



A Spectacular Eco-Tour around the Historic Bloc: Theorising the Convergence of Biodiversity Conservation and Capitalist Expansion

Jim Igoe

Department of Anthropology, Dartmouth College;
james.j.igoe@dartmouth.edu

Katja Neves

Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University, Canada;
knevesgr@alcor.concordia.ca

Dan Brockington

School of Environment and Development, University of Manchester, UK;
daniel.brockington@manchester.ac.uk

Abstract: The simultaneous proliferation of protected areas for biodiversity conservation and neoliberal market expansion has sparked a growing body of work, which suggests that these are mutually reinforcing processes that reflect alliances between conservationist and capitalist agendas. Because this alliance is so counter intuitive to the ways in which biodiversity conservation is popularly understood, theoretical perspectives concerning these relationships have been slow in emerging. Drawing from Gramsci's ideas of hegemony and historic bloc, we propose a theoretical framework systematically to inform understandings and investigations of these transformations. We suggest that they are driven by the convergence of networks of interests, which work to resolve the apparent contradictions between demands for continued economic growth and growing concerns about what it portends for the future of our planet. These in turn rely on spectacular presentations of conservation interventions, conservation success stories, and their putative linkages to ecosystems and the global economy.

Keywords: conservation, capitalism, hegemony, historic bloc, neoliberalism, protected areas, Spectacle

Conservation leaders need to stop counting birds and start counting dividends that nature can pay to the people who live in it (Ger Bergkamp, Director, World Water Council¹).

Introduction

On 8 October 2008, *New York Times* business columnist James Kantner wrote:

The World Conservation Congress is abuzz with how the conservation movement will continue to fail to achieve the objectives it has been seeking for decades unless it engages business and embraces business management techniques to further its goals.²

Indeed the Congress projected a strengthening consensus of synergies between growing markets and effective biodiversity conservation. IUCN leadership had recently entered a partnership with Shell Oil, and were busily forging a new one with the Rio Tinto Mining Group.³ The entrance to the Congress was aesthetically dominated by corporate displays, while its theater featured films like “Conservation is Everybody’s Business”. As shocks in the world economy sent ripples of consternation through the Congress, high-profile speakers warned attendees not to view the “implosion of banks and financial institutions” as a “signal to abandon market models” (for details, see MacDonald forthcoming).⁴

High-profile conservationists, corporate leaders, and celebrities spread the same message to broader publics: capitalism is the key to our ecological future and ecological sustainability will help end our current financial crisis (Igoe forthcoming; Prudham 2009). Through online initiatives, marketing, and fundraising campaigns they not only urge people to support this vision, but also to support re-regulations (cf Castree 2007) of the environment, facilitating the commodification of nature as the solution to problems that threaten our common ecological future (Igoe forthcoming).⁵ In contrast to Green Marxists’ predictions that the visible and costly environmental contradictions of late capitalism would prompt alliances of environmentalists and workers to demand green socialist alternatives (esp. O’Connor 1988), such initiatives entice consumers to participate in the resolution of capitalism’s environmental contradictions through advocacy, charitable giving and consumption.

Biodiversity conservation figures centrally in these transformations. The economic growth that preceded our current problems coincided with growth in protected areas, including private conservancies (Brockington, Igoe and Duffy 2008). It also accompanied dramatic growth of conservation BINGOs (Big NGOs), as they competed intensively for market shares and brand recognition and dramatically grew their budgets (Chapin 2004; Dowie 2009; MacDonald 2008; Rodriguez et al 2007; Sachedina this issue). Corporations donated millions of dollars to BINGOs and corporate representatives joined their boards (Chapin 2004; Dorsey 2005; Dowie 1995; MacDonald 2008), while conservationists sought to extend their influence inside of corporations.⁶ Diverse social scientists working in areas targeted for conservation began to observe, in different locations, that partnerships between conservation and capitalism were reshaping nature and society in ways that produced new types of value for capitalist expansion and accumulation (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008; Brockington and

Scholfield this issue; Garland 2008; Goldman 2005; Neves this issue; West and Carrier 2004).

Such value production is not limited to specific conservation landscapes. As Garland (2008:52) has noted, conservation as a mode of production appropriates value from landscapes by “transforming it into capital with the capacity to circulate and generate further value at the global level”. This includes images and narratives that circulate widely in the entertainment industry (Brockington 2009; Vivanco 2002), as well as in the marketing of new consumer goods and NGO fundraising (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008; Brockington and Scholfield this issue; Garland 2008; Igoe forthcoming; Sachedina 2008). These also provide essential fodder for powerful discursive claims that markets, information technology, and expert know-how offer new possibilities of optimizing the ecological and economic functions of our planet, simultaneously allowing economic growth to continue while spreading benefits to impoverished rural communities (Luke 1997; Goldman 2008; Igoe forthcoming; McAfee 1999; Neves this issue).

These claims are not always as verifiable, or indeed as commonsensical, as their advocates appear to believe. Moreover, they are often buttressed by overly simplistic presentations of socio-environmental problems and relationships in the capitalist economy (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008:ch 9). Much of the power of these ideas is derived from a currently dominant ideological context where it is believed that the attribution of economic value to nature and its submission to “free market” processes is key to successful conservation. The details of this logic are as follows. Once the value of particular ecosystem is revealed, for example an ecosystem’s ability to store carbon, the ecosystem acquires economic value as a service provider or as a non-consumptive resource, as in the case of eco-tourism. The ecosystem thus putatively becomes a source of income for local communities, creating further capitalist-development opportunities (Sullivan 2009).⁷ Given that within the tenets of capitalist principles the allocation of funds is directly related to associated potential returns on investment, conservationists who seek donor funds are increasingly under pressure to show the economic advantages of their conservation goals. Hence, the notion that the relationships between conservationist action and capitalist reality are necessarily beneficial becomes increasingly taken-for-granted. This idea becomes hegemonic when it is so systematically and extensively promoted that it acquires the appearance of being *the only* feasible view of how best to pursue and implement conservation goals. Alternative and critical views of this logic are consistently kept at the margins or outright silenced.

The hegemonic nature of these claims, and the ideological context from which they are derived, present major obstacles to democratic and reflexive discussions of our most pressing socio-environmental

problems. Capitalism's destructive-extractive relationships with the environment are unlikely to be challenged unless we are able to understand the fundamental contradictions between capitalism's need to expand exponentially vis-à-vis the capacity of ecosystems to withstand and absorb the disturbances and stresses that this exponential growth entails. Indeed, it appears that capitalism is turning the environmental problems it creates into opportunities for further commodification and market expansion (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008; Klein 2007).

The relationship between conservation and capitalism thus presents a salient site of enquiry for documenting and analyzing the kinds of relationships that facilitate capitalism's ability to reinvent itself even when its excesses appear to threaten the viability of the very ecosystems on which human economic activity depends. We thus propose a theoretical framework from which we can begin to organize our investigations and analyses of these issues. We now turn to a brief outline of this framework and its theoretical antecedents.

The Sustainable Development Historic Bloc and the Spectacle of Nature

Our theoretical framework builds on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which he developed in response to his discontent with monolithic and dualistic understandings of domination. Like Gramsci, we are concerned with the ways in which the ideas and agendas of particular interest groups are promoted and imposed over a world of diversity, full of conflicting values and interests. Gramsci (1971b:210–218) was especially fascinated that these processes occurred mostly without recourse to force, but rather through "the manufacture of consent" (1971a:12).

In thinking about global conservation, therefore, we are interested in understanding how such a complex and heterogeneous movement appears to be dominated by a relatively narrow set of values, ideas and institutional agendas. Here we are referring to what Brockington, Duffy and Igoe (2008:9) have labeled "mainstream conservation", which they describe as the dominant strain of global conservation. The ideas and values of mainstream conservation are most clearly visible in the operations of conservation BINGOs, which dominate conservation funding along with the discursive and spectacular representations of the values and goals of global conservation.

