"Hunting Africa": how international trophy hunting may constitute neocolonial green extractivism

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Abstract

In the post-Cold War neoliberal moment of the mid-1990s, Safari Club International's (SCI) nascent but now defunct 'African Chapter' published a *Strategic Plan for Africa*. Its aim was to secure the "greatest hunting grounds in the world" for access by SCI's hunting membership, the core of which is based in the United States. In advocating private sector-led trophy hunting under the umbrella of the SCI "market place", the plan supported an archetypal mode of 'green extractivism': killing indigenous African mammals and exporting body parts as hunting trophies was justified as 'green' by claiming this elite and arguably 'neocolonial' extraction of animals is essential for wildlife conservation. Already in 1996 SCI deflected scrutiny of this form of 'green extractivism' through promoting a view that any critique of this putative 'green hunting' should itself be dismissed as 'neocolonial.' This discursive twist remains evident in a moment in which trophy hunting is receiving renewed attention as countries such as the UK attempt to write trophy import bans into legislation. I engage with these politicized claims and counter-claims to foreground the lack of neutrality permeating trophy hunting discourse. I work with recent political ecology engagements with 'post-truth politics' to unpack SCI-supported advocacy for using accusations of 'neocolonialism' to counter critique of the neocolonial dimensions of trophy-hunting; showing how elite and greened extractivism through recreational access to land and African fauna is thereby consolidated. I draw on case material from Namibia – a country exhibiting stark inequalities of land and income distribution alongside a thriving trophy hunting industry – to explore how extracted 'green value' from 'conservation hunting' may shore up, rather than refract, neocolonial inequalities.

Keywords: Trophy hunting, extractivism / green extractivism, neocolonialism, political ecology, CBNRM, Namibia, Safari Club International, inequality, disinformation, post-truth politics

Résumé

Dans le contexte néolibéral de l'après-guerre froide du milieu des années 1990, le "chapitre africain" du Safari Club International (SCI), naissant mais aujourd'hui disparu, a publié un plan stratégique pour l'Afrique. Son objectif était de garantir l'accès aux "plus grands terrains de chasse du monde" aux membres chasseurs du SCI, dont le noyau est basé aux États-Unis. En préconisant une chasse au trophée menée par le secteur privé sous l'égide de la "place de marché" du SCI, le plan soutenait un mode archétypal d'"extractivisme vert": tuer des mammifères africains indigènes et exporter des parties du corps comme trophées de chasse était justifié comme "vert" en affirmant que cette extraction élitaire et sans doute "néocoloniale" d'animaux était essentielle pour la conservation de la faune sauvage. Dès 1996, le SCI a détourné l'attention de cette forme d'extractivisme vert en promouvant l'idée que toute critique de cette prétendue "chasse verte" devait elle-même être rejetée comme "néocoloniale." Cette tournure discursive reste évidente à un moment où la chasse au trophée fait l'objet d'une attention renouvelée alors que des pays comme le Royaume-Uni tentent d'inscrire dans leur législation l'interdiction d'importer des trophées. Je m'engage dans ces revendications et contre-revendications politisées

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pour mettre en évidence le manque de neutralité qui imprègne le discours sur la chasse au trophée. Je m'appuie sur les engagements récents de l'écologie politique en matière de "politique de la post-vérité" pour démêler le plaidoyer soutenu par le SCI en faveur de l'utilisation d'accusations de "néocolonialisme" pour contrer la critique des dimensions néocoloniales de la chasse au trophée, en montrant comment l'extractivisme des élites et l'extractivisme vert se consolident grâce à l'accès récréatif à la terre et à la faune africaine. Je m'appuie sur le cas de la Namibie – un pays qui présente des inégalités flagrantes en matière de répartition des terres et des revenus ainsi qu'une industrie de la chasse au trophée florissante – pour explorer comment la "valeur verte" extraite de la "chasse de conservation" peut renforcer, plutôt que réfuter, les inégalités néocoloniales.

Mots-clés: Chasse au trophée, extractivisme / "extractivisme vert", néocolonialisme, écologie politique, GCRN, Namibie, Safari Club International, inégalité, désinformation, politique de la post-vérité

Resumen

En el periodo neoliberal posterior a la Guerra Fría, a mediados de la década de 1990, la naciente pero ya desaparecida "sección africana" del Club Safari International (SCI) publicó un Plan Estratégico para África. Su objetivo era garantizar el acceso a los "mejores sitios de caza del mundo" a los miembros cazadores del SCI, cuyo núcleo se encuentra en Estados Unidos. Al abogar por la caza de trofeos dirigida por el sector privado bajo el paraguas del "mercado" de SCI, el plan apoyaba un modo arquetípico de "extractivismo verde": matar mamíferos africanos autóctonos y exportar partes de sus cuerpos como trofeos se justificaba como "verde" alegando que esta extracción elitista y posiblemente "neocolonial" de animales es esencial para la conservación de la vida salvaje. Ya en 1996, el SCI desvió el escrutinio de esta forma de "extractivismo verde" promoviendo la idea de que cualquier crítica a esta supuesta "caza verde" debería ser tachada de "neocolonial". Este giro discursivo sigue siendo evidente en un momento en el que la caza de trofeos está recibiendo un renovado escrutinio a medida que países como el Reino Unido intentan incluir en su legislación la prohibición de la importación de trofeos. Me ocupo de estas reivindicaciones y contrademandas politizadas para poner en relieve la falta de neutralidad que impregna el discurso de la caza de trofeos. Trabajo con los recientes compromisos de la ecología política con la "política de la posverdad" para desentrañar la defensa apoyada por la SCI del uso de acusaciones de "neocolonialismo" para contrarrestar la crítica de las dimensiones neocoloniales de la caza de trofeos; mostrando cómo se consolida de este modo el extractivismo elitista y verde a través del acceso recreativo a la tierra y a la fauna africana. Me baso en el caso de Namibia – un país que presenta marcadas desigualdades en la distribución de la tierra y los ingresos junto con una próspera industria de la caza de trofeos- para explorar cómo el "valor ecológico" extraído de la "caza de conservación" puede reforzar, en lugar de refractar, las desigualdades neocoloniales.

Palabras clave: Caza de trofeos, extractivismo / "extractivismo verde", neocolonialismo, ecología política, CBNRM, Namibia, Safari Club International, desigualdad, desinformación, política de la posverdad.

1. Securing the "greatest hunting grounds in the world:"[2] introducing concepts and approach

In 1996 the Pretoria-based 'African Chapter' of US-led Safari Club International published a report of almost 200 pages dedicated to "Africa's 'UNSUNG HEROES,' professional hunters, safari operators and amateur hunters" (Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996 – all quotes in this paragraph are from this report).[3] This *Strategic Plan For Africa* set out to identify "what actions will be necessary to see Africa remain the greatest hunting grounds in the world as we enter into the 21st Century" (p.x). Intended as a "road map" for securing these hunting grounds, the report advocated expansion of trophy hunting entrepreneurship under Safari

[2] This article develops a much shorter magazine article published in August 2022 in *The Land Magazine* (see https://www.thelandmagazine.org.uk/articles/hunting-africa-trophy-hunting-neocolonialism-and-land).

[3] From SCI's Chapter Locator (https://safariclub.org/chapter-locator/) it appears that there are now no SCI Chapters in Africa, perhaps making it less likely that SCI expansionist concerns are locally driven. SCI's new (2021) page on International Hunting in Africa promotes pro-trophy hunting sources with little emphasis on alternative views and legitimate concerns: see https://safariclub.org/international-hunting-africa/. Nb. all URLs last accessed in April 2023, unless otherwise stated.

Club International's (SCI) auspices as "the market place for trophy hunting" (p.1, also pp.18, 23, 26, 192[4]). Private sector-led trophy hunting is repeatedly promoted as a neutral technical 'tool' "for conservation, wildlife management, economic and rural development" (p.1[5]). In this post-Cold War neoliberal moment, SCI's African Chapter's aim for "Entrepreneurs To Become The Driving Force in African Conservation and Rural Development", with SCI as "the market place" and "unbiased outsider", was led by members' desire to see the trophy hunting industry "grow and mature" in each African member country (pp.3, 6): see Figure 1. Recommendations for expansion in South Africa, for example, included: development of joint partnerships between SCI and local hunting clubs to "overcome unfounded fear … that SCI will push them out;" the "sensitization" of new provincial and national governments to "wildlife as an economic development and rural development and management tool", and the "expansion of controlled hunting areas into 'tribal lands' … linked to rural development" (pp.26–28).

Figure 1: "Safari Club International Africa Chapter, Current Member Countries", as envisaged in 1996. Source: adapted from Degeorges & Africa Advisory Board 1996, opp. p.1.

These encouragements align to varying extents with reported aims of African Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) programmes that also unfolded in lands under communal forms of tenure in the 1990s (Sullivan 2002; Blaikie 2006; Dressler *et al*. 2010). Some commentators and facilitators use social movement language to describe these programmes, referring, for example, to the "CBNRM movement" or the "conservancy movement" (World Wildlife Fund Inc. *et al*. 2008: ii, v, viii, 8, 12, 25, 26, 28, 29, 33, 34). The

[4] When drawing on key policy reports I have elected at times to include multiple page numbers for use of a framing idea, to indicate the repeated emphasis placed on such ideas in these texts.

[5] Iterated on pp.8, 17, 29, 37, 69, 90, 106, 111, 114, 166, and 172.

rhetorical implication that CBNRM programmes were 'led-from-below' belies the fact that they also emerged alongside and were entangled with SCI-associated professional hunting discourse and desires of these same years. In Namibia, for example, promotion of trophy hunting as a critical source of income for emerging communal area conservancies involved donor investments in multiple training initiatives in game counts and monitoring so as to support partnerships with professional hunting operators (World Wildlife Fund Inc. *et al*. 2008) – see Section 4. In CBNRM, 'sustainable use' of wildlife is promoted as a pragmatic approach to conservation that places "the satisfaction of human needs above the rights of animals" (Duffy 2000: 18). Critical here, however, is whose human needs are most satisfied by 'sustainable use.' Protagonists tend to downplay that 'sustainable use' in this context mostly refers to the extraction of wildlife and other 'natural resources' in Africa by commercial operators and consumers from outside rural African communities, as well as to amplifying wildlife exchange values on external markets. Africans are deemed to benefit mostly through employment and other opportunities in tourism and hunting industries, as well as through hunt-dependent distribution of meat (Naidoo *et al*. 2016). The extent to which these benefits are equitable, meaningful or sustainable, however, is worthy of deeper analysis. As anthropologist Stuart Marks noted 20 years ago:

> [u]nder most community-based wildlife initiatives, local people are expected to forgo their 'opportunity costs' of living with wildlife together with their 'traditional' access rights in exchange for strictly economic benefit streams generated from wildlife uses by outsiders (Marks 2001: 122).

