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Environmental Values in Conservation: Ethics, Economics and Pragmatism

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Environmental Values in Conservation: Ethics, Economics and Pragmatism

Transcribed Plenary Lecture
by
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Note: The Slides mentioned are from the original PowerPoint presentation and the text here uses the same titles as were presented on those slides. The text relates to each slide and has been placed where they occurred during the talk. The text provides a set of stand alone arguments and significant points. The slides are provided in reduced form as an Appendix and are also available as a separate pdf from http://www.clivespash.org/lectures-and-presentations/conference-papers/. Some references to articles have also been added to this document, but not all those used for the presentation.

[Slide 1: *Title Page*]

Good evening. Thank you to the organisers for the invitation to speak to the Conference this evening. My talk will address environmental values in conservation, covering ethics, economics and pragmatism.

[Slide 2: Outline]

The issues we are here to debate are the claims being made for a 'New' Conservation. I will start by explaining how this has been framed in terms biodiversity and ecosystems valuation, where this has come from and what that means. I will then give some background on the mainstream economic theory that is used to support this approach as essential to an efficient and indeed optimal allocation of resources. I will cover, how mainstream economics is lying behind this and what that means, the creation of environmental values that goes on in this new approach to conservation, and the environment as well; what the New Conservation is about, that this is actually a distinct ideology, that it's actually an old political ideology, that

is being put forward; there is neoliberalism underneath this and technocracy. And that the environment, people and the economic aspects are important, but this is being framed around corporations and New Environmental Pragmatism (Spash 2009; 2013).

[Slide 3: FRAMING THE PROBLEM]

So, to start off; framing the problem.

[Slide 4: The Drive for Economic Valuation of Ecosystems as Services]

Well, you're all familiar with the way that biodiversity is being treated as ecosystem services and economic valuation, and that this has actually moved a long way through the collaboration of mainstream economists with ecologists, going back to the late 1980s. People like Paul Ehrlich and his student Gretchen Daily, pushing heavily on this front; people like Bob Costanza, particularly in ecological economics; Balmford. All these people are natural scientists, ecologists, pushing an idea of valuation from the economics. And also a whole lot of people from the United States and North America pushing this agenda forwards.

[Slide 5: The International Potsdam Initiative]

But it's also being internationalised, so we're seeing these things coming into the international arena, we're see things like the *Potsdam Initiative on Biodiversity*, which actually puts forward the idea of a "global study" to look at the costs and benefits of biodiversity loss. They're putting forward an idea here that's meant to be like the Stern report, to come up with a single number that would represent the net benefits and losses of biodiversity. Well, that didn't happen actually! But the idea behind this is very much pushed by the economic agenda. And this is the idea that the German Environment Minister stated before the *Potsdam Initiative*:

> "The 'biodiversity treasure trove' provides the global economy with an invaluable and extensive potential for innovative products and processes that is still widely untapped".

So the idea is about tapping into this treasure trove, that is out there. This is followed up, after the Postdam Initiative, by *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity*, the TEEB project, which is about "mainstreaming the economics of Nature".

[Slide 6: Banking and Finance, Growth and Development]

What lies behind this is banking, finance, growth and development. It's a very specific agenda. It's about creating new financial markets. You're probably aware of the recent financial crash!? Well, after the financial crash the next step is looking for new financial instruments, and they're looking for them in hardwiring biodiversity and ecosystem services into finance in order to do that. There's the whole area of carbon trading, which is making lots of money for lots of people; not doing much about climate change, but it's making lots of money for lots of people. And you've got the same thing going on in terms of the biodiversity area, things like wetlands credits and wetlands banking and so on. And the idea here is to show politicians how to get economic growth from ecosystems. This is about capital, jobs, economic development, economic opportunities—it's not about saving the environment or addressing the environment at all.

"Pro-biodiversity investment the logical choice."

[Slide 7: The Supposed Problem]

So, the supposed problem that drives this is the fact that, biodiversity lacks a market price and we're told that without the value of ecosystems being put into monetary terms, it's going to have a price of zero, a value of zero. Private companies lack the right incentives. Private companies apparently don't destroy the environment out of "wanton destructiveness or stupidity", they do it because it's "the logical and profitable thing to do". What they're saying is that the market system is failing them. They're innocent victims of a failing market system, which needs to be corrected. Politicians fail to take into account the 'right' values, those right values means we, that you, have to turn everything into capital so that they can take it into account.

[Slide 8: BASIC MAINSTREAM ECONOMIC THEORY]

So, behind this whole approach is a basic economic theory (see also Spash 2015).

[Slide 9: Efficient Resource Allocation: A Pro-Environment Position]

The economic theory that underlines this is all about costs and benefits, and it talks about the environment in terms of this kind of a story, a pro-environmental position. What we have is

the idea that the environment, ecosystems services, habitat and species have a cost associated with them. The more of them that you have, the more costly they are. That cost is in terms of the opportunity loss foregone. Which means economic development, it means housing, it means agro-forestry, it means mining, it means oil extraction and so on. That's the cost that we have to incur in order to have more animals and species and wild areas. But there's also a benefit to having those, and economists spend a lot of time looking at the benefits of actually having nature and the environment around, and more of it. And then there's a whole range of categories they come up with from direct use, to future options, value to future generations, existence values and so on. And the idea here is that, if you don't value the environment, then it's going to be under-provided, whole species will be under-provided, biodiversity will be under-provided. So you have to include the value, you have to start valuing it, so you can get to the 'optimum'. But you don't want to have too much of that stuff out there, because at some point the opportunity costs get too high.

[Slide 10: Alternative Viewpoint: Optimal Extinction]

So what's happens is that we could tell the same story from the other way around. What happens if you have a pristine area or an untouched area. Well, we could say the opposite, that there's too much nature there, there's going to be too many species, there's going to be too many areas that are providing ecosystem services. So we should just get rid of them! We need to develop them, we need to push them out. This is the story from the other side, which is actually about the over-provision and the optimal extinction of species. We've got to destroy those species, because they're just a waste of space, right!? We've got better things to do with that space. So, you can tell the story from the other direction. Well, actually there's a different dynamic you can tell as well.

[Slide 11: Developers Alternative: Accelerating Extinction]

What happens over time? As we've been shown [*referring to Kareiva's immiedaitely preceding talk*], there's a push for development, there's a push for growth, there's a push for more stuff. And if that happens, what happens is there's an increase in marginal cost over time, which means that there's going to be an increasing over provision of Nature, of ecosystem services, of species; you've got to get rid of more of them, because we have other things to be valued. So over time there's pushing for that.