Fully to appreciate the power and influence of mainstream conservation, it is necessary to illuminate its larger context. This in turn refers us to another Gramscian concept; the historic bloc. The historic bloc refers to a historic period in which groups who share particular interests come together to form a distinctly dominant class. The ideas and agendas of this class thus come to permeate an entire society's

understanding of the world.⁸ Two aspects of the Gramscian notion of historic bloc are germane to the issues that concern us here. First, the ideologies accompanying a particular historic bloc conceal the nature of existing relations of production by presenting a naturalized view of extractive class hierarchies that comprise these relations. Second this concealment has the effect of smoothing over the contradictions, paradoxes and irreconcilable differences that exist within these relations (Gramsci 2000a).

According to Sklair (2001:8) our present historic moment is dominated by “the sustainable development historic bloc”, which purports to offer easy consumption-based solutions to the environmental crises inherent in late market capitalism. They thus present a comforting alternative to the more disruptive social transformations predicted by O’Connor (1988) and other green Marxists. This historic bloc, according to Sklair, is produced and supported by a “transnational capitalist class” of corporate executives, bureaucrats and politicians, professionals, merchants and the mass media. Through their efforts, consumption and spending become indispensable to the solution of environmental problems (Sklair 2001:216).

Mainstream conservation’s connections to this larger historic bloc have their roots in networks and collaborations that were forged in the creation of national parks in the American West at the end of the nineteenth century. This was also America’s “Gilded Age”, which was a period of rapid industrialization, extractive capitalist expansion, and the rise of iconic business tycoons, many of whom also became noted philanthropists. Ironically, these transformations simultaneously threatened the natural beauty of the American West, while producing the elites who championed the cause of protecting that natural beauty. Tsing (2005) aptly notes that, early conservationists pursued strategies that involved the enrolment of these elites in nature conservation and corporate sponsorships for the creation of protected areas (also see Spence 1999). While the contexts of these relationships has changed over time, the creation of American parks has historically entailed the intertwining and blurring of states, private enterprise and philanthropy (eg Fortwangler 2007; Mutchler 2007; Muchnick 2007).

Brockington, Duffy and Igoe (2008:9) refer to the networks and affinities that emerged from these types of processes and relationships as mainstream conservation’s “collaborative legacy”. These networks and affinities, which have become increasingly transnational over time, are evident in the highly visible and central position that philanthropic entities, such as the Rockefeller, Gordon and Betty Moore and the Turner Foundations, have come to occupy in mainstream conservation. Foundations like these and the conservation organizations that they fund, are frequently intertwined by tight networks of interests, values and agendas (Chapin 2004; Grandia forthcoming; Igoe and Fortwangler

2007; MacDonald 2008). They share staff, personnel and board members.⁹ Moreover, the collaborative legacy forged in the American West continues to extend itself to other parts of the world and incorporate new elites.¹⁰

Recent expansions in the collaborative legacy of mainstream conservation have been closely tied to the growth of protected areas and conservation BINGOs briefly outlined above. During this period the five largest conservation organizations grew their collective annual budgets to billions of US dollars, thus commanding over 50% of globally available conservation funding (Chapin 2004). This growth was achieved in part by millions of dollars in corporate funding (MacDonald 2008), but also reflected an increased alignment of global conservation with bilateral donors (Corson this issue) and international financial institutions like the World Bank (Chapin 2004; Young 2002). To quote Goldman (2005:9):

In remarkable synchronicity, the sustainability crowd and the neoliberal development crowd have united to remake nature in the South, transforming vast areas of community-managed uncaptured lands into transnationally regulated zones for commercial logging, pharmaceutical bio-prospecting, export orientated cash cropping, megafauna preservation and elite eco-tourism (cf Ferguson 2006).

Such alignments of interest are consistent with Gramsci's notion of historic bloc, but this is only part of what constitutes a hegemonic position in which particular ideologies appear as commonsensical. Gramsci (1971a:3–23) was concerned with how such common sense worldviews were produced and presented to society through the work and words of intellectuals and experts. While Gramsci defended that all men and women have intellectual capacity, he drew a distinction between "organic intellectuals", whose ideas and worldview emerged from the lived experience and interests of the masses, and "ideological functionaries",¹¹ ranging in stature from petty bureaucrats, to individuals publicly renowned for their intellect and expertise (see Holmes this issue), whose ideas and worldview were closely associated with the interests of ruling elites. According to Gramsci, members of both groups exhibited competencies for making statements about the world, of being "in the know", and the ability to explain the world in ways that were understandable and appealing to a broad cross-section of society. Since those in power publicly sanctioned ideologue intellectuals as the true holders of legitimate and valid knowledge, however, members of this class held a much higher position of authority, visibility, and credibility vis-a-vis the general public. Consequently, they had an enormous impact on the legitimation and propagation of the ruling class's understanding of the world. This is reminiscent of the ways in which techno-scientific knowledge is often mobilized to implement elite understandings of

ecological-conservation practices, at the cost of silencing alternative types of knowledge that may be more closely associated with the interests of local communities (eg Neves 2004).¹²

Following this line of argument it is evidently crucial for ruling elites to place ideologue intellectuals in the key institutions that educate and inform the masses. Indeed, within Gramsci's paradigm ideologue intellectuals operated predominantly in the realm of civil society, an "ensemble of organisms" that he viewed as essential to the production and dissemination of hegemonic worldviews, including schools, workplaces, organized religion, trade unions. As MacDonald (forthcoming) demonstrates, we must also add professional meetings to this list. Like other Marxists of his time, Gramsci was also greatly concerned with the State's increasing reliance of mass means of communication for propagandistic purposes. What he could not have foreseen was the extent to which mass media would soon encroach on both the public and private spheres, as they were increasingly taken over and produced by capitalist interests.

Given the ascendancy of mass media and multi-media in the years since Gramsci's writing, our application of these ideas to the sustainable development historic bloc is greatly enhanced by Debord's (1995 [1967]) discussion of Spectacle, which he described as the increasingly encompassing mediation of relationships and interests by images. The following theses from Debord are apposite to the framework we are proposing:

- 1 Spectacle imposes a sense of unity onto situations of fragmentation and isolation (thesis 3);
- 2 Spectacle is an omnipresent justification of the conditions and aims of existing systems (thesis 6);
- 3 Spectacle conditions people to be passive while sending them a continuous message that their only viable path to action and efficacy is through consumption (thesis 46);
- 4 Spectacle itself is a commodity that people pay to consume, and it promotes the creation, circulation and consumption of other commodities (thesis 47);
- 5 In fact through Spectacle everything appears as a commodity (thesis 49);
- 6 This is achieved by presenting the world in terms of quantitative objects imbued with an inherent exchangeability (thesis 38);
- 7 Finally, and most generally, its end is its own reproduction and thus the reproduction of the conditions that produced it and the relationships that it mediates (thesis 13). In so doing, it conceals the complex and conflicted nature of those conditions and relations, presenting instead reified, and apparently problem free, generalizable forms.

