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## **Just conservation: In defense of environmentalism**

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### **Abstract**

Social scientists of conservation typically address sources of legitimacy of conservation policies in relation to local communities' or indigenous land rights, highlighting social inequality and environmental injustice. This chapter reflects on the underlying ethics of environmental justice in order to differentiate between various motivations of conservation and its critique. Conservation is discussed against the backdrop of two main ethical standpoints: preservation of natural resources for human use, and protection of nature for its own sake. These motivations will be examined highlighting mainstream conservation and alternative deep ecology environmentalism. Based on this examination, this chapter untangles concerns with social and ecological justice in order to determine how environmental and human values overlap, conflict, and where the opportunity for reconciliation lies, building bridges between supporters of social justice and conservation.

**Index terms:** anthropocentrism; biodiversity conservation; deep ecology; ecological justice; environmental justice; environmentalism; social justice; sustainability

### **Introduction: 'just conservation'**

Environmental anthropology, political ecology and social geography address sources of legitimacy of conservation policies as well as indigenous land rights in connection to conservation practice. In this chapter conservation will be discussed in two main ways: conservation as preservation of natural resources for human use, associated with neoliberalism and utilitarianism, hereby referred to as

neoliberal or mainstream conservation; and conservation as protection of nature for its own sake, associated with deep ecology and animal rights, hereby referred to as radical conservation (Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina 2016). This chapter will further distinguish between different types of “environmentalists”, including the “mainstream environmentalists”. The latter category is broken into sub-groups based on the “nature” the environmentalists want to conserve: nature that is used for the sake of human welfare (instrumental value) or nature protected for its own sake (intrinsic value). These sub-groups are then differentiated by their position on who needs justice: only less powerful people, non-humans, entire habitats, or everyone; or those that are not concerned with justice at all. In this chapter, environmentalists and conservationists will be labeled in accordance with how the authors quoted refer to these groups.

Neoliberal conservation is described as a form of top-down environmental governance, which creates protected areas exploited for profit, and as critics argue, disadvantage local communities (e.g. Wilshusen et al 2002; Brosius 2005; Büscher 2015). In this framing, large environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO's) are linked to a broader capitalist enterprise, which commodifies and profits from nature (e.g. Brockington 2002; Sullivan 2006). “Conservationist industry” (Wilshusen et al 2002) is linked to industries such as timber and (eco)tourism, catering to political and corporate elites by appropriating natural resources through ‘green grabbing’ (Igoe and Brockington 2007; Brockington et al 2008). This type of conservation is often generalized by its critics of ‘environmentalism’ in general and seen as imposed by post-colonial governments that exclude vulnerable communities in the process of capital accumulation (e.g. Kemf 1993; Escobar 1996; Brockington 2002; Goldberg 2010), particularly in developing countries (Kothari 2013; Lyman et al 2013; Rantala et al 2013). This critique is mainly focused on social justice in conservation, namely equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens among the human groups (Gleeson and Low 1998; Kopnina 2014a). Martin et al (2015) claim that conservation that succeeds in the ‘biological objectives’ fails to address social injustices, introducing new forms of coercion or dispossession, and that ‘local cultural norms are forcefully displaced’ (P. 166). This critical attitude to conservation as the perpetrator of social injustice stems from the fields of political ecology and ecological anthropology. A much-quoted anthropologist Kottak (1999:33) has implied that it is the job of anthropologists to prioritize human interests and not be “dazzled by ecological data”. This position is summarized by the platform Just Conservation (<http://www.justconservation.org/>). In this view of ‘justice’ in conservation, social and environmental justice are conflated as environmental justice refers to fairness in the distribution of natural resources among people (Gleeson and Low 1998; Faber and McCarthy 2003; Gould and Lewis 2012; Gould et al 2015).

The exclusive social justice perspective, in turn, has attracted some counter-critique from ecological justice proponents. In essence, this critique states that those that argue for the necessity to benefit local communities tend to present nature as a ‘warehouse for human use’ (Miller et al 2014: 509). Recently,

however, a small number of anthropologists, along with the champions of animal rights, have leveled criticism against the humanist anthropocentric worldview for its presumption that only humans are morally considerable and that human rights trump those of nonhumans (Sodikoff 2011). Within the new wave of ecocentric anthropology (e.g. Kopnina and Shoreman-Ouimet 2011; Desmond 2013; Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina 2016) the hierarchical relationship between humans and nonhumans was critically examined, providing a very different ethical context for viewing conservation based on deep ecology and animal rights perspectives.

