



Capitalism and Conservation: The Production and Reproduction of Biodiversity Conservation

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His Royal Highness rightly says that our rainforests are worth more alive than dead. This is absolutely true. Leaving aside the immeasurable value offered by our rainforests' diversity and water conservation functions, we are facing an almost unfathomably large business opportunity, one which we can share with the Rainforest nations of the world . . . With an estimated 610 billion tonnes of CO₂ sequestered by our tropical rainforests, a vast \$18 trillion business opportunity is before us . . . [I]t is increasingly clear that the solution to this problem lies not only within a free market system but also within our field of expertise. What the people of Rainforest nations need is a system that values the services locked up in their land . . . The rainforests are at the very centre of these countries' identities; they seek to preserve them even as they struggle against them . . . With capitalism at the centre of OUR identity, we must be bold enough to see the world at its widest, even as we struggle in our own way . . . To seize this \$18 trillion business opportunity, valuing the services of our rainforest will not only require innovation in market-based mechanisms but also unprecedented global cooperation between the brightest minds of the nations of our world. Many structures and mechanisms will need to be created, but it should be our expertise that defines them, and our appetite for these markets that forces political support for them.¹

With these words Stanley Fink, a former leading hedge fund manager, replied to Prince Charles at a banquet held at the Mansion House, in the symbolic and cultural heart of the financial district in the City of London. Prince Charles had arranged the event to communicate the work of his

Rainforest Project to the financial community.² His purpose, simply put, is to make rainforests worth more alive than dead through fostering novel financial mechanisms that properly value the ecosystem services rainforests provide.

Fink, and Prince Charles' event, rather neatly capture the phenomenon with which this special issue is concerned: the current alliances between capitalism and conservation. These alliances are characterised by an aggressive faith in market solutions to environmental problems. They are actively remaking economies, landscapes, livelihoods and conservation policy and practice and they are partying in the symbolic heartlands of capitalism. Corson (this issue) provides the best summary of the shared basis of these essays. She suggests that, by providing an avenue by which corporations and politicians can become "green", as well as through new enclosures and conservation-based enterprises, conservation fuels processes of capital accumulation. The net result is that "international biodiversity conservation is creating new symbolic and material spaces for global capital expansion" (Corson, this issue: 578). The purpose of this special issue is to explore the origins, manifestations and consequences of these unions.

A close relationship between capitalism and conservation is nothing new. Neoliberal conservation is but the latest stage in a long and healthy relationship between capitalism and conservation (Adams 2004; Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008; Neumann 1998). Rich elites have been promoting conservation of particular species for their pleasure and enjoyment long before capitalism even began; capitalist elites adopted these same privileges (Rangarajan 2001). Capitalist interests strongly advocated the first national parks in North America, and the first conservation NGOs. Indeed it is arguable that what is remarkable about the environmental NGOs and environmentalism of the 1960s and 1970s is that it took such a strong anti-capitalist line. The spirit of Edward Abbey and his Monkeywrench Gang are the exception, not the rule.³

The practices that link conservation and capitalism therefore are old. There is, however, something new going on. Critics and analysts of conservation are observing an increase in the intensity and variety of forms of capitalist conservation. Underlying that is a shift in the conservation movement's own *conception* of these practices. As the detailed histories that MacDonald and Corson trace in this issue show, the idea that capitalism can and should help conservation save the world now occupies the mainstream of the conservation movement. There is still resistance (Walker et al 2009) but it is becoming increasingly marginal in the corridors of conservation power. This is producing changes in the imagery and rhetoric of conservation as well as its policies and practices.

The challenge for analysts has been how to observe these shifts. The task of observing conservation at work has migrated from remote rural

locations where conservation policy happened to massive international meetings (the Earth Summits and World Parks Congress, World Conservation Congress, Conferences of the Parties to Conventions on Biodiversity or Climate Change), marketing seminars, elephant festivals, fundraising events in Washington, plush offices in metropolises throughout the world, film festivals, banquets and analyses of advertisements and glossy magazines. Studying conservation policy, organisations and natural resource management frequently requires multi-sited ethnographic research as well as long hours becoming familiar with the strange new languages of macroeconomics or conservation biology and the peculiar lifeways of exotic tribes of international bureaucrats and corporate sustainability officers.

