high poverty and low education indexes persist. Native people, isolated from their livelihoods and traditions, were expected to assimilate into the colonial culture in the city, but they found themselves unable to fully participate,

constrained by social and economic structures. Through time, the traditional use of territories and livelihoods was restricted and then illegalised.

My experiences in the markets, both before and during my fieldwork period, as well as other contextual information presented in these sections are part of the embodied framework through which I made sense of the experiences generously shared by my interviewees. They exposed the differences in lived experiences between the coastal colonial metropolis of Lima and the growing Amazonian Iquitos. Moreover, they raised questions about the everyday nature of wild animal trade in these markets and the policing aimed at stopping it, explored below through the lens of feminist geopolitical ecology.

## 7.4. Engaging with the "animal silvestre"

### 7.4.1. What is an "animal silvestre"?

> *"Un animal silvestre, es por ejemplo, que vive en la selva. Ahí se crió. Y vive de la fruta o animales que encuentra." (A wild animal is, for example, one that lives in the jungle. That's where they were raised and they live from fruit or animals they find, 009Belen)*

During my fieldwork it became apparent that people in the markets were unfamiliar with the term "silvestre". At least nine interviewees said they did not know what the term means and were unable to define it. Very few interviewees could define "animales silvestres" in the ways the Peruvian government and CWT organisations do, showing the gap in knowledge of the definitions used in legal frameworks. Instead, more than half of my interviewees linked the term to animals living in specific physical locations such as "the jungle" or "the fields". This focuses the understanding of wild

animals to geographical locations where they are found instead of a characteristic of the species in the way the laws portray it. This was further confirmed when some interviewees explained that any animal inhabiting those locations is wild, including species that might otherwise be considered domesticated such as cows, horses or dogs. Hence, for many participants an "animal silvestre" is any animal that usually lives in wild places. I refer to this as a geographical understanding of wild animals.

The difference between "silvestre" and "doméstico" was common in interviews, especially when discussing the definition of wild animals in legal frameworks. In Spanish, "salvaje", similar to "savage", is the word normally used for "wild", but it also evokes a sense of danger, an animal that cannot be controlled. Some participants defined animales silvestres as "salvajes", dangerous animals that will not listen to humans. However, the use of the term "silvestre" by the Peruvian government and CWT programmes has a scientific-managerial connotation. It is a term used in government frameworks and scientific literature, where it is assumed as evident, but mostly excluded from daily use as evidenced by interview responses. On the other hand, "doméstico" is used commonly, meaning an animal that is domesticated that inhabits the "domestic" space. Nonetheless, it is a complex term. Interviewees express a multiplicity of understandings of domestication: animals responding to humans, keeping animals as pets or livestock, relating to them as family, "raising" them, relating to animals that live nearby. Some interviewees mentioned that wild animals can be domesticated while retaining their condition as "wild." Furthermore, some mentioned that all wild animals have the potential to be domesticated: "Todo animal silvestre del monte también se domestica. Esos cuando tú les crías de chiquitos también son domesticados" (Every wild animal can be domesticated. When you raise them from babies they are also domesticated, 006Modelo). In this view, for people in markets, domestication happens to an individual animal instead of a species.

Taking that domestication -or lack of it- is central in legal definitions of wild animals, there being different understandings of domestication exhibits the gaps between actors. As uncovered in chapter six, the Peruvian law expresses a dichotomy: a species is either domesticated or wild. Nonetheless, for people in the markets that distinction is not as straightforward. The wild/domesticated dichotomy, one could argue,

fits into the ontological nature/culture separation of the Western-modern universe (Blaser, 2009a; Haraway, 2003; Russell, 2002). Domesticated animals are those created by culture, while wild animals exist outside of culture in a so-called natural state. If domestication is understood as a process that starts with human-non-human contact and ends with biological differences created by selecting desired traits (Collard, 2020; Russell, 2002; P. Stahl, 2014), only the species at the end of that process are considered domesticated by the Peruvian government and CWT programmes. However, in the markets any step in the process is considered domestication and, therefore, the wild/domesticated (and nature/culture) dichotomy does not unravel neatly. Looking at this through a political ontology lens reveals how cosmopolitical definitions of what animals are differ between actors. A feminist geopolitical ecology reveals how those ideas mobilised by CWT programmes can be used to enforce specific understandings of wild animals over other experiences.

### 7.4.2. Revealing human-animal relations

Political ontology points us to consider seriously that the stories about what kinds of things exist and the relations between them enact different worlds (Blaser, 2014), even stories about humans and non-humans (Petitpas & Bonacic, 2019). Interviews in Lima and Iquitos revealed relationships with wild animals according to varied, place-based experiences, and this was evident in differences between the cities. Almost half of my interviewees reported no interactions with wild animals or only seeing them from afar, on television or in zoos. This was expected considering the interviews were conducted in urban settings and possibly impacted by a perceived risk of talking openly about an illegal activity (Leberatto, 2016). However, while only three people in Lima accounted seeing wild animals in person, 15 participants in Iquitos mentioned seeing them often when entering the forest, mainly for agriculture. Interviewees in Iquitos were more knowledgeable about wild animals and expressed closer connections with them, naming local species and explaining where and how they live. In contrast, people in Lima named animals less often, and when they did, they named Amazonian or foreign species. In the

Western, modern city of Lima people mostly understand wild animals as geographically located “in the jungle”, therefore, they do not recognise local species as wild or have knowledge of or close connections with them.

It was clear that deep relationships with wild animals in Iquitos were based on close experiences, often for daily use. In Iquitos, 15 people stated that wild animals are used as food, which was absent in Lima. As an interviewee told me in the Modelo market: “They bring them here to sell and people buy them for daily food” (009Modelo). Additionally, 13 interviewees (only two from Lima) stated they see wild animals in the market when they are traded. Moreover, at least 15 people, mostly from Iquitos, expressed interactions with wild animals in the form of relating to or caring for them. Some relationships mentioned were “coexistence”, as pets, “criando” (raising/breeding) or looking after them. For example, an interviewee in the Belen market told me their family kept wild animals: “En el hospedaje que tenía hace 25 años tenía varios animales silvestres: añujes, pericos… Tenía mi anaconda” (In the lodging I had 25 years ago I had many wild animals: pacas, parrots… I had my anaconda, 007Belen). Other interviewees in Iquitos mentioned keeping animals as livestock: “Ellos viven así no más en su huerta. Por ejemplo, hay motelos. Majaz también crían algunos” (They live just like that in their plot. For example, there are motelos. Some also raise majaz, 006Belen). This shows engagement with wild animals in the domestic sphere in Iquitos, evidencing how place and traditions contribute to people’s relationships with animals without dividing them between wild or domestic in ways that are “multiform, at stake, unfinished, consequential” (Haraway, 2003, p. 29). This has important consequences for the geopolitical ecology of CWT since framings of IWT and the enforcement of CWT conflict with wild animal use and trade as a continuation of traditions and livelihoods.

Animals’ experiences and wellbeing were important concerns for most participants in both Lima and Iquitos. Often animals were likened to humans, saying that they are “like” or “the same as” people, or mentioning animals’ wants and needs, their rights, “dreams”, “customs”, “freedom”, and feelings. As an interviewee in Lima told me:

> *“Es como una persona. Si a una persona la sacan de su hábitat o la encierran está mal, entonces también está mal que se le haga eso a los animales”*

*(They are like a person. If you take a person out of their habitat or they are locked up it is wrong, therefore it is also wrong to do that to animals, 003Lima)*.

This participant expresses that similar values should be respected in the treatment of both animals and people. Other interviewees mention animals "wanting to be free" (018Belen), "having the right to life" (009Modelo), and "needing love like any person" (021Belen). This can express that some people recognise animals as more than resources, but as intelligent, sentient beings. In the markets, "humans are animals too" (009Modelo) and "protecting animals is right because we are all human beings" (014Lima). These connections between animals and people diminish hierarchies between human and non-human identities (Blaser, 2009b), blurring the lines between the nature/culture divide. Moreover, linking this with feminist geopolitics contributes to problematising and contextualising simplistic international framings of wild animals in CWT programmes which aim to enforce a separation between humans and nature or portray use and trade as solely an exploitation of resources. In this way, theorising CWT as an international cosmopolitical ordering enables me to elucidate ontological conflicts between global conservation programmes and everyday local contexts.

### 7.4.3. Problematising acceptable or unacceptable interactions

The experiences mentioned above shape the kind of interactions with wild animals considered acceptable or justifiable. Depending on the context, some ways of harming animals were perceived as more acceptable than others. For example, hunting and killing were mentioned by seven participants in Lima and 26 in Iquitos. They were portrayed as the most extreme harm that can be done to a living being, though it was not always perceived completely negatively. In Iquitos, most interviewees cited that animals are hunted for bushmeat: "Los traemos a vender, de eso también nos alimentamos. Pero también le hacemos un daño" (We bring them here to sell, we also feed ourselves from that. But we also cause them harm, 005Modelo). This participant recognises that hunting harms animals, but it is also an important source of nutrition in the region (Bodmer et al.,

2004; Bodmer & Lozano, 2001; Moorhouse et al., 2023). It is key to note that in Iquitos participants stressed that people who live in the "rivera" (riverside) or forest are the main suppliers of wild animals for these markets. They highlighted that people in cities eat domestic animals, while forest-dwellers rely on wild animals (El Bizri et al., 2020; Mayor et al., 2022). Mostly in Iquitos, people recognise that people's life and livelihoods depend on wild animals, putting the needs of humans and non-humans in conflict (Blaser, 2009b; Duffy et al., 2016).

The depletion of wild animal populations is an important concern for the Peruvian state and CWT programmes, but it was also central in Iquitos, though notably absent in Lima. People in Iquitos often described how the use of animals or the destruction of their habitats might lead to extinction, while in Lima extinction was referenced only when defining animals as endangered. This difference may be due to how people relate to wild animals; whereas in Iquitos people have closer experiences with animal populations, while in Lima people are not as concerned. As an interviewee in the Belen market told me: "Se les hace daño porque se están acabando contra sus vidas y en el hábitat en el que viven. Está terminándose" (They are harmed because their lives are in peril and the habitat where they live is running out. It is ending, 014Belen). In contrast, in Lima some participants mentioned that the trade of animals that are not endangered was acceptable. As an interviewee said: "Hay animales que están en abundancia en la fauna y pueden venderse porque no están en peligro de extinción" (There are animals that are in abundance and can be sold because they are not endangered, 010Lima). This shows a negative view of the overexploitation of wild animals and spaces, yet not necessarily of their use, revealing that people are concerned about their impacts on nature despite their acceptance of the use of animals. A similar view of wild animals as resources to be used sustainably was exposed by the Peruvian state, as analysed previously in chapter six.