Spectacular media productions, many disseminated via the internet, now play a central role in the ways that mainstream conservation portrays itself to the world. These productions represent an important form of Gramscian civil society, a realm in which celebrity intellectuals (in the terms described above) talk about the nature of pressing socio-environmental problems and the kinds of solutions they demand (cf Brockington 2009). A survey by Igoe (forthcoming) found that the spectacular productions of diverse conservation organizations are remarkably consistent, both in terms of their aesthetic and their content in several ways. They conceal the inequities and conflicts associated with particular conservation interventions, as well as the costs of global consumerism and the social and environmental contradictions it entails. They portray celebrities, corporate leaders, and high profile conservationists as a heroic vanguard in the struggle to save the planet, and invite consumers to join them. They present markets, commodification, and exchange as the most viable (if not the only) approaches to solving these problems, arguing that if nature becomes valuable enough, even poor people and their governments will want to save it. Finally, they suggest that the greening of the world economy will allow corporations to make record profits and help us out of the current global economic crisis (for details and detailed examples see Igoe forthcoming).¹³

The sense of unity these productions present facilitates NGO fundraising, as well as the marketing of new commodities and consumptive experiences. Gramsci also noted that such unified presentations of the world lend a crucial sense of coherency to the diverse, fluid and potentially fragmentary class networks that support a particular historic bloc. They not only celebrate and reproduce the dominant worldview and the action it implies, they also play an important role in concealing and managing discord and dissent. MacDonald (forthcoming) has documented the important role of Spectacle at the World Conservation Congress in managing dissent and opposition to the IUCN's private sector partnerships. He shows that previously highly visible dissent at IUCN meetings has subsided over the past several years, such that IUCN membership appears much more unified in its support of these partnerships. Thus when *New York Times* correspondent James Kantner repeatedly reported on the "singular sentiment" of Congress Participants that conservation must embrace business, he was simultaneously reporting upon and reproducing Spectacle and a particular hegemonic position through his online blog.

We have thus far confined our discussion to the realm of ideology and representation. As Gramsci emphasized, however, hegemonies and historic blocs are the product of specific relationships of production, while Debord (thesis 6) described Spectacle as the "result and product

of existing modes of production". Indeed, both theorists argued that ideology and material conditions are by necessity intertwined in ways that defy dichotomous distinctions between them. We thus turn to the question of how the hegemonies and spectacles of the sustainable development historic bloc are connected to specific modes of production and new types of value and capital that circulate in the global economy.

The Currencies of Conservation Spectacle

Alliances of capitalism and conservation trade on, and are lubricated by, a number of overlapping currencies. By these we mean goods, symbols and indicators that can be shared by networks of conservation and commercial interests, and which are more effective in the production of conservation spectacle if they are shared. These currencies are protected areas, sovereignty and success. They overlap because each invokes, or requires the other, to work effectively. They are foundational the production of conservation spectacle.

Protected areas are among the most concrete, observable and comparable expression of the ways in which conservation and capitalism are remaking the world (Igoe and Brockington 2007; Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008). Since at least 1871, the year Yellowstone National Park was gazetted, the creation of protected areas has frequently entailed a radical separation of humans and nature (West, Igoe and Brockington 2006), which as Marx (1973 [1857–1861]) argued in the mid-nineteenth century was essential to the transformation of the natural world into objects of exchange. Specifically he argued that such transformations entail the erasure and concealment of the relationships of production from which such objects are created. He called this process fetishization. Through this process the attribution of value to a commodity is determined almost entirely by the logic of capitalist market processes. Within this logic, a commodity is valued in relation to its ability to provide returns on investment or to generate additional capital value, while other types of value based on socio-cultural factors or purely ecological criteria either fade into the background or disappear altogether.

Protected areas have been fetishized in some ways, in that their values are increasingly reduced to their ability to generate economic output and the relationships that created them are hidden from view (Carrier and Macleod 2005). This is not to imply that protected areas are only ever valued according to the logic of market processes. Though their potential market value has long motivated their creation, their creation has also been motivated by forces such as nationalist projects and the rise of ecological science. In the context of the political-economic processes unfolding since the late 1980s, however, different ways of valuing protected areas, and nature in general, have become increasingly

correlated with nature's ability to generate wealth (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008; Goldman 2005; Harvey 1996; McAfee 1999).

Whatever other values may come into play, however, mainstream conservation has always presented protected areas as having value that transcends all things. As Tsing (2005:97–99) argues, the worldview of early mainstream conservationists rested on the foundational belief that “nature, like god, forms the basis of universal truth, accessible through direct experience and study. To study a particular instance offers a window onto the universal.” From this perspective, an imagined planetary nature was thus enfolded into the appreciation of nature in any specific protected area.

This ability of one object (a park) to stand in for the whole of that class of objects (imagined universal planetary nature) is an essential element of Marx's (1978 [1865–1870]) theory of how commodities gain exchangeability. In the process the distinct features and relationships that characterize a particular object are significantly reduced in importance. Of course, the distinctiveness of a particular park is what gives it value as a particular destination. Indeed certain parks like Yellowstone and Serengeti are popularly regarded as unique and unparalleled portals to universal nature. In our current context, however, the specific quality of parks is overshadowed by their abstract quantity, as conservationists and policy makers seek to protect designated, but growing, percentages of the earth's surface. Protected areas' great quality as a currency is that they are discrete, measured and eminently countable.

The inherent exchangeability of parks has become most salient as it has intersected with the logic of exchangeability so pervasive in global neoliberalism. This is especially visible in mitigation policies, which assume degraded nature and environmental harm can be balanced by pristine nature and environmental protection. This allows the possibility of imagining the Earth as a virtual ledger, on which it possible to carry out a quantitative balancing of environmental goods and bads. A stark example is the creation of protected areas to mitigate ecological damage caused by large-scale extractive enterprise, such as the World Bank sponsored Chad–Cameroon oil pipeline (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008:3–4) and the massive World Bank sponsored Nam Theun hydro-electric project in Laos (Goldman 2005). It can also be seen in the increasingly popular idea that environmentally harmful carbon emissions can be offset through the protection of tropical rainforests, an idea now championed by Prince Charles and an expanding cadre of celebrity supporters.¹⁴ Finally, it can be seen in the US government's recent opening of a federal office to oversee trading in ecosystem services that will be similar in function to the Security and Exchange Commission.¹⁵ This will include overseeing the emergence of a new species credit trading scheme, in which species banks pay credit for the protection of endangered species and their habitats, which in turn can

be purchased by corporations to “meet their mitigation needs” (Agius 2001; Bayon, Fox and Carrol 2007; Blundel 2006; Clark and Altman 2007; Etchart 1995; USDOJ 2003).¹⁶

We believe that these transformations are part of the consolidation of the sustainable development historic bloc, since the concept of sustainability revolves around the possibility of trading ecological functions, services and values against ecological harm and risk (cf MacDonald this issue). Thus the paradoxes and ecological excesses of late market capitalism are recast as problems of management and the realization of market value. This recasting rests on the assumption that the quantification of nature’s value, in terms of ecosystem services, is the key to financing the protection of that nature (Castree 2007; McAfee 1999; Sullivan 2009).¹⁷

Despite the growing importance of NGOs and companies in the sustainable development historic bloc, states remain key institutions to it. First, they are monopoly purveyors of sovereignty, which Mbembe (2001) defines as “the means of coercion that make it possible to gain advantage in struggles over resources traditionally the exclusive purview of the state”. Next, by means of their sovereignty, they have the power to write laws and make policies, including those prescribed by the World Bank and other transnational financial institutions.

However, while states alone can act in the name of sovereignty, they often have to invite others to act in that capacity on their behalf in order to realize their policies. Following Mbembe (2001), we argue that networks of conservation, commerce and the state are forged in conditions of fragmented state control that exist in post-colonial contexts. They are effectively bargains to which outsiders, such as conservation NGOs, bring money, expertise and technology, on which officials from impoverished states are highly dependent. These officials in turn bring the legitimacy and power of sovereignty (Mbembe 2001:78). Ferguson (2006) has labeled such bargains “the privatization of sovereignty”, and emphasizes that neoliberalism exacerbates and legitimizes this sort of fragmentation. Sovereignty is valuable to NGOs or corporate interests because it bestows legitimacy. It is only through the actions of sovereign states that protected areas can be established, tourism or hunting deregulated or people legally displaced. Exercising it is vital if the other currencies (protected areas, or success more generally) are to accrue.