[Slide 12: CREATING ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES]

So, once the environmental movement has gone down this route, once the conservationists have gone down this route, they're into a game where they've got to show value. That means you've got to create environmental values, you've got to create some values there and get them on the political agenda, because if you don't, you're going to lose the game.

[Slide 13: Making Ecosystems into Commodities]

And how do you do this? Well, you know, the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment carved the way here by showing you how to objectify things, putting ecosystems down as services, creating a whole classification system, even though the classification seems inherently somewhat arbitrary. Then there's another category at the end here, the service category, which includes the spiritual, the religious and the aesthetic. You know, even the TEEB report says that might be a little bit tricky to value, but... [*audience laughter*] ...given time.

[Slide 14: Stages of Commodification and Exchange]

And the idea, the one thing I want to get across to you here is that there are stages in commodification going on here. You don't actually have to put everything into monetary terms in order to commodify the environment. In the earlier stages of commodification you can exchange things in physical terms. You could exchange in monetary terms using a government scheme, its still commodified and only in the later stage do you get to the market exchange, which is where conservationists go wrong. If you look at the early stage, Stage 1 of commodification is actually just undergoing with offsets, that's what some of the offset schemes are doing, like the French Biodiversity Offset Scheme, it's commodifying for trade and trade-offs. So, there's a whole issue in there, which stage you go through.

[Slide 15: What is Required to Show Nature has a Money Value?]

So what's required to actually get to the monetary valuation stage? Well, once you get there you have to make Nature into an artefact, which means you have to objectify it, you commodify it. You then have to have some way of attributing values to it. The most common being used is the stated preferences approaches from the economists, and choice experiments. And if those don't work, you can transfer money numbers (Spash and Vatn 2006), just from anywhere really; you know, I mean that's what Costanza did with valuing his valuing the world study; just find some numbers and stick them down. [*audience clapping and laughter*]

And the characterisation of ecosystems theory, of ecosystems and biodiversity, is that the object is money values, that's the whole point.

[Slide 16: Economic Logic: Resources go to those Who Pay the Most]

If we follow the economic logic, the economic logic is that resources will go to who pays the most. And who can pay the most? Well the rich and powerful can pay the most, and they can also get private property rights to make the market system operate. So, what you get is land grabs; you get people pushed-off their land. So, if we're concerned about the good, potentially about the poor, then we should look into this issue. The poor may get compensation, but quite often they don't. And, as Martinez-Alier has pointed out, the poor sell cheaply, that's because they're poor, right!

So, rich or poor, it doesn't really matter. Whether you're rich or poor in the economic system, if you don't value something it has no value. It doesn't matter. So this whole system is about pushing things out.

[Slide 17: People's Preferences *animated slide with species appearing***]**

But it's also appealing to people's preferences (Spash 2008). And what do people have preferences about? What do people actually value? Well, the public perception of endangered species, what do they think about? Iconic, key species, the powerful, or [*pause*] the warm and fuzzy [*laughter*]. There's good reason the Panda's a logo for ... And maybe, [*pause*] human like? [*laughter*] Converting them into humans and then we all value them, like Disneyland.

[Slide 18: Informing and Forming Preferences *animated slide with species appearing***]**

So, informed and formed preferences becomes a key part of this whole story (Spash 2002). What goes on here? Well, of course, the way that ecologists think about things is somewhat different to the way public thinks about them, and the way economists think about them. And what happens when we code and decode information in this process. How will we get the information across to the public to tell them, "Oh! You should really value all these things". Or what happens with differences in utility, all the bits that the public doesn't really like or they feel a bit uneasy about? What this leads to is the selective extinction of unattractive species. You go to the zoo, today, that has been commercialised heavily, and you will see selected species that people find attractive, not the rest. So, there's studies on this problem, on holdings of snakes, the snake populations in zoos.

[Slide 19: Implicit Model of Human Motivation]

The implicit model underlying this is one of human motivation, and what is that model of human motivation? It's the idea that humans are self-preoccupied, self-centred, modern individuals and you need to either pay them or you fine them, they have to pay. That's the basic model. Well, what sort of human is this? I don't know!?

This is what Bob Costanza (2006) says: "I do not agree that more progress will be made by appealing to people's hearts rather than their wallets". Well that's the approach we have to use, appeal to the wallet.

Psychological egoism is what this is called: "the claim that people are incapable of regarding as important anything other than their own interests" (Holland 1995: 30). It's not something to glorify.

[Slide 20: Misconceptualising Values]

Misconceptualising values goes throughout this whole area. Look at what happened with markets and exchange. It can lead to crowding-out the intrinsic motivations and desired behaviour, that changes things into a market and trading system.

It fails to recognise that harm does not equate to good. For example, economists doing studies on climate change equate people drowning in future China with extra golfing days in America, because the climate will be improved! Great, hey!? Well, the Chinese are very cheap, you know, and golfing is very expensive in America, sounds good to me!

And what about the transformation of values? You can destroy values and transform them all the time right? I mean, if you think you can buy friends, you've misconceptualised the idea of friendship. Or if you think that you can pay for sex and that's love, I think you've got love wrong.

So getting what things to value' wrong, is a very serious issue here. And there's another aspect here, something that's called '*de dicto*' and '*de re*' valuation. I'll explain it to you with a story. Zsa Zsa Gabor, when asked "What was her greatest achievement?", she said "I found a way to keep my husband young and healthy". The reporter: "Wow! That's fantastic. How do you do that?". "I get a new one every five years." [*laughter*]. So she's had nine husbands.

Anyway, so what this means is that—Professor John O'Neill uses this to illustrate—the difference between values concerned with, the particular, '*de re*', as opposed to values relating to a general function, '*de dicto*'. And what this means is that the motivations of a '*de dicto*' concern—like in the Zsa Zsa Gabor joke—is that the person there is characteristic of someone who is alienated from people. They don't relate to their husband.

And you can give an environmental example as well. The idea of having a sense of place is different from relating to *any* place. It's not just *any* place, it's the place you were born or grew-up or whatever. So there's a difference between types of values, the *de dicto* concerns appeal to an end state; the *de dicto* concerns are fungible commodities which have no distinctive historical or emotional ties, like money and tools and the economic aspects.

De dicto evaluation of biodiversity protection takes you down a very particular route. What you end-up with is an end state for your non-human values. What matters is only the state of the biodiversity or ecosystem insofar as it affects the delivery of ecosystem services.

