
Introduction

All over Madagascar, small stores sell condensed milk produced by the Swiss company Nestlé. Once the content has been consumed, often to sweeten coffee, the tin itself embarks on a long life as a measuring cup. Nestlé's condensed milk tins have been used for decades in Madagascar for measuring rice and almost any other non-liquid product fitting into a can – a little bit of Switzerland in Madagascar. Travelling from south to north, on the other hand, litchis from Madagascar's east coast have been selling in Swiss supermarkets for many years, now being regularly offered to consumers from December to February – a little bit of Madagascar in Switzerland.

The exchange of goods between far-flung places is certainly nothing new, and has existed for centuries if not millennia, although what we have become accustomed to call 'globalisation' has increased the extent and the speed of such exchange. Contemporary globalisation, however, not only implies the transportation of goods across the planet and businesses of every *couleur* reaching even the remotest of villages, but also involves the idea of universally shared values and visions that are articulated in global agendas. Nature conservation is one such very prominent agenda, and Madagascar is a key site of global Nature conservation interventions.¹

I use Nature 'capital-N' to refer to the idea of a 'singular global system uniting all life' (Tsing 2005: 91), a self-evident entity of intrinsic, universal worth; the historical and political weight of the concept of Nature has been discussed by numerous writers.²

The island in the Indian Ocean is characterised by extraordinarily high levels of species that exist nowhere else on earth.³ At the same time, Malagasy habitats for rare fauna and flora have been declared to be at a high and immediate risk of destruction. The combination of these two factors has motivated the international conservation community to designate Madagascar as a global 'biodiversity hotspot' – in fact, as one of three 'hottest hotspots' on earth – where conservation measures are required particularly urgently (see Myers et al. 2000).⁴

These measures are rationalised and justified by a narrative that I call 'canonical', referring to it being generally accepted and widely distributed, in slightly different versions, by governmental and non-governmental conservation bodies working in Madagascar (Klein 2002: 195–96; Kull 2004: 11, 56; see also Pollini 2007: esp. 317–22 and chapter 10).⁵ According to this canonical narrative, the situation Madagascar finds itself in is, roughly, as follows. Before humans arrived on the island approximately two thousand years ago,⁶ Madagascar was a largely forested island providing undisturbed habitats for its numerous endemic animal and plant species. Then people appeared on the scene and, in particular through slash-and-burn agriculture, began to transform forests into grassland. Over the centuries, this process led to most of the island's original forests being destroyed and its landscapes being degraded by erosion, a process that continues today and that needs to be stopped if the last remaining patches of the original vegetation are to be rescued, especially because of an ever expanding population requiring more and more land. The cultivation of rice on forested hills is considered the chief culprit of this detrimental development. Madagascar, in short, is seen as a unique part of Nature that is being wounded by its human inhabitants, as a nation on a suicide track that needs to be rescued through international intervention.⁷

This story is, however, not supported by the evidence provided by scientists from many different disciplines, including paleoecology and -ontology, archaeology, biology, geography and tropical agroforestry.⁸ These experts, in contrast, paint a much more subtle and differentiated picture of the emergence of different Malagasy landscapes and of the impact of human activity (see Dewar and Richard 2012). The point is not to deny anthropogenic factors in shaping landscapes; probably all landscapes on the earth have been influenced by the presence of humanity. The problem is, rather, that despite substantial scientific evidence to the contrary, the grossly simplified canonical narrative 'cast[ing] people simply as destructive parvenus, agents of extinction' (Dewar and Richard 2012: 496) continues to be embraced and promoted, in various, slightly different versions, by international Nature conservation players that are active in Madagascar. These, in turn, have, since the mid-1980s, placed tremendous pressure on successive Malagasy governments to implement a strict Nature conservation policy, a fact that has caused analysts to consider Madagascar as being subject to 'global environmental governance' (Duffy 2006: 731).⁹ The level of influence of large Nature conservation NGOs (non-governmental organisations) has been observed to be exceptionally strong in Madagascar (Duffy 2006; Pollini 2007: 410–16; Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008: 167–70; Corson 2010, 2011a; see also Kremen et al. 2008: 224). As a result of such pressure, Malagasy governments have over

the course of the past three decades repeatedly embraced the conservation of the island's biodiversity as their flagship goal (see, for example, Mercier 2006), a prioritisation that has led to an ever-expanding network of various types of protected areas all over the island (UNESCO 2003; Kremen et al. 2008: 224; Corson 2011a: 703–4; Madagascar National Parks n.d.). The rescuing of Madagascar's unique biodiversity has thus become a global agenda said to represent a global value, and the creation of the Masoala National Park, with which this book is concerned, is among the most prominent conservation interventions emerging from this concern. Moreover, the park in Madagascar has got a little brother in Switzerland – a fact that has created a direct connection between two otherwise not directly connected places in the world: Zurich and Masoala.

The Masoala Partnership Project

The Masoala partnership project, which was first conceptualised twenty years ago,¹⁰ involves two locations: the Masoala peninsula on Madagascar's north-east coast and the zoo in the city of Zurich in Switzerland. In both localities, the project is depicted in terms of a partnership in which both sides are interested because of it addressing a shared and pressing concern.