Finally, success itself is an extremely valuable form of “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu 1977) that circulates far beyond the scope of specific interventions. The production of success stories is an essential marketing strategy for conservation BINGOs, whereby each seeks to distinguish itself in a highly competitive funding environment (Chapin 2004; MacDonald 2008; Sachedina this issue). We found Mosse’s (2004, 2005) insights into the ways in which networks operate to make specific

interventions appear coherent and successful most useful. The social reproduction of transnational, national and local institutions involved in governance, conservation and the promotion of economic growth, Mosse argues, depends heavily on the *appearance of success* according to prevailing policy paradigms. According to the hegemonic ideologies of the sustainable development historic bloc, environmental problems in late market capitalism are best repaired by capitalist solutions, and it is possible to manage our planet in ways that simultaneously maximize its economic and ecological function. The creation of protected areas is clearly a type of intervention that can deliver visible and tangible success according to the criteria of these ideologies. Indeed the establishment of protected areas by the hybrid networks of capitalist conservation has been recorded in diverse contexts (eg Bonner 1993; Dzingirai 2003; Garland 2008; Goldman 2005; McDermott-Hughes 2005; Sunseri 2005). In most recent years there has also been a proliferation of new decentralized forms of protected areas (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008). Some are purchased outright, a practice established by the Nature Conservancy in the 1970s (Luke 1997). However many others are created by NGOs, private companies and states using land trusts, leases, community titles and easements. Even more so than large state-sponsored protected areas, these new forms are especially amenable to the convergence of practices by trans-institutional networks (Igoe and Croucher 2007; Diegues, pers. comm. 2008; Dowie 2009; Sachedina 2008).¹⁸ As such interventions are occurring simultaneously all over the world, their aggregate visibility would lend significant coherence of the sustainable development historic bloc.

How do success stories, sovereignty and new (or revived) protected areas combine to produce value and profit for networks of conservation and commerce? Most obviously, protected areas transform landscapes in ways that transform them into valuable tourist destinations (West and Carrier 2004). As such, they generate economic opportunity for interests ranging in scale from the international leisure industry to local micro-enterprise. It is important to note, however, that many protected areas are created in places with limited potential, as tourist destinations still have significant potential value in other ways. As Garland (2008:52) argues, conservation and the creation of protected areas generate many kinds of “capital with potential to circulate and generate further value at the global level”.

Their very existence can be rendered profitable. For example, the Green Living Project is a media and entertainment company dedicated to the documentation of conservation success stories¹⁹ and the creation of new adventure travel markets.²⁰ In partnership with National Geographic Explorer, Green Living Project produces a multi-media presentation that tours REI and L.L. Bean Stores throughout North America.²¹ Such productions promote conservation NGOs, market

clothing and camping supplies, advertise tourist destinations, provide positive imaging for the countries in which they are set, and create possibilities for the production of nature films, coffee table books, and adventure magazines.

Other kinds of value produced by the conservation mode of production that Garland mentions include research grants, consultancy contracts, educational opportunities, travel, renown and remunerative careers (for illustration see Brockington 2009; MacDonald 2008). They also include valuable green washing services for environmentally destructive corporations (Dowie 1995) and countries with poor human rights records (Garland 2008). They are sources of valuable films, and still pictures, of landscapes and wildlife. They create new kinds of material commodities, such as Starbucks Conservation Coffee and McDonalds Endangered Species Happy Meals (Igoe forthcoming), as well as virtual commodities like carbon offsets. They produce realities in which it appears feasible to mitigate the social and environmental impacts of hydroelectric dams and oil pipelines.

From these eclectic and pervasive values, it is easy to imagine how the diverse groups that make up the transnational capitalist class would benefit from their participation in the production of the sustainable development historic bloc. As Gramsci argued almost a century ago, the maintenance and propagation of any historic bloc is directly related to its ability to render their view of the world self-evident such that it goes without questioning. The currently global production and dissemination of mass media spectacle in the realm of nature conservation is, as we explain next, a manifestation of this postulate.

Spectacular Relationships in the Global Economy of Appearances

All of the relationships and processes we have described thus far are occurring in the context of what Tsing (2005:57) calls “the global economy of appearances”, in which “dramatic performance has become an essential prerequisite of economic performance”. While extractive enterprise and material production remain important, economic growth in this context depends on the circulation of images and dramatic performance of institutional success. Tsing described how venture capitalists engage in “spectacular accumulation” by “conjuring profits” before they are actually realized in order to “draw an audience of potential investors”. Countries, regions and towns must also dramatize their potential as places for investment (Tsing 2005:57).

Conservation NGOs, as well as the foundations, government agencies and for-profit companies that support them, also engage in spectacular performances in conjuring spaces for effective conservation interventions-cum-profitable investments. In their performances,

images of dramatic landscapes and exotic people and animals are used to conjure urgent problems in desperate need of the timely solutions that the organization is uniquely qualified to offer. They present an audience of potential supporters with compelling virtual opportunities (problems that need to be solved) and the resources necessary to realize these opportunities (landscapes and animals in need of protection) if they will only make the necessary investment (a generous gift; for details see Ellison 2008; Igoe forthcoming; MacDonald 2008; Sachedina 2008).

In this context, spectacular accumulation is not geared towards direct financial returns. Rather it revolves around parlaying success as symbolic capital into other forms of capital and values that not only help grow specific conservation NGOs, but are also in the interests of a whole array of other agents and institutions (cf Brockington and Scholfield this issue). This in turn is linked to promoting the idea that the ecological ills of late market capitalism can be offset by protecting exotic nature and stimulating economic growth, as well as a pervasive and implicit message that saving the planet is ultimately best achieved by consumption, albeit of particular kinds.

The relationship of spectacular accumulation to the global economy of appearances is well illuminated by Debord's discussion of Spectacle as outlined above. Debord (thesis 1) describes Spectacle as "separation perfected", the ultimate expression of alienation: the loss of control by people over the conditions that shape their lives. Through Spectacle, he argued, the fragmented realities of life in late capitalism are given the appearance of a unified whole, which are visible everywhere.

The proliferation of new media technology over the past 20 years has rendered media spectacle less monolithic and more potentially open to contestation than under the conditions described by Debord in the late 1960s. As the work of Zygmunt Bauman reveals, however, they also have rendered spectacle more pervasive and definitive of people's lives, as many are increasingly likely to interact with a digital interface than with a real human being (2007). Bauman's (2000) prolific discussions of what he calls "liquid modernity" refine and update Debord's arguments about Spectacle. Bauman describes liquid modernity as a world of constant change and individuation, in which people must increasingly "go it alone", without support of social networks or the welfare state. It is a world of seemingly infinite possibilities and opportunities, as well as one of infinite risk (Bauman 2006). The fragmented fleetingness of these conditions are simultaneously exhilarating and terrifying, but ultimately unfulfilling. Consequently, individuals turn to mass media as a more palatable alternative to life actually lived. Here they encounter a bewildering parade of celebrities, experts and celebrity experts who provide examples and reveal secrets of how to live a successful life,

as well as comforting solutions to the disturbing problems now facing humanity (cf Brockington 2009). Because they compete intensively with one another, these media celebrity experts derive their authority from their ability to “tempt and seduce” would be choosers (Baumann 2000:64). Thus, as Adorno (1972) argued, consumption promises escape from conditions of alienation, but one so fleeting that it must be constantly renewed. It also offers the connections and safety of community, but without the inconvenient obligations that earlier forms of community demanded (Bauman 2001).