Capturing animals from the wild and caging them was identified as a form of harming animals by 24 participants, mostly in Lima. One interviewee mentioned how animals suffer in the trade:

> *"Los capturan para comercializarlos y los tienen en cautiverio. Esos animales sufren de estrés psicológico porque no es su hábitat. Si están tanto tiempo en cautiverio no van a poder desarrollar todas sus habilidades naturales como buscar su alimentación, reproducirse, toda su vida" (They capture them to sell them and they have them in captivity. These animals suffer from psychological stress because it's not their habitat. If they are in captivity for so long they will not be able to develop all of their natural abilities such as foraging, reproducing, all their lives, 023Lima).*

This participant explains how animals are harmed when extracting and keeping them in captivity, leading to them suffering "psychological stress". However, many interviewees also stated that people who keep wild animals as pets can look after them competently. They recognised that people care for their animals even when they know it is illegal to keep them:

> *"[su mono] es como de la familia. Ellos le tratan bien, pero se cuidan de la policía que si los encuentra les va a quitar." ([their monkey] is like part of the family. They treat her well, but they are wary of the police because if they find them, they will take [the monkey] away, 020Belen).*

Hence, keeping wild animals in captivity was not always perceived negatively, even when acknowledging illegality. This suggests that for some interviewees keeping wild animals is not negative if their wellbeing is ensured (Leberatto, 2016, 2017). Scholars of green criminology have focused on the harms that stem from viewing animals as objects and property instead of individuals (Wyatt et al., 2022). While some of my interviewees do relate to animals as individuals, that does not impede them from keeping them at home. In the world of the market, animals kept at home are always domestic animals, meaning that at that time they relate to them as family (Haraway, 2003). Drawing from geopolitical ecology and political ontology frameworks, I argue that these relationships with animals are not merely profit-driven or see animals as objects as some international CWT programmes might portray them but are relationships of kinship that put people in conflict with such programmes.

Not all wild animals are perceived in the same ways, however, and some viewed certain animals as dangerous and not worthy of protection. These complex relationships with wild animals can be seen in the case of snakes and big cats, as an interviewee in Iquitos told me: “El tigre, el otorongo comen gente. Son animales malos, bravos. Los matan porque son malos. Si no los matas, ellos te matan. Los tienen que matar” (The tiger, the jaguar eat people. They are bad animals, wild. If you don’t kill them, they will kill you. They have to be killed, 003Modelo). Rejection of snakes and jaguars was also reported in research by Shanee (2012) in campesino communities in Peru, and by Arias et al. (2021) in rural communities in Bolivia. This shows that concerns over animal wellbeing are also measured against protecting humans, especially in settings where people and wildlife live in proximity (Fletcher & Toncheva, 2021; Massé, 2016). Though international CWT networks prioritise the protection of jaguars, people who live close to them regard killing them as a matter of survival. This is a significant difference between people who live in a world with such animals and the CWT programmes which aim to protect these animals at any cost.

Though interviewees identified harms to wild animals, they also recognised challenges related to their use and trade, such as few alternative income opportunities and different value systems and traditions (Duffy et al., 2016). Many participants (22) stated that they believe that the main reason why people trade wild animals is out of necessity. As a participant told me in Lima:

> *“Hay que ponerse en los zapatos de cada quien. Por lo menos yo tengo este trabajo, pero mañana (…) ¿me toca a mí vender un animal? Lo haría. Porque yo tengo una hija, tengo familia, y la situación es crítica” (We have to put ourselves in others’ shoes. I at least have this job, but tomorrow (…) if it falls onto me to sell an animal? I would. Because I have a daughter, I have a family, and the situation is critical, 002Lima).*

This perception was mostly held in Iquitos (20), where participants empathised with the socioeconomic situation, calling it a “crisis”. They especially felt for rural or riverine communities, far from urban centres and transport links, who depend on nature for their livelihoods and nutrition. As an interviewee in Iquitos told me:

> *"Un tiempo he estado ahí yo. Se hambrea bastante. Si no hay quien vaya a buscar del monte, no hay. ¿Quién te va a dar? Tienes que buscar tú. Varios días no comes, no comes seis días. Te estás desmayando ya" (I have been there for some time. One starves a lot. If there's no one to go find something in the forest, there's nothing. Who will give you anything ? You have to go find something. You spend several days without eating, you don't eat for six days. You are already fainting, 008Modelo).*

This interviewee explains that they lived far from the city before and had to hunt because they were starving. Many interviewees stress that people who depend on agriculture or live in riverine communities have limited sources of income, and that hunting and selling wild animals can "cover a whole month of agricultural work's pay" (005Modelo). Trading wild animals may be one of the limited options for income available to rural dwellers with reduced access to education, allowing them to buy essentials (Duffy et al., 2016; Leberatto, 2017). Some interviewees also recognised that many communities hunt or trade because it is part of their traditions. Communities in -and around- Iquitos support their livelihoods through their use of wild animals, meaning that they can experience autonomy in their relations with the non-human (Heynen & Ybarra, 2021). The topic of wild animal use builds bridges between the urban and the rural, recognising the violence of the dispossession of rural and marginalised peoples in their limited choices (Heynen & Ybarra, 2021). This recognition stemming from worlds made with animals problematises the tolerance for wildlife trafficking solely as a crime since wild animal use and trade might also be enacted as life-sustaining, kinship, and autonomy practices.

Despite these views, not everyone had such a forgiving perception of animal trade since commercialising was often portrayed as negative in both cities for three main reasons: illegality, depredation, or objectification. Many interviewees conveyed that it is harmful to trade an animal that is "like a person", and often adopting animals was stated as an alternative. As an interviewee in Lima said: "No que sea simplemente para la gente comprar y revender el tráfico de animales. Sino que sea de uso doméstico" (Not simply for people to buy and resell into animal trafficking. But for domestic use, 006Lima). In this case, for people it is not wrong to keep a wild animal in captivity, but to allow profit to mediate that relationship. Moreover, 21 interviewees (11 from Lima, 10 from Iquitos)

stated that they believe people trade wild animals “because of money”, communicated to mean people participate in the trade out of greed. Interviewees expressed that there are more acceptable jobs, but trading wild animals is more profitable and easier. As an interviewee from Iquitos said: “Mayormente le cazan porque cuestan carísimo, sesenta soles el kilo” (They usually hunt because they are really expensive, sixty soles a kilogram, 005Modelo). S/60 PEN is worth around £13 GBP, and considering a peccary can weigh about 20 kilograms, a person can receive almost £250 GBP for one animal. To put it in context, that is above the Peruvian monthly minimum wage as of 2023 (S/1025 PEN). For many, that is an opportunity to earn a significant amount of money compared to other income (Duffy et al., 2016). These negative views on profit-driven trade are similar to CWT programmes, showing a concern for wild animals’ wellbeing and overexploitation. Nonetheless, they also problematise framings of wild animal use as solely profit-driven, since people agree to keep them as pets for other affective or kinship reasons.

From this section, it is clear that there are myriad ways in which people frequenting markets where wild animals are traded understand what wild animals *are* and what forms of relating to or interacting with them are *acceptable*. A geographic understanding of wild animals is widespread; thus, the distinction between wild and domestic is not as clear as in legal frameworks and for CWT programmes. While in Lima wild animals are experienced less closely and mostly connected to the pet trade, in Iquitos people relate more closely to them as part of their environment, nutrition and as pets. Moreover, although much of the international discourse focuses on organised crime driving IWT (Masse et al., 2020; Massé & Margulies, 2020), my interviews in markets show people experience the trade in wild animals mostly as an everyday, small-scale, and opportunistic trade. The predominance of such varied understandings of wild animals impacts what kind of uses and interactions with them are acceptable for people, despite what the government or CWT programmes enforce as “lawful”. In these markets people live in worlds with animals, wild or not, despite the cosmopolitical enforcement of international CWT programmes. While there are several similarities between what people in markets and the government consider negative, I problematise how people make sense of this harm and resulting CWT action in the next sections.

## 7.5. Perceptions of CWT action

Though there were varied understandings of wild animals and their use, it was clear that most people in the markets had a sense that laws that protect wild animals exist and that trading wild animals is not permitted by the state. Though a third of my interviewees said they did not know of any such laws, most interviewees in both Lima and Iquitos knew that laws for the protection of wild animals exist. Still, many admitted they knew little about them or conflated various policies. This meaning that laws protecting domestic and wild animals, and other related laws, were conflated and it was difficult to assess which laws interviewees were aware of. Moreover, some interviewees, mostly from Iquitos, assumed laws exist because they have seen policing against IWT.

Wildlife regulations are complex and not well understood in markets. For example, "vedas" (closed seasons) were well-known and often mentioned in Iquitos. This might be because they have been implemented for managing paiche fishing (*Arapaima gigas*) since 2001, making it illegal to fish, transport, and trade paiche from October to February (Resolución Ministerial Nº 215-2001-PE). However, participants believed police seized other wild animal species because they were traded off season, instead of understanding that their trade is always illegal. Another misunderstanding was that people assumed that permits for gun ownership were sufficient for hunting legally, which is not the case. During my fieldwork, several interviewees asked me to explain what vedas are or why the police raid the markets. This suggests that people do not understand legal frameworks enough to avoid engaging in illegal activities out of a lack of knowledge (Paudel et al., 2020). This highlights the importance of analysing CWT through a feminist geopolitical ecology approach, since looking at the embodied perspectives of strengthening legal frameworks and policing for CWT shows that such practices, highly advocated from the international levels, do not seem to be changing tolerance for IWT in markets. Thus, they are not fully achieving CWT action's cosmopolitical aim of a world where humans and wild animals live apart.

