

ENTERPRISING NATURE

ECONOMICS, MARKETS, AND FINANCE
IN GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY POLITICS

JESSICA
DEMPSEY



WILEY Blackwell

Enterprising Nature

*Economics, Markets, and Finance
in Global Biodiversity Politics*

Jessica Dempsey

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This edition first published 2016
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Registered Office

John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, UK

Editorial Offices

350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148-5020, USA

9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, UK

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Part of chapter 5 appeared in Jessica Dempsey, "Biodiversity loss as material risk: Tracking the changing meanings and materialities of biodiversity conservation," *Geoforum* 25 (2013): 41–51. Reprinted by permission of Elsevier.

Part of chapters 2 and 3 appeared in Jessica Dempsey, "Fixing biodiversity loss," *Environment and Planning A* 47 (2015): 2555–2572. Reprinted by permission of Sage.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Dempsey, Jessica, 1977– author.

Title: Enterprising nature : economics, markets, and finance in global biodiversity politics / Jessica Dempsey.

Description: Chichester, UK ; Hoboken, NJ : John Wiley & Sons, 2016. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2016010099 | ISBN 9781118640609 (cloth) | ISBN 9781118640555 (pbk.) | ISBN 9781118640531 (ePub) | ISBN 9781118640548 (Adobe PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Environmental economics. | Environmental policy—Economic aspects.

Classification: LCC HC79.E5 D45155 2016 | DDC 333.7—dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2016010099>

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Cover image: Illustration by Ian Whadcock / ianwhadcock.com.

Cover design by Wiley and Cathy Matusicky, State Creative Group

Set in 10.5/12.5pt Sabon by SPi Global, Pondicherry, India

Printed and bound in Malaysia by Vivar Printing Sdn Bhd

Enterprising Nature

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Series Editors: Vinay Gidwani, University of Minnesota, USA and Sharad Chari, CISA at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

Like its parent journal, the Antipode Book Series reflects distinctive new developments in radical geography. It publishes books in a variety of formats – from reference books to works of broad explication to titles that develop and extend the scholarly research base – but the commitment is always the same: to contribute to the praxis of a new and more just society.

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Acronyms

AHTEG	Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group
ALBA	Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America
BAU	Business as Usual
BBRs	Biodiversity Business Risks
BP	British Petroleum
BSR Network	Business Social Responsibility Network
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CER	Certified Emission Reductions
CESR	Corporate Ecosystem Service Review
CEV	Corporate Ecosystem Valuation
CI	Conservation International
COP	Conference of the Parties
COP 9	9th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
COP 10	10th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity
CRP	Conference Room Paper
CSD	Commission on Sustainable Development
CSR	corporate social responsibility
EIRIS	Experts in Responsible Investment Solutions
ES	Ecosystem Services
ETS	European Trading Scheme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FI	Financial Institution
FFI	Flora & Fauna International
G77	Group of 77
GBA	Global Biodiversity Assessment

GDM	Green Development Mechanism
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	Green Economy
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GMO	genetically modified organism
HoB	Heart of Borneo
IBAT	Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool
ICSF	International Collective in Support of Fishworkers
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFM	Innovative Financial Mechanisms
IIFB	International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity
INBio	Costa Rica's National Biodiversity Institute
InVEST	Integrated Valuation of Ecosystem Services and Trade-offs
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IRR	internal rate of return
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
MA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
MSY	Maximum Sustained Yield
NAS	National Academy of Sciences
NatCap	Natural Capital Project
NBASP	National Biodiversity Action and Strategies Plan
NCD	Natural Capital Declaration
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PES	Payments for Ecosystem Services
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
PWS	payments for watershed services
REDD	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
SAR	species-area relationship
SBSTTA	Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice
SCOPE	Scientific Committee on the Problems of the Environment
TEEB	The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity project
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
TWN	Third World Network
UBC	University of British Columbia
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNEP FI	United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative

UNEP-WCMC	United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank
WBCSD	World Business Council on Sustainable Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WEF	World Economic Forum
WGRI	Working Group on the Review of Implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity
WRI	World Resources Institute
WTO	World Trade Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Series Editors' Preface

The *Antipode Book Series* explores radical geography “antipodally,” in opposition, from various margins, limits, or borderlands.

Antipode books provide insight “from elsewhere,” across boundaries rarely transgressed, with internationalist ambition and located insight; they diagnose grounded critique emerging from particular contradictory social relations in order to sharpen the stakes and broaden public awareness. An *Antipode* book might revise scholarly debates by pushing at disciplinary boundaries, or by showing what happens to a problem as it moves or changes. It might investigate entanglements of power and struggle in particular sites, but with lessons that travel with surprising echoes elsewhere.