The opposing utilitarian view of conservation, the deep ecology perspective underlies the intrinsic value supporting close interconnections of cultural and biological systems (Naess 1973). As opposed to the utilitarian or 'money green' environmentalism, the deep ecology conservation supports broader ecological justice, promoting environmental protection independent of human interests (Wissenburg 1993; Cafaro and Primack 2014; Kopnina 2014a; Cafaro 2015). While an instrumental motivation can produce environmentally-positive outcomes in situations where both humans and environment are negatively affected, for example when biodiversity is used by local people for eco-tourism or by the pharmaceutical industry to develop medicines, anthropocentrism does not guarantee biodiversity protection which does not offer direct human benefits (Katz 1999; Kopnina 2012c, Bonnett 2013), nor safeguard animal welfare, let alone animal rights (Singer 1977; Kopnina and Gjerris 2015; Kopnina 2016a, 2016c). What allows pragmatic ethicists to rehabilitate anthropocentrism as a basis of the utilitarian position outlined above is their rejection of the intrinsic value of nature (Noss 1992; Mathews 2016). By rejecting intrinsic value, a human environmental right, or the right to use nature and animals subjugates all other needs of nonhumans to those of humanity (Bisgould 2008; Borràs 2016). This anthropocentric bias has been characteristic of much of conservation critique (Kopnina 2014b, 2016a), ignoring ecological justice that encompasses justice between species (Baxter 2005; Schlosberg 2007; Higgins 2010; Kopnina 2014a; Cafaro 2015).

While the mutual accusations of conservation critics and supporters clearly speak of perceived flaws amidst conservationist efforts, they also illustrate the gap in agreement in what environmental justice entails. A significant problem in relation to the value judgments in regard to conservation and environmentalism is the lack of conceptual clarity and failure to agree on definitions - the problem that has dogged the pursuit of sustainable development (e.g. Faber and McCarthy 2003; Washington 2015). This chapter will reflect upon different strands of arguments, contending that it is important to recognize the ideological, political and social forces active in shaping both the broad scope of environmentalism in order to differentiate goals in relation to conservation. The sections below outline various conservation perspectives that may help to build bridges between different types of justice.

## **Critique of conservation**

Several tropes emerged from the environmental justice critique of conservation, ‘things as classic as wilderness and as nouveau as carbon trading—as imagined categories invented as tools of the capitalist majority to wrest power away from the weak’ (Wakild 2015:43). This critique contains at least two threads of accusations. First, mainstream environmentalists supposedly collaborate in the very enterprise that they criticize – that of capitalism and corporatism (West and Brockington 2011). Indeed, the critics have pointed out that as protected areas approach designates certain areas as “wilderness”, it restricts human habitation or resource use and seeks to separate humans from “nature” (Brockington 2002). In this critique of ‘fortress conservation’, environmentalism is described as a view of the past as a “glorious unbroken landscape of biological diversity” (West and Brockington 2011:2), with the “environment” represented as natural and benign and humans as other-than-natural and destructive. According to West and Brockington, this romantic view achieves separation between humans and nature “by seeking to value nature and by converting it to decidedly [word missing in the original] concepts such as money; and ideologically, through massive media campaigns that focus on blaming individuals for global environmental destruction” (Ibid).

The second accusation is the supposed proximity of ENGO’s to the neocolonial capitalist enterprise (e.g. Chapin 2004; Adams and Hutton 2007; West 2008). West and Brockington (2011:2) state that it is rare today to find ENGO’s that challenge corporations or their logic, and that environment has become another “vehicle for capitalist accumulation”. Moreover, environmentalism is said to have gotten “snugly in bed with its old enemy, corporate capitalism” especially in developing countries (West and Brockington 2011:2).

Responding to these concerns, some conservationists have pointed out that most of the conservation is already targeted toward human welfare (Redford 2011; Doak et al 2015). Based on research demonstrating that the top-down conservation is both inefficient and incompatible with local norms, values and beliefs (Chaundhuri 2012), participatory, bottom-up, community-based conservation (CBC) was proposed (Brechtin et al 2003; Brosius et al 2005; Sullivan 2006).

In turn, critiques of CBC exposed community participation as a mechanism for masking persistent political power through the ‘creation of unwieldy projects aimed at top-down environmental management’ (Brosius 1999:50). It was also noted that CBC still garners a relatively low level of public acceptance (Hovik et al 2010), resulting not only in poor environmental protection and poverty reduction, but triggering grassroots resistance (Horowitz 2012; Temudo 2012).