Support for laws that protect wild animals was high, with 43 interviewees (60%) agreeing that they are good or fair. Participants cited different reasons for believing they

are positive, such as protecting animals from harm or species from extinction. An interviewee from Lima mentioned that wild animals are a resource and that laws to protect them are good because "if they go extinct there will be no more of them" (007Lima). They refer that such laws allow the government to manage the resource sustainably. However, another interviewee from Lima focused on wellbeing: "Me parece bien porque los animalitos no están hechos para distraer a los humanos, hacerles la vida feliz. Ellos tienen que estar en libertad, vivir en su hábitat" (I think it is good because animals are not made to entertain humans, make their lives happy. They have to be free, live in their habitats, 017Lima). This participant prioritises animal welfare and freedom over human desires for entertainment or companionship. Support for laws protecting wild animals corresponds with interviewees conveying appreciation for them and concern for their wellbeing and survival. Though these answers might be affected by social desirability bias, they show people in markets broadly support a world where wild animals are protected by the state, albeit in different forms.

Laws were not viewed uncritically, though, with several interviewees expressing negative views mostly about the legal trade in wild animals. Some participants rejected permits because they enable selling animals, while others explicitly opposed laws that allow keeping wild animals in captivity. Furthermore, some mentioned that the legal use of animals allows harm and injustice, as a participant from Iquitos said:

> *"Si se supone que está prohibido, ¿cómo van a permitir esto? Que cacen los que sí tienen plata, porque los que no tienen plata lo hacen clandestinamente. Es una manera también de apoyar este mal hábito que tienen las personas contra los animales" (If it is meant to be banned, how are they allowing this? For the rich ones to hunt, because the ones who don't have money will do it clandestinely. It is a way to support the bad habits people have against animals, 015Belen).*

This interviewee highlights the economic inequality permeating the granting of permits: while people with less means will hunt illicitly, people with money are able to secure permits. In Peru, the informal economy constitutes around a third of the GDP (Machado, 2014), establishing a parallel informal economic structure separate from but that

converges with criminal economies (Durand, 2007). Durand (2007) argues that in Peru, more powerful formal actors sustain mechanisms that impede others from entering formality, while informal actors stay at different levels in the process of full legalisation. In the case of wild animal trade, some of the current illegal trade could become formal and legal, but while people are unaware of the laws or cannot access legalisation opportunities, they will be criminalised. While CWT action establishes clear lines between legality and illegality, perceptions in markets problematise simple framings of what legal frameworks allow and why they allow it, producing conflict.

Protecting wild animals was perceived in both cities as mostly done by the Peruvian state or individual people in their choices. Almost half of my interviewees (33) said they do not know or have heard of any organisations that protect wild animals, while 16 others mentioned they have heard of such organisations but were unable to recall specifics. On the other hand, 13 interviewees (10 from Iquitos) mentioned that government authorities protect wild animals, most pointing to the police. In many interviews, the state was acknowledged as responsible for protecting wild animals because of the policing experienced in markets. For example, interviewees would mention that "the forestry police come and confiscate animals" (004Belen). This indicates that in markets, people recognise the state as the institution enforcing CWT, not organisations implementing CWT programmes. This is not surprising, since many CWT programmes train law enforcement authorities to tackle IWT, as revealed in chapter six. In this way, though international actors often sway government authorities into specific CWT action through funding and programmes, they are shielded from public recognition.

Due to the gaps in knowledge and understanding of IWT and CWT efforts, education and awareness raising campaigns should be important to bridge these gaps. Nonetheless, over a third of my interviewees (28) mentioned never having seen campaigns or information about IWT. Other participants mentioned receiving information in posters, social media, and television, or they mentioned seeing information about adopting pets. In my experience during fieldwork, I only saw information about wildlife trafficking a few times, through posters in Iquitos and Lima (images 8 and 9) and in rescue centres I visited recreationally. Most notably, some

interviewees in the markets conflated police operations with awareness raising campaigns, evidencing the greater effort put in law enforcement approaches instead of education and communication (Paudel et al., 2020). This lack of communication is crucial when considering the gaps in experiences and understandings of wild animal trade between people in markets and the state and CWT programmes. CWT programmes mobilise their cosmopolitical worldling of wild animals and conservation primarily through enforcement instead of communication, producing varied results.


Images 8 and 9. A poster in the Iquitos Plaza de Armas informing about illegal wildlife trade (8). A poster at the domestic arrivals section of the Lima airport (9).

One of the results of this lack of communication seems to be a distrust towards organisations that protect wildlife, primarily in Iquitos. As an interviewee in the Belen market said:

> *"Acá en Loreto me parece que hay como ocho o diez [ONGs], pero ninguna de estas ONGs está en el cuidado y la protección de la flora y fauna. Lo que*

*sí están empeñados es en la parte del espacio, de la tierra. Me imagino que deben haber intereses ahí" (Here in Loreto I think there are like eight or ten [NGOs], but none of them work in caring for and protecting flora and fauna. What they are keen on is the topic of space, land. I imagine there must be some interests there, 003Belen).*

This interviewee questions NGOs' motives, doubting they care about protecting nature but instead are focused on acquiring land, implying they profit off it. This suggests that conservation or CWT programmes in the area do not foster relationships of trust with urban residents in Iquitos, echoing the tendency of such CWT programmes to partner with government authorities and leave behind grassroots organisations explored in s five and six. While these strategic alliances with state authorities might bring CWT programmes legitimacy at international or national levels, at the local level some participants conveyed distrust towards CWT campaigns and the organisations that deploy them. An interviewee in the Modelo market said that they had never seen any awareness-raising campaigns and that these organisations are probably lying, "spending money saying they do the campaigns" (021Modelo) when they spend it elsewhere. Looking at this through a feminist geopolitical ecology, it becomes clear that international priorities of CWT as primarily enforcement-based are producing distrust of nature protection on the ground.

Although many studies call for more awareness of IWT and CWT (Mitman et al., 2021; N. Shanee et al., 2017), looking at the markets through a feminist geopolitical ecology and political ontology lens points not simply to a lack of knowledge, but differences on experiences of what wild animals are and which interactions with them are acceptable. Though laws and policies regulating the use of wild animals have existed in Peru since the 1960s, there is still limited understanding -and in some cases outright rejection- of the government frameworks that lead to criminalisation. Moreover, people in markets claim they do not receive information about CWT to address these gaps and view the state as the primary enforcer of CWT, leading to consequences that will be analysed in the next section. Other studies on the trade in wild animals in Peru show that traders know their practices are illegal but need money for essential commodities (Leberatto, 2017; Maldonado et al., 2009), or they do not see their practices as illegal or

immoral, just as ways to generate income (Leberatto, 2016; Pires et al., 2016). In this context, the world of international CWT is confronted with the reality of people living in worlds made with wild animals, where relationships with animals are acceptable ways for people to maintain traditions, make ends meet, create kinship, or progress in society.

## 7.6. The police as a force for conservation

Since policing was experienced as the primary CWT action at markets, policing and the police were recurrent topics in my interviews. When the police and other government authorities came up in conversation, many interviewees spoke negatively about them, highlighting how they are ineffective, corrupt, or not trustworthy. For example, even if interviewees viewed laws as positive, 24 participants commented that laws do not stop IWT, either because people break the law or government authorities do not enforce it. As a participant in the Modelo market said: “Para mí da igual que exista la ley porque igual les matan y les venden. Si hubiera control, nadie vendería” (To me it is the same if there is a law or not because people still kill and sell them. If there was control, no one would sell, 004Modelo). This participant, like many others, believes that if the state performed its duties correctly, it would keep IWT under control. Interviewees were not against policing in principle but believed that current efforts are inefficient or misjudged. This echoes the logic behind CWT projects that rely on enforcement approaches and assume the role of the state as an entity in charge of socio-ecological ordering (Massé, 2022). Nonetheless, as I have revealed before, there are other experiences and understandings of wild animals that come into place.

Police operations in markets, especially in Iquitos, were often perceived as targeting small-scale subsistence vendors. Other police operations recover wild animals kept as pets, which arguably has a smaller impact on IWT than stopping larger networks which mobilise more animals (N. Shanee et al., 2017). Interviewees highlight this, communicating a sense of injustice for how the police targets people who are trying to

make a living, while letting those they perceive as more dangerous criminals off the hook. A participant in Iquitos explained that when the police raided the market to confiscate bushmeat, they yelled at the officers: "¿Cómo es posible? Para que quiten un motelo vienen en mancha y cuando hay un asalto toditos corren de miedo" (How can it be? To take a motelo they come in a group and when there is a robbery they all run away in fear, 008Modelo). In their research, (N. Shanee et al., 2017, p. 8) also reported a lack of public cooperation, with people in markets becoming "aggressive toward the authorities" during police operations. Even though many interviewees understand wild animal trade is illegal, they do not perceive it as a "criminal" activity or see it as a lesser crime in comparison to others (Leberatto, 2016). Moreover, as explored in chapter six, these CWT policing operations over focus on easy targets to portray success in CWT action, which is causing conflict or distrust on the ground.

A distrust of state authorities directly related to IWT was especially prevalent in Iquitos, where several participants mentioned that the government is complicit. As a person told me in the Modelo market: "Las mismas autoridades que les dan ese cargo de cuidar, ellos mismos van. Ellos mismos traen, ellos mismos venden" (The same authorities that have the responsibility to look after [the animals], they are the ones who go. They are the ones who bring them, they sell, 012Modelo). Several interviewees expressed similar views that park rangers and the police either extract animals from the wild, accept bribes from traffickers, or commercialise or use the wild animals seized in operations. As an interviewee in the Belen market said: "La policía forestal les quita, pero por gusto porque si dan una buena plata les devuelven la mercadería. Yo veo, estoy en el mercado. Y si no es así, entre los policías mismos se reparten" (The forestry police takes [the animals] away, but it's no use because if they give them good money they return the goods. I see it, I am in the market. And if they don't, the police officers divide them among themselves, 015Belen). This participant claims that the involvement of the police in the trade is open, and this feeds into their distrust of the institution, which they see as not truly motivated by an interest to protect wild animals. Similar sentiments were reported by Arroyave et al. (2023) in their research on attitudes towards IWT in rural towns in Colombia. This impacts CWT strategies that rely on citizen reports since people will not report IWT to the police if they do not trust them (N. Shanee et al., 2017). Moreover,

this unfairness -directly related to CWT action- impacts the relationship between citizens and state authorities, fuelling dissatisfaction with CWT action and the state at large.