[Slide 23: Implicit De Dicto Concerns and End-state Values in the 'New' Conservation Science]

Well, here's the example. This is from "*Conservation in the Anthropocene*" (Kareiva, et al. 2012), and what it says is that: "In many circumstances, the demise of formerly abundant species can be inconsequential to ecosystem function". So, you can get rid of the American chestnut, passenger pigeon, Steller's Sea Cow or the Dodo, or whatever, because there's "no catastrophic or even measurable effects".

That is *de dicto*.

So, that's from the 'New' Conservation.

[Slide 24: 'NEW' CONSERVATION: OLD POLITICAL IDEOLOGY]

The New Conservation, I would say, is actually an old political ideology, rather than some ideology free zone.

[Slide 25: The Nature Conservancy (TNC)]

The Nature Conservancy has been pushing this. So Mark Tercek, who heads the Nature Conservancy, was interviewed in a long article, which is cited here (Max 2014), and the basic idea, "the key idea is to create tools that can assign monetary value to natural resources". Tercek's formerly from Goldman Sachs, a multi-millionaire from the financial markets, he's looking for "sound metrics drawn from the world of finance", it's not even economics. "The assumption is that if you want companies to care about nature you must put a price tag on it". And as Peter [Kareiva] and his co-authors said in *Conservation in the Anthropocene*, conservationists should partner with corporations. That's where this's taking us. These are not the only people in the community, this has become quite a big movement.

[Slide 26: We must put a price on nature if we are going to save it]

So here we have Tony Jupiter. Tony, are you in the room? [*pause*] No, well. [*laughter*] "We must put a price on nature..." [*referring to Juniper article*]. In that case I'll dissect Tony's argument. [*laughter*] The story is an argument. Basically if you take account of how he makes his argument you can go through it and see how flawed it is.

[Slide 27: Flaws in the Argument (1): Biophysical Structured Reality]

First of all, it's saying nature is vital for economics. Well, OK then, nature is vital for economics. So there's a biophysical structure of reality here, where the natural system is actually outside of the economic system. Oh! So why are we sticking ecology inside economics then? I thought it was the other way around. Oh yeah! Sorry—misinterpreted it.

[Slide 28: Flaws in the Argument (2): Value Theory]

Well, what about the value theory. Nature has measurable kinds of financial values. OK, yes nature has an interest for financiers to make money. What's that got to do with accounting for value of Nature in general, and what about the meaning of nature? Oh! Well, OK, there's no value theory in there—so its meaningless.

[Slide 29: Flaws in the Argument (3): Political Theory]

What about political theory? Oh, OK, the economics gets the attention, and the financial values, get the attention of people. Get the attention of people, right!? Which people does it get the attention of? You get the attention of your financial and economic elite. So why are

you appealing to these elites? Why is the conservation movement concerned about the elite? Where is the political theory behind this? Why do these people have power and why do they need to be persuaded? There's nothing here, is it democratic, is it justice, what is it. Oh! there's no political theory—missing.

[Slide 30: Flaws in the Argument (4): The Growth Imperative]

What about the, 'nature gets in the way of economic growth'? Underlying this whole thing is an idea that we must have economic growth; there's a growth imperative, it's very much embedded in this whole discussion. Oh! well, the growth imperative goes unquestioned.

[Slide 31: Flaws in the Argument (5): Ethics and Philosophy of Science]

And how about this old chestnut, that "beliefs won't work", the "moral case won't work". Compelling logic might be a bit better, the economic compelling logic. Well sorry, but economics is based on utilitarianism. Happens to be a moral theory. OK! So you don't get away from morality by going to economics—ethical theory misleading.

[Slide 32: Flaws in the Argument (6): Ethics and Philosophy of Science]

So it's flawed, at every level: value theory missing, political theory, growth imperative unquestioned, ethical theory misleading and biophysical reality misinterpreted. Underlying this is also a political ideology pretending to be conservation as science.

[Slide 33: A Political Ideology Pretending to be Conservation as Science]

So Juniper talks about competitiveness, growth industries, investment, modern technologies, re-framing environmental programmes, pro-competitive, pro-people, pro-security, pro-cost-saving. Lists that the political right, republican or conservatives generally depend on, and he's quite open about it, "embracing businesses, scientist, politicians...", and "...especially Conservatives...".

This is an implicit theory of political economy, and the type of political economy we need is about an elite that runs society on the basis of finance and economic growth. The capital accumulating system cannot be questioned; everything else must conform.

[Slide 34: Business First, Conservation May Be?]

And this seems to be quite clear in the way TNC is going. So Tercek makes it very clear, "no, no, we're doing this for business' sake", conservation comes along later; if you can get conservation out of it. Oooh, well, good luck! "If business goals overlap with ecological impulses, so much the better, but if they don't, most companies will continue on a polluting path", that's what the journalist wrote after having interviewed him.

[Slide 35: Economic Ornithology: A Lesson from History]

And here's a lesson from Economic Ornithology. Who here has heard of Economic Ornithology? [*laughter*] Nobody, right? One person, OK, well done. One person. Well this is a lesson for you. Between the years of 1880 and 1920, 40 years, 1000 studies calculated the monetary value of services provided by birds, in order to try and save the declining birds. Their services were replaced by technology, mainly insecticides and pesticides and economic ornithology disappeared, which is why only one person has ever heard of it. What that means is valuing a species as a service provider is not the same as valuing a species, and *economic values do not guarantee conservation of anything*.

[Slide 36: ENVIRONMENT, PEOPLE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH]

So let's think about people, the environment and economic growth. Economic development and human displacement in particular. Because one of the things that's been highlighted in the attack on conservation, on the 'old conservation', is that they didn't pay any attention to the humans, and a lot of humans were displaced. Well that's OK, I mean there's truth in that, right!

[Slide 37: Economic Development and Human Displacement]

But wait a second, what about economic development, what about the displacement of people due to economic development? That side of the story seems to be missing, and that's actually a current story and it's a massive story. Between 1980 and 2000 close to 200 million people have been thrown off their land for development related projects. 10 million people a year are being pushed off their land. The violence that the development projects inflict is stunningly commonplace. And it goes on all the time right. The liberalisation of the Indian economy for private investors seeking to develop, and the mining industry and through Special Economic

Zones (SEZ) is pernicious. It's pushing people, it's destroying rural India. Rural India, with hundreds of millions of people living in a, basically, sustainable form with agriculture and wildlife, being destroyed for economic development purposes. China, is moving 2.4 million farmers from mountain areas through deliberate urbanisation policies to achieve industrial growth. There are mass suicides amongst farmers due to these changes.

