

Chapter 32

The Environmentalism of the Paid



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32.1 Introduction

Since the early 1990s, deforestation and forest degradation in the tropics – home to millions of “poor” people and of a significant share of the world’s biological diversity – have become one of the most pressing environmental concerns, as they contribute to global climate change and biodiversity loss (Curtis et al., 2018). Furthermore, inequalities in income, ownership of assets, and development opportunities remain dire both within and across countries (World Bank, 2016). In this context, a perplexing policy experiment has emerged over the last two decades: a wealth of actors – from governments to private companies and social organizations – offer monetary payments to landowners and rural communities in exchange for protecting forests and related ecosystem services (e.g., watershed regulation, carbon, and biodiversity sequestration). This experiment, known as Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), is seeking to both conserve biodiversity and alleviate poverty, and it is nowadays one of the most popular conservation policy approaches worldwide.

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Payments for Ecosystem Services are inseparable from the episteme and trajectory of the “neoliberalization of nature”, i.e., the application of neoclassical economic theory and practice to nature conservation (Castree, 2008; Heynen & Robins, 2005). However, as we will argue further below, many PES embrace two contradictory societal paradigms: a neoliberal agenda endorsing market-based institutions to tackle the ecological crisis and a Keynesian vision emphasizing the role of the state in addressing such a crisis. The theoretical debates surrounding PES thus reflect this tension. Market enthusiasts, mostly within mainstream and environmental economics, advocated for PES as a promising alternative that could harness market forces and align incentives for conservation where previous policies failed (Engel et al., 2008; Ferraro & Kiss, 2002). In contrast, other scholars akin to ecological economics and political ecology strongly opposed PES as “conceits” (Fletcher & Büscher, 2017) that would inevitably cause “the poor selling cheap” (Martínez-Alier, 2002), “green grabbing” (Fairhead et al., 2012), “commodity fetishism” (Kosoy & Corbera, 2010), or “selling out on nature” (McCauley, 2006).

However, among such polarizing views, a growing body of empirical research has recently begun to shed light on the various ways in which local peasants and communities adapt, alter, resist, and respond to PES, and how such engagement leads to both expected and unintended socio-environmental consequences (Shapiro-Garza et al., 2020). This work has investigated if pro- or anti-neoliberal interpretations of PES conform with actual policy practice, and whether alternative theorizations are needed (McElwee et al., 2014; Van Hecken et al., 2018).

This chapter draws on Martínez-Alier’s environmentalism of the poor (Martínez-Alier, 2002) to provide a new perspective on PES. We argue that PES have fostered the emergence of a new form of environmentalism by local peasants and communities who bear with and take advantage of an external policy agenda predicated upon conservation payments and markets, while remaining attentive to their long-term livelihood goals. Rather provocatively, we bring forward the idea of the environmentalism of the paid as a rising though unexpected consequence of “not-so-neoliberal” conservation policy, and we outline its more salient features inspired by our long-term fieldwork in Mexico. The chapter is intended to reflect on the social lives of market-based conservation.

32.2 The Environmentalism of the Poor

In 2002, Martínez-Alier coined the powerful idea of the environmentalism of the poor, a variety of environmentalism that “grows out of local, regional, national and global ecological distribution conflicts caused by economic growth and social inequalities” (Martínez-Alier, 2002: 14). Considered similar to popular environmentalism, or to the environmental justice movement, given their shared emphasis on justice as a means to achieve sustainability, the environmentalism of the poor emerged as an articulated global social movement from the 1990s onwards, inspired by two previous currents of thought. On the one hand, the civil rights and

environmental justice movement in the United States (from the 1960s onwards) denounced the racialized nature of environmental degradation. On the other hand, the agrarian, rights-based, and indigenous movements in the Global South (from the 1970s onwards) emphasized self-determination and the “abuses” of development.

The environmentalism of the poor emphasizes the negative effects of environmental degradation on the well-being of the urban and rural poor, including Indigenous Peoples, and the critical role that such populations play in resource extraction and environmental dispossession conflicts. Economic growth damages nature by unsustainably exploiting nonrenewable resources and is detrimental to the global poor because these often and disproportionately bear the burden of environmental degradation and pollution. Consequently, the poor are dispossessed and alienated from their means of survival, and experience acculturation processes that damage their culture and social institutions. The environmentalism of the poor advocates for degrowth – particularly in developed countries – challenges the absolute dematerialization of the economy, warns about the impacts of new technologies, and puts justice at the center of any environmental policy through an emphasis in recognition, participation, and redistribution.