Antipode books will be theoretically bold and empirically rich, written in lively, accessible prose that does not sacrifice clarity at the altar of sophistication. We seek books from within and beyond the discipline of geography that deploy geographical critique in order to understand and transform our fractured world.

Vinay Gidwani
University of Minnesota, USA

Sharad Chari
CISA at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa

Antipode Book Series Editors

Preface

The first spark of this book began in May 2006, in the outskirts of Curitiba, Brazil. I was attending a negotiation of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Most attention centered whether or not the Parties, government signatories to the agreement, would reaffirm or overturn a moratorium on the field-testing of what is known colloquially as terminator technology (seeds engineered to produce sterile seeds). Hundreds of small farmers and landless people gathered outside the conference center every day reminding the suited delegates that they had responsibilities beyond the patent holders of the technology.

Outside this crucial debate, other agendas galloped ahead. The first of many events on concepts like “biodiversity offsets” took place, and bureaucrats were just beginning to speak in the language of ecosystem services. Compared to other CBD negotiations, where debates oriented around the definition of “primary forests,” it seemed as though the floor underneath international conservation was shifting. Global biodiversity policy was going (more) economic, and perhaps market based! This research was conceived following that negotiation, oriented around a simple question: how did this happen? How did economic and market-based approaches become so dominant, even commonsense, in global biodiversity conservation?

My role in these biodiversity circuits has never been one of passive observer, but of active participant, largely organized by the ongoing work of the Convention on Biological Diversity Alliance (CBD Alliance), a network of civil society groups that follows and intervenes in global biodiversity policies. For over a decade, working with all kinds of people, from all kinds of organizations and social movements – from WWF to Via Campesina – I researched and prepared briefing papers, coordinated joint policy statements, and fundraised endlessly to bring Southern NGOs,

Indigenous communities, and social movement representatives to negotiations. Attending over a dozen negotiations, we worked to influence the shape of international biodiversity law and policy. This might sound as if I inhabited a glamorous world of international diplomats and the jet-set crowd, but I can say that it mostly involved sitting with headsets on for long periods of time, carefully following boring legalese as it shifted and shaped, crafting alternative text to circulate to friendly government delegates, and working all hours for one or two weeks.

These experiences, but especially the people I worked closely with, contributed to the particular lens through which I see “enterprising nature,” a phrase that I use to describe efforts to transform diverse natures into economically competitive entities. More than anything, I learned how to inhabit the uncomfortable, impure spaces of liberal environmentalism.

Let me explain. I went to my first CBD negotiation in Den Haag in 2002 armed with a straightforward narrative about the limits of the global, and especially the limits of the multilateral, a lens honed over the course of my undergraduate education and local political activities: the bad experts and elites of the globe continue to wreak havoc on the local, the Indigenous, the peasant, even when they are saving nature. Yet upon arrival I met a group of international activists, such as Ricardo Carrere, Pat Mooney, Ashish Kothari, Chee Yoke Ling, Patrick Mulvany, and Simone Lovera, who were at once deeply skeptical of the premises of the CBD and the “sustainable development compromise,” but who also used the negotiations as a site to draw attention to the persistent blind spots in international environmental law and policy: to how new financial mechanisms fail to address deep power imbalances and socio-ecological injustices, to the way that very small steps forward at the CBD are undermined by neoliberal trade rules, to the enormous gulfs between haves and have-nots, to the epistemological conceits of Western conservation and science.

They were (and still are) constantly reminding government delegates and international experts that global biodiversity loss is an effect of a kind of “imperial ruination” (to take a term from Anne Stoler), and that addressing this problem requires not just cooperation and consensus between nations, but also disassembling deeply etched power asymmetries and clusters of concentrated power and knowledge that mark some ways of knowing, valuing, and living with nature above others – over and over again, with violent effects for both humans and nonhumans. This tireless group of people showed me what global environmental justice politics looked like: the problems of trenchant poverty in the Global South and the sixth extinction were not oppositional problems, but rather problems with the same root.

But perhaps most crucially, I learned that there was no privileged or perfect place to conduct this struggle; on one day I was holding a banner outside the negotiation stating “no green economy,” then a bit later I was circulating concrete language to improve the Convention text, asking for further study and research on the impact of market-based approaches. We were engaged in advocacy that sometimes shamed governments, sometimes destabilized the worst policy initiatives, and occasionally saw victories (as with the ban on terminator technology that was reaffirmed by governments in Curitiba).