Arguing that the local communities’ benefits should be considered as the primary objective of conservation, some commentators promoted, the ‘new conservation science’ (NCS) stated that conservation should be for people’s benefit, especially for vulnerable communities that live in or near protected areas (e.g. Kareiva et al 2011; Marvier 2014). Utilitarian conservation can be characterized by maximizing human use of land, water, or minerals to safeguard natural resources, or maintaining

wetlands for duck hunting. In fact, Kareiva et al (2011) have called for conservation to exclusively support programs for rural development targeted at human well-being. As many endangered species are not directly related to human welfare (Haring 2011), even protection of the critically endangered rhinoceros has led to an acerbic critique of ‘politics of *hysteria* in conservation’ (Büscher 2015).

### **The noble savage?**

Defenders of indigenous rights contend that conservation threatens cultural survival. For example, in the case of Greenland, hunting contributes little to the national economy but does constitute an important part of the cultural identity of Icelandic traditional groups (Nuttall 2016). In this context, conservationists that seek to prohibit fishing or hunting are seen as threatening local culture.

Illustrating this critique, both Einarsson (1993) and Kalland (2009) describe anti-whaling organizations as ‘culturally imperialistic’, ‘intolerant’, and even ‘militant’ as they are opposed to the traditional way of life of whalers. In the case of the Inuit hunting, the animal rights activists are said to threaten ‘cultural survival’ of northern economies (Wenzel 2009; McElroy 2013; Nuttall 2016)<sup>1</sup>.

The reification of ‘traditional cultures’ as ‘noble’ is not new. Roger Sandall describes ‘the noble savage’ representation as “the romantic insistence on the superiority of the primitive” which is “increasingly grounded in a fictionalized picture of the past - a picture often created with the aid of well-meaning but misguided anthropologists” (Sandall 2000:1). While social justice proponents insist that the local people should have special access rights –including hunting, in effect, they reify the indigeneity ironically implying that these ‘traditional’ societies should somehow be assigned different rights than more ‘modern’ societies. Reminiscent of Sandall’s (2000) critique, this view tends to disregard the drastic changes in the local environment and the dwindling numbers of surviving wildlife. Social scientists failed to recognize that indigenous people are rarely isolated from global market forces (Poutney 2012:215), thus stimulating the erroneous representation of the ‘noble savage’ who lives ‘in harmony with nature’ (Koot 2016).

Ironically, insistence on supporting special privileges (such as hunting endangered species) by the indigenous people presents ‘the natives’ as fundamentally different from the rest of humanity. In fact,

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth pointing out that those most concerned with social environmental justice are not necessarily the ones found in less powerful groups based on class, race/ethnicity, and national and global stratification systems. Also, the critiques of environmentalists are not uniform – while some are frustrated with political, corporate and ENGO elites masquerading as environmentalists, others are upset by the prioritization of environmentalism and animal rights over ‘traditional lifestyles’. But there is also evidence that the less powerful have a difficult time getting their voice heard and can benefit from more powerful “established academics” helping to tell their story and help provide access to resources. And while the “noble savage” perception may be in play during some of the arguments, both by academics and by the indigenous, a noble savage to sustain the claim is not necessarily needed to sustain a claim for human rights. Often it is simply cultural protection, deemed necessary given the assimilationist, or worse, genocidal tendencies that have been present historically.

special rights, like other forms of positive discrimination, tend to reify disparities in power as much as they address them (Strang 2013). Strang (2013) inquires whether Aboriginal communities in Australia should have the 'right' to extend their traditional practices, for example, to shoot rather than spear wallabies, to the point that the once plentiful wallaby population in Cape York has dwindled to critical levels. The possession of cars and rifles has enabled new forms of hunting within increasingly fragile habitat created by intensifying cattle farming. Should this be an Aboriginal choice? Should it be anyone's choice? How are we, as social scientists and as members of this planet, to "build bridges" between people inhabiting such different political, economic, and other cultural worlds, with different values, norms, and beliefs? Is that our responsibility as academics and/or practitioners?