Many of the features and conditions described by Bauman, and the theoretical genealogy he invokes, are visible in media productions related to biodiversity conservation. One of the latest and most sophisticated of these is the “online community” orchestrated and mobilized by Prince Charles and his supporters to protect the world’s rainforests. The website of the Prince’s Rainforest Project features numerous videos of celebrities, as well as corporate and non-profit leaders. All these individuals appear on camera with a digitally animated “rainforest frog” and urge viewers to take action to save rainforests.²² In other films, corporate leaders like Steve Easterbrook, CEO of McDonalds UK, and Sir Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin group, are cast as experts on the issue of climate change. Others feature leaders of CI (Conservation International) and Greenpeace.

Three messages are frequently repeated in these presentations. One is that tropical deforestation is a bigger cause of climate change than all the cars, trucks and airplanes in the world combined. Another is that the primary perpetrators of deforestation are poor people and their governments. Finally, the solution to this problem is to make “live trees more valuable than dead ones”, by swiftly moving to an effective and efficient carbon trading mechanism (see especially the Prince’s welcome video on the home page of the website, in which he outlines the entire vision of this campaign). Problems and their causes are portrayed as occurring at distant locations, while solutions revolve around new forms of commodification. Individuals are invited to join this “community” via Twitter and Facebook, submitting their own videos to the website, and “texting” world leaders.²³

A related story in this particular world making project is McDonalds-Europe’s Endangered Species Happy Meal Campaign, “designed to educate and empower children to make a difference”. The boxes that the meals come in feature links to an interactive online game, which allows children to create a “virtual passport to explore the virtual world”. The “virtual world” features multi-media presentations of endangered animals, as well as inviting parents to visit a virtual CI headquarters, where they may learn about McDonald’s and CI’s partnership to protect rainforest ecosystems, thus helping to combat climate change and make a donation.²⁴

As visually compelling as these presentations are, and in spite of the appeal of the solutions they propose, their propositions about how the world works are ultimately unverifiable. To use Debord's language, they conceal the actual nature of the relationships that they mediate. Thus, for instance, there is no way of knowing the extent to which, or even if, money given to a conservation organization actually achieves its purported objectives (Brockington, Duffy and Igoe 2008; Igoe forthcoming). Concerning carbon credits, a study by Gossling et al (2007:239) indicates that for "individual customers it is currently next to impossible to judge the real value of the credits that they buy". Likewise, the presumed social and ecological relationships secured by conservation coffee remain not only unverifiable, but, as West (this issue) shows, are unlikely outcomes. Moreover, an expanding network of scholars and activists are demonstrating that such interventions frequently produce undesirable consequences, especially in terms of displacing local communities and their livelihoods (West, Igoe and Brockington 2006).

Considering the unverifiable nature of these presentations, and the negative impacts they conceal, how come they have such broad and convincing appeal? The answer, we believe, is that these spectacular productions are embedded in a much wider "society of the spectacle" that profoundly shapes the experiences of people's everyday lives (West, Igoe and Brockington 2006). One of the most successful purveyors of spectacle is the Disney Corporation. Disney's techniques for controlling spaces and the gaze of people who visit those spaces have been imitated and reproduced in settings around the world (Bryman 1999). In fact, Disney is arguably as significant to our current era of neoliberal capitalism, and its central imperative of imaginary and virtualized economies, as Ford was to the previous era of liberal capitalism and its central imperative of production and consumption of physical goods (cf Allman 2007). In the words of a Disney illusioneer (Alexander 1992:161–162):

The environments we create are more utopian, more romanticized and more like the guest imagined they would be. The negative elements are discreetly eliminated, while positive aspects are in some cases embellished to tell the story more clearly.

This statement begins to illustrate a much wider social logic of Spectacle and liquid modernity, whereby people experience the world as a prepackaged matrix of imagined connections between things and people who do not readily present themselves as connected. So, for instance, the people in our story box (below) woke up each morning to a savannah filled with African animals, even though their hotel was in central Florida. At the end of their stay they were able to eat their way around the world.

Story box: Disney magic and cheetah conservation

The following letter is from a press release of Namibia's Cheetah Conservation Fund, <http://www.cheetah.org/?html=news-press&data=news-press&key=243>

Dear Disney Magic:

I want to relay the story to you of what a wonderful experience my wife, three kids and I had while visiting Disney for the first time last November. We arrived at the Animal Kingdom Lodge and our room was not ready, so we wandered around the lodge and its grounds while waiting for our room. After looking at the animals for a while we wandered into the gift shop. Our 8-year old daughter, Jillian, immediately fixated on a stuffed toy cheetah. My wife and I told our kids that this was our first day and the first shop and that they should probably wait to look at other shops before settling for a gift. Besides, we told Jillian, we could always pick the cheetah up later.

Our wandering eventually brought us out to where a Disney representative, Bianca, was stationed. She was handing out sheets with pictures of half dozen or so plants that we were supposed to find. My wife, Sharon, noticed that Bianca was from Namibia. This reminded her that Jillian, at her last birthday party, had asked all of her friends to make donations to the Cheetah Conservation Fund (which is based in Namibia) in lieu of birthday present.

Jillian heard about the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in the magazine "scholastic News" that they sent home from school. She thinks the cheetahs are beautiful, fast, interesting and wild. She was not happy to hear about the destruction of their habitat. It made her sad to hear that they are endangered. She wants wild things to be able to stay wild.

Sharon asked Bianca if she was familiar with the CCF. Bianca said that she was well aware of it and told us that not only was it based in her homeland but it was also one of the funds that Disney donates to as part of its conservation efforts. She asked us to wait while she found something for Jillian and returned with one of the buttons that you receive for making a contribution to the Disney's Wildlife Conservation Fund. Jillian and all of us were thrilled. This provided us with an opportunity to give Jillian some praise for her generosity and to teach her and our other children that when you are charitable to others, it will come back to you. Not necessarily directly but in magical ways that you would never expect.

We spent the next day at the Animal Kingdom. Jillian wore her button. Several people working there recognized her. Jillian was glowing with the recognition. This alone was gift enough.

We then moved on to the Polynesian resort and spent the next several days visiting MGM and Magic Kingdom. We had been on pretty much every ride that we had wanted to ride, at least once, so we decided to spend the final day eating our way around the world. We paced ourselves and did a good

job sampling various goodies in most of the countries. We had a late dinner at the German section while listening to the fireworks booming outside.

After a fantastic evening in Epcot, we began our walk back to the monorail. Jillian then informed us that she really, really wanted the cheetah to be her final gift. She had looked at all of the other and that was the one thing she most wanted. Since she had only picked one gift to take home, we began a sharp lookout for her cheetah, unsuccessfully. We told we would find one at the Disney store near our home or perhaps order it online. To our surprise, she took it quite well.

Back in our room, the first thing we noticed was a big Disney bag taped up and sitting on Jillian's bed. Inside was the very cheetah that she wanted. At first we thought that perhaps a miracle had occurred. Inside were wonderful hand written notes from Bianca, Claire and Kim (from the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund) and a personal email from Dr Laurie Marker, the CCF's founder and Executive Director. Jillian was beside herself with delight. It was a truly magical moment.

Jillian set to the task of naming her new cheetah. The naming of things is very important in our house. She quickly settled on Bianca as the name and Bianca she is. I want to thank the real Bianca from the bottom of my heart. Her gift goes far beyond giving a toy animal to a little girl. I have been telling this story to anyone who will sit still long enough to hear me through. I intend to see that this inspires more than just my merry little band of kids.

.....

The Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund has supported CCF's programs, such as the Livestock Guarding Dog, since 1999. CCF has received more than \$140,000 in support from DWCF, thanks to Disney and generous guests who contribute to the DWCF. The fund has been helping ensure the survival of wildlife and wild places in all their beauty and diversity for nearly 10 years.