[Slide 38: Recognising Corporate Power BUT Making it seems Natural]

So, recognising corporate power; Peter [Kareiva] recognises corporate power, he's already told us in the conservation papers that "kids [in the USA]"—I presume it's the USA because he generally talks about the USA [*laughter*]—"kids [in the USA] recognize hundreds of corporate logos but fewer than 10 native plant species". Well that says to me that corporations have too much power in the education of children in the United States then. "A small number of global corporations have a huge impact", a *small number*, right, "of global corporations have a huge impact on land conversion, mining, energy extraction, and consumer choices...corporations are the 'keystone species' of global ecosystems" (Kareiva and Marvier 2012). That must be one of the most unscientific statements I've ever heard. I mean, there's nothing natural about corporations. Let alone being 'keystone species'. Anyway [*looking over at Karieva seated on stage*], he's not an economist.

[Slide 39: Challenging powerful vested interests and how they would like us to see the world]

Challenging powerful vested interests and how they would like us to see the world is what we're actually doing, that's what the conservation movement was, what the environmental movement does, what justice movement does. Exposing the failure of materialism in our economies means that you're undercutting the modern political economy, from American neoliberalism to Chinese central planning. The scientific evidence for human impacts on the environment criticises powerful vested interest groups. That's what it does. Climate change is attacking the fossil fuel industry, not getting into bed with them. Revealing the political and economic exploitation of people and nations challenges those countries and corporations that have built themselves on exploitation of the weak.

[Slide 40: How corporations can defeat public interest activists by Ronald A. Duchin, senior vice president MBD]

So, the corporations are fully aware of this. The corporations have for some time been targeting NGOs. They have classified NGO's as radicals, opportunists, idealists, and pragmatists.

[Slide 41: The Divide and Conquer Strategy]

And they have a divide and conquer strategy, which is through isolating the radicals, buying off the opportunists, cultivating the idealists and co-opting the pragmatists. And who are these 'co-opted pragmatists'?

[Slide 42: BP's Chart on Dealing with NGOs over an oil pipeline]

Well, it's in the guidance of a chart released under the Freedom of Information Act, a BP chart dealing with NGOs over an oil pipeline—the global NGOs that they had to deal with on this pipeline. You may even see some conservation organisations on here. So, what they said was, their strategy was, only engage with the ones above that line and the other ones you can basically ignore, because you're just going to empower them, and the ones that are above that line are the 'New Environmental Pragmatists' of the Conservation Movement, cultivated by corporate interests. That's what the corporations are doing, they're buying above the line out, 'lock, stock and barrel'.

[Slide 43: A Failing Alternative Agenda]

So there's a failing alternative agenda here. The New Environmental Pragmatists are ready to accept the need for capital accumulation, the commodity form, the volitional power of the individual in the market place, defensive initiatives that can be bought-off by small initiatives and bought-out, and single issue non-governmental forms of politics and local democracy, which means it avoids addressing the systemic problems and the systemic changes that are required. It's a failing alternative agenda.

[Slide 44: The Spectre of a Return to Technocracy]

And there's one thing that I'd like to point out here, that underlying the 'New Conservation', I see a spectre of a return to technocracy. This is not a 'new' conservation, it's a very old conservation, and it goes back to conservationists like Julian Huxley, the ecologist. And H.G. Wells who studied biology and wrote his first book, a textbook, on biology—also probably know to you as a science fiction writer. But these guys actually were writing about the return to society. Huxley was also heavily involved in the eugenics program, he was the President of

the British Eugenics Society, there was some pretty dark stuff in this. Wells wrote the book called *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution* and *The New World Order*; these books are about the technocracy—the scientists and the engineers taking over a modern world based on industrial high-technology. Aldous Huxley, who you've probably heard of, wrote a book called *Brave New World*, he was Julian Huxley's brother, he wrote *Brave New World* because he read H.G. Wells and his brother's work.

[*pause*]

[Slide 45: CONCLUSIONS]

Conclusion [*laughter*]

[Slide 46: Misguided grounds for debate; Wrong solution to wrong problem]

Misguided grounds for debate, right! The rhetoric of the orthodox economic model is becoming engaged in conservation and the environmental movement, and this is embedding the whole area into a neoliberal politics. Changes in the discourse about species, preservation, conservation, and so on, it's changing the whole discourse into a debate over trade-offs, prices and money, and, as I said, you don't have to monetise to do commodification and get into the trade-off game. It's the wrong solution to the wrong problem. Economic valuation does not address the drivers of environmental degradation and doesn't offer any protection—as I pointed out. It removes attention from very important things, like plural values, incommensurability and non-market institutions.

[Slide 47: Some Real Issues]

Some of the real issues that need to be addressed—rather than this fantasy world of evaluating numbers and markets and corporate control—are the population consumption patterns. Not population! Population consumption patterns! Yeah, that means rich Americans, rich Europeans, over-eating, over-consuming. Don't blame the poor people for breading too fast, when you consume 10 times, 100 times, 1000 times more. Population is an issue because of consumption patterns. Land use change, the development model as economic growth, political process, the lack of political process, corporate power, financial greed, resource extractivism and the fossil fuel economy, militarism. Those are all the things that are impacting on the natural world, destroying conservation value. So we need institutions which

actually address ethical and other deeply felt concerns. To try and get institutions that can actually work without gain, and that, those deeply felt concerns, do not come through the market place.

[Slide 48: Conservation, Society and Economy]

The conservation, society and economy—conservation needs to link-up. I agree it needs to link up, seriously with the social and economics. But what type of economics? Mainstream, neoclassical economics that can't even predict a financial crisis and does nothing about it once exposed? [*laughter*] An economics that gives you emissions trading that has done nothing to address climate change? Is that what you want? Is that the future? So conservation is making a big mistake here, and it's obvious that elitist power theories and reinforcing institutions that appear useful for pragmatic reasons is not a good way to go. Neoliberalism, multi-national corporations and these institutions of social and ecological exploitation are *not* natural bed fellows for those people who are concerned about social and ecological exploitation. And technocracy, as you've noticed, is not a new idea, it's an old idea and it proved highly dangerous, remember the second World War anyone? (laughter) OK. Sorry!

Conservation is already lost when it enters the world of corporate finance, banking, economic trade-offs and commensuration of all values.

[Slide 49: Contrasting World Views]

So, we have contrasting world views, at least two: Social Ecological Economics—which is what I work on—is about environmental degradation, poverty, inequity and injustice, a worthwhile life, human moral progress, needs and *appropriate* technology. But what we tend to get—and this is what is entering the New Conservation and the Environmental Pragmatists—is economic orthodoxy, about resource use, income distribution, competition, maximum utility, material consumption, wants, industrial technology. So, we're reconceptualising the issues, that's what we've done. Reconceptualised these issues from the mainstream and put them in a different framing. The way in which these issues are framed and conceptualised is highly important (Spash and Aslaksen 2015).