Distrust of authorities was not only expressed in relation to wildlife trade but connected to long-held discontent towards corrupt or inefficient state authorities. Some interviewees expressed dissatisfaction towards the police because they do not feel personally protected from crime. As an interviewee in Iquitos said: "Por ahí dicen que la policía es cómplice de los asaltantes. Me parece a mí también que es así" (Word on the streets is the police is in it with the robbers. I also think it is so, 008Modelo). They perceive the police as complicit with criminals and as criminals themselves, and therefore, they see them as untrustworthy, so they question their motives and strategies. This extended to other levels of state authorities as well, as several interviewees even criticised the Peruvian President, who was facing corruption charges at the time of fieldwork and was later imprisoned in December 2022. Interviewees connected their perceptions that people engage in IWT out of immorality to a wider problem where people break laws for profit everywhere in Peru, even state authorities. This compounds with people stressing that the government "does not respect the laws that they enforce on people." In this context, people in markets believe that not even the state that makes and enforces laws respects them, and therefore it cannot expect anyone else to. In paying attention to the everyday embodied results of environmental geopolitical framings, a feminist geopolitical ecology framework enables to elucidate the relationship between the international prioritisation of law enforcement as CWT, the increased implementation of policing in markets, and ultimately the cosmopolitical conflict and distrust that such policing contributes to.

Knowledge about illegality and policing does not translate to people complying with state enforcement because of various experiences at play. An interviewee told me about a pet monkey owned by one of their family members and how they have told them not to keep it:

> *"Yo tengo un familiar que tiene un mono en su casa. Pero ese mono debe estar en la vegetación, en el monte. En su mundo. Pero un mono cría. ¿Y por qué crees que la policía les quita? Ahora, no sé dónde le llevará. ¿A un*

*parque? Pero donde un parque que le van a dar de comer, cuidar. No como en Quistococha" (I have a family member who has a monkey in their house. But that monkey should be in vegetation, in the forest. In its world. But they raise a monkey. Now, I don't know where they would take [the monkey]. To a park? But to a park where they feed, look after [the monkey]. Not like in Quistococha, 020Belen).*

Although this participant knows it is illegal to keep a wild animal at home, and they express both disapproval of keeping the monkey away from their habitat and concern for policing, they have not reported their family member. They also express scepticism of the services that "rescue" wild animals and their ability to look after them better than their family member, a sentiment also described in Leberatto's (2017) research. In many communities, people will be reluctant to report their friends, family members, and neighbours' involvement in IWT (N. Shanee, 2012). CWT action that requires people to engage in surveillance through reporting attempts to enforce a world where relations between humans and animals are expendable in the name of the rule of law. However, in a context where people distrust the government and value such relations over it, this action does not produce more compliance but resentment.

Current CWT actions were often perceived as insufficient or misdirected so interviewees pointed to different solutions that, in their experiences, could result in more just and effective outcomes. The role of education and communication for making more sustainable worlds with wild animals was a key concern. A few interviewees in Iquitos mentioned they would like the government to educate and support them in protecting wild animals and forests. As an interviewee in the Belen market told me:

*"Sí somos conscientes de que depredamos y ahuyentamos a los animales. Nosotros necesitamos obligadamente tener una capacitación para ver la manera de que estos animales no se ahuyenten, no se vayan lejos, sino que convivan con nosotros nuevamente" (We are aware we depredate and scare away the animals. We need training to learn how to not scare these animals, so they won't go far, so they can live together with us again, 003Belen).*

They express concern for the way human livelihoods are harming animals and hope that the government will educate them so they can maintain their relationship with their environment and coexist. Moreover, many interviewees referred to aguaje (*Mauritia flexuosa*) as an example of successful education and awareness. As a participant in the Belen market said: “Nadie viene y les orienta para que no haga esto. ¿Qué han hecho con el aguaje? Antes le tumbaban y le cosechaban. Ahora le suben. Entonces, siempre va a haber aguaje” (No one comes and teaches them not to do that. What did they do with the aguaje ? Before they would fell [the palm trees] to harvest. Now they climb. So there will always be aguaje, 020Belen). As a method for conserving the aguaje palm tree, the government and NGOs promoted climbing the trees to harvest fruits, instead of felling them (Hidalgo Pizango et al., 2022; Horn et al., 2012). These examples reveal that people in markets do share CWT programme’s concern for wild animals and the Peruvian state’s concern for sustainable use. However, they also want to continue making their worlds with wild animals instead of building a world apart from them, in contrast to most CWT action.

Many suggested solutions mentioned by participants looked beyond policing to tackling what they perceive to be more urgent drivers of wild animal trade. A few participants mentioned how most action and campaigns are overly focused on urban settings when they should engage directly with the suppliers of wild animals in rural settings through education or economic development programmes. Similarly, a participant in Iquitos highlighted the need for supporting livelihoods: “Si el gobierno pasaría una ley que pondría a una empresa acá para poder vender todos los productos que se traen, ya no estás viviendo de esos animales” (If the government introduced a law to set up a business here to sell all the products that are brought, people would not make their living out of those animals, 020Modelo). This participant states that if the government supported the development of alternative economic activities, people in the area would access other sources of income and would not depend on trading wild animals. In this way, participants convey that wild animals are a source of livelihoods for people with few other options, and that support in developing alternative sources of income might be viable solutions for CWT. This points to a broader set of strategies for CWT than just enforcement-first approaches (Duffy et al., 2019; Kashwan et al., 2021).

Looking at the threads between the increase of enforcement-based CWT action internationally and the various experiences of the wildlife trade locally problematises the issue and refuses single-solutions.

In the markets, the state, and more specifically the police, is identified as the main executor of CWT action, but is perceived as ineffective. These perceptions of incompetency, carelessness, and corruption add to an existing distrust of state authorities, further considering them as threats to human and non-human wellbeing. In this way, citizens argue that this inefficient policing is "evidence that the state was failing to fulfil its productive role in the creation of order" (Gutiérrez & Neocleous, 2023, p. 411). While international framings of IWT highlight the need to stop wildlife trafficking to ensure security, looking at the perceptions of CWT in markets through a feminist geopolitical ecology lens puts into question "who is made more secure by such geopolitical measures" (Massaro & Williams, 2013, p. 573). Moreover, looking at CWT action as cosmopolitical ordering uncovers that while seeking to enforce a world where wild animals and humans exist separately, it creates conflict which intensifies resentment of the state. The state, supported by NGOs and international actors, portray everyday wild animal livelihoods as something that must be stopped. At the same time, people in markets experience that same trade as everyday subsistence and contrapose it to other crimes that risk people's safety. These conflicts also elucidate how international discourses land into local action: while at the international level CWT is framed as protecting local livelihoods, local livelihoods based on bushmeat trade are deemed unacceptable and illegal.

## 7.7. Conclusion

Much of CWT action is no longer performed in traditional "conservation spaces" such as protected areas, but it now pours out into everyday physical and discursive spaces like markets, country borders, and government offices (Massé, 2022). In

advancing a feminist geopolitical ecology and political ontology of mainstream conservation, in this chapter I explored how framings of nature produced by CWT action pour into everyday life in markets where people engage with wild animals according to local histories, ontologies and politics, remaking discourses of what wild animals are and how humans should interact with them. I theorise that enforcement-first CWT action, carried out with training and support from CWT programmes, is a cosmopolitical ordering that manages specific interactions with nature, enforcing a separation between humans and wild animals over local experiences or values, producing conflict and contributing to distrust of the state from citizens. In implementing conservation outside of traditional conservation spaces, international conservation pushes the ontological nature/culture divide, and therefore the wilderness/domesticated binary, into new arenas.

In this chapter, I explored how place-based experiences of wild animals impact which ways of relating to them are perceived as acceptable in markets where they are traded. Geographical understandings of wild animals take precedence over an ontologically Western-modern domestic/wild divide, exposing core differences with CWT discourses. Additionally, place-based experiences of daily engagement and closeness with nature shape how wild animal trade is perceived as mainly for the pet trade in Lima but as part of everyday livelihoods and traditions in Iquitos. This is further permeated by deep care for wild animals which largely contributes to a negative perception of trading wild animals for profit, instead of to fulfil essential needs or relating to them as kin. In this context, people in markets perceive the trade in conflicting ways due to complex histories of dependence of nature, local politics, or socioeconomic needs.

In a context of various experiences and understandings of wild animals, CWT action is also perceived in conflicting ways. While people in markets have a sense that laws that protect animals exist and mostly view them positively, they are not clear on their contents and question their effectiveness. Only the state, and specifically the police, is recognised as responsible for CWT action and such action is recognised mostly through policing. The relationship of policing with citizens in the market is complicated because people perceive the state as corrupt and inefficient, but also want better

policing, instead of the current inadequate control. As people in markets do not recognise CWT programmes, the injustices they perceive in relation to the enforcement of CWT contribute to dissatisfaction with the state instead of the organisations that fund and encourage such action. Place-based worlds made with wild animals are often directly in conflict with the Peruvian legal framework and international CWT priorities. As such, international CWT discourses and action work to delimit the acceptable boundaries of engagement with nature through the state, using legal frameworks and policing to enforce a Western-modern separation from wild animals that does not resonate in the places where it is enacted.

In this chapter, the perceptions of people in wildlife markets entangle with geopolitics in two major ways. Firstly, embodied experiences speak back to international framings and their implementation, either problematising, dissenting, or contextualising. Additionally, they shape international priorities because as wildlife trade continues in those markets, they remain as target sites for CWT action. A feminist geopolitical ecology expands the field of feminist geopolitics into unravelling global environmental management, enabling the reorganisation of scales of analysis and bringing light into their connections and disconnections. Moreover, by including a framework of political ontology, it allows to elucidate how international and local ontologies enact different worlds which come into conflict. Merging political ontology with geopolitics zooms out from its tendency to look at very particular worlds and elucidates the ways in which Western modernity is mobilised through international actions globally. Thinking through a feminist geopolitical ecology and a political ontology of mainstream conservation, we can argue that the future of CWT actions lies in how ontological conflict is negotiated at different scales, taking into consideration local histories, values, ontologies, and politics. The people who participated in my research already point to some directions: encouraging and facilitating coexistence with nature, supporting local wellbeing and livelihoods, and fostering communication between citizens and the state for solidarity and trust.