Strang (2013) inquires whether anyone, advantaged or disadvantaged, has the right to prioritize their own interests at the expense of nonhumans. Besides, the reification of indigenous rights to *exploit* nature is derived from the culturally and historically unique logic of industrial neoliberalism, and is by no means 'traditional'. I need to emphasize, however, that bias towards reifying humanistic values might be present in much of academic work that considers itself liberal and inclusive. As academics, as well as non-academic actors, speak of justice, democracy, and equality, as some of the highest moral values – at least in the context of today's western morality, instructed by the heritage of enlightenment and humanism. Yet, ironically, all these noble values are not necessarily widely shared and maybe in themselves a manifestation of a biased worldview based on these historically and culturally unique ideas of some Western liberal academics.

It also seems that proponents of traditional practices are very selective. As Western colonial governments have prohibited 'barbaric practices' such as human sacrifice and headhunting, indigenous rights campaigners are not eager to revive them. Yet, they seem to relegate animal killing to an 'indigenous rights' domain.

It was argued that extreme cultural relativity, in which it is possible to ignore major abuses of human rights, can be seen as an abdication of moral responsibility (Caplan 2004). If we extend this to non-human rights, then the key concern is our responsibility towards non-human species, independent of human interests. In fact, the 'biological objectives' that Martin et al (2015) dismiss, and the 'politics of hysteria' that Büscher (2015) ridicules, includes desperate attempts to preserve the critically endangered species. The realization of the dire predicament of the biodiversity crisis highlights the need to consider ecological justice, or justice between species (Baxter 2005; Higgins 2010). Social justice advocates, while correctly identifying the larger destructive force of neoliberal capitalism that threaten both cultural and biological diversity, fail to recognize that these 'forces conspire not just against the poor [who live near protected areas] but also against wild places [themselves]' (Wakild 2015:52). The NCS position "restricts the focus of conservation to the advancement of human well-

being, which it frequently conflates with narrow definitions of economic development, and thereby marginalizes efforts [...] to protect nature” (Doak et al 2015:30).

### **Alternative environmentalism**

There are many schools of thought within the broad label of ‘ecocentrism’ - indeed conservation cannot be neatly construed in terms of insiders and outsiders (Igoe 2011: 334). A few generalizations about the core philosophy can be made. A tremendously diverse environmental movement is inspired in part by the work of transcendental writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, as well as the work of environmental philosophers Aldo Leopold (1949) and Arne Naess (1973). Both in the land ethics (Leopold 1949) and deep ecology (Naess 1973) humans are seen as part of nature. While anthropocentrism and shallow ecology typically sees the environment in terms of human-centered interests, deep ecology recognizes that the attempt to ignore our dependence on the environment and to establish a master-slave role has contributed to the alienation of man from himself (Naess 1973:96).

In an ecocentric view, turning nature into a ‘natural resource’ is inherently problematic (Rudy 2012). Ironically, it is this type of ‘economism that dominates human concerns in the West to override any conservationist concerns’ (Bonnett 2013:11). This position of mastery over nature and resources resembles ‘ecological colonialism’ (Eckersley 1998), a process in which environmental management becomes normative. By contrast, deep ecology argues that the natural world is a subtle balance of complex inter-relationships and sees the human being an integral part of nature, recognizing the inherent worth of *all* living beings. The types of conservation organizations that promote conservation for the ‘sake of nature’ are the Sierra Club, The Sea Shepard, and many ‘radical’ environmentalists.

Recognizing this common victimhood of vulnerable human and nonhuman communities, deep ecology environmentalism neither attempts to separate humans from nature nor collaborates with the capitalist power holders (Merchant 1992; Taylor 2008). In fact, deep ecology is openly critical of neocolonial history that has displaced supposedly inferior humans and wild nature to the fringes of earthly landscapes and human mindscapes (Crist and Kopnina 2014). This displacement has historically served the ‘superior’ human races that supposedly possessed the capacity for reason, morality, civilization, technology, and free will above animals or supposedly ‘inferior’ races or minority groups (Crist and Kopnina 2014). This same displacement also made it permissible for nature to be exploited as a means for human betterment. In fact, deep ecology favors diversity of human ways of life, of cultures, of occupations, of economies’ (Naess 1973:96) and thus embrace all. Deep ecologists support the fight against economic and cultural domination, and they are opposed to the annihilation of seals and whales as much as to that of human tribes or cultures (Ibid).