So, to finish.

[Slide 50]

Make no mistake, conservation is a fight for values in a contested world. What values do you want to dominate the future?

[Slide 51: The End; *slide shows moving graphic of bulldozer wiping out natural environment, species and people***]**

[*loud applause, whistling, standing ovation*]

[Slide 52 The End! THANK YOU, MERCI BEAUCOUP, DANKE SCHÖN]

For more information

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APPENDIX

Presentation Slides

Environmental Values in Conservation: Ethics, Economics and Pragmatism

by

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Presentation to the 27th International Congress for Conservation Biology and 4th European Congress for Conservation Biology "Mission Biodiversity: Choosing New Paths for Conservation"
Montpellier, France

3rd August 2015

Outline

- **Framing the Problem:**
  The drive to value biodiversity and ecosystems
- **Basic Mainstream Economic Theory:**
  Efficient and optimal resource use
- **Creating Environmental Values**
  The valuation solution and its problems
- **'New' Conservation: Old Political Ideology**
  Neoliberalism and technocracy
- **Environment, People and Economic Growth**
  The Role of Corporations & New environmental pragmatism

FRAMING THE PROBLEM

The Drive for Economic Valuation of Ecosystems as Services

- Ecologists collaborating with mainstream economists as a pragmatic / opportunistic way forward (e.g., Beijer Institute) from late 1980s
- USA ecosystems services pushed by natural scientists such as Paul Ehrlich and Gretchen Daily
- The monetary value of the World's ecosystems (Costanza et al., 1997) and all remaining wild Nature (Balmford et al., 2002). Both lead authors natural scientists.
- The National Research Council (NRC) in the USA. *Valuing Ecosystems Services: Toward Better Environmental Decision-Making*. (Heal et al., 2005)

The International Potsdam Initiative

2007 the G8 and five other industrialising nations proposed a global cost-benefit analysis of biodiversity loss called the "*Potsdam Initiative--Biological Diversity 2010*"

Under the subtitle "*The economic significance of the global loss of biological diversity*", the parties state:

"*In a global study we will initiate the process of analysing the global economic benefit of biological diversity, the costs of the loss of biodiversity and the failure to take protective measures versus the costs of effective conservation*."

As the German Environment Minister stated, the week before release of the Potsdam Initiative:

"*The 'biodiversity treasure trove' provides the global economy with an invaluable and extensive potential for innovative products and processes that is still widely untapped*"

The Economics of Ecosystems & Biodiversity (TEEB) *Mainstreaming the Economics of Nature*. 2010 synthesis report.

Banking and Finance, Growth and Development

Provide corporations and financiers with business opportunities

"*Hardwiring biodiversity and ecosystems services into finance*"
(UNEP Finance Initiative, 2010)

Extend carbon trading and expand financial instruments to create biodiversity offset programs. The market for wetland credits is estimated at US$1.1-1.8 billion
(TEEB 2010 p.22-24)

Show politicians how to get economic growth from ecosystems

"investment in natural **capital** can create and safeguard **jobs** and underpin **economic development**, as well as secure untapped **economic opportunities** from natural processes and genetic resources."

"***pro-biodiversity investment the logical choice***"
(TEEB 2010 p.10)

The Supposed Problem

Biodiversity lacks a market price

"Failure to include some measure of the value of ecosystem services in benefit-cost calculations will implicitly assign them a value of zero" (Heal et al.,2005 p.5)

Private companies lack the right incentives

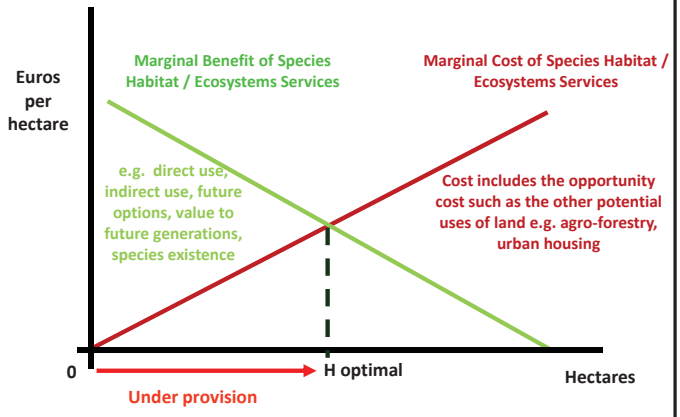
"Companies do not clear-cut forests out of wanton destructiveness or stupidity. On the whole, they do so because market signals ... make it a logical and profitable thing to do. (TEEB 2010 p.9)

Politicians fail to take into account the 'right' values

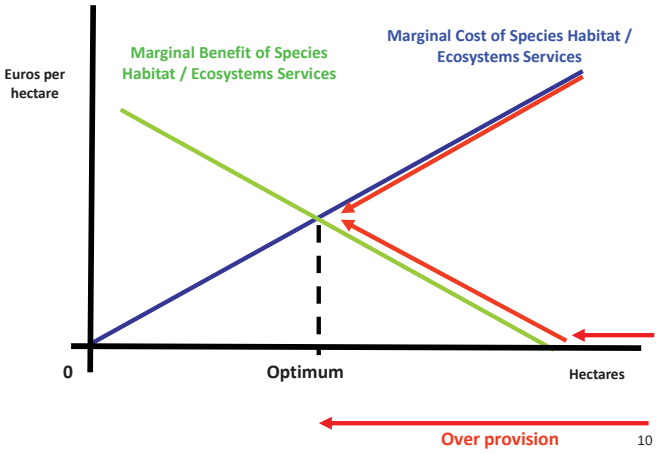
"Ignoring or undervaluing natural capital in economic forecasting, modelling and assessment can lead to public policy and government investment decisions that exacerbate the degradation" (TEEB 2010 p.10)