As such, 'sustainable use' is in part a euphemism for securing hunting grounds and other forms of market access by actors from outside rural communities. Often this is effected by undermining and/or criminalizing Indigenous and local uses of these same lands, as well as through overshadowing the connected diversity of species that may be used and valued locally. This extractive reality of the doctrine that "if it pays it stays" (Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996: 3, 9; Hart 2020: online) should not be ignored. Trophy hunting promotes exchange values for indigenous fauna, cultural heritage and landscapes marketed beyond local contexts, but also creates conditions for the displacement and/or appropriation of multiple local forms of use, exchange and management. The key frames of 'sustainable use' and 'if it pays it stays' act discursively to promote entrepreneurial access to African 'hunting grounds,' orienting these lands and their multiple inhabitants towards elite consumptive desires of non-inhabitants. Pointing out these dimensions, however, often seems to prompt systematic attempts to silence or block 'errant voices.'[6]

Although SCI initially voiced criticism of the political use of CBNRM by 'sustainable use' advocates (Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996: 8; also Degeorges & Reilly 2009), SCI also now adopts the language of 'sustainable use' to describe the benefits of "international hunting" in Africa. Thus,

> [i]nternational hunting generates funds for communities and local governments, in addition to funding for management of species and habitat protection. While hunting involves the highly regulated harvest of individual animals, the revenues and direct benefits incentivize conservation of the species. … Sustainable use of wildlife creates value for those living side-by-side with wildlife, who ultimately will determine its future. … The science is clear: hunting results in more wildlife, more wild landscapes, and a better coexistence with nature.[7]

Here, SCI echoes perceptions of the positive contribution of sport hunting, often generating exported trophies, to conservation. As Peter Hathaway Capstick (1977: xi–xii) —self-named "professional white hunter" ("a non-African who conducts safaris for sport in Africa") and former Wall Street stockbroker—wrote in the 1970s,

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[6] As traced in this sequence of papers: Koot *et al*. 2020; Dickman *et al*. 2021; Naidoo *et al*. 2021; Koot *et al*. 2022; also Igoe and Sullivan, 2009.

[7] https://safariclub.org/international-hunting-africa/.

> [t]hat the sport hunter is more responsible for wildlife conservation, through habitat preservation and species management (financed through donations, whopping fees, licenses, and stiff excise taxes on his equipment), than any preservationist group is not widely understood.

The use of this kind of 'greenwashing' discourse to frame expansionary extraction of indigenous fauna and trophy-products from Africa arguably translates into a series of racialized extractive outcomes, including: animal body parts extracted from the global South to the global North (broadly speaking) (Section 2), reliant on multiple extractive material flows, especially carbon-intensive travel; the creation and extraction of multiple layers of new exchange value arising through trophy hunting that concentrate beyond local contexts; and the extraction of vast expanses of land from local use, access and control so as to serve professional hunting businesses (Section 4). Trophy hunting thus involves material and ideational modes of continuous extraction that are greened through employing claims of sustainability. Trophy hunters, hunting operators and some conservation scientists cast the practice as positive for the conservation of habitats, populations and species (for example, Lindsey *et al*. 2006: 284; Dickman *et al*. 2019; Clark *et al*. 2023), and thus as embodying a form of 'green' praxis—suggesting that critique of trophy hunting must exhibit "neocolonialism" (Section 3) (cf. Bichel & Hart 2023: 251). I will argue instead that trophy hunting meets definitions of both neocolonialism and 'extractivism.' In terms of the former, the industry is shaped significantly from afar, and appears to consolidate and entrench inequality and poverty (cf. Nkrumah 1965). In terms of the latter, the industry arguably displays "a complex of self-reinforcing practices, mentalities, and power differentials underwriting and rationalizing socio-ecologically destructive modes of organizing life through subjugation, violence, depletion, and non-reciprocity" (Chagnon *et al*. 2022: 1), as considered further below.

Extractivism is normally understood as "diametrically opposed to the concept and practices of sustainability (including ecological, social, and economic) if that concept is defined through criteria of stewardship, reciprocity, regeneration, and ensuring life for future generations" (Chagnon *et al*. 2022: 3). This definition implies that 'conservation' and 'extraction' are opposed, although the last couple of decades have seen a consolidated visibility of conservation offsetting technologies developed precisely to 'green' extractive industry, i.e. mining (Seagle 2012; Sullivan 2013, 2018; LeBillon 2021). Although trophy hunting is framed as simultaneously good for conservation and for people, its extractive momentum and capitalistic structures may work against "criteria of stewardship, reciprocity, regeneration, and ensuring life for future generations", and thus against 'sustainability.' Despite justifications of trophy-hunting on the grounds that it generates income for local people (for example, Mokgalo & van de Merwe 2022), it has also brought about the systematic containment and control of local hunting and other land-use practices in favour of multiple layers of access for foreign recreational use and value extraction (see Section 4). Whilst it is argued that income and meat from international access to African mammalian fauna reaches new community-based conservation organisations to incentivize local conservation of this same fauna (Naidoo *et al*. 2016; Angula *et al*. 2018; Mbaiwa & Hambira 2021), analysts also express concern about societal inequality, rural impoverishment, encouraged dependencies and land grabs built into this form of 'greenwashed extractivism' (Marks 1984; Vaughan *et al*. 2004; Sullivan 2006; Mbaria & Ogada 2017; Mkono 2019; Nowak *et al*. 2019; Drake *et al*. 2020; Kalvelage *et al*. 2020; Sene 2022). In doing so, the latter analyses foreground the capitalistic momentum through which international trophy hunting intersects with and extracts from rural realities of the 'Global South' (Chagnon *et al*. 2022).[8] 'Green' discourse linked with trophy hunting masks this extractive character of the industry, the extractivism of which is justified on the basis of its putative or potential so-called green outcomes (e.g. Lindsey *et al*. 2006; chapters in the volume edited by Dickson *et al*. 2009; Dickman *et al*. 2019; t 'Sas-Rolfes *et al.* 2022): hence the relevance of 'green extractivism' as a frame through which to understand the industry. As such, trophy hunting, emerges as an unsuspecting, or creeping, form of green extractivism (Dunlap 2019: 20; Dunlap & Jakobsen 2020), extending extractive patterns established historically through colonialism.

This article works with these patterns and paradoxes to consider the following aspects. Section 2 explores materialities of green extractivism in trophy hunting. Trade patterns are revealed through analysis of export and import figures recorded on the trade database hosted by the UN Convention on International Trade in

[8] See Hewitson and Sullivan (2021) for an ethnographically-informed political ecology analysis of this intersection.

Endangered Species (CITES) for trophies from mammals included on this database that have crossed international borders in the last ten years (2013–2022). Some of the ritualized social contexts underpinning and sanctioning these practices are also considered. Section 3 reviews instances of mis/dis-information deployed to discursively transmute this form of extractivism into green praxis, i.e. as a practice good for species and habitat conservation, as well as being good for local African livelihoods. As a controversial topic under intense scrutiny in the public domain—about which misinformation (false information shared unknowingly) and disinformation (false information shared knowingly) abound (Kukura 2022) —knowledge production regarding trophy hunting is a topic relevant to political ecologists, with recent articles on the topic published by the *Journal of Political Ecology* (Hewitson & Sullivan 2021; Muboko 2021). Indeed, a key emphasis in political ecology is on how knowledge regarding environmental concerns is made and empowered, and with what socioecological effects (Fairhead & Leach 1996; Bryant & Bailey 1997; Stott & Sullivan 2000; Forsyth 2003; Burman 2017; Sullivan 2017). Additionally, political ecologists are taking sustained interest in the intersections of post-structuralist perspectives and 'post-truth' knowledge productions. In doing so, strong arguments are made for increased contestation of populist environmental knowledge proclamations promulgated to uphold vested interests (Neimark *et al*. 2019; Schmitt & Li 2019), as well as analysis of antagonistic engagement regarding environmental issues through social media (Büscher 2016; Matulis & Moyer 2018; Bichel & Hart 2023: 347–351). Drawing on these approaches, I argue that the transmutation of a broadly elite activity (international trophy hunting) into an activity seemingly under neocolonial attack is a text-book case of 'post-truth politics;' requiring, as political ecologists argue, the necessity of speaking power to post-truth (Neimark *et al*. 2019).

In Section 4, I go deeper into circumstances for the southern African country of Namibia as a popular international trophy hunting destination, where structural inequality illuminates the "relational power disparities (inequalities/imbalances)" (Chagnon *et al*. 2022: 4) on which the 'green extractivism' of the industry is based and further entrenches. The section reviews public domain data to explore patterns supported by the promotion of trophy hunting in communal area conservancies in relationship with the trophy hunting industry led from freehold farms. This review is embedded in the context of sustained collaborative oral history and ethnographic research in CBNRM circumstances in north-west Namibia (Sullivan 2003; Sullivan & Ganuses 2021). The article concludes by reflecting on the plutonomic structures and relationships shored up by the neocolonial green extractivism of trophy hunting, and the threats these structures may ultimately pose for the sustenance of biodiversity, including the so-called 'game' desired by trophy and sport hunters.

2. Materialities of green extractivism in trophy hunting

Trophy hunting is a consumptive form of commodified wildlife utilization involving the killing of animals considered and constructed as 'wild,' and the transportation and export of preserved parts of their bodies as objects effecting recall of a hunting event. As such, there is an immediate extractive materiality to trophy hunting: the removal and disembedding of individual animals and parts of their bodies from habitat and intra- and inter-specific relations in order that their preserved body parts can be displayed elsewhere. Trophy hunting is allied with 'recreational hunting,' "where the hunter or hunters pursue their quarry for recreation or pleasure", the enjoyment of a hunt arising "from the social and cultural norms associated with the hunt and from the sporting contest that occurs between hunter and quarry" (Leader-Williams 2009: 11). We might pause here to ask if it is reasonable to assume that the nature of this so-called "sporting contest" is equally enjoyed between "hunter and quarry", and whether the attribution of the notion of a competitive 'sport' is appropriate to describe this activity. Indeed, the longstanding but particular framing of the hunt as a sporting activity in itself belies the multiple inequalities at play in this framing: hunting for subsistence, understood and enacted as a critical and often sacred skill (Descola & Pálsson 1996, and essays therein), is a necessity rather than a game; and often there is little that is level between hunter and prey on the trophy hunting playing field. These observations point immediately towards the inequalities betraying trophy hunting as a form of unnecessary extraction serving elite interests and enjoyment, albeit framed as necessary for the population health of the animals hunted and their habitats, i.e. as 'green' (see discussion in Ghasemi 2021).