Intellectually the challenge has been made easier by the thriving research into the neoliberalisation of nature (Bakker 2005, 2009; Büscher and Dressler 2007; Castree 2009; Heynen et al 2007; McCarthy 2005; McCarthy and Prudham 2004) and in particular by Noel Castree's parsing of that literature (see, for example, Castree 2008a, 2008b). This has helped set the changes we have observed in conservation into a broader economic and environmental context. As we shall see, determining exactly *how* current forms of capitalist conservation are neoliberal can be difficult. Neoliberalism itself is an unevenly applied doctrine and its practice rarely lives up to its theory (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2005; Mansfield 2004). Nevertheless, the convergence of interest in the consequences of neoliberal policy for natural resource use have provided scholars of conservation both insight into the processes they are observing and a common language with which to communicate their work to a broader academe.

Academic interest in the changing nature of conservation has produced a flurry of activity exploring the permutations of the relationships between conservation and capitalism. Researchers working on these topics organised panels at the Society for Applied Anthropology in 2005, the Association of American Geographers in 2008 and the American Anthropological Association in 2009.⁴ A group of conservation activists and analysts met in Washington in mid 2008 to compare experiences of the disciplining power of hegemonic conservation.⁵ A team of researchers conducted an event ethnography of the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in 2008.⁶ Finally, a new network examining the work of celebrity and the media in conservation met in 2008 and again in 2009. The changing nature of conservation is producing new epistemic communities in academia.

The essays published here were first presented at an international symposium in Manchester in September 2008. Twenty-two papers were discussed over 2 days; 12 were submitted to *Antipode*. Collectively they provide the strongest theoretical and empirical examinations of the convergence of capitalism and conservation that we believe has

been published. They bring out the detail of the institutional and organisational alliances, some of their history and some indication of the great variety of commodity production that capitalist conservation creates.

We have sorted the essays into two sections. The first examines the practices, networks, organisations, elites and institutions through which relationships between capitalism and conservation are cultivated. The second examines the commodities and businesses that attempt to produce conservation outcomes through capitalist means. We summarise their main arguments below.

Cultivating Conservation with Capitalism

One of the central themes of this collection is that conservation is proving instrumental to capitalism's growth and reproduction. It provides an "environmental fix" (as Harvey might put it). As Igoe and colleagues observe (this issue), where Green Marxists have predicted environmental impediments that would threaten capitalism's prosperity (O'Connor 1988), in fact these very impediments are the source of new forms of accumulation. Consumers thrive on scarcity, anxiety, fear (all help create demand), so perhaps the flourishing of capitalism in conservation, which deals in similar currency, should not be such a surprise. It is still important, however, to understand how this union is being achieved.

Tackling that question is one of the main achievements of the essay by Igoe and colleagues. Following Sklair and others they propose the existence of hegemonic "mainstream conservation" interests composed of an alliance of corporate, philanthropic and NGO interests (Sklair 2001). Mainstream conservation (one part of Sklair's "sustainable development historic bloc") proposes resolutions to environmental problems that hinge on heightened commodity production and consumption, particularly of newly commodified ecosystem services. Their views are promulgated through a mutually reinforcing collection of spectacular media productions circulated in advertisements and on the web. The power of these productions lies not in their robustness, logic or rigour, but rather because they are presented and consumed within societies dominated by spectacle (Debord 1995 [1967]). That is, these are societies where representations of, and connection to, places, people and causes have long been mediated through commodified images. In consuming these images people are given "the romantic illusion that they are adventurously saving the world" (p 502) while the deleterious ecological impacts of these very purchases, and the lifestyles they require, are neatly erased.

By focusing consumers' attention on distant and exotic locales, the spectacular productions...conceal the complex and proximate

connections of people's daily lives to environmental problems, while suggesting that the solutions to environmental problems lay in the consumption of the kinds of commodities that helped produce them in the first place (p 504).

Spectacle is crucial to the work of capitalist conservation. It provides one of the central themes that resounds throughout this collection. The major intellectual contribution of this essay is to demonstrate how and why it works. The data these authors use — video material on NGO websites and accounts from the world of Disney — suggest a wealth of further work. As the authors show in their conclusion, a great deal of new research would be possible into the production and reproduction of hegemony through spectacle, and its contestation in the same.