BASIC MAINSTREAM ECONOMIC THEORY

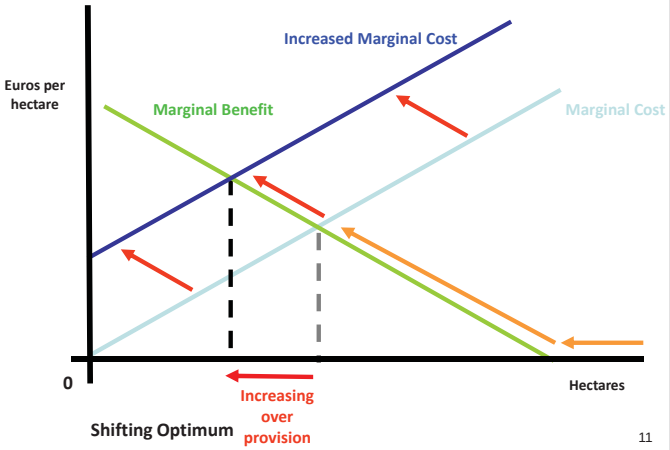
Efficient Resource Allocation: A Pro-Environment Position



Alternative Viewpoint: Optimal Extinction



Developers Alternative: Accelerating Extinction



CREATING ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

Making Ecosystems into Commodities

Ecosystems Objects

- **services**
  - **e.g. food provision, climate regulation, aesthetics and their attributes**
  - **e.g. security, feeling well, social cohesion**
- **comprehensive classification system:**
  - **Millennium Ecosystem Assessment**
- **"classification is inherently somewhat arbitrary"**
  - **(Brauman et al., 2007: 69)**

Service category 'culture'
sub-categories: spiritual, religious and aesthetic

Economic Logic: Resources go to those Who Pay the Most

Private Property Rights
Land grabs by the rich and powerful

Poor and Compensation
Indigenous peoples and rural farmers are disenfranchised and made homeless
The poor sell cheaply

Rich or Poor
If they don´t care to pay then loss of Nature doesn´t matter, there is no value



Stages of Commodification and Exchange

0		**None**	
1		**Objectify**	
2		**Instrumentalise**	
3		**Value as a physical metric**	*Commensuration*
4	Stage I Commodity	**Exchange in physical metric terms**	*Non-monetary compensation; French biodiversity offset scheme*
5		**Value as money**	*Preference utilitarianism*
6	Stage II Commodity	**Exchange in monetary terms**	*Government subsidy; monetary compensation; PES*
7		**Privatise property rights over objects**	
8	Stage III Commodity	**Exchange in a market**	
9		**Financialise (beyond commodities)**	*Derivatives markets*

People's Preferences

Public perception of important attributes

Key iconic species

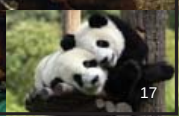
Powerful
or
Warm & Fuzzy

Human Like









What is Required to Show Nature has a Money Value?

Make Nature a human artefact
- **Objectification**
- **Commodification**

Evaluate Stated Preferences
- **Contingent Valuation**
- **Choice Experiments**

Transfer Values as Necessary
- **Where numbers are lacking be pragmatic**
- **Seek alternatives**

Characterisation of ecosystems & biodiversity as "objects" with "money values"


Informing and Forming Preferences


Public cognition vs. ecologist vs. economists

Encoding and decoding

Ecosystems integrity vs. bits the public prefer

Selective extinction of 'unattractive' species




Implicit Model of Human Motivation

Motivation and Psychology

Self-preoccupied and self-centred modern individual pay or be paid

"I do not agree that more progress will be made by appealing to people's hearts rather than their wallets"

(Costanza, 2006: 749)

Psychological egoism

"the claim that people are incapable of regarding as important anything other than their own interests"

(Holland, 1995: 30)

Misconceptualising Values

Markets and exchange value

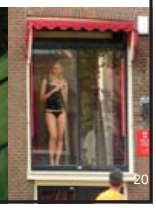
1. Can lead to crowding-out of intrinsic motivation desired behaviour

2. Fails to recognise harm does not equate to good

3. Can be transformative and/or destructive of value

e.g. Buying friends

e.g. Love vs. paying for sex



De Dicto Concerns and End-state Valuation

We normally have de dicto concerns about fungible commodities to which we have no distinctive historical or emotional ties: money, tools, and so on.

In a purely de dicto evaluation of biodiversity constituents are not valued as particular objects, but for those properties they possess that enable them to deliver relevant services

An end-state view of the value of nonhuman nature what matters is only the state of the biodiversity or ecosystem insofar as it affects the delivery of ecosystem services. If two constituents of biodiversity or two ecosystems are in the same state and therefore are able to deliver a service as effectively as one another, then their value is equivalent."

Implicit De Dicto Concerns and End-state Values in the 'New' Conservation Science

"In many circumstances, the demise of formerly abundant species can be inconsequential to ecosystem function. The American chestnut, once a dominant tree in eastern North America, has been extinguished by a foreign disease, yet the forest ecosystem is surprisingly unaffected. The passenger pigeon, once so abundant that its flocks darkened the sky, went extinct, along with countless other species from the Steller's sea cow to the dodo, with no catastrophic or even measurable effects."

Kareiva, P., Marvier, M., Lalasz, R., 2012. Conservation in the Anthropocene: Beyond Solitude and Fragility. The Breakthrough Institute, Oakland.

Getting What is Valued Wrong: De Dicto & De Re

Zsa Zsa Gabor when asked what was her greatest achievement

Gabor: I've found a way to keep my husband young and healthy
Reporter: Wow that's fantastic, how do you do it?
Gabor: I get a new one every 5 years

(she has had 9 husbands)

Prof. John O'Neill uses this story to illustrate the difference between values concerned with

the particular (de re) as opposed to values relating to a general function (de dicto)

To be motivated by a de dicto concern in the above context is characteristic of someone who is ***alienated from people.***

Environmental Example

Having a sense of place is not a value related to any place

'New' Conservation: Old Political Ideology

The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Mark Tercek, heads TNC

"The key idea is to create tools that can assign monetary value to natural resources. Tercek, a former partner at Goldman Sachs, thinks that environmental organizations rely on fuzzy science and fail to harness the power of markets. With the help of **sound metrics drawn from the world of finance**—"a higher level of accountability", in his words—some of the ecological harm caused by the very same corporations can be undone. Nudging big business in a green direction, he believes, can do far more good than simply cordoning off parcels of Paradise."

"The assumption is that if you want companies to care about nature you must put a price tag on it. Otherwise, as one Nature Conservancy economist told me, 'it implicitly gets a value of zero.'"

Max, D.T., 2014. Green is good, *The New Yorker*, pp. 54-63.

"**conservationists should partner with corporations** in a science-based effort to integrate the value of nature's benefits into their operations and cultures"

Kareiva, P., Marvier, M., Lalasz, R., 2012. Conservation in the Anthropocene: Beyond Solitude and Fragility. The Breakthrough Institute, Oakland.

