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"The Conservation Ideological State Apparatus"

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This article considers Louis Althusser's theory of the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) for advancing political ecology scholarship on the functioning of the state in violent environments. I reflect on a series of events in which a state forest department in South India attempted to recast violent conflicts between themselves and local communities over access to natural resources and a protected area as a debate over human-wildlife conflicts. Through the example of conservation as ideology in Wayanad, Kerala, I show how the ISAs articulate the functioning of ideology within the state apparatuses in order for us to understand the larger mechanics of the state apparatus and the reproduction of the relations of production necessary for the reproduction of capitalism. Revisiting the ISAs as a theoretical framework for studies in political ecology and conservation is timely given the resurgence of militarised conservation tactics, the emancipatory aims of Althusser's theory, and political ecology's turn towards praxis. (Text from author's abstract)

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