While Igoe and colleagues focus on the proliferation of capitalist conservation through society, MacDonald's essay examines the precise mechanisms by which conservation and conservation organisations became so capitalist in the last few decades. Organisations, he observes, have specific social and historical trajectories as well as their own arenas of struggle that have to be observed if we are to understand the shifts which have taken place. MacDonald examines the development of the sustainable development agenda and ideas of ecological modernisation, contending that "biodiversity has never really driven environmental agendas" but instead has "been an instrument in larger political projects" (p 515). He suggests that during the last 30 years the institutional context of international conservation governance was forged in ways which minimised impediments to business and even advanced new rounds of enclosure and appropriation. Indeed he calls the corporate co-option and taming of environmental regulations and their decision-making bodies "institutional enclosure".

Specifically MacDonald shows how corporate interests, perceiving the first Earth Summit in 1992 to be a potential regulatory constraint on the operation of business, worked to draw the sting out of the regulatory measures that the Summit could recommend. He shows how states out-maneuvred NGOs around the Convention on Biological Diversity to produce a convention which prioritised generating profit from genetic resources over protecting the environment. He also notes that business interests have enjoyed access to prime slots during Conferences to the Parties of the CBD. Following Sklair (2001) he argues that crucial to all these developments has been the formation of a transnational capitalist class fostering alliances and giving business interests the space and support they require.

Finally, MacDonald examines the relationship between conservation NGOs and businesses. He observes that, much as the former need the capital and legitimacy the latter provide, it has been corporate interests that have reached out to conservation groups, particularly if the latter

have been perceived to be an impediment. He goes on to document how advantageous materially and symbolically these alliances can be for the corporations involved. The gains for biodiversity are less clear. Within conservation organisations the result of their embrace by commercial interests is that there has been a “near universal conflation of nature and capital [which] has established itself as a dominant view”. He concludes:

[I]t says on the WWF International website “The panda means business”. But the panda didn’t always mean business. At a point in the not too distant past, the easily recognizable WWF symbol meant the development of effective public engagement in the protection of wildlife habitat. The shift in the meaning of the symbol, indeed its conversion from symbol to legally protected brand, indicates a shift in the recognition of what and who are currently in a position to best contribute the support necessary for the organisation to continue its activities (p 539).

Brockington and Scholfield’s essay examines in greater detail the configuration of conservation NGOs at work in one region — sub-Saharan Africa. These authors have undertaken a unique and large-scale survey of conservation NGOs in the region (Brockington and Scholfield 2010a, 2010b), the insights from which they use to present a framework showing conservation NGO activities. Drawing on Garland’s (2008) ideas of a “conservationist mode” of production, and illustrating Igoe and colleagues’ work on conservation spectacle (this issue), they explore how different types of NGO create symbolic and financial value from their representations of conservation need on the continent. Given that these representations often hinge on the material and/or symbolic displacement of other land uses, they call this process “appropriation for appreciation” (p 557). Interestingly the research agenda that led to this survey of NGOs resulted from the considerable attention NGOs attract from analysts and critics. However, as a result of this survey, Brockington and Scholfield conclude that these NGOs are in fact relatively minor players on much of the continent. They are important as catalysts and purveyors of neoliberal style conservation but diverse organs of the state are much more important in the day to day experience of conservation among rural Africans.

In the three essays discussed above we have large-scale overviews of the ways in which conservation and capitalism have become intertwined in a neoliberal age. Their reach is global and continental. The remaining four essays in this section provide more detailed case studies of particular arenas — institutionally and geographically — where neoliberal conservation has been constituted.

Corson sets out a detailed account of the work of US AID in conservation.⁷ She tracks the growing funds US AID poured into conservation NGOs (at Congress’ behest) and the influence this had

on them and environmental politics on Capitol Hill. When the more oppositional environmental groups began to campaign against the World Bank and on domestic issues, conservation NGOs were left to set the environmental agenda. In an effort to protect the budget appropriation for biodiversity (particularly against presidents who have been hostile to environmental concerns), congressmen and women have created the bipartisan International Conservation Caucus, while NGOs formed the colourful International Conservation Caucus Foundation (ICCF). The latter enjoys substantial corporate backing and strongly promotes conservation work undertaken in partnership with business (and smaller government) in general. It matters in part because it is in the theatre of the ICCF's spectacle-producing displays that the actually existing interactions between representatives of capital and conservation are forged, celebrated and promulgated. Corson also dwells on the politics of ICCF's conservation, observing that, in reaching out to liberal and conservative congressmen and women, it has focused on foreign biodiversity, free from the hassles of domestic politics. Corson quotes one former US AID official as saying: "It is easier to do biodiversity overseas than in this country because the conflicts don't involve constituencies of Congress" (p xx).