In thinking of trophy hunting as a form of 'green extractivism,' it is pertinent to consider the global patterning of species hunted via analysis of export and import figures of mammalian (and other) body parts

counting internationally as trophies. Table 1 provides export and import figures recorded on the trade database hosted by the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) for trophies from mammals that have crossed international borders in the last ten years (2013–2022). Data are included for the top 17 countries for trade in specimens from species listed under all three CITES Appendices as threatened, near-threatened and requiring regulated exploitation,[9] bearing in mind that there is a vast additional volume of exported and imported body parts from species not listed on the CITES database (Hughes *et al*. 2023). Table 2 lists the top 15 mammal species involved in these international trophy transfers for each of the three CITES Appendices, including information regarding their assessed status according to IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species.[10] In both tables the shaded cells indicate countries located in Africa (Table 1) and species coming only or mostly from Africa (Table 2). It should be noted that these data are added to by CITES on an ongoing basis (i.e. they are subject to change), and that there are discrepancies between export and import records, related in part to lags in reporting times and other disparities in data collection: the implications being that certainty is elusive for such complex international trade transfers and that reported figures may be conservative (see Hughes *et al*. 2023; Johanisova & Mauerhofer 2023). Perhaps unsurprisingly, most international trophy source countries are in Africa whilst importing countries feature especially the USA, Russia and countries in Europe. Material transfers associated with the trophy hunting industry thus exhibit classic 'core–periphery' patterning, building on and deepening historic patterns of resource acquisition and capital accumulation (cf. Chagnon *et al*. 2022: 6; also Gudynas 2010). African contexts are effectively 'primary producers' of trophy commodities from variously threatened mammal species for which value is added by/for extractors/investors and associated industries, including air travel, weaponry, taxidermy and elite tourism provision (Hewitson & Sullivan 2021) – as explored in more detail in Section 4 for a key African provider of hunting trophies.

This global industry patterning is promoted and consolidated via elite rituals, ceremonies, displays and awards performed by professional hunting associations and their clientele (see review in Bichel & Hart 2023: 113–138). Such performances are designed to ensure ongoing extractive hunting transfers from African (and other) contexts, in part through casting and entrenching these transfers as necessary for wildlife and habitat conservation, as well as for local livelihoods. The compulsion to hunt and to acquire material evidence of hunting success via a certified trophy is fuelled by a ladder of Achievement Awards offered by SCI and other professional hunting associations. This award system encourages hunters to kill multiple animals of multiple species in multiple countries, as well as to aim for animals of a sufficient size to satisfy SCI's measurement tests.[11] These tests build on long-established 'game records,' such as the *Records of Big Game* series of books established in 1892 by London-based taxidermist Rowland Ward (e.g. Ward 1903), reported as famous for "mounting heads for the British royal family as well the empress of Austria", and for carrying out taxidermy work for "the [British] Empire's rich and powerful."[12] Ward's clients included, for example, Major Percy Horace Gordon Powell-Cotton, Fellow of London's Zoological Society Royal Geographical Society and Royal Anthropological Institute, known for "potentially creating the largest collection of game ever shot by one man" – especially from East Africa (Powell-Cotton 1904) – whilst also being described as "an early conservationist:"[13] see Figure 2.

[9] For full definitions of the CITES Appendices see https://cites.org/eng/disc/text.php#VII
[10] Online at https://www.iucnredlist.org/
[11] https://safariclub.org/official-measuring-forms/
[12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rowland_Ward
[13] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_Powell-Cotton

CITES APPENDIX 1 – Threatened

TOP GLOBAL EXPORTERS	Reported by exporters	Reported by importers	TOP GLOBAL IMPORTERS	Reported by exporters	Reported by importers
Namibia	1667	1513	USA	1760	1893
Tanzania	721	937	South Africa	334	390
Zimbabwe	636	1056	Germany	286	343
South Africa	454	404	France	264	80
Mozambique	377	389	Russian Fed.	233	279
Zambia	249	287	Spain	166	229
Pakistan	79	63	Mexico	155	396
Cameroon	10	82	Austria	147	167
Russian Fed.	8	8	Hungary	89	140
Ethiopia	7	6	Canada	86	59
Tajikistan	5	32	Poland	73	85
Central African Rep.	4	9	Denmark	67	132
Uganda	3	5	Italy	63	70
Iran	3	–	Slovakia	45	41
Canada	2	1	Sweden	43	40
Uzbekistan	1	1	Czech Rep.	39	53
Botswana	1	20	UK	33	22
TOTALS	4227	4813	TOTALS	3883	4419

CITES APPENDIX II – Near-threatened

TOP GLOBAL EXPORTERS	Reported by exporters	Reported by importers	TOP GLOBAL IMPORTERS	Reported by exporters	Reported by importers
South Africa	14769	10891	USA	16493	62457
Namibia	7494	6214	Germany	2024	1704
Zimbabwe	2016	3333	Spain	1275	1664
Russian Fed.	1854	2371	Russian Fed.	1124	no data
Mexico	1104	766	France	1077	62
Zambia	1044	964	Canada	1005	no data
Canada	898	48774	Denmark	987	2009
Tanzania	767	1048	South Africa	983	1489
Kyrgyzstan	606	388	Mexico	902	1458
USA	569	463	Austria	703	652
Mozambique	446	473	Hungary	585	786
Burkina Faso	382	35	Sweden	525	753
Ethiopia	207	140	Norway	493	713
Pakistan	194	145	Poland	463	851
Romania	174	58	Slovakia	432	285
Cameroon	158	268	Australia	429	259
Mongolia	141	211	Czech Rep.	412	506
TOTALS	32823	76542	TOTALS	29912	75648

CITES APPENDIX III – Requiring regulated exploitation

TOP GLOBAL EXPORTERS	Reported by exporters	Reported by importers	TOP GLOBAL IMPORTERS	Reported by exporters	Reported by importers
Argentina	2721	1751	USA	3814	3313
Kyrgyzstan	1359	533	Spain	587	540
South Africa	1156	803	Germany	277	244
Turkey	590	346	Canada	274	no data
Mexico	318	89	Russian Fed.	255	no data
Pakistan	249	184	Denmark	204	105
Zimbabwe	201	277	France	189	1
Namibia	139	106	Mexico	184	228
Mongolia	102	169	Austria	160	54
Tanzania	78	90	Australia	115	30
Nepal	68	53	Belgium	106	22
Tajikistan	58	242	Italy	82	no data
Ethiopia	33	24	Sweden	78	71
Croatia	25	23	Hungary	65	24
Australia	15	55	Slovakia	64	26
Zambia	15	28	South Africa	62	64
Serbia	11	7	New Zealand	49	18
TOTALS	7138	4780	TOTALS	6565	4740

Table 1: Global figures for exports and imports of hunting trophy specimens from mammals sourced from wild habitats for 2013-2022 (2023 data not yet available), drawing down data for the top 17 countries (taking a lead from exporter report for exports) for CITES Appendices I, II and III. The shaded countries are those located in Africa. Nb. >1 specimen may be drawn from the same animal. Source: public data extracted from CITES Wildlife Tradeview 2022 (https://tradeview.cites.org/), 30 October 2022.

Appendix I (= species threatened with extinction) top traded taxa for trophies

Taxonomic Group	Common names & notes	IUCN Red List status & date of last assessment	Quantity Reported by exporters	Quantity Reported by importers
Panthera pardus	Leopard	Vulnerable (decreasing) 2015	3154	3563
Acinonyx jubatus	Cheetah	Vulnerable (decreasing) 2021	603	550
Loxodonta africana	African savanna elephant	Endangered (decreasing) 2020	203	455
Capra falconeri	Markhor	Near threatened (increasing) 2014	80	85
Ceratotherium simum	White rhino	Near threatened (decreasing) 2020	52	32
Oryx dammah	Scimitar-horned oryx	Extinct in the wild (unspecified) 2014	41	51
Diceros bicornis	Black rhino	Critically endangered (increasing) 2020	36	22
Ursus thibetanus	Asiatic black bear	Vulnerable (decreasing) 2016	8	no data
Capra falconeri megaceros	Kabul markhor	Near threatened (?) ?	5	2
Oryx leucoryx	Arabian oryx	Vulnerable (stable) 2016	4	2
Panthera leo	Lion	Vulnerable (decreasing) 2014	3	1
Ovis vignei	Uriel	Vulnerable (decreasing) 2020	3	3
Equus zebra zebra	Cape mountain zebra	Vulnerable (increasing) 2018	2	3
Ursus arctos	Brown bear	Least concern (stable) 2016	1	17
Panthera	?	?	1	?