According to Martínez-Alier, the environmentalism of the poor coexists with at least two older currents of environmentalism. On the one hand, the cult of wilderness arises from an aesthetic appreciation of beautiful landscapes, not from material interests or concerns about economic growth, and seeks to preserve the remnants of “pristine” natural areas to ensure the preservation of biodiversity. As such, has mostly advocated for the strict preservation of natural habitats, through protected areas and no-take zones (or the co-management of natural resources as the last resort), and it lies beyond some recent global campaigns for biodiversity conservation, such as the 30x30 (<https://30x30initiative.org/>) or Half-Earth (<https://www.half-earthproject.org/story/the-half-earth-project/>) initiatives. On the other hand, the gospel of eco-efficiency rests on worries about the effects of economic growth, not only on “pristine” natural areas but also on the industrial, agricultural, and urban environments. However, in contrast to the environmentalism of the poor, this variety encompasses distinct currents of thought regarding the relationship between growth and nature. Ecological modernization or sustainable development advocates, for example, emphasize the role that technologies can play in minimizing resource consumption and waste, whereas market environmentalists suggest that adequate resource stewardship is entirely dependent on how well social institutions harness self-interest through individual incentives, because individual property owners are better suited than governments to manage natural resources. Policy ideas such as technological innovation, the circular economy, or sustainable certification are central to the gospel of eco-efficiency.

Evidently, these types of environmentalism are archetypes that serve analytical purposes, which have “points of contact and points of disagreement” (Martínez-Alier, 2002: 15). For instance, one environmental organization may embrace more than one type of environmentalism over its lifetime, or it may also mobilize various types of discourses and contrasting policies in a report. We argue the same may occur with policy instruments advocated by distinct environmentalisms. For

example, are PES a new approach to fortress conservation inspired by the cult of wilderness? Or are they markets or subsidies for the provision of ecosystem services, inspired by market environmentalism and ecological modernization, respectively? May PES be regarded as a policy approach that facilitates an affirmative strategy of the rural poor to protect their forests, inspired by the environmentalism of the poor? We will come back to these questions later.

32.3 Payments for Ecosystem Services: Definition and Scope

Broadly defined, PES consist of voluntary (economic or in-kind) transactions between a social actor and an individual or collective landowner where the latter provides a specific environmental benefit or ecosystem service, which is enjoyed by the former actor and/or society at large. Over the years, however, this definition has been subject to reworkings and debate (Muradian et al., 2010; Tacconi, 2012; Wunder, 2005, 2015).

PES initiatives encompass different types of policy instruments, which can be classified in three broad types: (i) user-financed PES, where individuals, companies, NGOs, or public actors directly reward landowners for ecosystem services protection, enhancement, or reestablishment (e.g., voluntary payments for watershed protection, or for carbon offsets); (ii) government-financed PES, where third parties (usually governments) who act on behalf of users compensate landholders for activities that maintain or enhance ecosystem services delivery (e.g., agro-environmental measures, national programs of payments for biodiversity conservation); and (iii) compliance-based PES, where actors facing regulatory obligations compensate others for activities that maintain or enhance comparable ecosystem services or goods in exchange for a standardized credit or offset that satisfies their mitigation requirements (e.g., biodiversity offsets, water quality trading, wetlands mitigation banking, or environmental reverse auctions) (Pirard, 2012; Salzman et al., 2018). Therefore, contrary to what some often believe, PES initiatives have not always involved the establishment of markets that trade a specific unit of biodiversity or ecosystem service. They are characterized by contrasting degrees of commodification, depending on their underlying policy and regulatory framework, which has in turn influenced their design, objectives, and expected performance (Corbera, 2015).

Diversity in implementation probably explains PES appeal and expansion throughout the world. A recent global review of PES, for example, has documented over 550 active PES programs covering millions of hectares, and disbursing US\$ 36–42 billion in annual payments (Salzman et al., 2018). Ezzine et al. (2016) appear to identify 584 PES initiatives of diverse scales and goals. Bull and Strange (2018) show that 37 countries are implementing biodiversity offsetting programs – aimed at balancing environmental damage from development projects with “equivalent” gains – which occupy approximately 153,679 km² for an approximate total of

12,983 projects. A recent review of REDD+¹ (Maniatis et al., 2019) shows that dozens of countries in the Global South have developed pilot projects for the reduction of deforestation or the enhancement of forest stocks, as well as national programs that incentivize conservation or sustainable land management through direct payments to reduce national land-use greenhouse emissions, in order to meet their voluntary commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Dunlop & Corbera, 2016; Corbera & Schroeder, 2018). In this regard, the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, one of the main sources of donor funding for REDD+, has already signed emission reduction agreements with 14 countries to obtain land-use emission reductions in exchange (World Bank, 2021). These reductions will most likely be realized, at least to some extent, through direct conservation payments schemes organized at national or subnational levels.