Sachedina provides another perspective on the work of US AID in conservation, this time viewed from within one conservation NGO — the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). AWF is the fourth largest conservation NGO working in sub-Saharan Africa. Sachedina traces its remarkable success under the leadership of its eventual CEO Patrick Bergin, who fostered a successful relationship with US AID that saw it grow dramatically in size, and re-imagine its mission from a rather parochial East African focus to a pan-African NGO with its branded "heartlands" in every part of the continent. Alarming, however, AWF's financial success did not equate to success on the ground in achieving its conservation goals. Sachedina shows how the organisation became orientated towards its funders such that its work in the villages where it needed to be most active was hindered. Indeed, it is probable its work may even have hindered the realisation of those objectives at the same time as it was projecting itself, and growing itself, so successfully. Sachedina holds both the funder (US AID) and recipient (AWF) responsible for the change in character of this important NGO. The result is a particularly poignant account. It was written on the basis of years spent working for and believing in the organisation whose very success rendered it less effective.⁸

Finally, the essays by Holmes and Spierenberg and Wels focus explicitly on a persistent theme of this section — the work of conservation elites. Holmes, drawing on Sklair (2001), writes of a transnational conservation elite (elsewhere a transnational conservation class thesis; Holmes 2009) composed of bureaucrats, journalists, civil

society workers, CEOs and researchers. He also describes a national conservation elite in the place of his research — the Dominican Republic — whose commitment to protected area growth (particularly that of former President Balaguer) is virtually unmatched in the world. The surprise, however, is that here national conservation elites fought with the transnational elite and resisted their intrusion. Ironically, the conservation successes of extraordinary protected area expansion owed little to the work of transnational elites and much more to home-grown, nationalistic environmentalism.⁹

Spierenberg and Wels' account focuses on the work of two of conservation's richest and most influential supporters in recent times: Anton Rupert, the South Africa billionaire tobacco and alcohol magnate, and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands. These men were friends as well as conservation associates and constructed elite networks of corporate interests to support their work first for the WWF, and later for the Peace Parks Foundation (the fifth largest conservation NGO on the continent and the most recently established of the larger organisations). This is a spicy account, for moving in these circles involved a fair amount of skullduggery and secretive associations; their arenas mixed the intelligence networks of powerful and aggressive states with commercial and political interests. It is also valuable for the length of time it covers, extending long before neoliberal conservation, or neoliberalism itself, appeared. The essay shows how conservation initially provided an additional means of social networking for commercial interests, while benefiting from the public (and clandestine) funds donated to strengthen parks. Later visions of conservation were much more closely integrated into commercial transformations of space and nature — although still disruptive to local resource use. In both eras commercial interests benefited from the abidingly positive gloss that associations with conservation provide. This essay outlines rather different origins to the alliance between conservation and capitalism from that described by MacDonald. The agents of the union here were not so much business interests seeking to outflank and circumscribe potential conservation constraints. Instead the origins were men who believed in particular visions of the conservation cause and used the means and networks with which they were most familiar to advance it.

What emerges strongly from these four accounts is the contingency of the processes that have joined commercial with conservation interests. It required the absence of certain advocacy groups, and vigorous battles on Capitol Hill to produce the alliances that Corson described. It required the individual character traits of key figures (Rupert, Bernhard, Balaguer, Bergin) who made conservation causes their own, but who also, crucially, determined what forms of conservation policy would best advance their visions. At the same time, running throughout these events there is a common tendency to seek out

apparently apolitical conservation fields where the complex politics and social relations can be ignored (Igoe and colleagues would call these fetishised representations “conservation spectacle”). There is also the prevailing promiscuity of the main actors involved. In the face of hostile administrations, public or economic concerns, conservation NGOs, politicians and large corporations have been repeatedly able to forge environments where they could do good business together.