But the pervasiveness of these connections goes even further than giving people the impression that they are traveling around the world. They actually give people the romantic illusion that they are adventurously saving the world even as they are consuming it virtually (see story box). Guests purchase experiences that are staged as world-saving adventures, and which emulate the adventures of conservationists who are sponsored by Disney and other corporate concerns. For example, guests at Disney's Animal Kingdom Lodge are invited to "explore the riches of Africa" and "rejuvenate both body and spirit in luxurious surroundings while sharing the grandeur of the African wilderness",²⁵ while throughout their visit they are continuously reminded of the links between their consumption and the conservation

of biodiversity. First of all they are told that a portion of the profits go to the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund. The Lodge is “certified green” by the state of Florida and accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Guests are also reminded of the conservation value of the lodge through the various activities in which they participate. At Rafiki’s Planet Watch, “guests can get a glimpse of conservation efforts being undertaken by Disney’s Animal Program scientists to protect locally and globally threatened species”.²⁶

While the central argument in support of these processes is that they create value through non-consumptive experiences, they are anything but non-consumptive. Consumptive practices are normally associated with the extraction of resources from an ecosystems and/or their transformation into other goods (eg tree into wood, fish into food). Non-consumptive practices are those that at least in appearance leave resources untouched. The problem is that so-called non-consumptive practices often cause ecological and/or social disruptions which may not be immediately visible. As Neves explains in greater detail (2009, this issue) these types of disruption, along with their associated ecological costs, are rendered invisible by the consumptive experiences themselves. Carrier and Macleod (2005) further argue that eco-tourist experiences are constructed precisely to conceal their connections to the global infrastructure and relationships that made them possible in the first place. Their argument focuses especially on the links between eco-tourism and the global air travel industry.

Extending this logic even further, we have shown that the kinds of alienation and fetishization associated with the current convergence of conservation and capitalism have become so widely encompassing as to suggest that any consumptive activity can have a corresponding corrective ecological measure. The very production of this worldview creates the opportunity for continued capitalist expansion, in spite of Green Marxist predictions that these would be superseded by environmentally oriented social movements. Thus, for instance, environmental groups briefly succeeded in tarnishing McDonald’s image as a friendly, family-oriented corporation, by exposing the environmental harm it was causing in Amazonia. Not only is McDonalds recovering from this tarnishing by greening its image, it is also trying to capitalize on widespread environmental concerns through the creation of new products and commodities.

The socio-ecological implications of this issue are more profound than they may at first appear. McDonalds may very well have stopped using soy-based animal feed in response to activist criticisms. It is also not to say that children learn nothing about biodiversity loss and climate change from McDonalds’ Endangered Animal Happy Meals. As Schlosser (2001) so thoroughly demonstrates, however, the environmental contradictions of the fast food industry are far more

pervasive and integrated than a Hotspots and Happy Meals partnership can even begin to capture. The rise of the fast food industry in North America is inextricably linked to automobile culture, expanding networks of superhighways, and the industrialization of global food production systems. By focusing consumers' attention on distant and exotic locales, the spectacular productions of McDonalds and CI 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.

Conclusion: Research and Resistance in the Sustainable Development Historic Bloc

So far we have said nothing about how people might resist, subvert or creatively interpret any of the phenomena we have been talking about. This is an essential area of research, since without understandings of resistance and reinterpretation historic blocs appear deterministic and immune to change. Gramsci himself held that this was not the case, and this was precisely why he was so concerned with understanding historic blocs. We strongly believe that good ethnographic research is essential for understanding both the ways in which historic blocs are reproduced and the ways in which they are transformed. We wish to conclude, therefore, with three sets of points that should be kept in mind when doing such ethnography:

- 1 There will always be people, things and processes that cannot be co-opted by and/or are excluded from a prevailing historic bloc. These people, things and processes are potentially counter-hegemonic. At the same time, however, historic blocs relentlessly set limits on thought, speech and action. As such, all that is potentially counter-hegemonic comes across as lacking credibility, and in most contexts is easily dismissed. The sustainable development historic bloc, especially, rests solidly on a technocratic view of the world, in which experts elected by the historic bloc are presented as the holders of fundamental truths and wisdom. Views not sanctioned by this technocracy are dismissed as ill-founded. When a potentially viable critique of the historic bloc emerges, the historic bloc is able to quickly and efficiently mobilize a seemingly endless array of experts to counter that critique. Finally, it is essential not to forget that critiques of a prevailing historic bloc run directly counter to the economic interests of extraordinarily large and diverse groups of people.

- 2 Conflicts around issues of biodiversity in the context of the sustainable development historic bloc constitute what Gramsci (2000b) termed a war of position. In contrast to the types of direct frontal revolutions that occurred in Eastern Europe, Gramsci held that counter-hegemonic struggles in liberal capitalist societies would occur in the context of civil society, the political terrain of public space and media in which the dominant classes organize their hegemony and in which opposition parties and movements organize, build coalitions, and generate counter-hegemonic forms of thought, speech and action. These types of struggles, he cautioned, require a thorough knowledge of the prevailing historic bloc, careful and meticulous strategizing, and clever interventions forums in which hegemonies are produced and reproduced. In the context of biodiversity conservation these forums include meetings, workshops, congresses, summits, and the media, especially the internet. Accordingly, these are important sites at which resistance to the sustainable development historic bloc are occurring. It is important to remember, however, that increasingly sophisticated forms of Spectacle have rendered these struggles more complex than they were in Gramsci's time.
- 3 Spectacle continuously presents people with an aesthetic of a world that is already dead (Debord 1995 [1967]; see also Baudrillard 1993; Luke 1997).²⁷ This aesthetic is filled with images of life and motion, but these images themselves are dead. They cannot be changed. To the extent that consumers interact with the Spectacle it is by choosing between a set of preprogrammed consumptive experiences. But they cannot change the Spectacle through these interactions. In the context of late consumer capitalism described above, they are offered a set of prepackaged choices. Although we cannot presume to know how consumers personally conceptualize and feel about these intended metaphors, we must recognize the structures and constraints within which consumer responses will operate. However sophisticated their understanding of these choices may be (cf Carrier 2003), there is little that they can do to change the ossified spectacles of reality with which they are presented. Happily, the democratization of media technology and the internet presents new opportunities for subverting and resisting Spectacle.

We hope that this framework for understanding the sustainable development historic bloc will be useful in thinking about how future investigations of conservation and capitalism should be designed and carried out. Moreover, as intellectuals and cultural critics, it is essential

that we remain mindful of our own places and spaces on the political terrain of the sustainable development historic bloc, and the ways in which we might also contribute to both its reproduction and its subversion. Hopefully, the framework we have presented in this essay will also prove useful in doing this as well.

Endnotes

¹ From a statement at the World Conservation Congress, quoted in the *New York Times*, <http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/the-failing-business-of-conservation/>, accessed 4 August 2009.

² <http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/user-friendly-databases-make-conservation-easier-for-business/>, accessed 4 August 2009. The World Conservation Congress is the general assembly of the IUCN (World Conservation Union), <http://www.iucn.org/>, accessed 4 August 2009. It meets once every 4 years, and is described by the IUCN as the world's largest and most important conservation event, http://www.iucn.org/congress_08/, accessed 4 August 2009.

³ http://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business/bbp_our_work/bbp_shell/update/, accessed 4 August 2009. http://cms.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/business/bpp_news/?uNewsID=2013, accessed 4 August 2009.