Appendix II (= requiring strict regulation so as not to be threatened with extinction) top traded taxa for trophies

Taxonomic Group	Common names & notes	IUCN Red List status & date of last assessment	Quantity Reported by exporters	Quantity Reported by importers
Papio ursinus	Chacma baboon	Least concern (decreasing) 2018	5146	4295
Equus zebra hartmannae	Hartmann's mountain Zebra	Vulnerable (increasing) 2018	4880	4402
Hippopotamus amphibius	Hippo	Vulnerable (decreasing) 2016	2979	2371
Caracal caracal	Caracal	Least concern (unknown) 2014	2770	1917
Ursus arctos	Brown bear	Least concern (stable) 2016	2204	2952
Chlorocebus pygerythrus	Vervet monkey	Least concern (decreasing) 2022	1986	1374
Loxodonta africana	African savanna elephant	Endangered (decreasing) 2020	1817	2576
Damaliscus pygargus pygargus	Blesbok	Least concern (increasing) 2017	1056	574
Ovis canadensis	Bighorn sheep	Least concern (stable) 2019	1033	749
Kobus leche	Southern lechwe	Near threatened (decreasing) 2016	1027	1605
Panthera leo	Lion	Vulnerable (decreasing) 2016	986	1686
Ceratotherium simum simum	White rhino	Near threatened (decreasing) 2020	839	517
Giraffa camelopardalis	Giraffe	Vulnerable (decreasing) 2014	817	191
Philantomba monticola	Blue duiker	Least concern (decreasing) 2016	707	701
Canis lupus	Grey wolf	Least concern (stable) 2018	654	1945

Appendix III (= regulated so as to restrict exploitation) top traded taxa for trophies

Taxonomic Group	Common names & notes	IUCN Red List status & date of last assessment	Quantity Reported by exporters	Quantity Reported by importers
Antilope cervicapra	Blackbuck	Least concern (unknown) 2016	2731	1792
Capra sibirica	Siberian ibex	Near threatened (decreasing) 2020	1617	1104
Civettictis civetta	African civet	Least concern (unknown) 2015	758	698
Capra hircus aegagrus	Wild goat	Near threatened (stable) 2020	718	440
Mellivora capensis	Honey badger	Least concern (decreasing) 2015	548	426
Proteles cristata	Aardwolf	Least concern (stable) 2014	249	145
Nasua narica	White-nosed coati	Least concern (decreasing) 2015	233	61
Canis aureus	Golden jackal	Least concern (increasing) 2018	104	91
Pseudois nayaur	Blue sheep	Least concern (unknown) 2014	93	67
Dasyprocta punctata	Central American agouti	Least concern (stable) 2016	63	20
Axis porcinus	Hog deer	Endangered (decreasing) 2014	32	58
Mazama temama (cerasina)	Central American red brocket	Data deficient (decreasing) 2015	16	7
Hyaena hyaena	Striped hyena	Near threatened (decreasing) 2014	8	8
Cuniculus paca	Agouti	Least concern (stable) 2016	4	1
Odobenus rosmarus	Walrus	Vulnerable (unknown) 2016	–	19

Table 2: Top 15 mammal species in international transfers for CITES Appendices I, II, III (2013-2022), & their status on IUCN's Red Data List (taking a lead from the exporter report for exports). Species may be listed on a different Appendix in different countries depending on population status, hence more than once (e.g. *Loxodonta africana*, African savanna elephant). Shaded species are found only/predominantly in Africa (e.g. *Acinonyx jubatus venaticus,* Asiatic cheetah is listed on CITES under *Acinonyx jubatus* only in Iran, where 'critically endangered'); or only legally trophy hunted in Africa (e.g. *Panthera pardus* https://speciesplus.net/species#/taxon_concepts/8619/legal). Source: data reviewed 9-10/2022, from CITES Wildlife Tradeview 2022 (30 October 2022) (https://tradeview.cites.org/), IUCN Red Data List (https://www.iucnredlist.org/), and Species+ by UNEP-WCMC and the CITES Secretariat (https://speciesplus.net/species).

Figure 2: "Transporting a giraffe to the Powell-Cotton Museum". Source: Public Domain image, created *ca*. 1920, photographer unknown, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rowland_Ward#/media/File:Transportation_of_Powell_Cotton_Taxidermy.jpg, 21 September 2022.

The highest Achievement Award conferred by SCI is the "World Conservation and Hunting Award®" recognizing "committed SCI members for their continued hunting accomplishments beyond achieving the World Hunting Award Ring."[14] To achieve this award, a hunter has to:

> …continue traveling the six continents to hunt … contribute a monetary value to wildlife that promotes conservation of those species [and] achieve and purchase all 15 Milestones [there appear to be 17 listed], the diamond level of 25 of the 27 Inner Circles, the fourth Pinnacle of Achievement, Zenith and the Crowning Achievement.[15]

This masonic-sounding list equates to several hundred animals from different species categories across the world, the desirability of species rising with rarity (i.e. scarcity) (Hutton *et al*. 2009: 1). Acquiring each award requires fee payments to SCI. Since 2004, an award celebrating the defense of "the international big game hunting community and the role of hunting in the conservation of wildlife and its habitat" by the big game hunter mentioned in Section 1 – the Peter Hathaway Capstick Hunting Heritage Award – has also been made by Dallas Safari Club to a nominated individual demonstrating "long-term commitment to our hunting heritage."[16] Capstick additionally has a hunting rifle named after him – the .470 Capstick – "designed for use as a dangerous game cartridge but … proven very useful on light game as well", delivering "more shock transfer to game and a larger wound channel."[17] Hunting celebration is simultaneously a celebration of the modern weaponry required for a successful hunting, a point I return to in Section 3.

[14] https://safariclub.org/world-hunting-awards/
[15] https://safariclub.org/world-hunting-awards/
[16] https://www.biggame.org/the-peter-hathaway-capstick-hunting-heritage-award/
[17] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/.470_Capstick

Safari Club International's *World Hunting Award Field Journal* (2018) in which award categories are listed, is notable for the fact that more pages are devoted to African fauna than for any other continent (see Figure 3). The "Animals of Africa" section lists 175 species compared with 113 for Asia, 66 for North America, 56 for Europe, and 26 for South America. Qualifying for copper, bronze, silver, gold and diamond awards from Africa's listed species requires killing 17, 26, 49, 61 and 80 animals respectively from specific categories. A separate tiered award scheme for African animals killed using a bow rather than a rifle requires 5, 15, 21, 31 and 27 animals for copper, bronze, silver, gold and diamond awards respectively. In the terms of the SCI *Award Field Journal*, the "Global Hunting Award" requires more animals to "achieve" Africa than for any other continent. These figures illuminate the extractive dependence of the trophy hunting industry on securing access to Africa's "hunting grounds."

SCI Continental Awards

African 15

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBLE CATEGORIES

Required 12 species and 1 of the Africa Big Five OR Required 15 species and NO Africa Big Five. Rifle & Bow requirements are the same

	Score or photo		Score or photo		Score or photo
❑ African lion		❑ Roan antelope		❑ Pygmy antelope	
❑ African leopard		❑ Oryx/gemsbok		❑ Dik-dik	
❑ Small cats		❑ Waterbuck		❑ Bush duiker	
❑ African elephant		❑ Lechwe		❑ Ader duiker	
❑ African rhinoceros*		❑ Kob (or puku)		❑ Forest duiker	
❑ African buffalo		❑ Reedbuck (or rhebok)		❑ Nubian ibex	
❑ Eland		❑ Wildebeest		❑ Aoudad	
❑ Bongo		❑ Hartebeest		❑ Hippopotamus	
❑ Kudu (greater or lesser)		❑ Damalisc**		❑ Wild pig	
❑ Nyala (mtn. or common)		❑ Impala		❑ Nile crocodile	
❑ Sitatunga		❑ Gazelle		❑ Tsessebe	
❑ Bushbuck		❑ Steenbok		❑ Oribi	
❑ Sable antelope		❑ Springbok			

*May be darted
*Damalisc consists of Korriaum, Tiang Topi, Tsessbe, Hirola. Blesbok. White Blesbok or Bontebok

SCI Milestone Awards®

African 29®

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBLE CATEGORIES

Minimum 29 (3 of Big Five Required), Rifle & Bow requirements are the same.

	Score or photo		Score or photo		Score or photo		Score or photo
❑ African lion		❑ Nyala (mtn. or common)		❑ Reedbuck (or rhebok)		❑ Bush duiker	
❑ African leopard		❑ Sitatunga		❑ Wildebeest		❑ Forest duiker	
❑ Small cats		❑ Bushbuck		❑ Hartebeest		❑ Nubian ibex	
❑ African elephant		❑ Sable antelope		❑ Damalisc		❑ Aoudad	
❑ African rhinoceros*		❑ Roan antelope		❑ Impala		❑ Hippopotamus	
❑ African buffalo		❑ Oryx/gemsbok		❑ Gazelle		❑ Wild pig	
❑ Eland		❑ Waterbuck		❑ Springbok		❑ Nile crocodile**	
❑ Bongo		❑ Lechwe		❑ Pygmy antelope			
❑ Kudu (greater or lesser)		❑ Kob (or puku)		❑ Dik-dik			

*May be darted
**can be substituted for another on list

Dangerous Game of Africa®

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBLE CATEGORIES

Maximum of four of the Big Five. Minimum 5 of 7, Bow 5 of 7

	Score or photo		Score or photo		Score or photo
❑ African lion		❑ African rhinoceros*		❑ Nile crocodile	
❑ African leopard		❑ African buffalo			
❑ African elephant		❑ Hippopotamus			

*May be darted

African Big Five®

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS AND ELIGIBLE CATEGORIES

Minimum 5, Bow 5

	Score or photo		Score or photo		Score or photo
❑ African lion		❑ African elephant		❑ African buffalo	
❑ African leopard		❑ African rhinoceros*			

*May be darted

Figure 3: Safari Club International Continental and Milestone Awards specific to Africa. Source: adapted from Safari Club International (2018: 3, 7–8).

In combination, SCI award-winners and other hunters will no doubt have killed thousands of animals from around the world, transferring large numbers of trophies and tonnes of preserved animal body parts from Africa to elsewhere. As Tables 1 and 2 show, many hunted trophies from Africa specifically are derived from species listed by CITES as 'threatened,' 'near-threatened' or 'requiring regulated exploitation.' Additionally, numerous species hunted are considered 'threatened' or 'endangered' according to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species, with many listed species marked as 'decreasing.' Given the current pace of global environmental change, not least due to climate change (which might itself be mitigated in various ways by the presence of large mammals—see Malhi *et al*. 2022), it is alarming that quite a large proportion of these critical species listed in Table 2 were not assessed more recently than 2016. As Hughes *et al*. (2023: online) affirm, "gaps in data … undermine our ability to truly understand the sustainability of trade", including international trade in trophy-hunted species. The context of a global biodiversity crisis with accelerating species extinctions (United Nations 2019), and a decline of 66% reported for Africa's Living Planet Index between 1970 and 2018 (WWF 2022: 34-35), makes it unintuitive to equate the extractivist practice of trophy hunting with care for populations of vulnerable species (Ghasemi 2021). As often pointed out, "[t]he idea that conservation involve[s] safeguarding animals for shooting" is thus seen as "repugnant to many" (Adams 2009: 135). These paradoxes have necessitated the need for pro-hunting media campaigns so as to manage reputational risk and engender popular support, as considered in the next section.

3. Information manipulation and "neocolonialism"?

Trophy hunting is currently in the public eye due to proposals for generic trophy import bans. In the UK, a recent government-led public consultation and call for evidence on 'hunting trophies' elicited more than 44,000 responses, mostly against the import of hunting trophies, and thus by proxy against trophy hunting.[18] If legislated, the Trophy Hunting Import (Prohibition) Bill[19]—tabled in late 2021 and passing the Committee Stage in January 2023[20]—would "prohibit the import of wild animal specimens derived from trophy hunting; and for connected purposes." The Bill is intended to send a strong signal against trophy hunting, and would contribute to conditions limiting "hunting and hunters in global conservation advocacy" (Paulson 2012: 54). Other importer countries and regions such as the US and EU are also proposing import bans, eliciting resistance on the grounds that African countries "significantly rely on trophy hunting revenue" from American clients (Semcer 2022: online).