Selling Conservation

The second section explores different attempts to achieve conservation goals by selling different conservation products. Carrier provides a useful theoretical perspective to start, examining the forms of commodity fetishism with which these schemes commonly deal. He argues that ethical consumption, which is bent on revealing the social and ecological context of the commodities purveyed, still entails forms of fetishism that subvert ethical consumption’s central goals. He notes that ethical consumption depends upon the circulation of images that are taken to denote ethicality. Yet their validity and ability to circulate as a common currency can require a fair degree of ignorance and prejudice in the minds of the consumers in which they operate. Further he observes that ethical consumption often ignores the broader environmental and social contexts in which it operates. It achieves its ethically positive results by not counting various aspects of the production and consumption of its commodities. In sum, these constraints clearly limit the good intentions of ethical consumption to make transparent the socio-ecological origins of commodities. There is, however, a second, more insidious effect that Carrier finds at work. Underlying ethical consumption, and reinforced by every purchase, is the belief that “personal consumption decisions . . . are an appropriate and effective vehicle for correcting . . . the ill effects of a system of capitalist production” (p 683). This too has the effect of decontextualising the consumer, hiding the structures that encourage them to seek solutions in consumption in the first place.

The following three essays then explore the construction and repercussions of ethical consumption as applied to conservation goals. West’s analysis of the speciality coffee market operating from Papua New Guinea raises a number of concerns about the propensity of the industry to effect meaningful change. It is not just that her lurid accounts of the painful assumptions and constructions of consumers and Papua New Guinea cast doubt on the enterprise. It is the very parameters under which it operates. There is a sleight of hand at work here, for speciality coffees make the poverty and otherness of the coffee producers into something exotic, while simultaneously failing to recognise the

role of neoliberal capitalism in creating that poverty, and, furthermore, constraining the imagination of consumers to act against these injustices. It renders the coffee producers so exotic and alien that it stymies empathy, or even the desire to lobby for social change other than through purchasing the right sort of coffee. As she observes, “This supposed embedding of the political and social into capitalist consumption may make for a tasty cup of coffee but it makes for lukewarm political action” (p 710–711).

Neves looks at the role of whale watching in cetacean conservation. She discovers an industry that is widely portrayed by environmental NGOs (such as Greenpeace and WWF) as saving whales by providing an alternative livelihood for communities that used to depend on whaling. Yet, without any romanticism about the brutalities (to whales and whalers) that the whaling industry involved, she finds disturbing continuities between the old industry and the new one. Both result in “metabolic rifts”,¹⁰ and both fetishise the ecological costs of whaling, with whale watching doing so in the presence of whales and tourists. Whale watching plays down the ecological costs required to get to the remote islands (Azores, Canary Islands) that make whale watching possible. They also play down the ecological impacts that some whaling boats have on whales’ echolocation, which produce avoidance behaviours in the whales being observed. It is just odd that such problems are omitted in the rush to proclaim whale watching as the solution to the ills of whaling.

Duffy and Moore contrast the fates of elephant back safaris in Thailand and Botswana. Along with the essay by Katja Neves, this essay contests the idea that tourism offers a neat solution to conservation’s problems, and argues that it acts as a driver of capitalism. Since these authors identify capitalism as part of the problem, it is difficult, if not impossible, for it to offer the solution. While tourism is presented as the saviour of conservation, these essays examine the ways that tourism extends and deepens neoliberalism. Nature-based tourism is promoted by a staggering variety of organisations, from conservation NGOs to private companies to the World Bank; they all back it as a credible and green alternative to industrial development. It is hailed as an “alternative” pathway to sustainable development. But Duffy and Moore offer a critique of this position, arguing that nature-based tourism actually allows capitalism to identify, open and colonise new spaces in nature. However, it does so in variable ways in different contexts. The essay offers an explanation for why and how neoliberalism is shaped by its encounter with existing social and cultural dynamics. Neoliberalism, it seems, does not displace or obliterate existing ways of valuing, owing and approaching nature; instead it mixes with local dynamics to create new dynamics. The essay presents a snapshot of neoliberalism “as it exists” on the ground.

In the final essay in the issue we change focus, scope and scale and examine some of the everyday responses that neoliberal pressures on resource use and governance produce. In a collection such as this, written by authors who are almost all characterised by their personal strong commitments to long-term research in remote locations, it is surprising that the rural responses to the pressures we have described do not feature more prominently in the writings presented. It is an indication perhaps of how broad the field of conservation studies has become. Wilshusen's rich description of Mexican ejido's responses to the dismantlings of neoliberal policies provides a welcome counterpoint. Drawing on Bourdieu (1990) he explores how neoliberal reforms of forestry that stopped short of privatisation were accommodated by local institutions and practices. He argues that these are best understood as part of decades of coping with dictates from the centre.