⁴ One of us, Jim Igoe, attended the Congress and personally observed these sorts of statements, as well as learning about them through personal communication with Ken McDonald and Saul Cohen who were conducting research on the “neoliberalization” of conservation at the congress. The statement quoted here appeared in the *New York Times* business blog in a piece called “The Failing Business of Conservation”, <http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/the-failing-business-of-conservation/>, accessed 4 August 2009.

⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1CRs-7lRlPo>; <http://www.rainforestsos.org/>; both accessed 4 August 2009.

⁶ See especially IUCN President Valli Moosa's statements to the opening ceremony of World Conservation Congress in Barcelona, <http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/the-failing-business-of-conservation/>, accessed 5 August 2009, and *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman's statement for Conservation International, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLi3O81uDs>, accessed 5 August 2009.

⁷ This is assuming that such income stays in the community and that it is somehow equitably dispersed.

⁸ As Kate Crehan argues in *Gramsci, Culture, and Anthropology*, hegemony is far more nuanced and complex than I have briefly described it here. This book is essential reading for anyone concerned about hegemony and culture.

⁹ There are many examples (see Holmes this issue, but some examples include: George Moore who was invited to join the board of Conservation International after his George and Betty Moore Foundation donated over \$250 million to it; John Robinson, a Vice President of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) sits on the board of the Christensen Fund, the President and Chair of which (Diane Christensen) serves as a trustee of the WCS; Yolanda Kakabadse the former President of the IUCN and Kathryn Fuller, the former President of WWF-US have both served on the board of the Ford Foundation.

¹⁰ AWF, for instance, has invited former heads of African States onto its board of trustees, including Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania and Ketumile Masire of Botswana, <http://www.awf.org/section/about/trustees>, accessed 4 August 2009. Garland (2008) outlines the ways in which Michael Fay of the Wildlife Conservation Society forged new alliances with President Omar Bongo of Gabon, on the basis of which Bongo

set aside 10% of the countries' land for protected areas. In an interview on Comedy Central, Alan Rabinowitz of the Wildlife Conservation Society describes the necessity of working closely with dictators and corrupt regimes in order to convince them of the necessity of setting aside land for conservation, <http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/171137/june-10-2008/alan-rabinowitz>, accessed 4 August 2009. While individuals like Bongo are unlikely to make it on the board of trustees of any conservation organizations, they are an important part of the elite networks through which conservation is achieved.

¹¹ For the purposes of this essay we call them ideologue intellectuals.

¹² Neves (2004) also shows that such dichotomous distinctions hold true only as heuristic devices, since the dynamics of power relations leads to the emergence of much more fluid understandings of the world, as the articulation of different positions affects the positions themselves. The notion is indeed in accordance with Gramsci's notion of war of positions.

¹³ Especially notable examples include the corporate leader videos of the Prince's Rainforest Project, <http://www.rainforestsos.org/content/home/>; WWF's *Let the Clean Economy Begin*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mzr4H6ZWKBE>; WWF Earth hour videos, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C9GRh_9sQBw&feature=Playlist&p=283A669E4559A584&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=2; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHsJXFcSo7E>, accessed 14 August 2009; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HxZGK_iHIXc; AWF's Starbucks video, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvxdbKV4DEU>; About AWF, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P98NDWsUf3s&feature=related>; CI's video *Richard Branson on Climate Change*, <http://www.conservation.org/fmg/pages/videoplayer.aspx?videoid=63>; *Team Earth*, <http://www.conservation.org/fmg/pages/videoplayer.aspx?videoid=47>; and *McDonald's Endangered Species Happy Meals*, <http://www.conservation.org/fmg/pages/videoplayer.aspx?videoid=43>; all accessed 14 August 2009.

¹⁴ <http://www.rainforestsos.org/>, accessed 30 July 2009.

¹⁵ http://ecosystemmarketplace.com/pages/article.news.php?component_id=6356&component_version_id=9499&language_id=12, accessed 10 January 2008.

¹⁶ <http://www.speciesbanking.com/>, accessed 12 January 2008.

¹⁷ For numerous examples from around the world, please visit the website of the Katoomba Group, an international network of individuals working to promote, and improve capacity related to, markets and payments for ecosystem services, <http://www.katoombagroup.org>, accessed 12 January 2008.

¹⁸ Professor Antonio Diegues has been researching conservation displacement in Brazil since the late 1960s. Recently, he and his graduate students have been documenting the ways in which conservation BINGOs circumvent national laws prohibiting the sale of land to outsiders by using proxy Brazilian NGOs to purchase land, which then become mini-protected areas, where use and habitation by local people is forbidden.

¹⁹ <http://www.greenlivingproject.org>, accessed 7 August 2009.

²⁰ <http://www.prlog.org/10180118-green-living-project-and-xola-consulting-annou-nce-strategic-partnership.html>, accessed 7 August 2008.

²¹ <http://planetgreen.discovery.com/work-connect/green-living-project-tour.html>, accessed 7 August 2009.

²² <http://www.rainforestsos.org/>, accessed 30 July 2009. All of the videos cited in these paragraphs can be found at this web site.

²³ All of this extensive and rapidly expanding material can be viewed at <http://www.rainforestsos.org/>, accessed 10 July 2009.

²⁴ <http://www.conservation.org/fmg/pages/videoplayer.aspx?videoid=43>, accessed 10 July 2009.

²⁵ http://www.kingdom-travel.com/Walt_Disney_World_Resorts/Disney_Animal_Kingdom_Resort.shtml, accessed 9 July 2008.

²⁶ <http://disney.go.com/disneyhand/environmentality/animals/kingdom.html>, accessed 9 July 2008.

²⁷ We speak metaphorically here and are not making some oblique reference to the abundance of biodiversity (which is immense and exciting) or to the grave threats to it.

References

- Adorno T (1972) *The Culture Industry*. London: Routledge
- Agius J (2001) Biodiversity credits: Creating missing markets for biodiversity. *Environmental and Planning Law Journal* 18(5):481–503
- Aldridge M and Dingwall R (2003) Teleology on television? Implicit models of evolution in broadcast wildlife and nature programmes. *European Journal of Communication* 8:114–132
- Alexander A (1993) *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscapes from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers
- Allman T (2007) The theme-parking, megachurching, franchising, exurbing, mcmansioning of America. How Walt Disney changed everything. *National Geographic Magazine* 2007:98–115
- Baudrillard J 1993. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. London: Sage Publications
- Bauman Z (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press
- Bauman Z (2001) *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Bauman Z (2007) *Consuming Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press
- Bayon R, Fox J and Carrol N (2007) *Conservation and Biodiversity Banking*. London: Earthscan
- Blundel A (2006) Offsets could mitigate damage to biodiversity. *Nature* 442:245–246
- Bonner R (1993) *At the Hand of Man. Peril and Hope for Africa's Wildlife*. London: Simon and Schuster
- Bourdieu P (1977) *Outline of the Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Brockington D (2009) *Celebrity and the Environment: Fame, Wealth, and Power in Conservation*. London: Zed Books
- Brockington D, Duffy R and Igoe J (2008) *Nature Unbound: Conservation, Capitalism, and the Future of Protected Areas*. London: Earthscan Publishers
- Brockington D and Scholfield (2010) The conservationist mode of production and conservation NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa. *Antipode* 42(3):551–575
- Bryman A (1999) The Disneyfication of society. In G Ritzer (ed) *The McDonaldization Reader* (pp 52–58). London: Sage Publications
- Carrier J (2003) Mind, gaze, and engagement: Understanding the environment. *Journal of Material Culture* 8:5–23
- Carrier J and Macleod G (2005) Bursting the bubble: The socio-cultural context of ecotourism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 11:315–334
- Castree N (2007) Neoliberalizing nature: The logics of de- and re-regulation. *Environment and Planning A* 40:131–152
- Chapin M (2004) A challenge to conservationists. *World Watch Magazine* Nov/Dec:17–31
- Clark S and Altman R (2007) *A Field Guide to Conservation Finance*. Washington, DC: Island Press
- Corson C (2010) Tracing the origins of neoliberal conservation through the U.S. Agency for International Development. *Antipode* 42(3):576–602
- Crehan K (2002) *Gramsci, Culture, and Anthropology*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Debord G (1995 [1967]) *Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books