The Masoala peninsula is almost entirely covered by forest, most of which is classified by conservationists as primary rain forest (Merenlender et al. 1998). As much as 1 per cent of the world's biodiversity is estimated to be found on the peninsula and an adjacent area (Wildlife Conservation Society 2013; World Association of Zoos and Aquariums n.d.). In 1997, half of the Masoala peninsula was declared a strictly protected national park, the largest in Madagascar (Allnutt et al.: 2013: 6–7). One side of the story I will tell in this book takes place in two villages on the western shore of the Masoala peninsula. One of these villages is located at a short distance from the boundary of the Masoala National Park, the other is an enclave within it. The local population is not allowed to enter the park although many families' subsistence land has come to lie within it. Production activities inside the park are punishable by fines or imprisonment. The Masoala National Park is co-managed by the Malagasy Protected Areas' Agency created in 1990 (formerly called ANGAP, Association Nationale pour la Gestion des Aires Protégées, renamed Madagascar National Parks in 2011) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), a New York-based NGO and one of the world's four most influential global conservation players (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008: 157; Brockington 2009: 15).¹¹

The other side of the story I will tell takes places in Switzerland. There, I focus on an exhibit at the zoo in Zurich which opened to the general

public in 2003, six years after the inauguration of the park in Madagascar. The core part of the exhibit at the zoo is a greenhouse the size of a football pitch (a bit more than one hectare) within which a bit of the rainforest in Masoala has been artificially reproduced. Five hundred plant and one hundred free-roaming animal species live inside the greenhouse (Zurich Zoo 2013a: 7), with the most easily visible animals being the red-ruffed lemurs which are unique to Masoala, chameleons, birds, flying foxes and tortoises. Rather than exposing individual animal species in isolated environments, the greenhouse harbours a tiny ecosystem over which the zoo staff, quite intentionally, do not have full control. Because the zoo exhibit represents a fraction of its natural counterpart in Madagascar, it was baptised 'Masoala Kely', or Little Masoala. The stated purpose of Little Masoala is to alert the Swiss public to the alarming destruction of the world's rainforests in general, and to raise awareness and money for the Masoala National Park in particular. Adjacent to the greenhouse, the heart of the zoo's Masoala exhibit, an information centre has been built for visitors to acquaint themselves with various aspects concerning the island of Madagascar, its people, history and economy, and focusing in particular on concerns regarding deforestation and forest conservation.

Since the inauguration of the Masoala National Park in 1997 and during the years leading up to its creation, the zoo in Zurich has been one of the park's most important supporters, both ideologically and financially, committing itself to provide at least \$100,000 (U.S.) annually, that is between a quarter and a third of the park's annual operating costs, via its partner organisation, the WCS (Rübel et al. 2003: 20; Bauert et al. 2007: 205; Rübel 2011). At the occasion of Little Masoala's ten-year anniversary in 2013, the zoo proudly announced that over three million Swiss francs had up to then been donated to the upkeep of the park in Madagascar (Zurich Zoo 2013b). While the zoo provides essential financial means to the park in Madagascar, the cooperation, in turn, contributes crucially to the zoo's reputation as a modern Nature conservation centre, implying not only the sensitising of the general public to Nature conservation issues but also a direct and significant presence in ongoing conservation projects.

A Relationship in Imagination

The Masoala National Park connects the Masoala peninsula to the world beyond Madagascar in a much more direct way than would otherwise be the case, and Little Masoala at the zoo in Zurich brings a little bit of Madagascar to Switzerland. Thus the Masoala partnership project has, through the global agenda of Nature conservation, established a

palpable connection between two places at some 10,000 km distance as the crow flies. Global agendas of this kind also imply, as already observed, the existence of shared values and visions. Values are held by people. Does a project such as the partnership between the park in Masoala and the zoo in Zurich, therefore, create a connection between the *people* living at either end? The zoo postulates just that when, for example, its director writes in a leading Swiss newspaper that: ‘We hope that over the years a close connection between Zurich and Masoala will develop, that the [zoo] visitors will follow the progress of the project there [in Masoala]. Those who feel like it may travel to Madagascar and get a picture of it [the Masoala National Park] themselves’ (Rübel 2003b, my translation). Indeed, the percentage of Swiss tourists to Masoala has risen manifold since the opening of the zoo exhibit (Masoala National Park 2005) so that the Swiss are now among the most numerous of the foreign nationalities visiting, although the absolute numbers are still very moderate.¹² That the creation of Little Masoala is intended to connect *people* is also evident in publications such as one by the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), which the director of Zurich zoo presided over at the time of the opening of Little Masoala, where it is stated that the Masoala exhibit provides ‘a window on another culture’ (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums n.d.). By 2013, ten million people had visited the zoo’s Masoala exhibit (Zurich Zoo 2013b). At the same time, the park management in Masoala regularly highlight their appreciation of the support given by people in Zurich.

Yet, of which nature, exactly, is the contact between people living on the Masoala peninsula and people living in Switzerland? On the one hand, personal, direct contacts are extremely rare, being almost exclusively limited to encounters between tourists and the few local people in Masoala who work in the tiny tourism industry. On the other hand, the people at either side of the partnership project are aware of one another. The farmers in Masoala are perfectly aware of the implication of foreigners in the Masoala National Park, and they reflect about the latter’s intentions and the meaning of their involvement. At the other end, the zoo exhibit offers visitors a particular perspective onto Madagascar and the Malagasy people. Thus the park in Madagascar and its mini-counterpart in Zurich have created conceptual windows through which there are possibilities for people at either end of the partnership to gaze at one another and reflect about one another’s lives, world views and intentions as well as one’s relationship with ‘the other’. We are, therefore, looking at a relationship ‘in imagination’.