This evidence suggests that millions of farmers and communities have already been participating in PES, while more are likely to join in the upcoming years. Unsurprisingly, this rising policy agenda has been accompanied by significant scholarly efforts that aimed to make some sense on this experiment, which quickly turned into reality. The concept of PES, their suitability to achieve certain goals, their socio-environmental effectiveness, and many other aspects have been examined and scrutinized. To provide context as to how we see the environmentalism of the paid emerging, we expand below on the academic debates surrounding PES, and we present a short vignette from our own long-standing work in Mexico to illustrate the nature of such environmentalism.

32.4 Payments for Ecosystem Services: Competing Perspectives

As a new experiment in environmental policy, PES has attracted significant scholarly attention. Though risking simplification, we argue that such interest can be explained not only because PES have opened interesting operational questions but most importantly because the apparently "simple" act of paying for conservation outcomes reflects a series of fundamental normative, political, and ideological assumptions and worldviews.

In a seminal contribution, Wunder (2005: 3) defined PES as a voluntary transaction where a well-defined environmental service (ES; or a land-use likely to secure that service) is being "bought" by an (minimum one) ES buyer from an (minimum one) ES provider, if and only if the ES provider secures ES provision (conditionality). Drawing heavily on Coase (1960) and Hardin (1968), this view frames environmental problems, such as forest loss and degradation, as a consequence of the failure

¹REDD+ stands for countries' efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, foster conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

to incorporate the environment into the market sphere. The assumption here is that those at the resource base have no mechanisms to privately capture the positive “environmental externalities” that their resource management practices provide. This “market failure” unequivocally leads to the underprovision of public environmental goods. PES should thus attempt to put into practice the “Coase theorem” (Engel et al., 2008), which states that if transaction costs are low and property rights are clearly defined, an efficient provision of environmental goods and services can be achieved through private negotiation. In doing so, PES would correct market failures by creating a market where service “buyers” and “sellers” interact with one another through conditional payments at the “right price” (Muradian et al., 2010).

Unsurprisingly, for this perspective, ensuring that PES worked as intended required well-defined ecosystem services and property rights, minimal transaction costs, and fair negotiation processes. This would involve designing contracts to elucidate opportunity costs and reduce “informational rents” (Ferraro, 2008; Schomers & Matzdorf, 2013); enhancing efficiency through spatial targeting (Alix-García et al., 2008; Wünscher et al., 2008); ensuring that adequate property rights were at place (Engel & Palmer, 2008); and creating well-defined services that could be subject to trading (Engel et al., 2008; Wunder, 2005).

The alleged “neoliberal” (and Coasean) nature of PES attracted a wealth of criticism from political ecology and political economy scholars. McCauley (2006) decried the development of markets for ecosystem services and suggested instead that “we will make more progress in the long run by appealing to people’s hearts rather than to their wallets” (ibid.: 28). Others linked PES to the expansion of capitalism into new spheres of social life and they argued that PES would inevitably imply different transacting parties operating under unequal terms of exchange (McAfee, 1999; Büscher, 2012). Similarly, voices critical of environmental markets have used Harvey’s (2003) concept of “accumulation by dispossession” and Martínez-Alier’s (2002) notion that “the poor sell cheap” to emphasize how market-based policies might entail virtual and actual “green grabs” (Fairhead et al., 2012) and involve “conservation rents for renouncing development” (Karsenty, 2007). Others, drawing on Polanyi (1944), warned of the counterproductive ethical and practical consequences of commodifying nature. Kosoy and Corbera (2010) argued that market-based forms of PES represented both a symptom and consequence of “commodity fetishism”, which disregards ecosystem complexity, reduces ecosystem values to single exchange values, and creates power asymmetries across those involved in market development. Gómez-Baggethun and Ruiz-Pérez (2011) warned about the counterproductive consequences of commodifying nature for biodiversity conservation and equity in access to benefits from environmental services.

Much to the dismay, or relief, of supporting and critical voices of PES as “neoliberal” conservation, however, a third body of mostly empirical literature began to suggest that both views had rested more on ideological assumptions and beliefs than on a careful examination of reality. Most “real world” PES initiatives did not seem to encompass a great deal of the elements associated with neoliberal policy, such as commodification, privatization and the retreat of the state (McElwee et al., 2014). Realizing simultaneously all the conditions that would guarantee the development of efficient markets for ecosystem services has proven elusive, except for

compliance-based approaches with robust regulations and well-functioning governance frameworks (Wunder et al., 2020).