# Chapter 8

# Geopolitical conservation conflicts in worlds with animals

*"Debe ser terrible ser animal, pensar como humano*
*Los espectadores ni siquiera intuyen el drama de los osos,*
*Creen que los pandas, los camellos y los elefantes*
*son vertebrados redondos*
*disfrutando un espacio reducido?*
*mientras caritas felices les tiran maíz envenenado."*

- Vuelo nocturno del oso panda brasilero, Julia Wong Kcomt

## 8.1. Introduction

My thesis set out to develop the geopolitical ecology of conservation using CWT efforts in Peru as a case study. Throughout this thesis, I demonstrated that the geopolitical-ecological dynamics and structures of conservation interact with other conditioning factors to shape CWT efforts in Peru, producing numerous effects on people, nature, and their politics at various levels. I developed the study of the geopolitical ecology of conservation by unravelling how the dynamics of international decision-making spaces, processes, and structures influence discourses on IWT and the implementation of CWT programmes in the country.

The literature on geopolitical ecology provides a framework to examine the role of large geopolitical institutions on the definition, management, and control of nature (Belcher et al., 2020; Bigger & Neimark, 2017). This framework has largely been applied to study the influence of US state agencies in relation to climate change, but Massé & Margulies (2020) applied it to examine how security and conservation objectives interact in the "prioritisation of IWT and related security concerns in foreign assistance for conservation" (p. 4). As introduced at the beginning of this thesis, political ecologists have unravelled various aspects of how tackling illegal wildlife trade has become an important endeavour for the conservation sector in recent years (Duffy, 2022b; Massé et al., 2020), primarily in parts of Africa and Asia (de Jong & Butt, 2023; Koot & Veenenbos, 2023; Massé, 2019). However, many of these studies undertheorise articulations between scales of conservation action and have limited engagement with the dynamics and effects of counter wildlife trafficking efforts in Latin America.

In Abya Yala, Peru is a developing target for conservation CWT interventions, but also a country with long-held traditions of wildlife use and trade. Within the region, Peru has not made moves towards the valuation and recognition of Indigenous cosmovisions within state structures, despite having large numbers of Indigenous and mixed populations. To develop the understanding of the dynamics of international conservation in CWT efforts in Peru, I took Peruvian wildlife management structures as a start to "follow the influence" of CWT programmes from the international to the local. This research, then, examines the geopolitical ecology of international conservation in shaping and reshaping counter wildlife trafficking efforts in Peru, shedding light on the cross-scalar dynamics, conditions, and effects of conservation efforts for tackling the illegal wildlife trade on wildlife management structures, frameworks, politics, and ontologies.

Through this research I empirically demonstrate that national action to address IWT in Peru is shaped and enabled by international structures of funding and legitimacy which channel geopolitical discourses and material actions through conservation. Currently, international structures of conservation such as the monitoring requirements of grant agreements and the participation requirements of international conferences, as well as other conditions including national legal and institutional frameworks, influence

the CWT efforts implemented in the country. Most of these CWT interventions are executed outside of traditional conservation spaces, targeting everyday places and structures, such as reshaping regulatory frameworks or increasing policing in markets. As these efforts make their way from the international to the local, they produce unintended and conflicting impacts for natures, people, and their relationships. In particular, the impacts of geopolitical conservation perceived at the personal level in open street markets, highlight the cosmopolitics in the connections people have with animals. I uncover that in some places in Peru, people live in worlds with animals and so this elicits conservation conflict with CWT programmes and the state. In this way, I conclude that international CWT programmes, in their effort to manage the relationships between humans and animals, constitute a form of *geopolitical, cosmopolitical ordering*. I argue CWT programmes as a form of *cosmopolitical ordering* mean that CWT efforts aim to order and control how different worlds are enacted, enforcing specific experiences of what animals are and how humans should interact with them.

To reach my empirical conclusions, I developed and extended the theory of geopolitical ecology by rethinking it through decolonial and feminist approaches. This approach combined and contributed to four bodies of literature: political ecology (Duffy, 2021a, 2022b), decolonial conservation (Corbera et al., 2024; Hope, 2021a), geopolitical ecology (Bigger & Neimark, 2017; Massé & Margulies, 2020), and political ontology (Blaser, 2009a, 2009b). While these different frameworks are all relevant for tackling aspects of international conservation and IWT in isolation, they are unable to fully account for how CWT efforts driven by the international conservation industry encounter and are shaped by the alternative ontologies. Therefore, in chapter two I argue that combining these frameworks can theorise across scales how "large geopolitical institutions (…) define, control and manage nature" (Bigger & Neimark, 2017, p. 20) while not taking the "ontological status" of wild animals for granted (Blaser, 2013c). This combination of theoretical frameworks produces a novel contribution by theorising CWT actors as part of a wider geopolitical ecology of conservation that is in essence cosmopolitical, meaning it relates to the political consequences of different worlds interacting, interfering and mingling with each other (Blaser, 2013c). Additionally, these

insights have further repercussions on discussions about the decolonisation of the international conservation industry.

Diverse wild animals emerge throughout my research when analysing discourses across scales: the animal as victim of trade, the animal as saviour from environmental crises, the animal as resource to be used sustainably, the animal as a friend to be approached, the animal as a threat to protect ourselves from. Adapting de la Cadena's reflection on territory, wild animals "simultaneously coincide with, differ from, and even exceed (…) the object that the state [and conservationists] (…) translate into resources to be exploited or defended" (de la Cadena, 2019, p. 48). As the poets opening each of my empirical chapters suggest, animals can be "bought like a fruit / a flower bouquet" (chapter five), companions that ease and mirror our deepest emotions (chapter six), akin to humans in their sadness (chapter seven), or "thinking like a human" in their own misunderstood "dramas" (chapter eight). In short, the wild animals that are discussed from the international to the local in Peru *contain multitudes* and, therefore, are themselves pluriversal. Engaging with how these animals are defined and positioned multi-directionally, geopolitically, and across scales has allowed me to reveal the cosmopolitical orderings that act through the international conservation industry to make political worlds that are deemed acceptable by international networks.

In this concluding chapter, in section 8.2. I draw concluding remarks from the three scales I examined. As such, I summarise and draw out conclusions on international discourses and structures (8.2.1), national conditions (8.2.2), and local ontologies and politics (8.2.3). After this, I reflect on what my research means for broader agendas of decolonising conservation in section 8.3. Lastly, in section 8.4. I consider future academic questions and practical implications relating to CWT in Peru which emerge from my research.

## 8.2. Unravelling the geopolitical ecology of counter wildlife trafficking programmes in Peru

My thesis has developed understanding on the geopolitical ecology of conservation by closely examining CWT efforts in Peru. My analysis sheds light on the ways in which the geopolitical-ecological dynamics, structures, and mechanisms of international conservation shape and reshape CWT efforts in Peru. I further uncovered how such structures encounter various conditioning factors and contributed to produce effects and implications for people, nature, and their relationships across scales. Through this empirical analysis, I uncovered how international discourses and structures, national conditions, and local ontologies and politics have implications for CWT programmes implemented in the country. In the following sections I provide conclusions related to each of the scales I examined, corresponding to each of my research questions in chapter one, section 1.2.

### 8.2.1. International discourses and structures

By bringing together Bigger and Neimark's (2017) geopolitical ecology framework with literature on political ecology, global conservation governance, and decoloniality, I shed light on the ways in which international discourses and structures shape CWT programmes. In chapter five I argue for theorising international non-state actors as large geopolitical actors within conservation networks, due to their ability to define, control, and manage global natures in certain contexts. In the same chapter, I heed scholars calls to discuss CITES and other wildlife trade conferences as spaces for "institutional and transnational geo-politics and multi-scalar institutional and illegal processes" (Hobson, 2007, p. 264). In so doing, I further argue that events and spaces which are not exclusive to conservation actors, such as wildlife trade conferences, can have major implications for conservation and therefore must be attended to in the study of the geopolitical ecologies of international conservation. Additionally, I aim to strike the balance between "ways in which peoples' thoughts are either determined by hegemonic discourses on one

hand, or are largely independent creations on the other" (Svarstad et al., 2018, p. 359). Due to this, I extend the study of geopolitical ecology by arguing for the importance of paying attention to how the structures and mechanisms of international conservation reiterate, produce, and reproduce framings of nature and legitimise powerful actors, posing challenges to decolonial conservation governance.

In this thesis, I look at conservation as a global industry and examine the structures and mechanisms that operate in the production and reproduction of framings of natures and IWT which influence ensuing CWT action in specific places. To answer my first research question, "How are global discourses on wild animals, their use and trade, unfolding and being negotiated in Latin America and Peru through global CWT action and international conferences?", in chapter five I turned my focus to two international conferences focused on wildlife trade. The role of wildlife trade conferences in international conservation has been understudied in academic literature (some exceptions are Challender & MacMillan, 2019; Duffy, 2013; Massé et al., 2020), and when it has, it has seldom been assessed in combination with decolonial approaches nor for Latin America.

In chapter five, I shed light into the ways structures and discourses in two international wildlife trade conferences contribute to shaping CWT action globally and in Latin America. For this, I first looked at the structures of attendance and participation and found that different states, institutions, and groups have different abilities to attend, participate, and influence decisions in these spaces. This often depends on their economic resources, their links to powerful actors, and how they align (or not) with already legitimised agendas. Due to these characteristics, I found large, international non-state actors often had a privileged position to influence agendas and decisions in conferences, sometimes more so than some states and more than grassroots groups, Indigenous, peasant, rural, or local communities.