We must put a price on nature if we are going to save it

Campaigning against economic valuations could inadvertently strengthen the hand of those who believe nature has little or no worth

Tony Juniper
theguardian.com, Friday 10 August 2012 12.13 BST

theguardian

Putting an economic value on nature will help protect it. Photograph: Bang Yan/AP

Flaws in the Argument

"By appreciating that **nature is vital for economics, and has measurable tangible financial values**, it is possible to get the attention of people who have at best hitherto regarded nature a supplier of resources, or worse still an economically costly distraction that gets in the way of economic 'growth'. Making the moral case in the face of such beliefs won't work. If, on the other hand, such scepticism can be met with economically compelling logic, then we might get a bit further."

Biophysical Structured Reality
Nature is essential for the economy BUT the economy is not require by Nature → incorrect response is to embed ecology within the economy and its discourse

Flaws in the Argument

"By appreciating that **nature** is vital for economics, and **has measurable tangible financial values**, it is possible to get the attention of people who have at best hitherto regarded nature a supplier of resources, or worse still an economically costly distraction that gets in the way of economic 'growth'. Making the moral case in the face of such beliefs won't work. If, on the other hand, such scepticism can be met with economically compelling logic, then we might get a bit further."

- Biophysical Structured Reality [misinterpreted]

Value Theory
Nature is used by financiers to make money BUT what has this to do with how humans value Nature or the role and meaning of Nature?

Flaws in the Argument

"By appreciating that nature is vital for **economics, and** has measurable tangible **financial values**, it is possible to **get the attention of people** who have at best hitherto regarded nature a supplier of resources, or worse still an economically costly distraction that gets in the way of economic 'growth'. Making the moral case in the face of such beliefs won't work. If, on the other hand, such scepticism can be met with economically compelling logic, then we might get a bit further."

- Biophysical Structured Reality [misinterpreted]
- Value Theory [missing]

Political Theory
People obsessed by economics and finance are the ones in control to whom conservationists must appeal → what theory of power underlies this appeal to an elite? → is this in line with democracy or justice?

Flaws in the Argument

"By appreciating that nature is vital for economics, and has measurable tangible financial values, it is possible to get the attention of people who have at best hitherto regarded **nature** a supplier of resources, or worse still an economically costly distraction that **gets in the way of economic 'growth'**. Making the moral case in the face of such beliefs won't work. If, on the other hand, such scepticism can be met with economically compelling logic, then we might get a bit further."

- Biophysical Structured Reality [misinterpreted]
- Value Theory [missing]
- Political Theory [missing]

The Growth Imperative
Economic growth is taken to be the central and unquestionable goal of human society → the fallacy and utopianism of growth goes without analysis

Flaws in the Argument

"By appreciating that nature is vital for economics, and has measurable tangible financial values, it is possible to get the attention of people who have at best hitherto regarded nature a supplier of resources, or worse still an economically costly distraction that gets in the way of economic 'growth'. Making **the moral case** in the face of such beliefs **won't work**. If, on the other hand, such scepticism can be met with **economically compelling logic**, then we **might get a bit further**."

- Biophysical Structured Reality [misinterpreted]
- Value Theory [missing]
- Political Theory [missing]
- Growth Imperative [unquestioned]

Ethics and Philosophy of Science

Economics offers a "compelling logic" that is divorced form "the moral case" → fails to understand the basis of economics in utilitarianism → denies ethics are relevant to economics

Flaws in the Argument

"By appreciating that nature is vital for economics, and has measurable tangible financial values, it is possible to get the attention of people who have at best hitherto regarded nature a supplier of resources, or worse still an economically costly distraction that gets in the way of economic 'growth'. Making **the moral case** in the face of such beliefs **won't work**. If, on the other hand, such scepticism can be met with **economically compelling logic**, then we **might get a bit further**."

- Biophysical Structured Reality [misinterpreted]
- Value Theory [missing]
- Political Theory [missing]
- Growth Imperative [unquestioned]
- Ethical Theory [misleading]

A Political Ideology Pretending to be Conservation as Science

Juniper worries about
"harming **competitiveness**, damaging **growth industries**, driving away **investment** and leaving the UK behind in the global race to lead in **modern technologies**"

He wants to:
"**re-frame environmental programmes** for what they are, and increasingly can and should be: namely **pro-competitive, pro-people, pro-security and pro-cost-saving**."

This he believes requires:
"**embracing businesses, scientists, politicians** from across the spectrum (but **especially Conservatives**), social groups, non-governmental organisations and think tanks among them"

Implicit Theory of Political Economy:
An elite run society on the basis of finance and economic growth. The capital accumulating system cannot be questioned; everything else should conform.

Business First, Conservation May Be?

'Tercek clearly knew how to win over the people at Dow [Chemical]. At one point, he told them, "The old model would be 'We're doing it for conservation's sake.' The new approach would be 'No, no, **we're doing this for *business'* sake**, and we get the conservation, too.'"'

"Yet there's something dubious about trusting the main forces behind ecological ruin to reverse it. Dow and Coca-Cola and Rio Tinto, to name three Nature Conservancy partners, are motivated not by public spirit but by a survival instinct. If business goals overlap with ecological impulses, so much the better, but if they don't, most companies will continue on a polluting path. This leaves little room for conservationists to operate."

Max, D.T., 2014. Green is good, *The New Yorker*, pp. 54-63.

Economic Ornithology: A Lesson from History

Valuing Nature as a productive employee, a factor input, such as wild insect pollinators valued at €150 billion (Gallai et al. 2009)

Over 40 yrs from 1880-1920 over 1000 studies calculated the monetary value of services provided by birds

Their services were replaced by technology, namely insecticides and pesticides, that also helped remove them and the need for economic ornithology

- **Valuing a species as service provider is not the same as valuing a species**
- **Economic values do not guarantee conservation of anything**

Environment, People and Economic Growth

Economic Development and Human Displacement

"Cernea (2000: 6) estimates the total number of people displaced as a result of development-related projects **between 1980 and 2000 to be close to 200 million**."

Displacement for 'development' was running at **10 million people a year** [prior to China's urbanisation and growth drive].

"... the **violence that development projects inflict** upon people continues to be **stunningly commonplace** (Morvaridi 2004)."

Agrawala, A., Redford, K., 2009. Conservation and Displacement: An Overview. Conservation & Society 7, 1-10.

The **liberalisation of the Indian economy** since the early 1990s has arguably ushered in a new phase of conflict over land acquisition, where land is increasingly being acquired for **private investors seeking to develop, for example, mining projects and Special Economic Zones (SEZ)**

Nielsen, K.B., Nilsen, A.G., 2015. Law Struggles and Hegemonic Processes in Neoliberal India: Gramscian Reflections on Land Acquisition Legislation. Globalizations 12, 203-216.