There is little doubt that radical environmentalists are far from being complacent to the system of neoliberal oppression (Sunstein and Nussbaum 2004). In fact, many 'radicals' are motivated by the belief that the promotion of ecological justice is similar to the previous social liberation movements, such as the liberation of slaves (Liddick 2006). Thus, radical environmentalists are not the ones who have 'taken a back seat to corporate power' or 'brought corporate leaders directly onto the boards of directors of their organizations' (West and Brockington 2012). In fact, environmentalists who support ecological justice, animal rights, and biospheric egalitarianism are thwarted by those who allow anthropocentrically motivated utilitarian conservation to blossom. Indeed, alternative environmentalists are lesser heard, fewer in number, albeit an ecologically enlightened moral minority (Scarce 2011; Scruton 2012). In the United Kingdom and the United States members of the Earth Liberation Front or Animal Liberation Front are considered to be terrorists (Liddick 2006).

Granted, mainstream environmental organizations do engage in strategic alliances with corporate partners (e.g. Van Huijstee and Glasbergen 2010; Van Huijstee et al 2011; Kopnina 2016b). Perhaps many mainstream environmentalists are accepted in a wider society precisely because they have become 'much more sensitive, well behaved, and well spoken' (Best and Nocella 2011). In this sense, deep ecologists and social scientists might agree that the 'mainstream environmentalists' are part of the industrial neoliberal system.

The premise that 'the conservation community needs to take justice issues seriously and that it cannot claim to be doing this until it has developed ways of assessing justice impacts of conservation interventions' (Martin et al 2015) needs to be critically examined. What is intolerable is an injustice that threatens the very survival of all species but one. For deep ecologists, "the sense of ability to coexist and cooperate in complex relationships, rather than ability to kill, exploit, and suppress" (Naess 1973:96) describes mutual justice. As Strang has argued (2013:2):

Discourses on justice for people often imply that the most disadvantaged groups should have special rights to redress long-term imbalances... However, if the result is only a short-term gain at the long-term expense of the non-human, this is in itself not a sustainable process for maintaining either social or environmental equity.

This opens up a question of whether social scientists should promote cultural relativity to the degree that no universal human – or other – rights carry any weight.

### **Reflecting on the arguments: points of conversion and disagreement**

While some of these conflicting perspectives attempt to combine social and ecological interests, both contain critiques of capitalism, but also of each other. At the most basic level, the primary distinction between these different schools of thought can be credited to the dualism between nature and culture. There is robust literature critiquing the nature and culture dichotomy, highlighting interdependence and the human-nature continuum (e.g. Ingold 2006; Paterson 2006; Sullivan 2006; Shoreman-Ouimet and



Kopnina 2016). Indeed, the nature-culture dichotomy is a significant contributor to the lack of progress toward ecological sustainability (Strang 2013). Due to the global reach of human impacts, there are few places left on Earth that could be considered to be “natural”. Even if humans have never physically been there, our climate and other ecosystem-influencing impacts have. Also, there is nothing that can be considered to be human that is not shaped by the non-human world. Following this, the rights of humans and non-humans cannot be thought of as wholly distinct, nor should one be valued over the other (Kopnina 2016c). Thus collapsing the dichotomy and thinking of nature and human social systems as co-produced is more helpful than leaving the two areas as mutually exclusive (Moore 2015).

Yet, the dichotomy needs to be addressed in legal terms as well (Kopnina 2016c). Deep ecology requires a radical restructuring of societies in accordance with the recognition of basic rights of individuals within the species, entire species, or even whole habitats or ecosphere (e.g. Naess 1973; Eckersley 1998). Classified under the banner of animal rights, or biospheric altruism that extends beyond ‘animals’ and includes plants or entire habitats, the concept of ecological justice has recently become prominent in legal scholarship. As Sykes (2016:75) has reflected, the emergent status of non-human protection as a matter of weight “both reflects and adds to a nascent consensus that a global conception of justice must include some notion of justice regarding animals”. In recognition of the rights of nature, some countries have oriented their environmental protection systems around the premise that nature has inalienable rights, as do humans (Borràs 2016:140).

However, there still appears to be a large gap between the recognition of human rights and animal rights. This gap originates from what environmental sociologists William Catton and Riley Dunlap (1978) have termed the dominant “Human Exemptionalism Paradigm” or HEP. HEP is symptomatic of sociology’s tendency to consider humans exempt from ecological influences and in seeing humans as morally superior.