The research questions and approach of this book are overdetermined by this set of personal and political experiences: I see the global as neither homogenous nor smooth, but replete with contestation and even possibility. The shifting ground toward “enterprising nature” is deeply inflected by the hegemonic, elite processes of contemporary neoliberal capitalism, but it is also composed of people I know, often found easy to talk to, and with whom I could at times imagine becoming allies, depending on the issue or the political moment. And over the course of my research I was often surprised at what the most ardent advocates of “enterprising” said in the course of interviews, at the difficulties and hesitations articulated.

...

In this book I tell the story of how biodiversity is being tethered to economic and market logics and practices: when and where this is happening, who and what is involved, and how it is unfolding. This is the story of the making of enterprising nature. But the book is also a story of its *non-making*: attempts “to enterprise” are often halting and even marginal (while remaining strangely hegemonic).

Within this book I do not dismiss the people involved in enterprising nature, or their ideas, their knowledges and tools. My aim is to open a historically and geographically situated debate on this way of addressing the monoculturing of the planet. The approach I bring to enterprising nature is influenced by feminist scholarship, particularly that of Donna Haraway. Her work reminds us that science and technology are accumulation strategies, deeply implicated in producing classed, gendered, and racialized hierarchies. Yet she also asks that we sit awhile with the excess, with historical and geographical overabundance, that we engage with the “always messy projects of description, narration, intervention, inhabiting, conversing, exchanging, and building” (1994, 62). The point is not simply to “make a tangled mess,” but rather to “learn something about how worlds get made and unmade, and for whom” (1994, 70).

My hope is that this book will be of interest to scholars engaged with debates over the character of environmentalism and conservation in an era of neoliberalism. I hope, too, that it will be read by actors in the

circuits I describe: scientists, economists, bureaucrats, employees of non-profit and international organizations, who are keen to reflect on broader implications of the processes in which they are enmeshed. While enterprising nature is so pervasive as to seem axiomatic, if we look closely at the specific operations of these circuits and calculative devices, their effects and non-effects, we can avoid the weary resignation, narrowing vision, and sense of inevitability that so many involved in resisting the sixth extinction nowadays experience. For this reason, I am particularly hopeful that activists and advocates in biodiversity politics will see the book as an invitation to engage and challenge the turn to enterprising nature in new ways.

...

I remember when I was a graduate student I would read other people's book acknowledgments and think: why did it take them so long? Now I get it. This book took a stupidly long time to finish and so there are many people to thank.

For the most part this project emerged out of an almost decade-long participation in two worlds – the University of British Columbia's Department of Geography where I was a student and around the world of global biodiversity politics. Around the negotiations of the Convention on Biological Diversity, I can't believe my luck in meeting the inspiring, insightful and fierce policy wonks and activists already mentioned above, and many more, such as Faris Ahmed, Tasneem Balasinorwala, Joji Carino, S. Faizi, Ana Filipini, Barbara Gemmill, Antje Lorch, Malia Nobrega, Helena Paul, Hope Shand, Chandrika Sharma, Ricarda Steinbrecher, Jim Thomas, and Christine von Weizsacker. All of these people infuse this research project, although they may take issue with some of my interpretations.

Many other people generously gave of their time to be interviewed in the course of my research. It was rare that anyone said no, strangely, even if it meant sneaking me into a 15-minute time slot (which often carried on much longer). The Trudeau Foundation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council supported this travel-intensive research.

At UBC, Trevor Barnes provided the most supportive but also demanding supervision on my dissertation that led to this book. I don't want to make anyone jealous, but he's the kind of supervisor who turns your work around to you overnight (it's true, it happened many times!) but also makes your heart skip a beat because you know that feedback is going to feel like ripping a band-aid off raw skin. Also at UBC, Gerry Pratt and Juanita Sundberg led me through rigorous scholarly but also political debates in courses, over beer and in the hallways at 1984 West Mall. They model a kind of feminist, political scholarship that I aspire to: keenly critical and questioning but also open and generous. I'm so happy to be back there as their colleague.