Revisiting Neoliberal Conservation

In the essays included here and in other publications produced by this epistemic community, authors have frequently referred to "neoliberal conservation" (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008; Büscher and Dressler 2007; Büscher and Whande 2007; Igoe and Brockington 2007; Sullivan 2006). This term derives from the literature on "neoliberalisation of nature" (Castree 2008a, 2008b; Heynen et al 2007; McCarthy and Prudham 2004) and has been one of the unifying themes behind the recent surge of scholarship.¹¹ There is always a risk that this sort of terminology is employed simply as a means of joining the crowd. It is important to test its worth.

The difficulty with examining the usefulness of a term like "neoliberal conservation" is that neoliberalism, in Peck and Tickell's, Harvey's and others' depictions, is a fundamentally uneven project (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Harvey 2005; Peck and Tickell 2002). It is applied with differential rigour across space, and often in direct conflict with its ideological precepts. Neoliberalism can be hard to identify as such in these circumstances.

Nevertheless some neoliberal aspects of contemporary conservation are obvious. Conservation is extensively promulgated by NGOs, and in new hybrid governance arrangements of "privatised sovereignty" that appear to be direct products of neoliberal thinking. Conservation strategies can hinge on the deregulation and reregulation of nature-based industries and environmental services. This is, plainly and simply, neoliberalism in practice. In such circumstances the environment, or as we would put it, conservation initiatives, is the actual arena wherein neoliberalism is actively constituted (McCarthy 2005).

Moreover, the fact is that we are witnessing policies and institutions that were forged at the time of neoliberalism's domination of economic

and social policies globally with its concomitant trends of marketisation and commodification (Brenner and Theodore 2002). New conservation enterprises and commodities are also integral to the expansion of capitalist operations. Conservation organisations can provide endorsements that ensure an “environmental stamp of approval” (to paraphrase Corson) on new enclosures. Through mitigation, measures, partnerships, offsets and new commodity production, conservation has proven integral to capitalist growth. If anything, it would be more interesting to look for conservation strategies that are *untouched* by neoliberalism.

However, it is possible to identify vital aspects of neoliberalism that are not visible in conservation practice, or at least in the current literature on it. For instance, according to Harvey, neoliberalism is characterised by a disciplining and marginalisation of labour power. Brenner and Theodore note its “hyperexploitation of workers” (2002:342). The restrictions conservation can impose on rural livelihoods can increase the importance of wage labour. There are many instances of this occurring, and in that sense conservation can be a means of creating a proletariat. However, this aspect of conservation has rarely been presented explicitly as an aspect of labour relations (for some recent, and notable, exceptions, see Sodikoff 2007, 2009; Timms forthcoming). Nor is it easy to speak of disciplining labour within the conservation movement itself. If there is a conservation proletariat then it is a tiny group of eager volunteers sacrificing time or underpaid staff forgoing better salaries elsewhere to serve a cause.¹² These are social relations that are not well characterised by capitalist exploitation.

More importantly, according to Harvey, neoliberalism is fundamentally about finance. It has meant “the financialisation of everything” (2005:33). It has not, however, “financialised” conservation. Some of the larger NGOs have engaged in debt for nature swaps, and there has been some interchanging of personnel, but these are peripheral developments.¹³ Conservation has hardly been involved in the production of value through financialisation. Fink’s bold words, with which this introduction began, were intended to shock an audience that has largely avoided the financial opportunities conservation work might provide.¹⁴

Thus while neoliberalism may pervade conservation, conservation remains a peripheral element of neoliberalism, certainly if measured by economic activity. But, in one final respect, conservation is integral to the neoliberal project. For Harvey, the often unacknowledged core of neoliberalism is the restoration and maintenance of class power and privilege. This was largely achieved through “exacting tribute” and was visible through heightened inequality and extraordinary concentrations of wealth among a new super-rich (2005:119). It should be abundantly clear from the work that follows that enjoying the

benefits of conservation is precisely one of the privileges class power affords. Conservation is not necessarily a luxury of the rich; varieties of environmentalism include all sorts of concerns and practices that originate in poverty. However, in a neoliberal world, conservation is made into a luxury. It becomes the preserve of elites and exclusive communities. Accessing conservation's rewards, and directing its restrictions, is part and parcel of the restoration of class power that runs through the core of the neoliberal project.

