

Is green the new gold? exploring the possible implications of an Ecosystem Services based wave of Neo-mercantilism

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Summary

This paper develops a set of conceptual and methodological tools for studying the political economy of ecosystem services. These build on the paper 'Intellectual mercantilism and franchise equity.' The concept of Intellectual Mercantilism is unpacked, as a tool that points to the power asymmetric ecological political economy of international payments for ecosystem services (IPES), where physical materials that were not previously part of the global money system are accreted, via commodification, to private paper money book values, by creating the idea of a product. Methodologically it is argued that this neo-mercantilist logic compromises the existential right of local and indigenous peoples in tropical countries to political and economic self determination. The methodological tool of 'walking forward together,' is proposed as an alternative: not only do the ideations of these local 'service providers' guide problem framing, but these persons collaborate in establishing the ontological, epistemological and theoretical foundations of our work.

Extended Abstract

This paper develops a set of conceptual and methodological tools intended to facilitate the elaboration of ecological economic analyses concerning how power is accumulated and employed in the political economy of ecosystem services, first as a concept and second as a management and policy tool. Both the conceptual and methodological aspects of the paper build on issues addressed in the Ecological Economics article 'Intellectual mercantilism and franchise equity.' First, the concept of Intellectual Mercantilism is unpacked, as a conceptual tool that points to a specific and inherently power asymmetric ecological political economy logic of international payments for ecosystem services (IPES), which can be understood as 'packaging nature as product,' where physical materials that was not previously part of the global money system is accreted, via commodification, into private paper book values that can, in turn be used to leverage other money based transactions. At the methodological level, it is argued that this neo-mercantilist logic inherent in IPES subordinates the existential right of local and indigenous peoples in tropical countries to political and economic self determination.

Numerous leaders of indigenous peoples from across the planet have clearly stated, repeatedly, independently, and together in two global declarations, at Kari-Oka Village, in Brazil in 1992 and 2012, that they reject the commodification of 'the natural' as a strategy for saving it from destruction at the hands of late industrial human societies. While there is often attention to the perceived interests and the euro-descendent humanitarian rights of these people within payments for ecosystems services

(PES) discourses, the empirical logic of their positions on this topic and their existential privileges as first nations are rarely discussed as concrete challenges to form and content of academic descriptions regarding this matter of concern. Taking the content of the two Kari-Oka Declarations as a point of reference, this paper consider to what extent these can be reconciled, or not, with the logic inherent in the International PES activities being practiced and anticipated within the frame of REDD+ (United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries - FAO et al., 2008; 13th, 14th and 16th Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, COP13 Bali, COP14 Poznań, and COP16 Cancún).

Based on this juxtaposition, the methodological tool of ‘walking forward together,’ is proposed as an alternative management and policy support tool, in contrast to the paternalistic *nobles oblige* logic implicit in IPESs: with walking forward together consisting of transdisciplinary collaborations between ecological economics scholars and local and indigenous peoples, where the ideations of first nations and other similarly positioned local ‘service provider’ communities guide problem framing; where the work of understanding and acting to manage is concerned not only with collaboration as method but also, and first and foremost, with collaboration to establish the ontological, epistemological and theoretical foundations of collaborative work.

References;

FAO, UNDP, UNEP, 2008. UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD).

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Kari-Oka Declaration, 1992 | <http://www.tebtebba.org/index.php/all-resources/category/92-unced-conference>

Kari-Oka Declaration, 2012 | <http://www.ienearth.org/kari-oca-2-declaration/>