In thinking about this relationship in imagination, I ask what and who do visitors to Zurich zoo’s Masoala exhibit reflect about when they look at the Masoala rainforest conservation project presented to them? What

and who, at the same time, do Malagasy farmers reflect about when they look at the same project that has led to the creation of a protected area on their doorstep? The stories in this book, told by Malagasy farmers and by visitors to Little Masoala, will reveal that the answers to these questions revolve around entirely different issues, and that there is, in fact, no point of contact.

Outline of Chapters

The study's double focus and its two ethnographic locations also shape the argument's presentation. In Part I, I discuss the issues which visitors to the exhibit in Switzerland, including many school classes, perceive as connected with what is being presented to them. I further examine what looking towards Madagascar through the lens of Nature conservation entails in terms of visitors' imaginations of the Malagasy people. I begin with the Swiss side of the story as the concept of Nature conservation has its origins in the global North.

Chapter 1 takes the reader on a virtual tour through the tropical greenhouse at the zoo, stopping at a Malagasy kitchen and at a research station presented amidst the vegetation in order to reflect about their meanings and significance. Upon leaving the rainforest environment one passes through the adjacent information centre and eventually encounters a shop which sells, besides Malagasy handicrafts and other items, children's books. These include the story of the parrot Globi, a well-known Swiss children's character, travelling to Madagascar in search of a supposedly extinct bird. **Chapter 2** examines the difficult relationship between presented information and its perception by those who encounter it. I first investigate the zoo's mission and goals through an analysis of its own print and online publications. In the second part of the chapter I draw on schema theory to discuss perception from a theoretical point of view, thereby paving the way to consider in detail, in the following three chapters, visitors' perceptions of the zoo's Masoala exhibit. In the first of these, **Chapter 3**, a curious phenomenon crystallizes. For most visitors, the Masoala exhibit, despite its manifold references to the Indian Ocean island, is not a space for thinking about Madagascar but a space for thinking about morality, thereby erasing the focus on saving Madagascar's rainforests that the zoo so ardently attempts to bring home to its visitors. **Chapter 4** examines, partly by analysing school children's understandings of propositions made in the Hollywood animation film 'Madagascar', the role the Malagasy people play in zoo visitors' imaginations of the island. I conclude that not only is Madagascar erased from the picture in

visitors' gaze through the window of the Masoala exhibit, but so are, in complicated ways, the people of Madagascar. The final chapter of Part I, **Chapter 5**, continues to examine what visitors have in mind when they think of the people of Madagascar. I investigate this question by analysing discussions I had with a total of twenty-seven school classes of all ages and academic levels in the canton of Zurich. Some of these classes had been to the zoo's exhibit while some had not; I examine the effects of a visit to Little Masoala on these children's and teenagers' perceptions. Drawing on schema theory I argue that, from as early as the age of seven at the latest, the pupils associate the Malagasy people with an evolutionist network of ideas. Moreover, presumed environmental awareness and knowledge has, in the tow line of the global agenda of Nature conservation, become a manifestation of perceived evolutionary progress.

When we turn to the second part of the book and to people at a destination point of global Nature conservation efforts, we encounter an entirely different story. Part II examines which issues the Masoala National Park makes the farmers in Masoala reflect about, and what the park entails in terms of their imaginations of the people connected with it. **Chapter 6** presents the two villages where fieldwork was carried out, introduces the park's history and some of the consequences of its creation for the local population, and details national and local conservation laws and agreements, as well as punishments for transgression of conservation rules. Drawing on a locally told myth about why the Malagasy people prefer to die like the banana plant rather than the moon, **Chapter 7** discusses the Malagasy farmers' 'ethos of growth'. This ethos is intimately linked with the importance and profound meaning of kinship ties and with the aspiration of turning neutral soil into 'land of the ancestors'. This chapter also draws attention to the stark contrast between the Malagasy and the conservationist ethos, respectively. **Chapter 8**, entitled 'The Island of the Wanderer', examines local people's interpretation of, and reaction to, the inclusion into the Masoala National Park of a tiny islet sheltering the oldest burial ground in the region, which has resulted in significant restrictions in the execution of ancestral rituals. The chapter shows that, from the local people's perspective, the park not only puts at risk the fulfilment of their most fundamental aspiration of paving the way for future generations to prosper but that it also represents a potential threat to the safety of the ancestors upon whose blessing their kin's well-being depends. But who, exactly, is responsible for these various kinds of threats discussed in chapters 6 to 8? Who is 'the park'? **Chapter 9** examines this question, showing how the park represents a nebulous consortium of governmental and non-Malagasy outside powers who, in the minds of the farmers in Masoala, merge into one hostile 'other'. The resurfacing

of the central Malagasy state and the suddenly increased appearance of white foreigners in the wake of the creation of the park significantly contributes to this interpretation. In the last chapter of Part II, the perceived links between the present situation and former times of servitude, both under Malagasy and foreign rulers, are discussed, and the significance of historically inclined reflections in local people's understandings of the park is emphasised. **Chapter 10** ends with a discussion of how, from an analytically observing perspective, the Masoala National Park threatens to interrupt a historical process through which descendants of slaves have succeeded in shedding the legacy of slave descent by anchoring themselves, over the course of several generations, on the land of the Masoala peninsula. Finally, **Conclusions** provides a comparative analysis between, on the one hand, the reflections of the Malagasy farmers as they look at the Masoala National Park and, on the other, the reflections of the zoo visitors as they look through the window of the Masoala exhibit, including their mutual imaginations of the others' motivations, intentions and situation in life. It will emerge that the bridge between North and South that the Masoala project is said to provide is broken and that instead the project, in fact, widens the gap.