The consequences of neoliberal conservation are not unremittingly negative. As we have repeatedly stated in other publications, conservation distributes both fortune and misfortune (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008). Moreover the measures of neoliberal conservation have often been implemented by the most sincere and caring groups. The volunteers and employees of the conservation movement are primarily motivated by their desire to make the world a better place.

The problem is, however, that its rhetoric is relentlessly positive. It presents us only with market solutions, win-win solutions (or win-win-win and more), ethically traded commodities, saved nature, wholesome communities, integrated landscapes, sustainable development, cleansed reputations and secure conservation brands. It is because such powerful actors as Stanley Fink think only in unremittingly positive terms of the market that we must invoke a note of caution. The critical tone is a consequence of the chasms that we see opening up between the rhetoric of neoliberal conservation and its actually existing consequences. As Harvey puts it:

It has been part of the genius of neoliberal theory to provide a benevolent mask full of wonderful-sounding words like freedom, liberty, choice and rights to hide the grim realities of the restoration or reconstitution of naked class power (2005:119).

The future challenge this epistemic community faces is to find ways of communicating its concerns more effectively with the conservation community. This collection is probably not the best way to do it, but we hope it will play some role. There are many conservationists who share our antipathy to inequality and cant. We will need to be as zealous in communicating our concerns to such audiences as we have been in sharing them here.

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Endnotes

¹ Extracted from Stanley Fink's speech at the Mansion House on 10 September 2008; copy in possession of Dan Brockington. Capitals in the original.

² The Prince's Rainforest Project is advised by a steering group composed of Barclays, BSKyB, Climate Exchange Plc, Deutsche Bank, DLA Piper, Finsbury, Goldman Sachs, KPMG, McDonald's, Man Group plc, Morgan Stanley, Rio Tinto, Shell, Sun Media Group and Virgin Group, among others (www.rainforestsos.org/pages/steering-group viewed on 16 February 2010).

³ Abbey's fictional book *The Monkeywrench Gang* describes the escapades of a group of environmentalists who were violently opposed to capitalist development and set about destructively opposing the construction of roads, logging camps and bridges. Dave Foreman, the founder of the radical group Earth First!, used such tactics and produced a manual on how to do so, called *A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching*.

⁴ The SFAA collection resulted in two edited collections (*Conservation and Society* 2006, volume 4, issue 3 and *International Journal of Biodiversity Science and Management* 2007, volume 3, issue 2). The publication of the AAA meeting is still being deliberated.

⁵ This meeting produced a number of essays in *Current Conservation* 2010, volume 3, issue 2.

⁶ This produced a special issue of essays forthcoming in *Conservation and Society*. The same team may return to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Japan in 2010.

⁷ Corson's work is based on years of doctoral research and an earlier career in Washington (Corson 2008).

⁸ Sachedina's work is based on a prize-winning doctoral thesis (Sachedina 2008) which, rather unusually, was read and circulated throughout the East African conservation community where he was based. The pdf of this (100,000 word) document has probably been downloaded in excess of 600 times.

⁹ In their survey of eviction for conservation, Brockington and Igoe (2006) note that active cases of eviction (in Botswana, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Thailand) are driven by strong home grown environmental debates.

¹⁰ Metabolic rifts is defined here more broadly than Marx's original term to include ecological disruption, not just nutrient extraction.

¹¹ Igoe and Brockington (2007) provide an introduction to what neoliberal conservation might entail.

¹² We refer to NGO workers, not volunteers who pay to go on conservation camps and holidays with conservation NGOs for short periods of time.

¹³ Mark Tereck, a managing director of Goldman Sachs, became the president and CEO of the Nature Conservancy in July 2008.

¹⁴ The launch of investment funds like Earth Capital Partners in the City of London in December 2008, which seeks to raise \$5 billion over 5 years, does not really count. These and others are seeking to make money out of new opportunities in clean technology and energy. They are looking for new profits in ecological modernisation rather than biodiversity conservation.

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