



UFW Thesis Award 2020

Wisse van Engelen

'The Park Multiple: The Politics of Conservation Tourism Partnerships'

Jury Report

Dear Wisse,

Your thesis entitled *'The Park Multiple: The Politics of Conservation Tourism Partnerships'* was selected as the best master thesis for the domain Social Sciences of Wageningen University. This is an achievement for many reasons, not just for you but also for the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy group and your supervisor, Prof.dr. Esther Turnhout. The thesis has been chosen out of 9 competing theses.

Your thesis deals with conservation and tourism, a topic which is central to the mandate of Wageningen University. The thesis examines the claim that conservation and tourism converge in achieving similar goals of rural development and efforts to conserve our natural environment. You examine the politics of the partnerships. Your examination unfolds as a spectacular journey along sophisticated social sciences approaches and concepts. The interesting and novel aspect of approach is that the park under consideration is not a single but a multiple entity. This novelty allows you to unpack the various trajectories by which conservation and tourism in enacted by human and non-human actors. These enactments of course con-exist but also interact. The concrete interactions you observe make you conclude that conservation is the dominant partner in the conservation-development partnership. This is an original avenue of exploring the argument and a reason to award you the University Fund Wageningen Thesis Award.

One major other reason is that, in passing as it were, you developed a substantial critique on prominent and lauded scholars like Bruno Latour and his co-workers.



There is also a whiff of critiquing political ecology which finds many supporters, also in Wageningen. This makes the thesis not only a good read and a substantial contribution to critical theory, but also a fine product of scholarship.

Wisse, congratulations and I hope that your thesis is not your last contribution to science.

Congratulations!