Friction in Imagination

Beyond the Lens of Conservation is not a study about the mechanisms and socio-economic consequences of contemporary globalisation, nor about manifestations of creative, culturally specific agency in its wake. Rather, the book zooms in on ordinary people's imaginations at both ends of a globalised Nature conservation project. This entails a threefold focus: on *imagination*, on imagination at *both* ends of a global agenda (rather than an exclusive focus on a local people in the southern hemisphere), and on *ordinary* people's perspectives, both in the global North and South (rather than contrasting the view of Western experts with that of 'ordinary folk' in the South). By combining these foci, the book offers a novel approach to the study of the global agenda of Nature conservation.

The case I present is an instance of what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing has coined 'friction', that is 'zones of awkward engagement' that emerge out of 'global encounters across difference' (Tsing 2005: xi, 3).¹³ These encounters are sparked by 'aspirations to fulfil *universal* dreams and schemes' (ibid.: 1, emphasis in the original). One such dream – and one that involves a particularly large number of dreamers in the global North and some in the South – is the rescue of Nature from anthropogenic destruction. The fulfilment of such globalised dreams necessitates the movement of

particular types of knowledge ‘across localities and cultures’ (ibid.: 7), and it entails ‘spatially far-flung collaborations and interconnections’ (ibid.: ix). Yet, while the promoters of such collaborations, of which the Masoala partnership project is a perfect example, imagine the transmission of knowledge to proceed smoothly, in reality the road is full of bumps. The ‘cross-cultural and long-distance encounters’ (ibid.: 4) that the implementation of universal aspirations trigger are awkward ‘interconnection[s] across difference’ (ibid.: 4), sparking friction when the ideas and actions of those involved rub each other up the wrong way. It is ‘the messy . . . features’ (ibid.: 3) of such encounters that Tsing suggests we ought to make the subject of ethnographic inquiry, ‘grounding one’s analysis of global connection not in abstract principles of power and knowledge but rather in concrete engagements’ (ibid.: 267). I agree.

I therefore take Tsing’s notion of ‘friction’ as a theoretical anchoring point for the study of the interconnection across distance and difference between a Swiss zoo and a Malagasy national park, and the ‘ordinary’ people living at either end. Following Tsing, I look at this globalised project through an ethnographic prism, directing the light onto the awkward and messy encounter it produces. My account of the Masoala partnership project, however, differs from Tsing’s story of the global connections that manifest themselves through friction in the rainforests of Indonesia, in that my focus lies not on the practical encounters on the ground (although such encounters are not excluded from my analysis). Rather, I primarily investigate how ‘the zones of awkward engagement’ that have emerged out of the Masoala partnership project are imagined, what the Malagasy farmers and the visitors to the zoo’s exhibit think is happening ‘at the meeting point’. My focus, in other words, lies on friction in imagination.

Read On!

In the field of social scientific studies concerned with issues related to ecology and the environment, one can, broadly speaking, discern two perspectives (Robbins 2006). ‘Symbolic approaches’ are concerned with culturally situated ontologies and with examining how relationships between humans and non-humans are mediated through all aspects of human life.¹⁴ In Madagascar, symbolic approaches to the study of the interaction between humans and their non-human surroundings¹⁵ focus on the intimate and profound connection between land and kinship-based identity.¹⁶ Symbolic approaches also discuss the encounter between local ontologies and internationally determined Nature conservation aspirations. For

example, the case studies in a special volume of *Conservation and Society* highlight the fundamental ‘dissonance’ (Campbell 2005: 288) between, on the one hand, the perspective of those who dwell in a place and look at the landscape from within and, on the other hand, the concept of biodiversity that is completely detached from any specific place and involves a perspective as if from space (cf. Ingold 1993) calling for conservationists ‘to come back to earth’ (Campbell 2005: 302). Chapter 7 of this book stands in the tradition of this line of research.

‘Political approaches’ examine questions of power in connection with access to, and the use of, natural resources, asking ‘Who wins, who loses and through which mechanisms?’ This approach is presently very much at the centre of interest in Nature conservation studies, both concerning Madagascar and elsewhere. Among the most prominent issues discussed in the vast body of literature are: the commoditisation of natural resources and the neoliberal character of Nature conservation programmes;¹⁷ new schemes for Nature conservation; carbon trading and its ecological, political and social effects;¹⁸ foreign control over national policies and internationally monitored ‘green governance’ as well as the tremendous influence exerted by internationally active conservation NGOs;¹⁹ the physical or economic displacement of local communities for the sake of Nature conservation, recently coined ‘green grabbing’;²⁰ the strengthening of existing power inequalities within local communities through Nature conservation programmes;²¹ the economic and social impacts of large-scale commercial extraction of various minerals or other natural resources, (in Madagascar primarily concerning a large mining project in the country’s south-east,²² as well as the extraction of and trade in sapphires);²³ the history of conservation efforts and the paradigm shift from ‘fortress conservation’ to participatory approaches (and back), as well as the various difficulties also surrounding the latter;²⁴ the misinterpretation of local realities and the robustness of ‘conservation myths’;²⁵ and finally, local people’s skill in rhetorically adjusting their proclaimed identity to fit expectations and to thus earn support by conservation organisations.²⁶ Most of these topics are not directly discussed in this book although Part II draws attention to the external control over natural resources in Masoala and the resulting economic displacement of local families. The stories told will, nonetheless, be highly relevant also for readers primarily interested in a political ecology analysis, as well as for conservation practitioners, and I therefore urge such readers to read on! Because from whatever angle one wishes to look at contemporary Nature conservation programmes in the global South, it is indispensable to attempt to understand how internationally monitored conservation efforts are perceived by those targeted in situ, and how these percep-