The UK's proposed import ban has prompted varied international responses by conservationists (cf. Dickman *et al*. 2019; Nowak *et al*. 2019; Batavia *et al*. 2019; Clark *et al*. 2023), as well as stimulating lively and revealing media exchanges. In early 2022, for example, the UK's Channel 4 showed on its news programme that SCI was auctioning a polar bear hunt at their annual Trophy Hunting Convention held in Las Vegas specifically to raise money to fight "UK government plans to pass one of the world's strictest bans on importing animal trophies" (Thomson 2022: online). Recalling how SCI has been described as "unbiased" (see Section 1), this trade fair "celebrating 50 years of protecting the freedom to hunt" and attended by "top pro-hunting voices" such as Donald Trump Jr., in fact featured an evening banquet with live auctions of hunts raising over US$15 million for SCI's "advocacy and conservation efforts."[21] In the UK, Channel 4's five minute sequence featured a rather dissonant interview with vocal vegan, climate change activist and recent winner of the Orwell prize for journalism, George Monbiot. Reversing his previous position,[22] in this interview Monbiot essentially repeated SCI's 'green extractivist' messaging, stating that trophy-hunting large mammals is essential for habitat and species conservation in Africa and elsewhere:

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[18] See: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hunting-trophies-call-for-evidence and https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/hunting-trophies-controlling-imports-to-and-exports-from-the-uk/outcome/summary-of-responses-and-government-response--2.

[19] https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/2971

[20] https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/laws/passage-bill/commons/coms-commons-comittee-stage/

[21] See https://safariclub.org/sci-concludes-its-50th-annual-convention/

[22] "… I got this issue wrong. I find trophy hunting repugnant, but the campaign against it appears to have damaged conservation efforts" https://twitter.com/georgemonbiot/status/1350073445975994374

> …the money that people harvest from people going out to shoot charismatic megafauna and other popular hunted species—that money provides a very powerful incentive to local people to protect those wildlife populations and to protect the habitats on which those populations depend. (in Thomson 2022: online)

Stating that people living with large mammals simply "harvest" money from hunters obscures the significant inequalities in who this money goes to, as well as who exactly gains from the labor and land underscoring trophy hunting activities (see Section 4). UK proponents of 'sport hunting' instrumentalizing Monbiot's stance—such as the Fieldsports TV Channel celebrating that "George Monbiot backs trophy hunting" (Fieldsports News 2022)—leave us in no doubt about whose interests dominate this international industry.[23] As Alex Thomson's (2022) Channel 4 report asserts, trophy hunters tend to be "rich, white and mostly male", a characterisation that seems more-or-less accurate (Muller *et al*. 2022; Bichel & Hart 2023: 172), as also indicated in a recent controversial report by the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) advocating for a UK ban on trophy imports (APPG 2022). Although strongly and repeatedly mocked on social media for inaccuracies and bias,[24] this report conveys relevant information regarding interconnections between organizations lobbying for trophy hunting and the use of SCI funds to create a demonstrably misleading pro-hunting social media campaign (Kukura 2020), as discussed below.

This recent social media campaign linked with SCI was designed to seed and shape "a positive global narrative around hunting and sustainable use" that would recruit "a ground swell of millions of empowered volunteers who speak [via social media especially] on the benefits [of] hunting every day" (ICG 2019: 1-2). These quotes are from a 2019 grant application to the SCI Foundation's Hunter Legacy 100 Fund (SCI-HLF) by an astroturf organisation based in Illinois calling itself Inclusive Conservation Group (ICG),[25] run by a former president of the pro-hunting Shikar-Safari Club International Foundation. This latter organisation is one of the US National Rifle Association (NRA) Foundation's "largest donors in recent history" (Kukura 2020: online), donating more than US$3 million to the NRA in 2018, a year in which it also donated US$132,500 to ICG.[26] At this time the president of both organisations (Shikar-Safari Club International Foundation and ICG) was the same person.

To convey legitimacy, the name for the Illinois-based 'Inclusive Conservation Group' cleverly co-opts an intensified emphasis in conservation discourse on 'inclusivity,' a term used by multiple conservation organizations, donors and campaigns to signal an emphasis on the participation and inclusion of local and Indigenous communities in conservation efforts.[27] In fact, Inclusive Conservation Group's funding application to SCI-HLF sought to do none of those things usually associated in conservation praxis with inclusivity. The title of their application – "*Non-branded* educational Social Media Capability" (emphasis in original) – instead demonstrates its emphasis on financing social media advocacy, an activity by ICG already funded by SCI-HLF with over US$ half a million between 2016-2017.[28] The content of both previous and proposed campaigns was explicitly pro-hunting, as elaborated in this statement:

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[23] For example, https://www.fieldsportschannel.tv/ourpeople/

[24] See, for example, the troll twitter account "Campaign to Ban Truth and Honesty" (https://twitter.com/CBTHonesty) set up for precisely this purpose by mimicking the account of the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting (https://twitter.com/CBTHunting).

[25] See financial accounts at https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/inclusive-conservation-group,813225246/

[26] See financial accounts at https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/view_990/237444819/f03e8b14e702c99d7479c19ef15d5f29

[27] For example, https://wwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/governance/inclusive_conservation/ and https://www.inclusiveconservationinitiative.org/

[28] See accounts at https://www.causeiq.com/organizations/inclusive-conservation-group,813225246/

> [w]ith the help of SCI-HLF ICG developed a first of its kind, non-attributional social media platform, capable of communicating to millions of people each and every week. *This social media effort has been critical in shaping a positive global narrative around hunting and sustainable use*. ... Having this constant engagement with people who are pro-hunting and neutral allows us to leverage sound science, hunting facts, and *the emotion of our sport* into the conversations with non-hunting people in a causal and "safe" way to them (ICG 2019: 1, 4, emphasis added).

In an extraordinarily cynical example of post-truth politics, this ideologically-motivated campaign created fraudulent populist social media accounts as "the most effective tool we hunters, conservatives, and patriots have to battle the leftist, anti-guns, anti-hunting, animal rights fanatics" (ICG 2019: 2—page numbers in this paragraph are from this application). These accounts included #LetAfricaLive and #ProudAmericanHunter (see Figure 4). #LetAfricaLive was described by ICG as conveying SCI messages about hunting as "sustainable wildlife conservation in Africa [as if] through a native voice" (p.5). Gesturing towards Section 4, "some photos for their memes" were provided to the #LetAfricaLive campaign by a trophy hunting business owner who is the President of the Namibian Professional Hunting Association (NAPHA), who applauded the campaign for helping "to make the general public think twice about the crucial benefits of conservation through hunting" (p. 2). Echoing SCI's *Strategic Plan for Africa* of 1996 (as noted above), the #LetAfricaLive campaign *vigorously promoted the idea that critique of trophy hunting is a form of neocolonialism*. #ProudAmericanHunter is described by ICG as reaching "a rabid following of 25–54-year-old United States males who are passionate about hunting, guns, and patriotism" (p.5). The alignment of SCI and NRA interests was thereby intentionally promoted through "supporting two of the most pro hunting social media pages in the world" (p.5).

Figure 4. Example images used by the fraudulent #LetAfricaLive (L) and #ProudAmericanHunter (R) campaigns, run in parallel by Inclusive Conservation Group through a Safari Club International-Hunter Legacy Foundation funded advocacy project.

These circumstances and interlinkages—disentangled by Jared Kukura of Wild Things Initiative[29] to abuse on social media and legal threats offline—no doubt sound like conspiracy theories. The fact is, however, that the #LetAfricaLive and #ProudAmericanHunter accounts were eventually removed by Facebook for embodying "coordinated inauthentic behaviour" (Gleicher 2020: online). Facebook's Head of Cybersecurity

[29] https://wildthingsinitiative.com/

observed that "real people, not automation" were used to "create the perception of wide-spread support of their narratives by leaving comments on posts by media entities and public figures", some of whom were prominent conservation scientists; asserting that "[d]eceptive campaigns like these raise a particularly complex challenge by blurring the line between healthy public debate and manipulation" (Gleicher 2020: online).

A key discursive tactic here is to neutralize expressed concerns regarding the trophy hunting industry through charges of 'neocolonialism.' In alignment with the SCI-financed #LetAfricaLive campaign outlined above, and the SCI *Strategic Plan for Africa* prior to that, any criticism of trophy-hunting today is thus being framed paradoxically as 'neocolonial.' As journalist Patrick Greenfield reports recently in the UK *Guardian* newspaper (Greenfield 2022) and Namibian conservationist Maxi Pia Louis relates in the UK tabloid *The Mail*, "[i]t's a form of colonialism to tell us Africans what to do with our wildlife" (Louis 2022: online). The particular focus of these articles is so-called animal rights activists or 'ARAs', apparently "intensifying their campaign for a ban on the importation of hunting trophies", thereby "trying to put a stop to a practice that has economic benefits for millions of Africans via the sale of hunting licences", with the UK "at the forefront of this trend" (Louis 2022: online). This is in fact an old concern: one of the recommendations of SCI's 1996 *Strategic Plan For Africa* was thus "The Need For Photographic And Hunting Safaris To Team Up Against The Onslaught Of The Western Animal Rights Movement Coming To Africa" to present the "harsh reality of Africa" that "if it pays it stays" (Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996: 3, 9).

As observed above, this transmutation of a broadly elite activity (international sport and trophy hunting) associated with anti-liberal and right-wing tendencies, into an activity seemingly under neocolonial attack, is a text-book case of 'post-truth politics' (Neimark *et al*. 2019). Applying the term 'neocolonial' to critics of the neocolonial character of trophy hunting masks the frequently neocolonial character of trophy-hunting businesses themselves, as well as the land grabbing central to trophy hunting expansion. Namibia in southern Africa is one African country where land distribution issues are particularly stark, and where trophy hunting is promoted as a core pillar of conservation praxis. Since trophy hunting businesses require access to large land areas and are usually accompanied by removal of prior use and production practices, Namibia is an appropriate context for exploring the real neocolonialism that can be part and parcel of the green extractivism of the industry. Added to contexts of a relatively weak post-colonial state and associated possibilities for forms of personalization and clientelism of state institutions and donor opportunities (cf. Duffy 2000), the situation is ripe here for intensified neocolonial and extractive patterning that deepens inequality and alienation, as discussed in the next section.

