

Convivial Conservation

Degrowth and the quest of overcoming Capitalist Conservation

A surreal landscape featuring a stone archway in the center, which appears to be a portal leading to a bright, mountainous scene. The archway is set against a sky with two large, purple, planet-like spheres and a field of white and yellow clouds. The foreground is a lush, green forested area.

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Degrowth conference – 2-6 September 2014

Introduction

- Capitalism & Conservation: historically intertwined
- Hence: degrowth, in its most radical incarnation (DG-4 / a-growth), must have implications for conservation
- What are these implications, and what is the potential role for conservation in a post-capitalist world of ‘ecoviviality’?

‘Accumulation by Conservation’

Period	Regime of Accumulation	Key Characteristics	Dominant Ideology	Conservation Approach	Key Mechanisms
1860s-1960s	Colonial / Fordist / Organized Capitalism	Vertical integration; Statism; violence	Liberalism / Keynesianism	Fortress Conservation	Protected Areas; State funding; wildlife tourism
1970-2000	Post-Fordism / Disorganized Capitalism	Flexible accumulation; decentralization	Roll-back Neoliberalism	Flexible Conservation	CBC; ICDPs; Biosphere reserves; Ecotourism; Bioprospecting
1990s			Roll-out Neoliberalism		TFCAs; PES
2000-Present	Financialization / Casino Capitalism	Spectacular accumulation, networks, crisis		Fictitious Conservation	Carbon markets; species/wet-lands banking; financial derivatives; REDD

Table 1: Accumulation by Conservation (Sources: Mandel 1978; Lash and Urry 1987; Harvey 1989; Arrighi 2009; Nealon 2008; Büscher 2013)

Capitalist *conservation* is underpinned by capitalist *natures* or ‘Nature™ INC’

- Nature Incorporated: quantified as ‘natural capital’
- Trademarked nature: nature’s status in sociotechnical production and its legal, commercial and scientific frames
- Nature on the move: Nature translated into ‘value’ that moves through global markets
- Nature on the go: Nature consumed through park visits, online and ‘armchair’ conservation, species images, etc.
- The death of nature: (Merchant) reduction of nature to an inanimate, technocratically manipulable object, immersed in violence

From capital-ism via degrowth to 'ecoviviality'

- Political struggle & strategy to deal with institutionalised forms of accumulated power across material and discursive domains
- Two-step strategy: from (radical) reformism to radical, systemic change away from capital as 'value in process':
 - Short term – subvert the logic of capital: truly 'green' production, cut subsidies, redirect public spending, tax CO2 & financial transactions, defuse competitive pressure, slow down trade, lessen advertising, encourage 'degrowth', learn from all the alternatives / different cosmologies out there, etc.
 - Medium to longer term: conceptualizing and building 'alternative economic spaces', based not on logic of capital and economic growth but on logics of equality and radical ecological democracy (Shrivastava & Kothari)
- Outcomes (for nature and conservation) depend on these complex, contrived and contradictory processes

Convivial conservation

- Underpinned by convivial natures – *multiple*: nature as commons; nature as relational: living with (Turnhout et al, 2013); nature as animate, as freedom, as peace, etc
- Convivial conservation: about different *uses, frames* and forms of *embeddednes* of multiple natures
- A political economic system that needs hierarchical, rules, regulations, discipline and biopower backed by violence in order to save (non-human) nature from itself has a problem!
- CC about not setting nature apart but integrating the uses of (non-human) natures into social, cultural, and ecological contexts and systems (re-embedding)
- All based on and in non-commodified (!) value systems and constructs of space and time

The uses of convivial conservation

Changing value, space, time from focus on capital to focus on people and nature in relation to:

- Protected areas (fortress conservation):
 - Emphasis on openness and access
 - Involvement of non-experts: radical democratisation of management
 - From commodified tourism to non-commodified *visitation*
- Community (flexible) conservation (& development):
 - flexibility and decentralisation focused on the social rather than the (neoliberal) market
 - Changing community to *include* nature
 - Rights of nature – pacha mama
- Financialised (fictitious) conservation:
 - Integrating value into everyday life rather than in distant, compturized markets
 - Non-monetized, non-commodified forms of the exchange of nature

Some key questions for research and practice

- What types of value, space and time can aid the non-commodified use of natures?
- What is radical democratic nature, how do we get there?
- How do we move from the production of nature to a nature embedded in work, labor and action (Arendt)?
- How to connect networks, scale and institutions to convivial natures and conservation?
- Will there be need for conservation at all under ecoviviality?

Thanks!



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