The moral concern with social justice has increased during the post-colonial and post-world-wars decades, expanding our concern for human lives *everywhere*. At present, few academics and liberal intellectuals would dispute the importance of human rights, environmental justice, racial and gender equality and economic equality. Yet, the daily subjectivism of animals and plants for the industrial food-production or pharmaceutical industry is often ignored (Crist 2012:145). As witnessed by the massive scale abuse of animals in the industrial food production system (CAFO’s), animal experimentation, and habitat destruction, it seems that our regard for the rights of other species has in fact decreased. While “raising the standard of living” everywhere is outwardly admirable it is also a “euphemism for the global dissemination of consumer culture” (Crist 2012: 141-142). Below, alternative types of environmentalism that defend the rights of other species are examined.

### **Explicating standpoints**

One of the main points of disagreement is the agency of blame and the value placed on the environment. Those conservationists concerned with protecting nature for its own sake typically addresses BOTH structural factors (e.g. population pressures) and the role of tenure, authority, and global markets. It is the exposure of structural factors that unleashes the most ardent counter-critique of social justice supporters. Martin et al (2015) find that 'local factors such as population growth and resource dependence' (p. 167) are irrelevant for analyzing conservation struggles. They state that the "narratives about population pressure, about local poor people being the main threats.... tend to exclude in-depth political analysis of the role of tenure, authority, global markets, and the systemic implications of expanding capitalist relations" (Martin et al 2015: 167). Fletcher et al (2014) imply that overpopulation discourse is constructed by racists and elitists that blame vulnerable populations, while the real cause of environmental and other problems is industrial rapacious capitalism.

While identifying industrialism and top-down economic development a perpetrator of social inequalities and deepened ecological injustice is constructive, discounting demographic trends is short-sighted. For those that worry about the prospects of future generations, long term perspective on population in relation to nature (even if only defined as a resource) needs to be considered (Hawkins 2012). If we assume that the well-meaning social justice proponents want *everybody* in this world to enjoy a decent standard of living, expansion of unsustainable consumptive practices that accompanies this process will necessarily cause greater pressure on the planet and thus hurt the future generations (e.g. Smail 2003). Thus, addressing population is not a condemnation of the poor, nor is it a call for coerced population control (Campbell 2012), as the straw-men arguments imply that 'environmentalists' or other elites seek to do (Fletcher et al 2014). Rather, it is a call to recognize the fact that there are many common factors contributing to global poverty, inequality, and environmental destruction, and that population growth exacerbates all of these (Wijkman and Rockström 2012).

The population pressure scales up all issues that might have been benevolent in 'traditional' (pre-industrial) settings, leading to fundamental incompatibility of agriculture with nature conservation in the context of the global demand for food (Henley 2011). This is why it is ironic that those who defend local communities' 'ways of life' use the very vocabulary of the power-holders they criticize. Despite the claim that *all* biodiversity is needed to provide a safety-net for humanity (Rockström et al 2009), much of biodiversity may be expandable from the utilitarian point of view (Crist 2012; 2013). It has been argued that since monocultures suffice in sustaining human material needs, conservation should be based on the intrinsic value of nature (e.g. Ehrenfeld 1988; McCauley 2006; Redford and Adams 2009). As Redford and Fearn (2007) note, a review of existing writings and available evidence suggests that there is no easy way for conservation professionals and organizations to defend conservation when it leads to the forcible displacement of humans from areas that are to be protected, even if it is to stave off extinction of several species. Equally, however, it appears difficult to justify massive displacement and extermination of nonhumans in the name of justice (Crist 2013; Cafaro 2015). The common concern with the suffering

inflicted upon those displaced makes the question of displacement urgent for both social and ecological justice proponents.

Many environmentalists, as well as social justice proponents, could find a meeting point in placing the blame on political and corporate elites and more generally, the rich world's consumption. In fact, most environmental organizations subscribe to sustainable development framework and aim to address issues associated with the human use of natural resources and ecosystem services, as well as aim to minimize negative environmental effects. An example of conversion of interests is a Greenpeace campaign to minimize toxic pollutants or promote the use of 'safe' energy (Greenpeace 2013).

There is an especially relevant thread of environmental justice literature that focuses on justice in the distribution of environmental risks (such as pollution) and benefits (such as natural resources) to different human groups. The environmental justice literature maintains that people should not be disproportionately burdened by environmental threats or able to benefit from environmental goods because of race, ethnicity, gender, or economic status, or other characteristics (Fredericks 2015). Environmental justice examines the relationships between environmental toxins, risks, and the role of neoliberal policies in those injustices (e.g. Harrison 2014; Gould et al 2015). The definition of environmental racism has arisen as research has shown that people of color and the poor are disproportionately burdened by environmental degradation (Faber and McCarthy 2003). Environmental justice advocates argue that everyone has the right to basic goods and services and should not be disadvantaged (Gould and Lewis 2012; Gould et al 2015). Harrison (2014), for example, explicitly criticizes the social inequalities and relations of oppression that help produce environmental inequalities.