tions may radically depart from what actors in the North believe them to be. Such a perspective is essential in order to grasp the mechanisms at work when the global agenda of Nature conservation is implemented and, indeed, in order to better comprehend the widespread failure of international conservation efforts.

Methodological Reflections

Because the contexts in Switzerland and in Madagascar respectively required very different methodological tools, it is necessary to say a few words about how I proceeded in gathering the empirical data for this research project and in conducting the analysis.

My principal methodological tool while working in Madagascar was participant observation (as in my earlier work; see Keller 2005). Because readers trained in social and cultural anthropology will be familiar with this method, I will not go into any details about this classical anthropological research tool. For readers less acquainted with anthropology, I would like to briefly point to two of its key aspects. First, participant observation necessitates a researcher spending enough time in a place to become a competent speaker of the vernacular (by 'competent' I mean the ability to converse with ease in daily life); second, it consists in spending long periods of time with local people, in taking part in, and in observing carefully, and as non-judgementally as possible, what they do and in listening to what they say. Once relationships of trust had developed between myself and those people in Masoala with whom I interacted on a daily basis, participant observation was supplemented by recorded interviews about specific topics with selected people and, in the case of one of the two villages where I conducted fieldwork, a household survey concerning the economic consequences of the establishment of the Masoala National Park for the village's residents.

The situation in Switzerland required entirely different methods of data collection. The goal of the Swiss part of the study was to understand what the zoo's exhibit about Nature conservation in Madagascar, and the Masoala rainforest in particular, makes visitors reflect about, and what kinds of images it creates in their minds. Does 'Little Masoala' actually bring to mind Madagascar and, if so, in which ways? Does looking through the lens of the zoo's presentation bring to mind the Malagasy people and, if so, which images emerge? With this goal in mind, I interviewed adult visitors inside the zoo exhibit; I spoke with school classes from primary to grammar school who had, or had not, been to the exhibit together with their teachers, and I accompanied some of them on their visit to the zoo;

I analysed the zoo exhibit's content and took part in guided public tours through it; I examined children's stories about Madagascar and Masoala sold at the zoo; and I analysed the coverage about Madagascar and the Masoala exhibit in the Swiss media (further details will be given in following chapters).

The Implicit and the Explicit

As anthropologists and other scholars have discussed and stressed (e.g. Strauss and Quinn 1997), the relationship between implicit knowledge and language is far from straightforward or clear. It is, therefore, extremely important to be aware that explicit talk is not the same as mental concepts, and therefore what people say is not necessarily a direct window into what they think.

In a situation where one is able to spend a lot of time with the people whose perspectives on things one aspires to understand, and where one can immerse oneself into their lives through round-the-clock and long-term fieldwork as I was able to do in Madagascar, participant observation is likely to yield a much deeper understanding of these perspectives than any kind of interview or survey. I am convinced that participant observation remains the best research method anthropologists have at their disposal, and I therefore use it as my key tool. Bloch has recently discussed the special value of participant observation from a cognitive point of view. He argues that because of our species' outstanding ability to read each other's minds, people who interact in daily life enter into a process that results in 'the mutual colonisation of the related minds' (Bloch 2012: 183) and in mental 'interpenetration' (ibid.: 184). This allows researchers to develop an implicit understanding of the implicit knowledge of those in whose lives they participate. 'The participant observer is simply exposing her mind so that the process [of interpenetration] can take place', thus using the human 'mind reading ability as a research tool' (ibid.: 184). Others' implicit knowledge thereby becomes part of one's own implicit knowledge, thereby producing a feeling in the ethnographer of having grasped 'the native's point of view'. At the same time, it is often extremely difficult to explain in words why exactly one knows what one is so sure to know – a sensation that any ethnographer who has done long-term fieldwork through participant observation will immediately recognise. The challenge then is, of course, to render such implicit and highly complex knowledge into explicit language for the sake of published texts, a process that Bloch (2012: 184–85) suggests is made possible through introspection – that is through the analysis of one's own implicit knowledge that has evolved as a result of the interpenetration of

minds. However successful this analytical process may be though, considering it to bring about full congruence between implicit knowledge and knowledge expressed through language would be cherishing an illusion.

In certain cases, the research situation does not offer the possibility of in-depth participant observation. Instead one has no other option but to rely on people's explicit statements they express in interview situations. This was the case with regard to my research in Switzerland which was based on catching people during those moments when 'Madagascar' briefly entered their lives. The question then arises of how to unearth tacit, implicit cultural understandings from speech. The contributors to *Finding Culture in Talk* (Quinn 2005a) suggest a variety of ways. These include paying special attention to recurrent keywords because 'they permit speakers easy reference to the salient cultural concepts that they mark' (Quinn 2005c: 72; see also Strauss 2005). If a specific word or expression crops up frequently and in the talk of many different people, it makes sense to investigate it as a potential explicit marker of an implicit concept. In other words, keywords may point to something important 'beneath'. However, one cannot assume that all concepts will be marked by keywords attached to them like labels to a box. Moreover, in the analysis of explicit talk it is important to take into consideration not only *what* has been said but also *how* it was said. Was a statement expressed with hesitation or assertively? Which emotions accompanied it? Did it appear to be the outcome of conscious reflection or, instead, to represent an almost automatic reproduction of others' talk? Did it seem to spring to mind easily or only after considerable reflection and analysis?

