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"Investigating Consistency of a Pro-market Perspective amongst Conservationists"

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While biodiversity conservation has had a longstanding relationship with markets, the recent past has seen a proliferation of novel market-based instruments in conservation such as payments for ecosystem services. Whilst a number of conservation organisations have aligned themselves with this "neoliberal" shift, relatively few studies interrogate the extent to which this move resonates with the values held by conservation professionals. An earlier study of the views of conservationists participating in the 2011 Society for Conservation Biology conference found both supportive and critical perspectives on the use of markets in conservation (Sandbrook et al. 2013b). This paper investigates the consistency of the perspectives identified in the earlier study by applying the same Q methodology survey to a group of Cambridge, UK-based conservationists. While both studies reveal supporting and more sceptical perspectives on the use of markets in conservation, the pro-market perspective in each sample is nearly identical. This finding provides empirical confirmation of a growing body of research that suggests that a relatively consistent set of pro-market perspectives have permeated the thinking of decision makers and staff of conservation organisations. It also lends some support to the suggestion that a transnational conservation elite may be driving this uptake of market approaches. (Text from authors' abstract)

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