In China the largest peacetime population transfers in history: the removal of 2.4 million farmers from mountain areas in the central Chinese province of Shaanxi to low-lying towns, many built from scratch on other farmers' land. The total cost is estimated at $200 billion over 10 years.

Recognising Corporate Power BUT Making it seems Natural

"kids [in the USA?] recognize hundreds of corporate logos but fewer than 10 native plant species"

"A small number of global corporations have a huge impact on land conversion, mining, energy extraction, and consumer choices. In essence, **corporations are the "keystone species" of global ecosystems**."

Kareiva, P., Marvier, M., 2012. What is conservation science? BioScience 62, 962-969

Challenging powerful vested interests and how they would like us to see the world

- **Exposing the failure of materialism** to provide a meaningful life undercuts the core of modern political economy from American neoliberalism to Chinese central planning
- **Scientific evidence for human impacts** on the environment criticises powerful vested interests today (e.g. action on climate change threatens fossil fuel multinationals, car and plane industries)
- **Revealing the political and economic exploitation** of people and nations challenges those countries and corporations built on exploitation of the weak

How corporations can defeat public interest activists by Ronald A. Duchin, senior vice president MBD

PR/public affairs firm of Mongoven, Biscoe and Duchin (MBD)

PR Watch expose 1993

MBD boasts that it "maintains extensive files on organizations and their leadership."

NGOs are classified as:

radicals,
opportunists,
idealists, and
pragmatists (or realists)

The Divide and Conquer Strategy

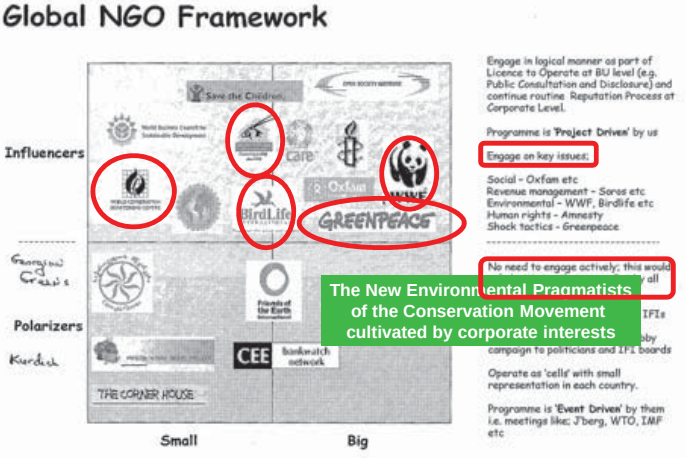
1. Isolate the Radicals

2. Buy-off the Opportunists (e.g. jobs, publicity, token projects)
"*The key to dealing with opportunists is to provide them with at least the perception of a partial victory*"

3. "Cultivate" the Idealists (e.g. church groups) and "educate" them into becoming pragmatic.
"Because of their altruism, the idealists are hard to deal with."
Exploit their sense of justice to show the injustice of harming corporations and their employees.

4. Co-opt the pragmatists into working with industry & corporate interests
They possess the following key qualities:
- •look beyond the issue at hand;
- •understand the consequences;
- •live with trade-offs;
- •willing work within the system
- •not immersed in radical change;
- •pragmatic

BP's Chart on Dealing with NGOs over an oil pipeline



The New Environmental Pragmatists of the Conservation Movement cultivated by corporate interests

released by the US Department of Energy in response to a Freedom of Information by a US NGO called the National Security Archive. It is described by DoE as "Environmental and Social Impact Assessment-program...

A Failing Alternative Agenda

New Environmental Pragmatists are ready to accept

the need for capital accumulation and increasing material & energy throughput, if only for the poorest (i.e. 80% of the world population).

the commodity form. Everything must be made into capital, goods and services to be given a place in the system. Everything must be given an 'economic' value.

the volitional power of the individual in the market place. A liberal market democracy.

defensive initiatives to resist the latest advance of privatization and liberalization. A marginalized role in society.

single issue non-governmental forms of politics and local democracy without connection to the broader structural issues and the need for comprehensive change in society.

The Spectre of a Return to Technocracy

An elite of scientists and engineers running a modern world based on industrial high technology.

H. G. Wells, Julian Huxley

Wells, H.G., Huxley, J.S., Wells, G.P., 1931. *The Science of Life: 3 Volumes.* Doubleday, Doran & Company Inc., Garden City, New York.

Wells, H.G. (1928) *The Open Conspiracy: Blue Prints for a World Revolution*.

Wells, H.G. (1940) *The New World Order*.

Aldous Huxley

Huxley, A., 1932. *Brave New World*. Catto & Windus, London.

CONCLUSIONS

Misguided grounds for debate

The rhetoric of an orthodox economic model embedded in neoliberal politics

Changes the discourse for species and ecosystem preservation and conservation into a debate over trade-offs, prices and money

Wrong 'solution' to wrong problem

Economic valuation does not address the drivers of environmental degradation and does not offer protection

Removes attention from value pluralism, incommensurability and non-market institutions

Some Real Issues

Population consumption patterns,
Land use change,
Development model as economic growth,
Political process,
Corporate power,
Financial greed,
Resource extractivism and the fossil fuel economy,
Militarism

Institutions are needed in which ethical and other deeply felt concerns can be properly voiced.

Conservation, Society and Economy

Conservation is linked to social and economic factors BUT that means being aware of economic and social research and ideas NOT adopting an elitist power theory and reinforcing any institutions that appear useful

Neoliberalism, mutli-national corporations and the institutions of social and ecological exploitation are not natural bed fellows for those concerned about social and ecological exploitation

Technocracy is not a new idea and has proven highly dangerous as a political philosophy

Conservation is already lost when it enters the world of corporate finance, banking, economic trade-offs and the commensuration of all values

Contrasting World Views

Social Ecological Economics	Economic Orthodoxy
Environmental degradation	Resource use
Poverty	Income distribution
Inequity and injustice	Competition
A worthwhile life	Maximum utility
Human moral progress	Material consumption
Needs	Wants
Appropriate technology	Industrial technology

Reconceptualising the Issues

The way in which issues are framed and conceptualised is highly important

Make no mistake conservation is a fight for values in a contested world.

What values do you want to dominate the future?

The End!

THANK YOU
MERCI BEAUCOUP
DANKE SCHÖN

For more information
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