One of the key assertions in *Finding Culture in Talk* is the necessity for every researcher to devise methodological tools that are appropriate and implementable in a given situation (Quinn 2005b: 32–33). By necessity, these will often depart from textbook blueprints. The following sections explicate the way I proceeded at the zoo in Zurich, as well as pointing to inherent and emerging limitations.

At the Zoo

At the zoo, it was only possible to engage visitors in short conversations. Although I had obtained permission from the zoo director to conduct interviews inside the zoo premises on condition that these were not bothersome to visitors, it turned out that the majority of the latter were clearly unwilling to stop and talk for more than a few minutes. Sometimes there were obvious reasons, like impatient children or tiredness after several hours at the zoo. Mostly, however, visitors on a leisure trip simply seemed not to be in the mood or right frame of mind for in-depth discussions

about any topic. I approached people randomly at various places along the visitors' trajectory through the exhibit – catching those who were about to enter as well as those who were about to leave it – and asked them for a few minutes of their time. The vast majority consented. I proceeded to ask a small number of open questions concerning my respondents' understanding of the purpose and message of Little Masoala, as well as their imagination and perception of Madagascar and the Malagasy people. I did not record the interviews, nor did I enquire about people's socio-economic background. Had I tried to conduct recorded in-depth discussions with visitors and to get data about their professional and other background, only unusually interested visitors would likely have agreed. This would have produced a highly unrepresentative sample and a consequently distorted picture. Thus the particular 'cultural analysis of discourse' (Quinn 2005b: 3) I undertook at the zoo departs in important ways from the methods presented in *Finding Culture in Talk* which are based on the systematic analysis of lengthy and recorded talk.²⁷ Immediately after each interview, I took notes on what the interviewee(s) had said, including as many verbatim expressions as I could recall. I also noted clues to socio-economic background that had emerged in the course of the conversation as well as the 'how' of respondents' statements to supplement the 'what'. These notes provided the basis for later analysis.

Some readers might criticise that such a procedure will inevitably result in little more than touching the surface of what might go through people's minds as they stroll through the zoo's Masoala exhibit. Although not entirely untrue, the brevity of most exchanges I had with visitors actually echoes the likely extent of visitors', at least conscious, engagement with what is presented to them at Little Masoala, a point I will come back to later on in this book. In this sense, catching a glimpse of what goes through visitors' minds as they stroll about inside the exhibit enabled me to meet the visitors at *their* level of engagement with the Masoala conservation project rather than forcing onto them my considerably more pronounced interest in this topic (but see the discussion on schemas in chapter 2).

After I had spoken with 125 individuals or small groups of visitors such as couples or groups of teenage friends²⁸ (I counted such groups as one respondent, although in my notes I differentiated wherever relevant between their individual statements), I realised that I was no longer receiving new information but simply getting more of the same, with many answers being extremely similar. When one reaches such a stage of research, one can either stop or else develop the next research step by investigating certain answers more deeply or developing new questions that lead in new directions. Much to my regret, neither was possible. After having published an article in a leading Swiss newspaper in which

I pointed to injustices the local population in Masoala has to suffer in connection with the Masoala National Park, I was henceforth not allowed to conduct any further research on the zoo premises. As a consequence, certain aspects of my data from Zurich zoo could not be developed as I would have wished. Such are the limitations in the real research world.

At the Schools

Besides speaking to adult visitors at the Masoala exhibit itself, I worked with twenty-seven different school classes in the canton of Zurich at all levels of primary and secondary school education (for more details, see chapter 5). Some of these had visited Little Masoala together with their teachers, others had not; some had had a guided tour by zoo staff during their visit, some had not; in some cases, I accompanied the class on their visit to the zoo; some classes engaged thoroughly with the exhibit, others much less so. In all cases, however, I met with the classes after their visit – between immediately still on the premises of the zoo, and several months (in one case two years) afterwards at their schools – and involved them in conversations concerning their images of and thoughts about Madagascar and the Malagasy people, using open questions as with the adult visitors to the zoo. These discussions were all tape-recorded and later transcribed for further analysis (to different degrees of linguistic detail, depending on the subject of conversation).