Whereas many environmental justice definitions focus on equal distribution of benefits of nature exploitation, Schlosberg (2007) highlights ecological justice by recognizing the varied needs of human communities and non-human nature. If the considerations of 'equal share' are extended to nonhumans, one can speak of inclusive justice or biospheric egalitarianism (Naess 1973; Baxter 2005; Schlosberg 2007). Environmental racism, in a more ecocentric interpretation, refers to human discrimination against nonhuman groups.

Many organizations work within an established system trying to minimize environmental damage and accommodate human needs – something that the majority of engaged social scientists support. However, the realization of our collective impact needs to move beyond blaming elites and toward the recognition of collective responsibility of us as a species towards millions of other living beings, from laboratory rats to battery chicken to captive elephants.

Are the accusations that mainstream environmentalists are 'part of the system' (of neoliberal industrial capitalism) fair? The answer to this largely depends not only on what is meant by environmentalism but also on the degree of penetration of neoliberal ideology into social scientists' own rhetoric. The critics of

conservation may be equally unjust in prioritizing human entitlement over the disadvantaged (and even critically threatened) non-human beings. The critiques of mainstream conservation implicitly lump together all environmentalism, while the 'non-mainstream' environmentalists who speak for whales, seals, or lemurs as part of compassionate conservation (Bekoff 2013) remain marginalized. Most of the critics' writings on conservation, quoted above, contain generalizations implying that all conservationists are environmentalists and that they share similar values, lumping together different groups in a sweeping critique of supposedly socially unjust conservation and environmentalism. Are the critics of the mainstream conservation and environmentalism (which tends to be utilitarian and anthropocentric) prepared to accept deep ecology into the 'mainstream'? If not, is it fair of them to 'blame' mainstream environmentalism for being complacent? Are the critics themselves not part of the neoliberal system that treats 'nature' as a 'natural resources' under the guise of justice?

### **Attempting reconciliation**

There is a necessity is to find a way for conservation proponents and opponents, however diverse in their approaches and orientations, to work and thrive together. In fact, many ideas are already shared by proponents of community-based and conservation-for-the-sake-of nature approaches, such as the misgivings about the 'dollar green' environmentalists. In distinguishing between different but at times overlapping schools of thought or motivations, the positions on the main issues can be outlined: 1) position on what/who is considered nature; 2) what kind of justice is sought and for who?; and, 3) how to best approach environmental problems that affect both human and nonhuman communities. Intuitively most easy way to reconcile positions is to include both human and nonhuman actors (thus, considering both humans and nonhumans as part of nature; seeking justice for both human and nonhuman beings, and approaching environmental problems that threaten both human and nonhuman survival).

Notwithstanding many instances in which hard choices that may affect or exclude human and nonhuman groups have to be made (e.g. exploiting forest for timber plantations that may economically benefit local community versus preserving biodiversity of this same forest with strict controls on human use), including the interests of both humans and nonhumans and attempting to find ways to best balance them, remains an ideal that has been in many cases successfully implemented in practice.

Positive examples of reconciliatory approaches include valuation of nature for both its benefits to humans and as an intrinsic good, with ecosystem services including the services that all species provide each other (Lawrence and Abrutyn 2015). The common search for justice, addressing the conditions that have created domination and exploitation of the powerful classes over the oppressed ones, can be based both on the appreciation of deep ecology, and sensitivity to the local context and the human costs of conservation policies. Indeed, the outcomes in any conservation project are related to specific cultural, historical and political circumstances (West et al 2006).

The points of conversion in the case of polluting materials that affect both human health and the environment can be illustrated by the example of the use of DDT, an insecticide which was used to increase agricultural productivity. There were high death rates among nonhumans who were directly affected by the intake of DDT but it was not until 1970 when DDT was prohibited after adverse health effects became apparent (Bateson 1972).

The underlying idea of a law against ecocide is based on strategically powerful argumentation of human dependency on nature. Ecocide refers to “the extensive destruction, damage to or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished” (Higgins 2010). Crist (2012:147) is more radical in her designation of ecocide as a form of genocide: “the mass violence against and extermination of nonhuman nations, negating not only their own existence but also their roles in Life’s interconnected nexus and their future evolutionary unfolding”.