In these conferences, framings of wildlife trade followed discourses related to security and crime in conservation, as described in other literature on the topic (Duffy, 2021; Duffy & Brockington, 2022; Masse et al., 2020). Wildlife trade was framed primarily as a threat to conservation and an issue of crime, a serious, transnational organised

crime driven by profit. Additionally, it was framed as a threat to global health, constantly referencing the recent COVID-19 pandemic, and a threat to the livelihoods of Indigenous peoples and local communities. Nonetheless, concern for Indigenous peoples and local communities was mobilised in conflicting ways, at once depicting these groups as protectors of nature, threatened by IWT, and a threat to nature. These framings were often mobilised to secure international support and legitimacy within the network, and justified CWT action primarily focused on law enforcement. These discourses were reshaped when relating specifically to Latin America, where framings did not mention militarising conservation for tackling poaching and securing protected areas, which are salient topics for IWT elsewhere (Büscher, 2016b; Duffy et al., 2019; Massé, 2019). Instead, in Latin America protecting the Amazon as a "global nature" and its species was discussed as a frontier for tackling environmental crises. Additionally, the jaguar was framed as a species of particular interest for CWT efforts, comparing it to other charismatic species of global interest to attract relevance and resources.

The mechanisms exposed in these conferences and in international conservation more broadly direct actors to mobilise framings in ways that will allow them to secure legitimacy within the network, garner political will, and attract international support and economic resources. Moreover, considering the structures of attendance and participation, these conferences contribute to maintaining Western modern framings of nature, as Indigenous peoples, peasant, rural, and local groups have less opportunities to contribute to the production and reproduction of the framings exposed. For places which aim to attract international support, such as Latin America, this means that legitimised states and institutions adapt and repurpose already acceptable international framings of IWT to further cement their legitimacy within CWT networks and benefit from increased funding and interest.

After, in chapter six, further insights on the structures and mechanisms of international conservation emerged. Through interviews with professionals working in CWT programmes in Peru, I uncovered that the international discourses exposed in conferences were reflected in the trends of priorities and strategies of CWT programmes in Peru. This is facilitated by the structures of international funding that non-state institutions often rely on for their operations, such as grant agreements funding

individual projects. In this line, international attention towards particular issues drives institutions to focus on those issues to attract funding, amplifying and reiterating the same discourses and strategies. To comply with funder requirements and provide evidence of successful impacts, institutions respond to outcomes that can be actionable and measurable within the life of the project, instead of looking to contribute to long-term positive impacts. Furthermore, this is compounded by networks of personal and professional relationships between legitimated institutions which maintain a network of mainstream CWT action. These structures and mechanisms also work to shape the geopolitical ecology of CWT action in Peru.

### 8.2.2. National conditions

As Massé and Margulies' (2020, p. 14) work on the geopolitical ecology of conservation claims that the "discursive acts" of large geopolitical actors produce "material effects on the ground," in chapter six I contribute to the framework of geopolitical ecology by revealing how international framings of IWT interact with national legal and institutional frameworks in Peru to shape action on the ground. By paying close attention to such national context and frameworks, and bringing in concepts from political animal geography (Collard & Dempsey, 2013, 2017), I extend the geopolitical ecology framework by arguing that the process through which international framings produce material effects is not straightforward and is instead mediated by various conditions at many levels. I develop theories of the geopolitical ecology of conservation with attention to the contextual conditions that facilitate international framings and priorities landing in particular settings or that reshape how such discourses are materialised.

In examining how international discourses and structures influence CWT in Peru, I then focused my attention to the national context. In chapter six, I answer my second research question: "How do mainstream CWT framings and practices interact with national and international conditions to produce the CWT action currently implemented in Peru?". I carried out a review of Peruvian policy relevant to wildlife use and trade and

interviews with state and non-state professionals working in CWT efforts to explore the conditions which allow international CWT action to land or be reworked in Peru. Academic literature on political and geopolitical ecology has studied international framings of IWT (Duffy, 2021; Masse et al., 2020; Massé & Margulies, 2020) and local impacts of CWT action (Annecke & Masubelele, 2016; Koot & Veenenbos, 2023; Lunstrum, 2014), but the specific conditions and mechanisms which mediate international framings in their way to become action on the ground remain understudied.

In chapter six, I explore the ways in which national and institutional frameworks in Peru interact with international priorities and structures. I first look at the policies which orient wild animal management in Peru, uncovering that the country has a long history of legally managing wild animal use and trade, mainly as resources meant to produce revenues. While subsistence use for peasant, native, or rural communities is allowed, this often compounds and clashes with various other regulations. These policies are managed through various permits and licences, implemented in coordination between various state authorities, and are embedded in law enforcement structures specifically targeted towards wildlife management, which precede current global interest in IWT.

Peruvian legal and institutional frameworks are discursively focused on "promoting the sustainable use of the wild animal resource." Nonetheless, interviews with professionals involved in CWT uncover different interpretations depending on previous institutional arrangements, values, or priorities. Though legal and institutional frameworks aim to promote legal and sustainable use, a series of challenges hinder its achievement. The system is complex and bureaucratic, and regulations come into conflict. Moreover, state authorities are overburdened and under resourced, while those who attempt to make legal and formal use can find the process costly and confusing. These conditions limit what the Peruvian state can achieve in terms of promoting a sustainable use of wild animals. In such a context, the Peruvian wildlife management system relies on the support of international CWT programmes to make progress, making it a country which is hospitable to accepting CWT programmes.

Through this analysis, I found most international CWT programmes in Peru do not focus on anti-poaching efforts in protected areas but mostly support policy development or strengthening law enforcement. Important government efforts which received support from CWT programmes during my research were countering "wildlife crimes," updating the National Strategy to Reduce Illegal Trade, introducing wildlife trafficking within the organised crime law, and increasing policing and sanctions to dissuade trafficking. By dividing law enforcement between control and policing, I find that although Peruvian wildlife authorities prioritise efforts for controlling sustainable legal use, CWT programmes are increasingly involved in policing. In Peru, CWT programmes have found that strengthening policy frameworks and policing are efforts which can be achieved in the short term and produce measurable results that contribute to proving success. I additionally found that certain institutions and strategies align better with international framings and thus receive more support from CWT programmes.

### 8.2.3. Local ontologies and politics

By bridging geopolitical ecology and feminist geopolitics into a feminist geopolitical ecology, in chapter seven I enquire on how the mobilisation of geopolitical framings of wild animals and the illegal wildlife trade through the structures of international conservation impacts people's daily lives, remaking discourses to provide results different than intended. Thinking through feminist geopolitics I bring attention to powers that "are not formally channelled through the politics of statecraft but do create (political) geographies" (Sharp, 2000, p. 363), not just as receivers of international framings, but as political actants along the geopolitical continuum between the global and the embodied. Bringing in feminist geopolitics into this cross-scalar analysis allows me to unravel the "domestication" of international conservation geopolitics in how international priorities are brought into domestic spaces (the home, everyday street markets) and into material relationships with other species and environments (Sharp, 2020, 2023). Moreover, my feminist geopolitical ecology analysis further suggests ways in which geopolitical ecologies emerge from meetings between international conservation and people, entangling the "intimate, everyday and domestic" with the

“remaking of geopolitics in different ways” (Sharp, 2023, p. 1655). This is evidenced in the form of mistrust and resistance that challenges geopolitical imaginaries and yet still reinforces CWT action.

I further put this feminist geopolitical ecology into conversation with political ontology in chapter seven by theorising CWT action as cosmopolitical ordering and enquiring about the ontological politics between international discourses enacted through CWT programmes and the place-based experiences of wild animals and CWT action in places targeted by such programmes. The attention that political ontology provides to the conflicts that emerge from the encounters between diverse ontologies provides tools to not take the ontological status of “what is there” and how they constitute realities in power-charged fields” (Blaser, 2013c). I further follow from Lorimer’s (2010) analysis of Asian elephants in contending that many species of wild animals in the Amazon are sometimes experienced as “companion species” (Haraway, 2003, 2007), deeply entangled in daily life, often potentially domestic, seldom solely wild.

Understanding the geopolitical ecology of conservation requires also taking account of the geopolitical ecological implications of international conservation on the places targeted by CWT programmes. In chapter seven, I direct my focus to markets where wild animals are traded to answer my third research question: “How do local experiences, ontologies, and politics shape perspectives of wild animals, their trade, and efforts to tackle such trade in places where wild animals are commercialised?” I carried out semi-structured interviews with people working in or visiting markets where wildlife is traded to gain insights on people’s understandings, experiences, and perceptions of wild animals, their use and trade, wildlife management regulations, and CWT efforts. Many studies have examined open street markets to quantify IWT (El Bizri et al., 2020; Mayor et al., 2019, 2022) or to understand its dynamics (Leberatto, 2017; N. Shanee, 2012; N. Shanee et al., 2017). Recent research has assessed perceptions of and demand for wildlife in markets (Moorhouse et al., 2023, 2024), yet none have yet made the connections between experiences of wildlife and conservation CWT programmes.

Empirically, in chapter seven I uncovered that people frequenting street markets defined wild animals differently than definitions in government policies or by CWT professionals. Instead, more than half of the people I interviewed defined wild animals according to where animals live. This geographical understanding was linked to place-based experiences of wild animals, in Lima animals were connected to the pet trade and in Iquitos to the environment, nutrition, and as pets. These experiences of everyday, small-scale, opportunistic wildlife interactions, use, and trade contributed to blur the lines between "domesticated" and "wild" animals, and connected to conflicting perceptions of which uses and interactions with wild animals are considered acceptable or harmful. Often, use or trade for subsistence was viewed as acceptable, as was keeping animals in captivity if their wellbeing is ensured. Many of the experiences of wild animals participants referred to revealed relational connections to animals beyond distinctions between domestic or wild.

Interviews at the markets further shed light on various levels of knowledge regarding wildlife regulations and CWT efforts. Overall, participants understood that selling wild animals is sanctioned by the police, but it was difficult to assess the level of understanding of the laws which regulate it. There was confusion between regulations enforcing a permanent ban on trade and closed seasons, and between the different types of permits needed to use and trade wildlife. Still, 43% of participants agreed that laws which protect wildlife are good or fair, though nuanced perceptions arose. For example, participants criticised how regulations allow the legal trade of wild animals and how economic inequalities led to criminalisation. Most participants claimed they did not know of any organisations which protect wild animals, though 18% recognised the role of state authorities in CWT. Moreover, over a third of participants claimed they had never seen awareness raising campaigns about IWT or conflated informational campaigns with police raids in the market.