Seeking Patterns

In analysing both the adults' words, based on my notes, and the tape-recorded interviews with the children and teenagers, my aim was to investigate *frequently recurrent* ideas and patterns in what respondents talked about in connection with the zoo's Masoala exhibit. Some of these were hinted at by the use of certain keywords. I was particularly interested in those ideas which seemed to spring to mind easily and spontaneously in response to minimal cues such as the word 'Madagascar'. In other words, I wanted to understand which ideas were readily available in people's minds. Research always involves a choice of focus. I decided to pay particular attention to widely shared ideas rather than investigating individual variation which is, of course, not to deny the existence and significance of the latter. I had not chosen to focus on widely shared cultural ideas a priori, however. I did not start out looking for similarities and overlaps between different people's answers to my questions, and I did not start out intending not to differentiate along socio-economic lines, gender, age or similar criteria. On the contrary, I had expected aspects

such as formal education to play an important role in shaping people's views. However, early on in my empirical research in Switzerland I was struck by the apparent existence of a relatively small set of extremely widely shared ideas which were voiced by both men and women, of vastly different ages and equally different socio-economic backgrounds (as far as discussions gave me cues to the latter). I was struck and surprised by the far-reaching homogeneity of what children, adolescents and adults said. Below the surface of varying vocabulary and different degrees of eloquence, the gist of a great many respondents' ideas was extremely similar, to the extent of being quasi-verbatim repetitions of one another. Therefore these recurrent ideas – probably reflecting a mixture of tacit 'taken-for-granted-assumptions that are at the core of what is meant by "culture"' and powerful explicit public discourse (Strauss 2005: 203) – became the focus of my study. Schema theory proved to be an important analytical tool that helped me to make sense of what I observed.

Comparing Apples and Pears?

One last methodological point is important to emphasise. It might at first appear that I am comparing apples with pears in that I am juxtaposing the views of Malagasy farmers with the views of visitors to an exhibit in Switzerland, some of whom are children. If I was comparing these different groups of people in any strict sense, I would indeed be comparing apples with pears, but this is not the case. What I offer is a juxtaposition of two different ways of making sense of one and the same Nature conservation project and of the relationships involved in it, a project that has emerged from one of the most prominent contemporary global agendas and that has created a connection between two geographically far-flung places. This juxtaposition allows us to analyse whether, and if so in which ways, the Masoala partnership project also creates connections between the people living in these places. This book is an attempt to find answers to this question.

Notes

1. Since 1990, international donors have invested at least \$450 million (U.S.) in Nature conservation programmes in Madagascar (Rabesahala Horning 2008; Allnutt et al. 2013: 2).
2. These scholars, from a range of disciplines, include Nash 1989; Grove 1995; Soper 1995; Escobar 1999; Stepan 2001; and Descola 2005.

3. It is estimated that Madagascar's endemic plant species make up more than 3 per cent of all plant species worldwide, and its endemic vertebrate animal species almost 3 per cent (Myers et al. 2000: 854).
4. The concept of 'biodiversity hotspots' was first formulated by Myers in 1988. By the year 2000, the concept had been slightly modified (see Myers et al. 2000) but the principal idea remains the same. For a critical analysis of the concept of 'biodiversity', see Guyer and Richards 1996; and Escobar 1998. Recently, Kull et al. (2013) have criticised the conservation focus on hotspots, arguing instead for the recognition of the economic, ecological and social value of 'melting pots': smallholder farming landscapes in the tropics where native and introduced plants are mixed and in combination provide the basis for sustainable livelihood and sustainable natural resource utilisation (highland Madagascar is one of three case studies presented in the article). The authors argue that 'wild biodiversity is not the only kind of biodiversity that should be recognized, celebrated, and protected' and that, in fact, 'melting pots are arguably more sustainable than hotspots' (ibid.: 13).
5. It is important to recognise that there is much diversity within the global Nature conservation community in terms of both values and practices, and that it would be unsound to lump together all conservation bodies. However, those which are particularly influential in Madagascar, and certainly the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) that shapes matters in Masoala, can be grouped with what Brockington, Duffy and Igoe call 'mainstream conservation' (2008: 9, 154–57; also Duffy 2006; Pollini 2007: 410–16), embracing what I call the 'canonical' conservation narrative. The WCS belongs to those large conservation NGOs that continue to see strictly protected areas from which local people are largely banned as the way forward (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008: 164; see also Escobar 1998: 56–57).
6. A recent study by Dewar et al. suggests, however, a much longer occupational history: 'Past research on Madagascar indicates that village communities were established about AD 500 by people of both Indonesian and East African heritage. . . . Recent archaeological excavations in northern Madagascar provide evidence of occupational sites . . . [which date] to earlier than 2000 BC, doubling the length of Madagascar's known occupational history' (Dewar et al. 2013: 1).
7. Consider the following examples of this canonical narrative. On the website of the United Nations Environment Programme, News Round-up 2011 (United Nations 2011), an article is cited which states that 'In it's [*sic*] pristine condition Madagascar was covered by 85% forest and this has been reduced to just 8%'. Conservation International (2013) states in its online overview of Madagascar that 'people's impact on the land means the curious island is far from pristine. Roughly four-fifths of Madagascar's forests have been stripped bare'. The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust stated in 2009 that 'The main threats are slash-and-burn agriculture, mining and logging (either for charcoal or construction wood). The practice of cutting forest to clear for either grazing or cultivation increased dramatically in the 1980s and predictions indicate that unless halted most forest could be removed by 2050'. In 2003 the Zurich zoo

wrote: 'Only 4 per cent of the original rainforests of Madagascar are still intact' (Zurich Zoo 2003: 16; my translation). See also Harper et al. 2007.