Another point of conversion is the critique of neoliberalism or neo-colonial enterprise that commodifies nature and equates human progress with economic prosperity. A conservationist Redford (2011) and anthropologist Igoe (2011) both reflect that the differences between environmentalists’ and social scientists’ positions are not irreconcilable. Indeed, ‘there are openings for serious engagement by social scientists with conservationists and the broader conservation community’ (Redford 2011:329). We need to ‘foster more informed understandings of how best to promote conservation that is effective and equitable’ (Igoe 2011:334).

Inclusive justice can be conceived as a form of multiculturalism that most of us, academics writing about conservation, support (Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014). This multiculturalism is rooted in social justice, human rights and citizenship, but also in ecological justice and animal rights, aiming to contest status hierarchies that have privileged hegemonic groups while stigmatizing minorities. This progressive conception, Kymlicka and Donaldson (2014) reflect, operates to illuminate unjust political and cultural hierarchies, to de-center hegemonic norms, and to hold the exercise of power morally accountable. Viewed this way, multiculturalism and animal rights are not in conflict, but flow naturally from the same deeper commitment to justice and moral accountability.

Exclusive attention to social and economic justice leads environmental myopia (Pluhar 1995; Kopnina 2012a; 2012b; Wuerthner 2012) and even complacency in ecological genocide (Crist and Cafaro 2012; Crist 2013). The conservation struggle is not between conservation elites and poor communities, but between the larger forces of industrialism and “fickle but ravenous consumer desires” (Wakild 2015) and those that seek to protect the last remaining troves of cultural and natural diversity.

Conservation critique outlined above masks the fact that the very environmentalism is NOT an elitist or neoliberal invention but a truly transnational phenomenon (e.g. Dunlap and York 2008) with concern for

environmental issues consistently observed in different cultures (Dietz et al 2005; Milfont and Schultz 2016). Kelch (2016:83), for example, has explored the impact of culture on animal advocacy, finding that there is “a universal facet composed of moral, ethical, empirical and other principles posited to be accepted across cultures”. These universal principles can be constructed and utilized to advance the cause of animals worldwide (Peters 2016).

A number of studies on the nature and origins of environmentalism and conservation are instructive as it shows the breadth of movements and ideas (Milton 1993; 1996; 2002; Ingold 2006). Ecological justice position was elaborated from the deep ecology perspective, supported by the ‘species turn’ (Ingold 2006; Haraway 2008) in social science. These perspectives could strengthen the theoretical framework of common justice that recognizes the artificiality of dualism, reintegrates the human and non-human, and thus enables reconciliation between the critical perspectives on these issues (Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina 2015; 2016). This theoretical frame has a potential not only to aid the mutual understanding of social and ecological justice proponents through articulating their differences but may also promote their cooperation towards a more socially and ecologically just world. As one of the reviewers of the earlier version of this chapter has suggested, we need to ask: But what to do about those who do not support universal justice, many who seem to have the power historically and in the present to turn their standpoint into political, economic, and other cultural reality? Nobody has the easy answer and the lack of universal support for presumably inclusive values is an ongoing source of frustration for those that care about moral injustices. Yet, it is the author’s hope that we, as social scientists, as environmentalists or conservationists, continue to provide evidence that demonstrates the costs and benefits of different pathways, and that we should, as members of the Earth, advocate for those that best move us, based on what the science reveals, toward ecological sustainability.

## **Conclusion**

Whether the two Norwegians Arne Naess (1912 – 2009) and Arne Kalland (1945-2012), one a fervent defender of all species, the other, of human and indigenous rights, could reconcile their views, is unclear. Strang (2013) has raised a number of moral conditions to enable this reconciliation. First, one needs to recognize the provision of justice to those who can speak for themselves, in preference to those who cannot. Second, humans and nature are interdependent, and that disruption for any of the participants has potentially major impacts on the others. Third, that the culture and nature dualism is theoretically inadequate. The author sees hope in accepting ecological justice in environmental justice debates. There are strategies for defending progressive causes, whether animal rights or human rights, against the danger of instrumentalization and cultural imperialism (Kymlicka and Donaldson 2014). As the (most of) humanity could be recently swayed to accept that slavery, racism and sexism are morally wrong, so can the moral deficiency of anthropocentrism will be realized in time to extend justice to the most vulnerable beings.

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