4. "Hunting Namibia"

SCI's 1996 report discussed in Section 1 noted that only 3% of the 50% of SCI members who had "hunted Africa" had "hunted Namibia", compared with 80% in South Africa, 60-70% in Botswana, and 60% in Zimbabwe (Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996: 1). Recommendations were made by SCI for expanding the number of SCI members "hunting Namibia;" including how to access endangered species—particularly elephant and cheetah—and being able to import trophies from these species to the US (Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996: 24, 91-94). At the time of SCI's report, Namibia was simultaneously on the cusp of establishing new policy for wildlife on 'communal land.' New legislation – the Nature Conservation Amendment Act – was passed in the same year that SCI's *Strategic Plan for Africa* was published (Sullivan 2002: 164; Bollig 2016: 778). This legislation devolves some proprietorship over indigenous fauna to new resource management institutions called communal area conservancies, given satisfaction of specific registration requirements.

Before independence, hunting farms on freehold land in the territory were already accounting for a significant proportion of the African trophy hunting market: around 12% in 1985 (Bollig 2016: 778), oriented towards a predominantly German/Austrian market (Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996: 24). Under apartheid, and through Nature Conservation Ordinance No. 4 of 1975, the former Ministry of Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism (MWCT) had relaxed prohibitions for hunting by white settler farmers on freehold land, whilst retaining them for hunting and trapping by Indigenous Africans in communal areas (Sullivan 2002: 162). Private game reserves and 'hunting farms' could thereby be established in freehold settler farming areas,

if certain species-dependent requirements for fencing and security were adhered to (Abbiati *et al.* 2013: 15-18; also Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996: 90). The former South West Africa thereby became aligned with similar game farming policies on freehold land in South Africa (Wels 2015). After independence in 1990, possibilities for commercializing access to wildlife in remaining communally managed lands were extended: new communal area conservancies became legal organizations able to sell consumptive access to animals in these areas (MET 1995; GRN 1996; Jones 1995, 1999, 2009; Sullivan 2002, 2006). Namibia is now well-known for its Community-Based Natural Resources Management programme (CBNRM), through which a conservancy committee is permitted to sell animals of selected species to a trophy hunter or professional butcher, as well as to take animals for 'own-use,' once a quota for the species has been agreed by the state (Bollig 2016: 775).

Hunting communal land

The trophy hunting industry in Namibia and its extension into communal area conservancies thus became established on top of the pattern of land control set up during the country's colonial and later apartheid history (Becker 2022a,b). As shown in Figure 5, most of the central and southern parts of the country were surveyed, fenced and settled by commercial white farmers once African Namibians had been constrained to more marginal lands which also acted as labor reserves (the dark shaded areas on the left-hand map) (Sullivan 1996). This means that when SCI speaks of bringing "game back onto former natural areas that had been converted into livestock farms" (Degeorges & African Advisory Board 1996: 3), in the Namibian context it is (mostly) talking about land already extracted by settler farmers from Indigenous African land-users, and subsequently enclosed with fencing. In 2018, more than 70% of freehold land was owned by "previously advantaged farmers", which in Namibia's racialized history means they are white (NSA 2018: online; Becker 2022a,b). It is Namibia's remaining *communally-managed land areas*—those often more marginal lands (for farming) beyond the predominantly white-owned freehold farms—that are the focus of CBNRM, through the registration of communal land areas as 'conservancies' with defined boundaries, members, and plans for wildlife management. As the map on the right of Figure 5 indicates, communal area conservancies remain limited to areas designated under colonialism and apartheid as communal lands where African land-users were permitted to live. The registration of communal area conservancies has not disrupted the highly unequal and enclosed pattern of land distribution established through Namibia's colonial and apartheid histories (Sullivan 2018), although has often been drawn on to assert and negotiate historically understood and contested claims to land (Sullivan 2002: 162, 165; Bollig & Menestry Schweiger 2014: 169–170, 178; Bollig 2016: 780).

The integration of wildlife conservation with rural development via conservancies in communal land areas has been the focus of an impressive list of donor-funded, NGO-implemented projects.[30] Currently, a new Legacy Landscapes Fund established in 2020 as a charity under German law, involving the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), KfW, Agence Française de Développement (AFD), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FSZ), the IUCN and WWF, focuses on professional partnerships between NGOs and protected area authorities, listing as a candidate application an "Etosha Conservation Bridge" led by the NGOs WWF Namibia and Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation (IRDNC) to the tune of US$30 million.[31] These and other donor-funded initiatives have directed millions of dollars towards developing CBNRM and 'sustainable use,' i.e. consumptive species use, businesses (Weaver 2016). In 2013, new *National Policy on Community Based Natural Resources Management* published by the then Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET, now Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism—MEFT) thus emphasised NGOs as partners in the 'institutional framework' of CBNRM (MET 2013: 13-14). Aligning with SCI's 1996 *Strategic*

[30] A five-year Living in a Finite Environment (LIFE) project from 1993, extended in 1999, brought major donor funding from WWF and USAID to the CBNRM project; the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and World Bank funded an Integrated Community-Based Ecosystem Management (ICEMA) project focusing on selected conservancies from around 2003-2011; the Strengthening the Protected Areas Network (SPAN) from 2004 onwards brought finance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), GEF and Germany's state-owned investment and development bank (KfW), and included communal area conservancies in proposals for new forms of protected areas; and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) is funding 'biodiversity economy' initiatives that include communal area conservancies. Information available in review of literature at https://www.futurepasts.net/1990-present.

[31] https://legacylandscapes.org/2023/04/new-candidate-sites-announced/#more-3978

Plan for Africa, conservancies are also described as organizations established to facilitate business, such that a conservancy is "a business venture in communal land use… although its key function is actually to enable business" (NACSO 2014: 25). This institutional context means that as well as connecting communal areas with consumers from afar, the programme places these lands within the orbit of state, donor, NGO and private sector aspirations, governance and control (Gibson & Marks 1995: 942; also Sullivan 2002: 163)—arguably becoming a strategy of neocolonialism (as framed by Nkrumah 1965).

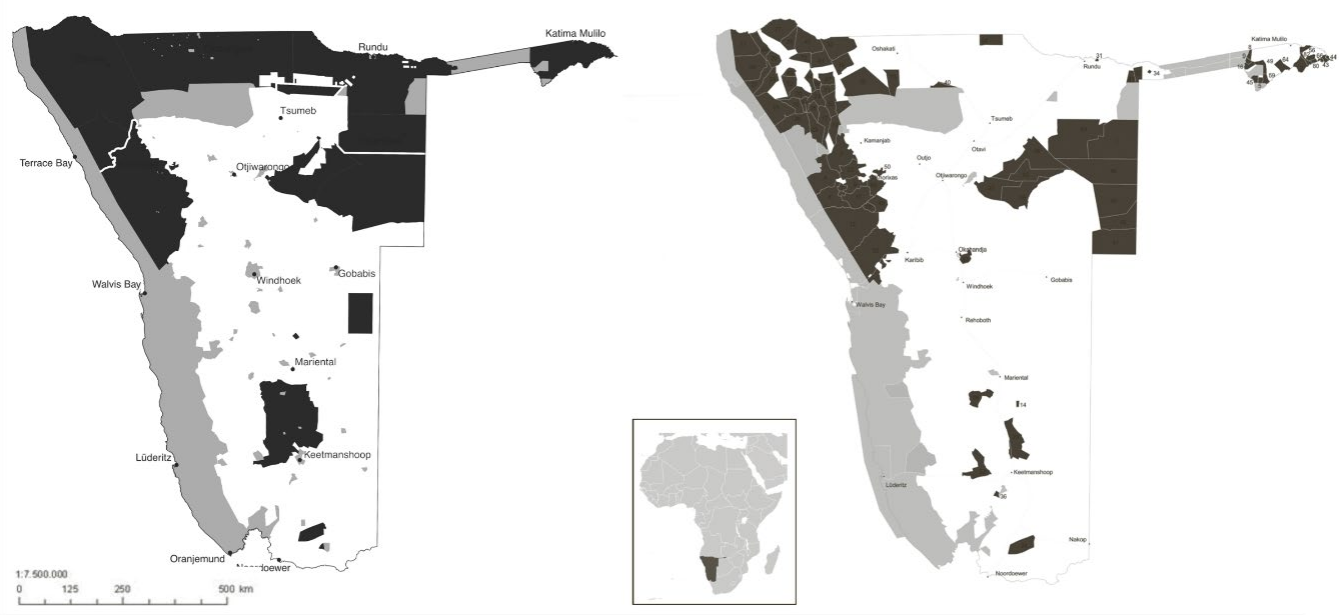

Figure 5: Broad patterns of land tenure in Namibia: the dark shading on the map on the left shows areas under communal tenure in 2000 (source: John Mendelsohn pers. comm.); the dark shading on the right-hand map shows 82 registered communal area conservancies in 2014 (there are now 86) (source: NACSO, Windhoek, https://www.nacso.org.na/conservancies). The white areas on both maps are mostly under freehold tenure (other than in north-central Namibia). The pale-shaded areas are under state protection for conservation or (formerly) diamond mining, or are designated as Tourism Concessions.

Whose revenue?

One of the key and encouraged ways in which conservancies can enter into business arrangements with private sector investors is through agreements with commercial hunting operators (Humavindu & Barnes 2003; Jones 2009; Naidoo *et al*. 2016). Hunting tourism is promoted as a primary means of generating income for conservancy management structures and members through fee payment by professional private hunting operators, as well as through calculating the economic value of meat occasionally distributed from trophy hunts via an equivalence method using prices of shop-bought meat (Naidoo *et al.* 2016). Current international media promotion of trophy hunting in Namibia is noticeable, for example, through the films *Green Facts Over Green Ignorance* (2021) (English version, *The Eco-Colonialists – An Exposé* 2022) by the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC),[32] and *Beyond the Trigger* by UK 'Into the Wild' podcaster Ryan Dalton, funded by UK-registered impact investing charity Jamma International (2022).[33]

[32] Online in German at http://www.cic-wildlife.org/green-facts-over-green-ignorance/ and in English at https://www.fieldsportschannel.tv/namibiatrophyhunting/.