- Dorsey M (2005) Conservation, collusion and capital. *Anthropology News* October:45–46
- Dowie M (1995) *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Dowie M (2009) *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred Year Conflict Between Global Conservation and Native People*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Dzingirai V (2003) The new scramble for the African countryside. *Development and Change* 34(2):243–263
- Etchart G (1995) Mitigation banks: A strategy for sustainable development. *Coastal Management* 23(3):223–227
- Ellison K (2008) Business as usual. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment* 6(9):12
- Ferguson J (2006) *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- Fortwangler C (2007) Friends with money: Private support for national parks in the U.S. Virgin Islands. *Conservation and Society* 5(4):504–533
- Garland E (2008) The elephant in the room: Confronting the colonial character of wildlife conservation in Africa. *African Studies Review* 51(3):51–74
- Goldman M (2005) *Imperial Nature. The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalisation*. Yale: Yale University Press
- Gosling S, Broderick J, Upham P, Ceron J, Dubois G, Peeters P and Strasdas W (2007) Voluntary carbon offsetting schemes for aviation: efficiency, credibility, and sustainable tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 15(3):223–248
- Gramsci A (1971a) The intellectuals. In Q Hoare and G Smith (eds) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (pp 5–23). New York: International Publishers
- Gramsci A (1971b) State and civil society. In Q Hoare and G Smith (eds) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (pp 210–215). New York: International Publishers
- Gramsci A (2000a) Structure and superstructure. In D Forgacs (ed) *The Antonio Gramsci Reader* (p 192). New York: New York University Press
- Gramsci A (2000b) War of position and war of maneuver. In D Forgacs (ed) *The Antonio Gramsci Reader* (pp 192–228). New York: New York University Press
- Grandia L (forthcoming) Silent spring in the land of eternal spring: The germination of a conservation conflict. *Current Conservation*
- Harvey D (1996) *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Heynen N, McCarthy J and Robbins P and Prudham S (eds) (2007) *Neoliberal Environments: False Promises and Unnatural Consequences*. New York: Routledge
- Holmes G (2010) Conservation elites and the Dominican Republic. *Antipode* 42(3):624–646
- Igoe J (forthcoming) The spectacle of nature in the global economy of appearances: Anthropological engagements with the spectacular mediations of transnational biodiversity conservation. *Critique of Anthropology* 30(3)
- Igoe J and Brockington D (2007) Neoliberal conservation: A short introduction. *Conservation and Society* 5(3)
- Igoe J and Croucher B (2007) Conservation, commerce, and communities: The story of community-based wildlife management areas in Tanzania. *Conservation and Society* 5(3):534–561
- Igoe J and Fortwangler C (2007) Whither communities and conservation? *International Journal of Biodiversity Science and Management* 3:65–76
- Klein N (2007) *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. New York: Metropolitan Books
- Luke T (1997) *Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- MacDonald C (2008) *Green Inc: an Environmental Insider Reveals How a Good Cause has Gone Bad*. New York, NY: Lyons Press

- MacDonald K (2010) The devil is in the (bio)diversity: Private sector “engagement” and the restructuring of biodiversity conservation. *Antipode* 42(3):513–550
- MacDonald K (forthcoming) Business, biodiversity and new “fields” of conservation: the World Conservation Congress and the renegotiation of organization order. *Conservation and Society*
- Marx K (1973 [1857–1861]) *The Grundrisse*. London, New York: Penguin
- Marx K (1978 [1865–1870]) *Capital*, Vol 2. New York: Vintage
- Mbembe A (2001) *On the Post-Colony*. Berkeley: University of California Press
- McAfee K (1999) Selling nature to save it? Biodiversity and green developmentalism. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 17:133–154
- McDermott-Hughes D (2005) Third nature: Making space and time in the Great Limpopo Conservation Area. *Cultural Anthropology* 20:157–184
- Mosse D (2004) Is good policy unimplementable? Reflections on the ethnography of aid policy and practice. *Development and Change* 35(4):639–671
- Mosse D (2005) *Cultivating Development: An Ethnography of Aid Policy and Practice*. London: Pluto Press
- Muchnink B (2007) “9/10 of the law: Vigilante conservation in the American west.” Unpublished paper presented to the 106th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, 26 November to 1 December, Washington DC
- Mutchler (2007) “The failure of wilderness: Bureaucracy, bovines, and bullets.” Unpublished paper presented to the 106th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, 26 November to 1 December, Washington DC
- Neves K (2004) Revisiting the tragedy of the commons: Whale watching in the Azores and its ecological dilemmas. *Human Organisation* 63(3):289–300
- Neves K (2009) The great wollemi saga: Betwixt genomic preservation and consumerist conservation. In C Casanova (ed) *Contemporary Issues in Environmental Anthropology* (pp 134–156). Lisbon: ISCSP University Press
- Neves K (2010) Cashing in on cetourism: A critical ecological engagement with two whale watching business models. *Antipode* 42(3):719–741
- O’Connor J (1988) Capitalism, nature, and socialism: A theoretical introduction. *Capitalism, Nature, and Socialism* 1:11–38
- Prudham S (2004) Poisoning the well: Neo-liberalism and the contamination of municipal water in Walkerton, Ontario. *Geoforum* 35(3):343–359
- Rodriguez J, Tabler A, Daszack P, Suckumar R, Valladares-Paudua C, Padua, S, Aguirre L, Medelin, M, Acosta, M, Aguirre A, Bonacic C, Bordino P, Bruschini J, Buchori D, Gonzales S, Matthew T, Mendez M, Mugica L, Pachecho F, Dobson A and Pearl M (2007) Globalization of conservation: The view from the south. *Science* 317:755–756
- Sachedina H (2008) “Wildlife is our oil: Conservation, livelihoods, and NGOs in the Tarangire ecosystem, Tanzania.” Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Oxford University
- Sachedina H (2010) Conservation empire: A case study of the scaling up of the African Wildlife Foundation. *Antipode* 42(3):603–623
- Schlosser E (2001) *Fast Food Nation*. New York: Houghton Mifflin
- Sklair L (2001) *The Transnational Capitalist Class*. Oxford: Blackwell
- Spence M (1999) *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of National Parks*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Sullivan S (2009) An ecosystem and your service: Environmental strategists are redefining nature as a capitalist commodity. *The Land* Winter 2008/2009
- Sunseri T (2005) Something else to burn: Forest squatters, conservationists, and the state in modern Tanzania. *Journal of Modern African Studies* 43:609–640
- Tsing A L (2005) *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- USDO I (2003) *Guidance for the Establishment, Use, and Operation of Conservation Banks*. Washington DC: United States Department of the Interior

- Vivanco L (2002) Seeing green: Knowing and saving the environment on film. *American Anthropologist* 10(4):1195–1204
- West P (2010) A wookiee wouldn't drive a hummer, but would an ewok drink certified coffee? Media, consumption, and the fashioning of contemporary environmental politics. *Antipode* 42(3):690–718
- West P and Carrier J G (2004) Ecotourism and authenticity: Getting away from it all? *Current Anthropology* 45:483–498
- West P, Igoe J and Brockington D (2006) Parks and people: The social impacts of protected areas. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35:251–277
- Young Z (2002) *A New Green Order? The World Bank and the Politics of Global Environmentalism*. London: Pluto Press