

Envisioning Nature
transformational discourses of nature
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ENVISIONING NATURE

TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCOURSES OF NATURE

PHENOMENON

Transforming nature for the sake of rewilding and conserving valuable ecosystems is an enormous task that affects both nature spaces, humans and non-humans alike. For years, nature has supported the anthropocentric life-style at the cost of habitats and biodiversity.

The rapid decline in biodiversity and widespread public support has prompted the Danish State to focus on restoring Danish nature by establishing Nature National Parks. This PhD project thus studies a case where the State takes responsibility, and as a result must negotiate and legitimize restrictions on consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Existing consumer research on nature-based consumption:

- Mainly focuses on romantic and extraordinary experiences*
- Positions nature as a setting for experiential experiences*

*(Arnould & Price, 1993; Celsi, Randall & Leigh, 1993; Canniford & Shankar, 2013)

→ This project broadens CCT research to also include non-human agency and multispecies encounters as part of the consumption experiences.

THEORY

Discourses and consumption practices:

The meaning of what nature is, the role of humans and non-humans, as well as what practices are enabled and constrained are co-constituted through discursive structures (Jørgensen & Philips, 1999).

Utopia, dystopia and heterotopia:

Heterotopias can act as compensations, a sort of mythic and real constitution of the space in which we live. An other space (Foucault, 1986).

Governmentality:

Subjects willingly participate in their own governance (Foucault, 2010). Consumption is managed by the State and negotiated discursively with different stakeholders (Karababa & Ger, 2011).

Responsibilization:

The ethical, responsible consumer and the P.A.C.T. routine for transformation of consumer behaviour (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014).

Political ecology:

Studying how environmental issues and management are politicized (Nustad & Swanson, 2021).

METHOD

Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA) inspired by Willig's version (2013).

- 1: Thematic analysis
- 2: Subject position of the State
- 3: State discourses of Nature
- 4: Action orientation and context
- 5: Human and non-human subject positions
- 6: Practice possibilities
- 7: Antagonistic frontiers

Discourses makes it possible to study visions of nature, the negotiation of governance and consumption initiated by the State, and accepted or rejected by citizens.

CONTEXT

The Danish Nature National Parks are a variant of National Parks, placed in State-owned nature spaces. Unlike traditional, Danish National Parks, nature alone has first priority in the Nature National Parks, production is prohibited, large animals reintroduced, and nature-based consumption somewhat restricted.

15 parks were established in 2020-21 as part of a new political biodiversity policy. In 2021 a law amendment was passed to support a new nature governance regime, that allowed for sustainable ecosystem management.

How is the State transforming nature spaces and nature-based consumption?

WHO IS THE STATE?

Denmark is a parliamentary democracy constituted by a multi-party government. Political agreements are often supported by the parties in government, but for certain projects broad agreements are made to secure that the project will outlast changing governments. Such is the case of the Nature National Parks, which are now protected by law.

Danish society is based on egalitarian values such as equality, safety, and freedom. It has a flat hierarchy, a high degree of trust, and a strong welfare state, which for example can be seen in citizen acceptance of State regulation benefitting the common good.

DATA

The data used for the discourse analysis presented on this poster are primarily from the Government and Ministry of the Environment.