[33] Online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HFijn9F_YY

Review of public data on NACSO's website in June 2022 indicated 27 professional hunting operators ("consumptive wildlife use partners"), accessing 54 hunting concessions in conservancies in communal land areas in 2020 and 2022.[34] This means that around 60% of the 86 communal area conservancies in Namibia include hunting concessions accessed by professional operators. Eight of the listed operators access three or more communal area hunting concessions, with one operator accessing eight concessions. These professional hunting outfits usually operate from freehold farms in Namibia's commercial farming areas or from Namibia's capital city Windhoek (Kalvelage *et al*. 2023: 6), and/or include hunts on freehold farms as part of their business, meaning that their access to communal areas is additional to core hunting business on these farms. Indeed, in 2019 over 95% of hunting activities in Namibia were reported to be concentrated on freehold farms, although communal area conservancies tended to receive higher payments per hunted animal, primarily because it is in communal areas that animals commanding high prices (such as elephant) remain for hunting (Maclaren *et al*. 2019).

What this pattern means is that the vast majority of professional hunting operators selling hunts in Namibia are from previously advantaged groups, i.e. they are white (see discussion in Becker: 2022a,b). In 2013 the Namibia Tourism Board (NTB) "determined that [only] 1 of 555 trophy hunting operators in Namibia is previously disadvantaged" (Abbiati *et al*. 2013: xiii, 2; Becker 2022a, b). As Kalvelage *et al*. (2023: 7) have observed more recently for Namibia's Zambezi Region, "all the [hunting] concessions are operated by White professional hunters, and only one company is registered in [the regional capital] Katimo Mulilo." These ratios indicate the strong racial bias of this form of extractivism, which in 2013 reportedly grossed over NAD 500 million from primary and secondary sectors (i.e. almost US$50 million), with a high proportion (75%) of registered trophy hunting operations allegedly "owned by foreign entities or managed by absentee landlords" (Abbiati *et al*. 2013: xiii, 18-19). Efforts to explore possibilities for increased participation by black hunting operators in the industry drew in part on a member of SCI's New England Chapter—"an American hunter who has hunted Africa several times", and "an NTB staff member who was a former professional hunter and Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) employee" (Abbiati *et al*. 2013: xii–xv, 11). These hunting experts found that "the trophy hunting industry is a tightly-knit community that is hard to enter;" an additional barrier being that previously disadvantaged farmers do not wish their farms to become collateral for AgriBank loans that would facilitate the improvements necessary for a farm to host trophy hunters (Abbiati *et al*. 2013: xii–xv, 11). The racialized and arguably neocolonial structure of roles in the Namibian trophy hunting industry continues to look like the diagram in Figure 6: income concentrates upwards towards the hunting operator whilst low incomes and precarity characterize the employment of African 'trackers and skinners' and 'support staff' (on these labor structures, also see Hewitson 2017; Koot 2019).

Professional hunting outfits pay a fee to conservancies for a permit to hunt animals approved by the MEFT as part of permitted conservancy hunting quotas, a cost that is ultimately absorbed by hunting businesses through their charges to hunting tourists. The ability of a communal area conservancy organisation to sell a permit to hunt to a private operator is intricately linked with observations (i.e. 'counts') recorded in event books by conservancy employees and members as a central part of conservancy management. Animals that qualify to be hunted are thus 'made' through intense work by conservancy members to log observations (Hewitson 2017). It is through this information that 'surplus' and/or 'problem' animals are identified and potentially allocated as a part of the quota of 'huntable' animals in a season (Bollig 2016; Hewitson 2017; Schnegg & Kiaka 2018). In order to sustain 'hunting concessions' in communal area conservancies, land in a conservancy is zoned for this purpose. Large areas of land are thus further removed from local production practices, engendering a proliferation of new local categories of 'intruders' and 'trespassers,'[35] as well as new forms of committee control of those transgressing zone boundaries (pers. obs.; also Bollig 2016: 786-787). In some cases, these circumstances are linked with evictions via court cases taken by conservancy committees to Namibia's High Court.[36]

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[34] https://www.nacso.org.na/hunting-partners—data appear unchanged in April 2023.

[35] As also observed for conservancies in Samburu, Kenya (Lesorogol 2022).

[36] For example, *Anabeb Conservancy Committee v Muharukua & 39 Others* (HC-MD-CIV-ACT-OTH-2016/03267) [2021] NAHCMD 24 (01 February 2022), https://namiblii.org/na/judgment/high-court-main-division/2022/24.

Figure 6: Roles associated with trophy hunting. Source: Abbiati *et al*. (2013: 13).

An important indicator here is the amount of profit extracted by professional hunters once their fees and other costs have been paid. How much is this income in comparison with the income to a conservancy, once conservancy costs (i.e. payments to staff for event book work, game counts etc.) have been covered? It is claimed that 100 per cent of hunting revenue goes to local communities (e.g. Louis 2022).[37] This reference to revenue is misleading, however, since it refers only to the agreed fee paid to a conservancy by a hunting operator, not to the income from the hunting business operation as a whole. Detailed survey research by Linus Kalvelage and colleagues in Zambezi Region in north-east Namibia forming part of the high-profile trans-boundary conservation area KAZA (Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area), finds that only some 20% of value generated by the tourism and hunting operations is captured at conservancy community level, largely in the form of staff salaries or investments in local infrastructure projects, with little of this income being visible at household levels (Kalvelage *et al*. 2020).

Close ethnographic research by Lee Hewitson disentangling the creation and flow of monetary values and payments in relation to elephant trophy hunting in Kwandu Conservancy, Zambezi Region, demonstrates that Kwandu received just over 50% of the trophy fee paid by the client to the professional hunting operator, and outlines the limited disbursement of value to those local people whose labor creates the value of animals that become identified as potential trophies (Hewitson 2017; Hewitson & Sullivan 2021). In both cases, the remaining income leaves conservancy areas as income and profit to commercial operators and investors. Bollig (2016: 795) found conservancy linked wages to be low, with those for game guards being below the minimum wage fixed by law for the agricultural sector in 2014. These and other recent studies echo observations from the World Bank-funded Integrated Community-Based Ecosystem Management (ICEMA) project in 2003 which

[37] A figure repeated by the Chair of IUCN's Sustainable Livelihood's Group in this video of 25 January 2023, https://youtu.be/PK85o4pWkjE

urged "more equitable benefit distributions of income from renewable natural resources" given that "income generated that reaches households is minimal…" (MET 2003).

Responding specifically to proposed trophy import bans in the UK, it is claimed that "[w]e Africans may have thrown off the yoke of colonialism but it seems that our former masters remain determined to dictate how we should live our lives" (Louis 2022: online). For the Namibian context, statements like these act to divert attention from the very neocolonial structuring of the trophy hunting industry, as well as its rootedness in the violence of German settler colonialism (Becker 2022a,b). As various authors convey for this context, such a discursive strategy – consciously or not – acts to extend "the lingering power" of settler colonialism, and to sustain a silence around the fact that "large swaths of land, important businesses [including trophy hunting], and scientific organizations are owned or controlled by German-Namibians" (van der Hoog 2022: 1, 4). Thus, when UK Professor of Science Communication Adam Hart (2020: online) writes from a private hunting farm in Namibia that "[t]he wildlife here is doing well for one reason alone: trophy hunting", it would be more honest to acknowledge instead that the reasons for success of this enterprise are a history of land appropriation, racialized labor structures, and structural inequality.

In effect, it is these extractive businesses and the inequalities on which they rest that rhetoric against trophy hunting critique seeks to protect. In the Namibian context specifically, protection of the industry on freehold land is masked by an emphasis in pro-hunting rhetoric and research on income and benefits to communal area conservancies (for example, Naidoo *et al*. 2016). Whilst important to the conservancies that receive payments from professional trophy hunters, this income is arguably marginal in terms of the wealth extracted from communal areas by the national trophy hunting industry, as well as extracted via the land appropriations underscoring trophy hunting businesses in freehold areas. In addition, "[l]ocal people have found themselves to be cut-off … from their traditional hunting practices" (Paulson 2012: 56; also Marks 2001): as has been conveyed to me in multiple oral histories—for a glimpse into these histories see Figure 7. Money made is mostly directed away from areas formerly accessed by local peoples into the accounts of those able to professionalize and sell hunting and other touristic business (via the role structure depicted in Figure 6).[38]

Human-Wildlife Impacts

Adding complexity, wildlife population increases from 1996-2012 attributed to the success of CBNRM (NACSO 2022) have contributed to heightened multispecies 'Human-Wildlife Impacts', including livestock depredation, crop raiding, damage to infrastructure and human attacks. For this reason, 1,415 'problem animals' were destroyed across 79 conservancies between 2001-2019 (Tavolaro *et al.* 2022: 8). In areas of north-west Namibia specifically, however, concern about animal populations now appears warranted due to the combined impacts of high permitted conservancy offtake quotas extended into a multi-year drought. Significant and sustained declines of populations of gemsbok (*Oryx gazella*), springbok (*Antidorcas marsupialis*) and mountain zebra (*Equus zebra hartmannae*) have been observed between 2011-2017 in Sesfontein, Anabeb and Puros Conservancies in the north-west (Heydinger *et al*. 2019: 497-498). Relatively good rainfall in 2022 does not (yet?) appear to have contributed to a recovery of populations (for figures, see NACSO 2022). This combination of dynamic factors meant that in 2016 a moratorium was placed on 'shoot-and-sell' offtake in the north-west (Heydinger *et al*. 2019: 498), radically reducing actual or potential conservancy income from consumptive use of wildlife, a fact rarely mentioned in recent reviews of trophy hunting in Namibia's communal areas (for example, Bichel and Hart 2023: 244).

[38] This is not to deny the importance of hunting license fees to government, or payments from the industry into the Game Products Trust Fund (GPTF) (https://www.gptf.org.na/) from which limited compensation may reach rural households experiencing negative 'human-wildlife impacts.'

Figure 7: Former renowned hunter Ruben Sanib explains how he and his forefathers once hunted using self-made bows and arrows at the site of the spring 'Sanibi- ǂgams,' named for his family but which they are no longer able to access. Photo: © Sian Sullivan, 10 March 2015.