The interviews I carried out at open markets shed light on deeper implications of increased CWT efforts in open markets, especially interventions focused on policing. Participants often perceived the role of the state in CWT as good for protecting wild animals, but a third of participants viewed laws as ineffective since IWT is still an issue. Moreover, state authorities were perceived as incompetent, careless, and even corrupt

in relation to how they deal with crime. Some participants communicated anger in how the police targets illegal small-scale wildlife vendors yet does not act when crimes harm people. These perceptions added to an existing feeling of distrust and discontent with the state, fuelling resentment and in some cases prompting interviewees to side with those selling wildlife. While policing was perceived as a part of tackling IWT, participants also highlighted the need to promote a sustainable use, raise awareness, and develop livelihoods so people do not have to rely on hunting and trading wild animals.

Theorising CWT action driven by international conservation as cosmopolitical ordering brings out the role of CWT programmes in defining what animals *are* and which relations with them are *deemed acceptable*. The imposition of homogeneity in the acceptable ways of relating to wild animals through CWT programmes, then, becomes "a matter of political concern" (de la Cadena, 2019, p. 53). This assertion challenges prevailing discourses of wildlife trade as primarily a transnational, serious organised crime and problematises discourses on securitised CWT action as an issue of law enforcement. Moreover, theorising CWT programmes as a form of cosmopolitical ordering driven by geopolitical international non-state actors further reveals the scope and bounds of international conservation and raises questions about the feasibility of a decolonial turn in international conservation.

## 8.3. Decolonising the international conservation industry

This dissertation contributes to problematising the use of blanket framings in conservation and to especially assess them considering current calls for decolonising conservation. However, through my analysis I take a nuanced and interdisciplinary look at what decolonisation might entail for conservation as a global industry. In chapter two, section 2.3, I conceptually divide conservation between a practice, an outcome, or an industry. In the academic literature discussing decolonial conservation, decoloniality is often suggested for conservation as a practice or an outcome. This conceptualisation of

conservation allows me to critique the extent to which conservation as an industry can contribute to decolonial conservation as an outcome.

My research reveals that the international conservation industry maintains structures that allow simplistic discourses to flow from the international to the local through the funding and legitimacy of powerful actors. These discourses, based on Western modern ontologies, often help maintain colonial geopolitical imaginaries, narratives of criminality that facilitate violence, and contribute to maintain certain perspectives marginalised from spheres of decision-making and management. As Stuart Hall writes, discourse "draws crude and simplistic distinctions and constructs an oversimplified conception of "difference"" (Hall, 2018, p. 146). Interrogating closely the myriad ways in which international conservation produces and reproduces simplistic distinctions and difference can perhaps allow us to assess if it can also enable "dispersed, locally appropriate, more just, and genuinely sustainable ways of living with nature" (Collins et al., 2021, p. 984).

International conservation organisations are trying to learn from their past mistakes, omissions, neglects, and even abuses. Many organisations are committing to human rights-based or people-centred approaches (Ford-Learner et al., 2024), implementing more robust safeguarding and social safeguards mechanisms (Krause et al., 2013; Krause & Nielsen, 2014), and partnering with local or grassroots organisations. Increasingly it seems donors are also requiring safeguarding and social safeguards procedures, as well as serious social commitments, as part of funded projects. For the USA government, the Leahy Law prohibits the provision of funding to foreign security forces "where there is credible information implicating that unit in the commission of gross violations of human rights" (U.S. Department of State, 2021). Though welcome steps, these strides can remain performative without amounting fully to decolonisation if they do not support the undoing of systems of colonial domination (Collard et al., 2015; Heynen & Ybarra, 2021). In thinking about how a decolonial conservation can be made to meaningfully engage "with the realities and contexts of societies in which it operate" (Collins et al., 2021; Krauss, 2021), my research raises questions about which localities or contexts we aim to adapt conservation to, and if it is indeed possible to adapt the international conservation industry to alternative ontologies.

In chapter two, section 2.3, I draw from Daigle & Ramírez (2019), Collard et al. (2015), and Corbera et al. (2024) to define a decolonial conservation as a state where humans and non-human nature, and their relations, are maintained long-term while undoing colonial and capitalistic systems. A global conservation industry that remains bound by the ontopolitics of colonial systems will find challenges to contribute fully to decolonisation. Empirically and practically, this thesis contributes to examining if the global conservation industry can look beyond good intentions and engage in critical reflexivity to assess its role and commitments to decolonial praxis. Throughout this dissertation I have traced the political, structural, legal, institutional, and ontological frameworks that condition how conservation interventions are shaped across scales. I have demonstrated that many of these frameworks, from the international to the local, present challenges towards full epistemological and ontological decolonisation, such as the structures of grant agreements which continuously place resources into the same legitimated actors. In investigating the geopolitical ecology of the international conservation industry, I have found that the global structures and mechanisms of mainstream international conservation present significant barriers for various decolonising agendas.

## 8.4. Future implications for research and practice

This thesis contributes to understanding the geopolitical ecology of counter wildlife trafficking programmes as they make their way from international decision-making spaces to places where wild animals are illegally traded in Peru. In following the influence of international conservation action for CWT, I have unearthed the myriad ways international framings of IWT are shaping and reshaping CWT efforts in Peru across scales. In developing a theoretical framework which introduces feminist and decolonial approaches to geopolitical ecology, I theorise CWT programmes as a form of cosmopolitical ordering of wild animals which works from the international to the

embodied. From this work, a number of implications for future research and practice emerged.

My research raised questions about the extent to which international conservation can be decolonised. In the previous section I conclude that the mechanisms and structures that bind the international conservation industry present challenges to the decolonisation of conservation. A further question following from this discussion is to assess the possibility that international conservation can support decolonisation efforts on the ground. Indeed, some international non-state organisations support movements for justice, land tenure, and autonomy of Indigenous, peasant, rural or local communities around the world. For example, the Forest Peoples Programme and Rainforest Foundation work to support the rights of people who depend on nature. As mentioned in chapter five, CITES also considers the importance of livelihoods and the participation of "Indigenous peoples and local communities." Future decolonial research can develop understanding on if and how international conservation can support decolonisation beyond metaphors.

Also related to the previous point, in following the influence of international framings on IWT in international conferences, I found conflicting discourses for some countries in Abya Yala related to traditional use of wildlife. In chapter five I analysed how some countries claimed to protect and respect Indigenous and traditional uses of wildlife in some instances while in others they proudly presented their policing efforts against traditional use during festivals or celebrations. Therefore, I believe the connections between decolonial state policies, the discourses states present in international spaces, and the way states internally manage wildlife use and trade merits further exploration to gain deeper understanding of the geopolitical ecologies of CWT in Abya Yala.

Through focusing on the national conditions which facilitate, reject, or remake the international framings of IWT aiming to influence CWT programmes in Peru, in chapter six I reveal that Peruvian legal and institutional frameworks shape the ways these programmes develop in the country. Crucially, my research revealed that although the Peruvian government is interested in promoting the sustainable use of wild animals

through formal and controlled trade, most CWT efforts were prioritised towards strengthening legislation and policing. In chapter six, I recounted how a CWT professional questioned the adoption of legislation which linked the organised crime law to the wildlife trafficking criminal offence with no assessment of the success of the organised crime law for other wildlife crimes. There are still gaps in understanding how effective legislation to regulate wildlife use and trade is on stopping wildlife trafficking. Indeed, conservation often takes preventive actions in hopes they will contribute to the intended results. Nonetheless, there is scope for further critical assessments from both policy and academia of such preventive measures to examine their potential for success, dynamics, or unintended impacts.

Through my thesis, I revealed that law enforcement-based interventions were a key focus of international CWT strategies, and national and local interventions through the support of CWT programmes. Nonetheless, in chapter seven my interviewees in markets highlighted some openings for the conflict of living with wild animals in Peru, often emphasising greater understanding of how to respect animals and finding ways to look after them. For example, they mentioned protected areas, looking after the forest, or promoting ranching or captive-breeding. It sounded similar to what Collard (2020, p. 131) suggests as relational autonomy, "being able to care and provide for oneself and the collectives of which one is a part, being able to respond to one's own needs and the needs of others." Considering wild animals as companion species within their respective contexts can provide insights into how to approach harmful use and trade of wildlife within the place-based relational connections between humans and the wild animals forming their collectives. This can be a fruitful avenue for further research in places where wild animals are embedded in everyday life.

Perhaps all is not lost in our global attempts to bring forward more just worlds for humans and non-humans alike if we navigate the tensions in bridging multiple scales and incommensurabilities (Simpson & Pizarro Choy, 2024). Looking at the markets, we can find that CWT programmes and people may navigate these worlds by converging in an "uncommonality" (de la Cadena, 2019), an interest in common that is not the same interest: ensuring wild animal wellbeing. While CWT programmes seek to maintain wild animal populations and ecosystems, they might find positive allies in people who want

to protect the wellbeing of animals as individuals with wants, needs, rights, and feelings. Around 2016 SERFOR did indeed carry out a communications campaign asserting “your house is not my home”, focusing on people empathising with live wild animals which have been taken from their “real home,” nature, to be someone’s house as pets. There is little information about how effective this campaign was, though it has been now replaced with a campaign highlighting criminality: “if you buy you are an accomplice”. Recently, other authors have also suggested demand-reduction efforts might be successful in tackling IWT in Peruvian markets (Moorhouse et al., 2023, 2024). Future efforts from research and practice should focus on evaluating the feasibility, success, and permeation of these campaigns based on demand-reduction and empathy, to find the best ways to both ensure the long-term maintenance of nature, as well as enabling people’s relationships with wildlife to flourish.

This research project has revealed important empirical insights on the overlooked ways international structures in conservation shape and reshape counter wildlife trafficking efforts in Peru. By following the influence of CWT programmes from international spaces to national frameworks and local perceptions, I have examined the ways increasing conservation interest to tackle IWT has discursively and materially influenced CWT efforts in Peru. In developing a theoretical framework grounded in feminist and decolonial approaches to geopolitical ecology, this thesis accounts for both the geopolitical ecological dynamics of international conservation action and the embodied and ontological relations with nature and politics. In doing so, it contributes to unravelling the cosmopolitical orderings present in CWT within the entangled dynamics of international discourses and structures, national conditions, and local ontologies and politics. This further contributes to debates on the decolonisation of conservation by shedding light on the exact mechanisms and structures of international conservation which contribute to maintaining colonial systems.