8. Scientific research in paleoecology/-ontology and archaeology has shown that the picture of a once (almost) totally forested island, most of which has been reduced to barren landscape by human subsistence activities (a theory that goes back to early French colonial botanists [Burney 2005: 386]), is incorrect and that the extent of anthropogenically induced changes in the landscape since the arrival of humans in Madagascar as well as the role of humans in the extinction of the endemic megafauna have been exaggerated (see Burney 1997, 2005; Dewar 1997; Gommery et al. 2011; Dewar and Richard 2012; Dewar et al. 2013). '[T]he roles played by climatic and anthropogenic drivers remain unclear' (Dewar and Richard 2012: 498). Researchers have also criticised the demonisation of fire as an agricultural technique (Kull 2004) and have discussed the mismatch between representations and realities that lie at the heart of conservation policy in Madagascar (Pollini 2007). The claim that the core cause of deforestation in Madagascar is necessarily population growth has also been challenged by researchers, pointing instead to historical and political driving factors of forest loss (Jarosz 1993; Fremigacci 1998; Klein 2002; Simsik 2002; Horning 2012: 117) as well as, following the pathbreaking study by Boserup ([1965] 1993), to adaptations of farming techniques when population density increases (Pollini 2007: 242–48, 470–72 and chapter 6). Finally, long-term climatic changes (Virah-Sawmy 2009; Dewar and Richard 2012) and seismic activity (Zavada et al. 2009) have been shown to be responsible for landscape transformations in places where the subsistence activities of local people are often postulated as their only cause. These criticisms of the canonical discourse do not, of course, mean that deforestation is not a problem in Madagascar. What they show, rather, is that the narrative used to justify contemporary conservation measures is, in fact, highly contested by expert scientists, and that its presentation as 'uncontroversial' is politically and ideologically motivated (cf. Fairhead and Leach 2003: chapter 2; Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008: chapter 3).
9. Concerning Madagascar, see also Kull 2004: 238–40; Mercier 2006; Pollini 2007: 58–62, 89, 410–16; Rabesahala Horning 2008; Corson 2010, 2011a; and Horning 2012. Concerning the emergence of international environmental governance in general, in which conservation NGOs have a crucial role, see Fairhead and Leach 2003, especially chapter 2. Referring to different African contexts, Broch-Due even speaks of 'ecocracy' (2000: 14).
10. For an overview of the development of the cooperation beginning in 1993, see World Association of Zoos and Aquariums n.d.; and Zurich Zoo 2010a.
11. In a study by Brockington and Scholfield on 'Expenditure by Conservation Nongovernmental Organizations in sub-Saharan Africa' (2010) between 2004 and 2006, the WCS ranks third on the list of the 'largest 10 conservation NGOs' behind the WWF and Conservation International (ibid.: 109). Madagascar is among the top five countries in terms of conservation NGO expenditure in sub-Saharan Africa (ibid.: 110).

12. In the peak year of 2007, the Masoala National Park had 2,500 foreign visitors of which 500 were Swiss (Masoala National Park 2009). Most of these only visited the small island of Nosy Mangabe, which can easily be reached on a day's excursion from the hotels in the town of Maroantsetra. See also Ormsby and Mannle 2006: 278, 282.
13. Interestingly, a similar concept of 'friction' was developed independently from Tsing by the authors of the collection of essays entitled 'Museum Frictions: Public Cultures / Global Transformations' (Kratz and Karp: 2006: 27 [note 4]) – the third in a series of books about museums' contemporary roles – to capture the idea of museums in conversation not only with the past but also with 'global flows and articulations' (ibid.: 6). In certain ways, the zoo's exhibit could be seen as a museum exhibit. This line of thought is not, however, further explored in this book.
14. See MacCormack and Strathern 1980; Tsing 1993; Descola 1994, 2005; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Descola and Palsson 1996; Rival 1998; and Ingold 2000.
15. On the term 'surroundings' instead of 'environment', see West, Igoe and Brockington 2006: 252 and 264.
16. Most ethnographies of Malagasy societies discuss, at some point, the tremendously important link between kin groups and their 'land of the ancestors' (e.g. Bloch 1994a) – including in situations where that link becomes jeopardised (e.g. Evers 2002; Graeber 2007) – or other forms of the inseparability of people and land (Woolley 2002).
17. Special Issue of *Antipode* (Brockington and Duffy 2010); West 2005; Büscher and Whande 2007; Castree 2007; Hanson 2007, 2009; Igoe and Brockington 2007; Duffy 2008; Brockington, Duffy and Igoe: 2008; Igoe 2010.
18. Concerning Madagascar, see, for example: Pollini 2008, 2009; Ferguson 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Bidaud 2012; Larson et al.: 2013; Savaresi 2013.
19. Duffy 2006; Kaufmann 2008; Corson 2010, 2011a; Ramiarantsoa, Blanc-Pamard and Pinton (eds) 2012.
20. Brockington and Igoe 2006; Fairhead, Leach and Scoones 2012; Corson, MacDonald and Neimark 2013.
21. For Madagascar, see e.g. Klein et al. 2007; Pollini 2007; Pollini and Lassoie 2011.
22. For example, Evers and Seagle 2012; Kraemer 2012.
23. Walsh 2004, 2012; Duffy 2005.
24. On the history, see Kull 2004. For analyses of participatory approaches, see Messerli 2006; Pollini 2007: chapter 11; Ratsimbazafy and Kaufmann 2008; Corson 2011b; Pollini and Lassoie 2011; Hanson 2012.
25. See Fairhead and Leach 1998. For Madagascar, see: Pollini 2007; Rabesahala Horning 2008; Scales 2011; Horning 2012.
26. Campbell 2005: 287; Galvin and Haller 2008; Huff 2011.
27. I did attempt to recruit visitors for a longer interview on a different day, but the success rate was virtually nil.
28. Interviews on the zoo premises were conducted between May 2007 and April 2008.