An outcome of reduced prey is an increase in predator attacks on livestock, especially by lions (*Panthera leo*)––sightings of which generally increased between 2002-2021 (NACSO 2022). This situation contributes to already compromised livelihoods in the north-west, and at times has catalyzed local defiance in the form of lion poisoning and other retaliations (Sullivan 2016; Heydinger *et al*. 2019; cf. Witter 2021). For the wetter north-east of the country, recent research indicates that crop losses through the activities of elephant are not offset by trophy hunting income (Drake *et al*. 2020) and observes that "the promises of tourism-driven development reach only a very limited number of rural residents" (Kalvelage *et al*. 2021: 1000). Thus, whilst tourism and hunting provide income and meat to a proportion of conservancies, their committees, and inhabitants (Naidoo *et al.* 2016), resource rent opportunities vary widely across all 86 registered conservancies (Nattrass 2021). The situation is uneven and dynamic, not least due to recurring dry periods as well as disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Lendelvo *et al*. 2020). Despite optimistic suggestions that conservation-related income may permit conservancy members to disinvest from livestock farming and cultivation (Ashley 1995, 1997), conservancy members often continue to rely on subsistence farming as their primary source of livelihood (Tavolaro *et al.* 2022: 3).

Local perspectives on trophy hunting are correspondingly rather more variegated than is often conveyed, as indicated by the following four anonymised statements from incidental conversations during recent research in north-west Namibia. A conservancy member stated, for example, that "we do not see any meat or income from trophy hunting. I just hear that people come and take a lot of animals, including elephant heads and tusks. It's not good;" whilst a Traditional Authority representative asserted that,

> I thought at the start that trophy hunting would be good, but then I realized that all the income goes to the professional hunter who comes from outside the community. We get very little for a permit for 'small game' and the professional hunter gets all the fees for accommodation, meals and so on.

A retired MEFT employee lamented that there's "lots of grass but no animals!", explaining that:

> [t]he shoot-and-sell quotas were set too high. With these years of drought the animals, especially gemsbok, have been badly affected. The situation is much worse than what happened in the early 1980s drought.

And a retired professional big-game hunter confided that "I have become more sensitive over the years and am now unsure about the appropriateness of trophy hunting." More independent research is needed to ascertain up-to-date perspectives on international trophy hunting amongst those hosting huntable mammal species in communal areas.

Enduring poverty

Indeed, more than 30 years after independence and almost 25 years since the first communal area conservancies were registered and Namibia's CBNRM programme became the recipient of a sequence of multi-million dollar grants, it is noticeable that many rural Namibians linked with conservancies in communal land areas remain poor. In 2022 the World Bank confirmed that 1.6 million people in Namibia (of a total population of 2.6 million) are living in poverty (Petersen 2022). Kunene Region in north-west Namibia is the worst hit. In 2011 39% of the population here were classified as 'poor,' i.e. living on <US$1/day (GRN 2015). In 2021, and partly reflecting subsequent years of drought as well as the impacts of COVID-19 (Lendelvo *et al*. 2020), over 64% of the population of Kunene Region was considered "multidimensionally poor", with a Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) of 0.379—the highest poverty intensity level in Namibia (NSA 2021: 29). Kunene Region is simultaneously notable for having the highest number of conservancies by region by far (n=38), hosting eight professional hunting businesses operating in 21 conservancy hunting concessions (according to recent NACSO figures). Alongside these figures, and prior to the COVID pandemic, tourism was the third largest sector in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), contributing around 14.7% of GDP in Namibia in 2019 (US International Trade Administration 2021).

These figures are consistent with extractivism. They tell us is that many people in Namibia are significantly and structurally poor, and that this is also the case for areas of conservancy concentration that include hunting concessions. This entrenched rural poverty exists despite significant national income from tourism, as well as claims for the success of Namibia's CBNRM programme and the necessity of hunting income for communal area conservancies that are part of this programme. Lack of opportunity in rural areas, including reduced local production possibilities, has also prompted many people to leave conservancies for highly impoverished circumstances in townships attached to Windhoek, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. I personally know members of Kunene conservancy area families who have left for these reasons, and have observed how precarious their circumstances are. I am unaware of any analysis of conservancies that documents rural to urban migration from conservancy areas, despite this being an important individual and household strategy for responding to material poverty and lack of opportunity.

These circumstances notwithstanding, people in rural areas tend to support and delight in the presence of wildlife, and in the north-west are currently preoccupied with the absence of indigenous fauna in these areas (see above). Indeed, it is telling that historically Namibia's communal land areas were often where wildlife remained, having been removed elsewhere in Namibia through colonial-era hunting and in the process of establishing commercial freehold livestock farms free from predators and competitors (Heydinger 2020; Sullivan *et al.* 2021; also Sullivan 2016). Unfortunately, however, some of the rhetoric now circulating in support of trophy hunting conveys a very dismal view of how people in communal areas view and value indigenous fauna, implying that:

> …without the money raised from conservation hunting in Namibia … our rural communities would simply despatch all the cow-killing lions and crop-trampling elephants and rhinos in their local areas and turn the land over to agriculture. (Louis 2022)

This perspective radically downplays local plural values about wildlife, and long-established methods for living with indigenous fauna (Lendelvo *et al*. 2015), existing in complex relationship with systemic poverty, local

desire for food and other items from these animals, and the occasional need to remove animals that become problematic for livelihoods.

Whilst some benefits from the industry 'trickle down' to communal area conservancies, for many if not most conservancies and conservancy households this is indeed only a 'trickle.' Wealth from the industry cascades 'upwards' towards operators, freehold land-owners and agents, extending a racialized neocolonial patterning of greened extractivism that appears impossible to meaningfully transform.

5. To conclude: hunting plutonomy, populism and post-truth politics?

This article has shown how trophy hunting involves major transfers of mammal material that broadly echo 'North-South' colonial patterns of extraction (Section 2). I have argued that the industry produces significant value-chain concentrations with income directed towards professional operators who frequently derive from a colonizer class, whilst employed local land-users tend to be in low paid and precarious jobs (Section 4). These dimensions are characteristic of extractivism (Gudynas 2010; Dunlap 2021: 2). Framing extractive momentum in trophy hunting as good for sustainability and species conservation warrants consideration of the industry as a form of 'green extractivism.' I have additionally discussed discursive strategies deployed by protagonists of trophy hunting to mask and deny how the structure of the industry sustains a neocolonial form of green(washed) extractivism (Section 3). These circumstances beg political ecology engagement that foregrounds "the coloniality of reality" regarding African wildlife conservation and its tendency to subjugate to the highest bidder "cultural, and especially indigenous, diversity in relation to ecological knowledges and praxis" (Neimark *et al*. 2019: 614). An additional layer in this story is the active suppression of perspectives attempting dialogue beyond the promoted narrative (as discussed in Koot *et al.* 2022).

As a powerful instrument of 'improvement' (cf. Murray Li 2007), trophy hunting in conjunction with CBNRM has brought remote rural areas of Namibia (and elsewhere) into increasing global visibility and scrutiny. This has contributed an additional layer of pressure to perform well according to standardized metrics applied across the programme but from which benefits are not necessarily clearly visible or broadly shared. It seems clear that despite the promotion of sustainable use via trophy hunting as necessary for the flourishing of people, wildlife populations and habitats in Africa, the industry also promotes and solidifies a system of land, labor and animal appropriation directed towards the recreational and investment desires of the world's elite, frequently from beyond the borders of Africa. This is an industry that consolidates rather than transforms circumstances of hyper-inequality that plague countries such as Namibia, even as hunting advocates repeat the lie that the flourishing of rural households and communal area wildlife alike is dependent on trophy hunting extractivism. This is not to suggest that trophy hunting alone shores up these inequalities: the nexus of photo- and trophy-tourism linked with wildlife conservation has in combination removed lands and key resources from local use, creating poverty and insecurity, even as some individuals and structures have gained from these removals (Monbiot 2003[1984]: 89–111; Huismann 2014: ch. 5; Schnegg & Kiaka 2018).

An oft-stated objection to proposed trophy import bans in the UK (and elsewhere) is that these do nothing to curtail trophy hunting business in the UK itself. Although beyond the scope of this article, I completely concur with this objection. It takes us full circle to one of the roots of trophy-hunting in the modern world, namely the historical enclosure of hunting parks for elite access in Britain. In his analysis of the original accumulations of land and resources fuelling later capitalist enterprise, Marx noted the destruction of 36 villages in 1079 by William the Conqueror of Normandy, so as to create a royal hunting ground of the New Forest in southern England (Marx 1974[1867]: 685). Some centuries later, parliamentary Enclosure Acts and the Black Act underscored new capital offences for those "hunting, wounding or stealing red or fallow deer, and the poaching of hares, conies [rabbits] or fish" in regulated forests and in private and royal estates (Thompson 1975: 22ff; Perelman 2007). These forms of offences were often transferred to colonized nations to become decrees and laws related to so-called 'game' and other wildlife, acting to diminish and delegitimize local hunting praxis whilst privileging access by colonial elites (Adams & McShane 1996; Adams 2009; Mbaria & Ogada, 2017).

From the UK to Namibia, then, trophy hunting continues to consolidate elite recreational access to land (i.e. "hunting grounds"), exotic animals and human labor, whilst removing rights by local peoples. Beyond animal welfare concerns and ethical critique (Hannis 2016; Ghasemi 2021), hunting extractivism begs forensic

analysis for how it shores up inequalities, alienates people from land, diminishes some kinds of productive autonomy, and concentrates 'wildlife' in securitized landscape units requiring para-militarized management whose authority may be questioned and defied by local inhabitants (Witter 2021, and references therein). These dimensions are why trophy hunting needs image management through costly disinformation campaigns that arguably align with the production of 'alternative facts' associated with right-wing and variously populist 'post-truth' politics (Neimark *et al*. 2019). It is puzzling that the contribution of trophy hunting and other forms of elite conservation recreation to widening wealth gaps is not of more concern to those promoting this industry, given demonstrated correlations between high gini-coefficients and biodiversity decline (e.g. Mikkelson *et al*. 2007). Increasing defiance of trophy hunting and its racialized protection as 'wildlife conservation' may also mean that "environmental harms will increase as the legitimacy of conservation policies, tactics, and authority decline" (Witter 2021: 125, 128; also Benjamin & Svarstad 2010; Hübschle 2017; Mbaria & Ogada 2017; Sene 2022). Such defiance may ultimately be understood as a form of land defence enacted by predominantly Indigenous peoples in their protection of land from extractive operations (Dunlap 2021: 1, after Menton & LeBillon 2021).

Seeing trophy hunting more explicitly as a form of green(ed) extractivism extending neocolonial economic structuring, may assist with understanding these sources of contention and friction. Sustaining the 'green extractivism' of trophy hunting, despite growing threats to conservation and livelihood outcomes associated with the industry and its legitimacy, make it pertinent to ask: whose interests really are protected by advocacy for this industry?

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