If there is anything good in this book it is in good part due to the diligent advising I received at UBC but also the ever-critical and supportive students and postdocs I met there: Chris, Matt S., Bonnie, Ted, Alex, Pablo, Fiona, Tyler, Sarah, Michael, Joel, Dawn, and many more. Kevin Gould, Matt Dyce, Shiri Pasternak, Jono Peyton, Jo Reid, Geoff Mann, Emilie Cameron, and Rosemary Collard are probably some of the funniest and most fun people to be a student and now faculty with, as well as hefting serious scholarly weight. I am so grateful for their ongoing friendship and collaborations. Emilie, Rosemary, Geoff, and Jo in particular are big influences on this book: Emilie with her straight-shooting advice and wise insight over the phone, Geoff with his political-economic might delivered from his perch at JJ Bean (and often behind a can of 1516), Rosemary with her lightning-fast email responses clarifying and improving anything I put to paper. Jo edited and re-edited the manuscript, raising big and little questions about what lies within. They are the jackpot I somehow managed to hit in this whole academic thing.

Others who improved this book with their astute readings or conversations include Scott Prudham, Karen Bakker, Matthew Sparke, Nik Heynen, Laura Janara, Rebecca Lave, Raj Patel, Julianne Collard, Erika Bland, Ryan Lucy, Morgan Robertson, Larry Lohmann, Daniel Suarez, and Sian Sullivan. Then there is the stellar editing of Vinay Gidwani, all the way from book prospectus to final edits. I'm so happy I was on the receiving end of his hard questions, thoughtful comments, and ongoing support. At Wiley-Blackwell, Jacqueline Scott and Sakthivel Kandaswamy were ever so patient and prompt; copy-editor Katherine Carr whipped the text into further shape. Cathy Matusicky designed the lovely cover; Ian Whaddell allowed us to use his illustration and Eric Leinberger at UBC helped with maps.

Much of this book was rewritten (and re-rewritten) while I was at the University of Victoria's School of Environmental Studies, an oasis in the dry, ever neoliberalizing university. Conversations with Kara Shaw, James Rowe, Michael M'Gonigle, and Brian Starzomski are highlights of my time there, and they read parts of this book with their keen analytical but also political minds. Michael also sent me to my first Convention on Biological Diversity meeting in 2002, setting off the more than a decade of learning and collaboration that underpins this book. James and Kara deserve special fist bumps for having my back in those sometimes challenging years.

All the way through are friends and family, many of whom are the pointy-heads mentioned above, but also Suzie, Shawn, Narda, Deb, Brad, Michelle, Kira, Donovan, Madeline, Robbie, Nate, Trish and all of the little people that surround us, crack us up, and irritate us. My mom and dad – Joy and Steve – regularly dropped everything to

drive from Edmonton to Victoria/Vancouver to help out, providing bucketloads of support and love to my family when I was travelling. There is also our extended family of caregivers for my kids for over a decade: Lynn Busby, Laurel Beerbower, Narda Nelson, Eaglets, the YMCA-False Creek and even further back. My now not-so-little family is sustained by a big circle.

In 2006 when I went to Curitiba for the CBD negotiation, my family came along for the ride – then composed of Ryan and Sean. Sean was not quite 2. Now he is 11. I sent off the first book prospectus for this project in 2012 when I was nearly exploding with who are now Cecelia and Eloise, the irrepressible CC and Elly. And so the biggest high five and the most explosive fist bump must go to the ever-generous, wise, and (mostly) unflappable Ryan, the key condition of possibility for all this life and liveliness. Thank you, my love!

Vancouver, Canada
February 2016

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1

Enterprising Nature

In the Beginning, There Was Failure

In book- and paper-stuffed academic offices, walking down cold and dark streets in Norway alongside government bureaucrats, on Skype interviews with bankers – everywhere I went in the course of my research people talked about the failures of biodiversity conservation. “We tried to make people care about nature for its own sake,” said global experts, “without the results.” I read about failure within the pages of *Science* and *Nature*; I decoded profound disappointment in the stilted text of multilateral policy documents. Over beer in a noisy Palo Alto bar, the chief scientist of The Nature Conservancy, Peter Kareiva, explained the problem in his straight-shooting manner, “No one cares about biodiversity outside of the Birkenstock crowd.” Biodiversity, he went on to say, “is something that suburban white kids care about and nobody else.”

While I remain unconvinced that no one cares about biodiversity outside of white, suburban hippies, such tired resignation makes sense. The decimation of nonhuman life on earth continues. Despite conservation-oriented laws and policies at every level of governance from local to international, and the establishment of thousands of protected areas, “there is no indication of a significant reduction in the rate of biodiversity loss, nor of a significant reduction in pressures upon it” (CBD 2010a, 17). A study published in *Science* found that most indicators of the state of biodiversity are in decline, and the pressures underlying this shift are also increasing. One in five species of vertebrates are classified as threatened, with that figure increasing every year; 322 vertebrate species have gone extinct since 1500. Declining diversity is apparent in agriculture, where 75% of genetic diversity has