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"What the Gringos Brought: Local Perspectives on a Private Protected Area in Chilean Patagonia"

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Privately Protected Areas (PPAs) are a growing trend in conservation and have been promoted by global environmental institutions such as the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as an essential component for achieving conservation targets. PPAs are on the rise worldwide and particularly in Chile, where neoliberal reform has created new spaces in conservation management for private individuals and civil society. However, little empirical research examines their effects on local people. Drawing from critiques of the neoliberalisation of nature and the intertwining of capitalism and conservation, this research explores the case of a particular PPA in Chile, Patagonia Park, asking specifically: what are the impacts of this particular PPA on local residents? Based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews, this research finds that the park has been detrimental to local livelihoods, disrupted systems of production, and elicited emotional responses of pain, sadness, and loss. The relation between the park and community has been characterised by a lack of information and understanding, and reveals deeply contrasting views of nature held by park administrators and local residents. We find that, in this case, the social impacts of the PPA are similar to those that have long been documented and criticised in state-run, "fortress conservation" models. When we look closely at the history of many state-run protected areas, we see that private capital has always played a central role in conservation. This research suggests then that there may be little truly novel about PPAs in terms of both process of development, and the ways that local people experience them. (Text from authors' abstract)

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