1. Introduction

The following study concerns nature conservation as a way to benefit local communities. The theme of this research was first inspired by a reading of the book *Wildlife Heroes*, a compilation of forty leading conservation projects written by Julie Scardina and Jeff Flocken. The articles talk about the work done being accomplished for the preservation of various endangered animal species, but also pointed strongly to reference work done with the local communities at these sites, which who are directly exposed to relations with the wild animals. Wild animals are repeatedly commonly treated like pests in areas where the wildlife meets human habitats, and are therefore exterminated as such and sometimes driven into extinction. To help combat this problem, many educational programmes have been launched and countless local inhabitants have been encouraged to take part in the conservation projects giving which provide them with the opportunity to gain employment and education. Through education, and understanding, and enjoying the benefits of that they can benefit from a healthy wildlife, the people often change their hostile attitudes toward the local animals. Educated communities can then plan their development more sustainably, what means better which leads to valuable results for both the people and the animals. Such a comprehensive approach to nature conservation and people's welfare in developing countries appeals to someone who is concerned about both prosperous nature and prosperous people. The further research on the subject helped lead to the given topic of this thesis - peace parks.

1.1 Peace parks

The beginning of the peace park phenomenon and the origins of the term phrase 'peace park' began with the establishment of the Waterton Lake Glacier International Peace Park between Canada and the U.S.A. in 1932. The gesture had a largely symbolic meaning, since the countries were not in a conflict and they remain in friendly relations today. Despite that, many countries have followed this example and attempted to maintain or establish peace with the help of nature-protecting transboundary areas. The first international peace park involving any which involved armed conflict between neighbouring countries was in the Cordillera del Condor region between Ecuador and Peru (Ali 2007). Today, the Transboundary Protected Areas Network recognises 188 peace parks all over the world (IUCN references).
Peace Parks often operate as buffer zones between countries in conflict. There are several examples of buffer zones between hostile territories. One of these lies between El Salvador and Honduras, where there is a 2km-wide strip of which is said to reduce the possibility of war by about 90% (Lejano 2007). Pakistan and India are divided by an even narrower strip, which has also resulted in a significant decrease in violent incidents within the area. These two countries are considering the creation of a formal peace park on the Siachen glacier, just above the military control line. Jordan and Israel have jointly managed the Binational Sea Marine Peace Park since 1994, and the situation in Cyprus changed its direction from hostile to cooperative even on the local level. After decades of being divided by a buffer zone, nowadays, the Greek and Turkish Cypriots now exchange social and cultural relations within the buffer zone that area (ibid).

The most widely accepted definition for Peace Parks is the one brought-presented by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) (date references). The IUCN distinguishes certain Protected Areas, which have been established to generally protect biodiversity and cultural diversity. Transboundary Protected Areas (TBPA) are a subcategory of Protected Areas and need to straddle over the borders of two or more countries. Peace Parks or Transboundary Protection Protected Areas for Peace and Co-operation (otherwise known as ‘peace parks’) are the narrowest subcategory of Protected Areas, which must demonstrate biodiversity, cooperation and most importantly, a peace objective between at least two countries. The mission of Peace Parks is to preserve their natural and cultural heritage while helping to establish peaceful and cooperative relations between countries in conflict, as well as developing their economies and improving the living conditions of local populations.

Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) is a term used mostly to describe TBPs in southern Africa. The distinction is made to give the phenomena exclusiveness for that part of the world (van Amerom and Büscher 2005). Southern African countries have adapted the idea of Transboundary Protection Protected Areas for Peace and Co-operation as a regular cooperation and development tool, with the help of the Peace Park Foundation (PPF), they have created peace parks in naturally and culturally valuable areas, where the local people are included in ambitious development plans. The situation of people living in the protection area is the interest of this thesis.