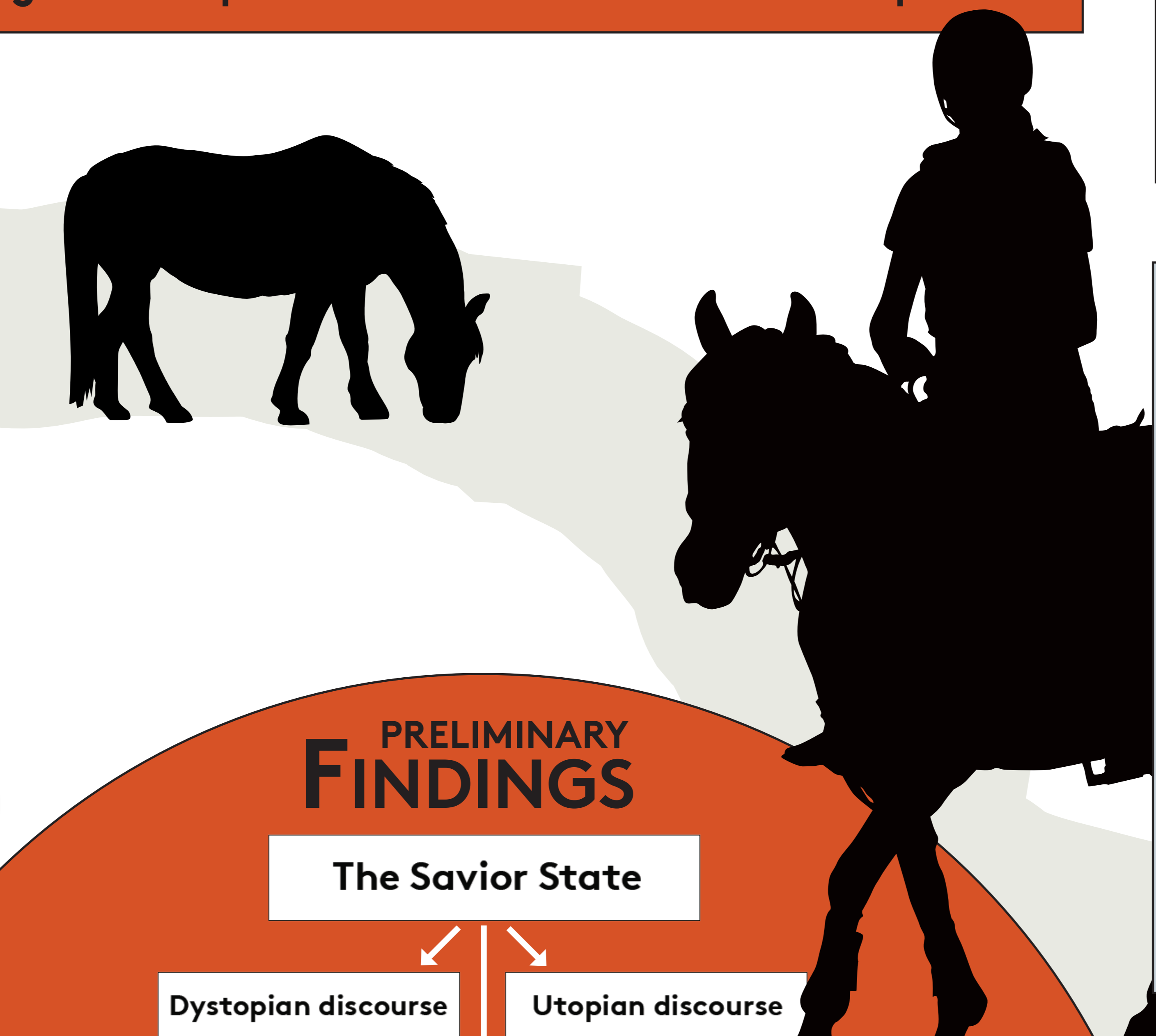
All data below will, however, be included going forward to identify and characterize antagonistic frontiers.

Source	Type
Government	Law amendment
	Hearing documents
	Press releases
Ministry of the Environment	Speeches
	Fact sheets
	Political agreements
	Area descriptions
	Project and governance plans
Danish Nature Agency*	Hearing documents
	Citizen feedback from tours in NNP
	Written tour guides
	Video conference
	In-depth interviews with project managers
Field notes	Photos of signs and facilities
	Talks w. experts and stakeholders

*Under the Ministry of the Environment

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PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The Savior State

Dystopian discourse

Animals dying
Nature in crisis
Production exploits
Unsustainable

Utopian discourse

New habitats
Nature prioritized
No production
Life flourishes

The Plan

New Nature governance scheme Using democratic processes Guiding nature-based consumption

Non-humans

Endangered species
Passive
In need of saving
Survive and multiply

Grazing mammals
World-makers
Management tool
At the mercy of humans

Humans

Involved citizens
Giving input
Showing interest
Supportive and respectful
Concerns = uninformed

Unruly consumers
Chasing good experiences
Unconsciously selfish
In need of education and guidance

Dystopian and Utopian discourses of Nature are used to gain support and weaken opposition towards the transformation process.

The State positions itself as a savior of Nature and offers positions to humans and non-humans that are State-dependent.

This constructs a paternalizing State-consumer relationship, that allows the State to justify the loss of citizen co-ownership and the implementation of restrictions on consumer activities.

THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

The preliminary results presented here indicate that within a social liberal society such as Denmark, it is possible for the State to take the lead on transformational projects. State responsabilization, however, comes with the price of restricted consumer freedom and loss of co-ownership and influence that might be too steep for citizens to accept. It has yet to be seen in which ways the consumers are resisting the path laid before them, and to what extent they are willing to give up individual privileges for the greater good of society and nature.

POSSIBLE AVENUES

- 1: State governance and consumer resistances in transformation projects, where the state is taking responsibility for behavioural changes (Nustad & Swanson, 2021; Wiebe & Mitchell, 2022).
- 2: Governmentality. Material representations within the Nature National Parks created to guide and enable specific nature-based consumption (Abolien, Arsel & Cho, 2021; Lemke, 2021).
- 3: Animal co-consumption. More-than-human theories. Multi-species encounters affects consumer experiences in rewilding inspired nature spaces (Valtonen, Salmela and Rantala, 2020).
- 4: Postcolonial perspective on the State's role and regulation of subjects.

WANT TO HELP ME ON MY WAY?

Use the post-its to suggest possible avenues for me to look into.

All input is received with gratitude.