# Appendices

Appendix I. SERFOR documents related to animals.

| | Title | Year | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Conviviendo con el oso andino en el Perú | 2019 | Document compiling information about human-wildlife conflicts related to the spectacled bear, and proposing actions to mitigate conflicts. It mentions instances of hunting and trade in bears or bear parts. |
| 2 | Guía para la exportación de quelonios con fines comerciales | 2022 | Informative document guiding legal exporters of turtles and tortoises and law enforcement officers on the correct procedures for legally exporting these animals. This is done to promote legal trade and animal wellbeing. |
| 3 | Guía de Cetrería | 2016 | Document compiling information about falconry and how to do it legally and ethically. |
| 4 | Guía de Identificación y Cuidados Iniciales de Animales Silvestres Decomisados o Hallados en Abandono | 2017 | Informative document presenting the identifying characteristics for 44 commonly seized species between mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, and guiding for their correct caring after seizure. |
| 5 | Libro Rojo | 2018 | Book compiling information about endangered species in Peru. Amphibians, birds, mammals, reptiles. Wildlife trafficking is listed as a threat for several of them, including specific information about how and where they are trafficked. |
| 6 | Plan Nacional de Conservación de Primates Amenazados en el Perú | 2020 | Informative document presenting the current conservation landscape of primates in Peru and presenting the national conservation plan for primates. Wildlife trafficking is listed as a threat to primate species and stopping IWT is one of the action lines for the plan. |
| 7 | Plan Nacional de Conservación del Oso Andino en el Perú | 2016 | Informative document presenting the current conservation landscape of the spectacled bear in Peru and presenting the national conservation plan for spectacled bear. Wildlife trafficking is listed as a threat to the species and stopping IWT is one of the action lines for the plan. |
| 8 | Plan Nacional de Conservación del Tapir Andino en el Perú | 2019 | Informative document presenting the current conservation landscape of tapirs in Peru and presenting the national conservation plan for |

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|---|---|---|---|
| | | | tapirs. Wildlife trafficking is listed as a threat to the species and stopping IWT is one of the action lines for the plan. |
| 9 | Plan Nacional de Conservación del Suri | 2015 | Informative document presenting the current conservation landscape of suri in Peru and presenting the national conservation plan for suri. Wildlife trafficking is listed as a threat to the species and stopping IWT is one of the action lines for the plan. |
| 10 | Plan Nacional de Conservación del Cóndor Andino | 2015 | Informative document presenting the current conservation landscape of condors in Peru and presenting the national conservation plan for condors. Wildlife trafficking is listed as a threat to the species and stopping IWT is one of the action lines for the plan. |
| 11 | Plan Nacional de Conservación del Tapir | 2018 | Informative document presenting the current conservation landscape of tapirs in Peru and presenting the national conservation plan for tapirs. Wildlife trafficking is listed as a threat to the species and stopping IWT is one of the action lines for the plan. |
| 12 | Plan Nacional de Conservación de la Pava Aliblanca | 2016 | Informative document presenting the current conservation landscape of pava aliblanca in Peru and presenting the national conservation plan for the pava aliblanca. Illegal hunting is listed as a threat to the species and stopping IWT is one of the action lines for the plan. |
| 13 | Presentación de la Estrategia Nacional para Reducir el Tráfico Ilegal de Fauna Silvestre | 2017 | Document presenting the national strategy to reduce wildlife trafficking in Peru 2017-2027. The document explains the legal framework, the knowledge of IWT in Peru and presents actions, budget, institutions in charge and monitoring. |
| 14 | Situación Poblacional del Suri en el Perú | 2018 | Informative document presenting the current knowledge of suri populations in Peru. Illegal hunting and collection of eggs is listed as a threat to the species and stopping IWT is one of the action lines for the plan. |

Appendix II. Participant information sheet for interviews.


**The geopolitical ecology of conservation funding: Discourse and power in counter illegal wildlife trade programmes in Peru**

**Alejandra Pizarro Choy**

# Participant Information

What is the study about?

We invite you to participate in a research project about the way different actors and discourses shape action to stop wildlife trade in Peru. This project explores the views different people have on the use of wildlife and what should be done about it.

Why have I been invited to take part?

You have been invited to take part because you have been identified as someone who has knowledge and experiences related to wildlife use or programmes to stop wildlife trade. We are interested in gathering a broad range of perspectives on the topic.

Do I have to take part?

This information sheet has been written to help you decide if you would like to take part. It is up to you and you alone whether you wish to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be free to withdraw at any time before May 2023 without providing a reason, and with no negative consequences.

What would I be required to do?

You will be asked to do an interview of a maximum of 2 hours, though we anticipate for it to last for about 1 hour, speaking honestly about your experiences and perspectives on wildlife use and projects to stop wildlife trade. There are about 10 questions but you may choose not to answer any questions you are not comfortable with.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?

These interviews might touch on topics that can involve reputational damage or conflict in working relations within or between organisations. They can also touch on topics that can involve criminal activities such as wildlife trafficking. All data collected will maintain

anonymity and I will make sure you are not identifiable in the data or in any published documents such as my dissertation or research articles. Data will be pseudonymised to ensure it can be deleted if you want me to.

Are there any benefits associated with taking part?

This project aims to shed light on the ways in which large institutions impact priorities and action related to environmental change. It enquires on the influence of foreign aid into tackling the illegal wildlife trade through the funding of global conservation. As such, it aims to produce information that indirectly benefits the public in Peru, conservation organisations and donor agencies.

This research project will bring to light the views of wildlife users on the problems and solutions related to wildlife trade in Peru. This information will highlight the need to ensure the ability of Indigenous and local communities to make decisions over their own issues and further tailor conservation initiatives in ways that safeguard human and Indigenous rights.

This project will allow to situate international counter wildlife trafficking action to the current Peruvian context. It aims to contribute to an early analysis of the dynamics at play in Peru for donors and conservation organisations to create more just interventions and avoid causing harm to communities that have been marginalised from national decision-making processes.

What precautions will you take to help protect me from the coronavirus?

In planning for this research, we have completed a University of St Andrews risk assessment. We will always wear masks when interacting with you and maintain physical distance when possible. If possible, our interactions will be in open, well ventilated spaces. I will not interact with you if I or anyone in my household have developed symptoms of coronavirus in the last 14 days.

Please let us know at any time if there is anything we could do to make you feel safer or if you ever want to reschedule or withdraw your participation.

What can I do to help protect you from the coronavirus?

If in person, please wear a face covering and respect distancing, if possible. If you or a family member has developed symptoms of coronavirus in the last 14 days, please let me know now, we can get in contact and arrange another time to meet.

Informed consent

It is important that you are able to give your informed consent before taking part in this study and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions in relation to the research before you provide your consent.

What information about me or recordings of me ('my data') will you be collecting?

I will be collecting data on experiences, perspectives and motivations on wildlife trade and counter wildlife trafficking programmes in the form of semi-structured interviews. Interviews will be audio recorded if you allow it, transcribed and pseudonymised using codes. If you do not want me to audio record you, I will take detailed notes and pseudonymise using codes.

For interviews with conservation professionals and representatives of donor agencies, only the participant's organisation and rough description of their role in the organisation will be recorded (either director or project coordinator/manager).

For people visiting wildlife markets and wildlife users, their location (market or city), gender, ethnic background and whether they are visiting wildlife markets or if they are wildlife sellers will be recorded.

No names, contact details or other personal data will be recorded.

How will my data be securely stored, who will have access to it?

Your data will be stored in a **PSEUDONYMISED** form, which means that your data will be edited so that you are referred to by a reference code number, and the original data will be deleted. Your data will be stored in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development in the University of St Andrews, and only I will be able to access it. Your consent form will be the 'key' document, which will link your unique reference to your data. The key will be kept in the School of Geography and Sustainable Development in the University of St Andrews, and only I will have access to it and be able to reconnect your data to you at a later date.

Audio recordings will be taken on an encrypted device and transcribed at the earliest opportunity before being destroyed OR archived for future use.

How will my data be used, and in what form will it be shared further?

Your research data will be analysed as part of the research study. It will then be published in my dissertation and research publications. If published, your data will be in an ANONYMISED form, which means that no-one could use any reasonably available means to identify you from the data.

It is expected that the project to which this research relates will be finalised by January 2025.

Where can I find out about the results of the study?

The results of my study will be published in my dissertation and in research publications which will be linked to my ORCID page when they are out: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6389-3473.

When will my data be destroyed?

All anonymised participant data will be deleted 10 years after the research project is finished, in January 2034. Participant's data will be deleted earlier than that if the participants request it before May 2023.

International data transfers – Personal data

Your data will be stored and processed in St Andrews, Scotland. No matter their physical location, researchers are required to store and make use of personal data as if they were in the UK; University requirements and the provisions of the data protection law apply at all times.

Will my participation be confidential?

Yes, your participation will only be known to myself.

Use of your personal data for research and data protection rights

The University of St Andrews (the 'Data Controller') is bound by the UK 2018 Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which require a lawful basis for all processing of personal data (in this case it is the 'performance of a task carried out in the public interest' – namely, for research purposes) and an additional lawful basis for processing personal data containing special characteristics (in this case it is 'public interest research'). You have a range of rights under data protection legislation. For more information on data protection legislation and your rights visit https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/terms/data-protection/rights/. For any queries, email dataprot@st-andrews.ac.uk.

You will be able to withdraw your data before May 2023. If your data is anonymised, we will not be able to withdraw it, because we will not know which data is yours.

Ethical Approvals

This research proposal has been scrutinised and subsequently granted ethical approval by the University of St Andrews Teaching and Research Ethics Committee.

What should I do if I have concerns about this study?

In the first instance, you are encouraged to raise your concerns with the researcher. However, if you do not feel comfortable doing so, then you should contact my Supervisor or School Ethics Contact (contact details below). A full outline of the procedures governed by the University Teaching and Research Ethics Committee is available at https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/research/integrity-ethics/humans/ethical-guidance/complaints/.

Contact details

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