PES have rarely involved processes to value nature or to compartmentalize environmental services. Instead, policy makers have often used estimations of opportunity costs or arbitrary methods to determine payments and treated resource management practices as proxies for service provision (McElwee et al., 2014). On the side of “buyers”, PES national programs such as those in Costa Rica, Mexico, and China involved an active role by governments as single or monopsonistic “buyers” of ecosystem services. On the side of “sellers”, where land institutions involved collective property and tenure regimes, communities acted on behalf of individual landowners. Finally, many PES initiatives have been designed with an anti-poverty agenda in mind, prioritizing poverty considerations over environmental additionality in targeting approaches, accompanied by a discourse about revaluing the countryside (Shapiro-Garza, 2013).

With these empirical observations in mind, rooted in the field of institutional economics and the interface of ecological economics and political ecology, some scholars have advocated for a better understanding of social relations in PES, the intricate institutional and political arrangements in which they take place, the complexity of the ecosystems which they are intended to sustain, and the multiple and incommensurate values embedded in the nonmarket institutions in which PES operate. For example, institutional analyses of PES have shed light on how discourses and practices around PES operate at various interconnected governance levels (Corbera et al., 2007; Muradian & Rival, 2012; Muradian et al., 2010; Vatn, 2010). Others have emphasized that different actors associated with PES at various levels, from those at the local resource base to high-level officials involved in policy design, may have different and potentially conflicting notions of fairness, equity, and justice (Corbera & Pascual, 2012; Pascual et al., 2014). Others have brought forward the need to “re-politicize” PES by explicitly examining how the workings of politics and power influence multiple spheres of PES (McAfee & Shapiro, 2010; Rodríguez de Francisco et al., 2021; Shapiro-Garza, 2013; Van Hecken et al., 2015). Finally, the conceptual and empirical flaws inherent in the Coasean view of PES have also been challenged, such as the incorrect assumption of rivalry and excludability as dynamic policy variables instead of biophysical characteristics that are not dynamic at all (Farley & Costanza, 2010), the inherent problems in measuring natural capital and assigning monetary value to environmental services (Rival & Muradian, 2012), and the scientifically weak links between land use and environmental service provision (Pascual et al., 2010).

32.5 The Environmentalism of the Paid

We have argued above that PES have acquired a myriad of forms that seldom align in practice with their market-based, foundational principles. It may thus be misleading to associate PES approaches with only one sort of environmentalism and that it

would instead be more appropriate to think of such approaches as serving distinct environmental discourses. Furthermore, we believe it is important to develop contextually situated, and culturally rooted understandings of PES initiatives that can reflect on the lived experiences of PES beneficiaries.

While PES are too often designed as short-term incentives for narrow conservation goals (e.g., a contract over a limited number of years, which may or may not be renewable, to conserve forests), we have observed that beneficiaries think about their livelihoods at wider temporal and spatial scales. Such broader and longer term thinking allows them to exert some degree of control on the various policies, including but not limited to PES, that they encounter along the way. Participants thus voluntarily participate in PES but do so on their own terms. They continuously adapt, respond to, and sometimes even contest PES based on their specific livelihood interests and priorities.

Strategic behavior related to environmental policies by participants and other local actors is not a new phenomenon. What is novel in the specific case of PES, however, is how local conservation actions and attitudes are increasingly predicated and dependent upon conditional monetary payments by external entities. It is within this unexpected entanglement that we see the environmentalism of the paid as a rising phenomenon that shares some similarities but is otherwise distinctive from previously identified varieties of environmentalism. The environmentalism of the paid combines certain reverence for the stewardship of nature, with a strong concern for local livelihoods and a utilitarian view of development.

Payments in Mexico's Selva Lacandona

In Mexico, there are multiple PES initiatives throughout the country, from local and mostly user-financed schemes for watershed conservation to nation-wide PES programs that focus on hydrological services and biodiversity conservation. Between 2003 and 2019, nation-wide programs have protected 6.7 million hectares of forests under conservation contracts (10.3% and 3.4% of Mexico's forestlands and total surface, respectively) (Izquierdo-Tort et al., [In progress](#)). These national PES programs have two key features: first, most contracts are signed by indigenous and agrarian communities who often manage their forests in common and, consequently, such contracts are typically signed off and managed at the community-level upon approval by landed members within each community. Second, contracts are valid for 5 years and provide annual payments per hectare (approx. US\$ 50) of protected forest in exchange for the development of a series of forest management and conservation activities, and they can be renewed.

Over the years, we have investigated the role that national PES schemes have played for local livelihoods and the natural base in several communities of two contiguous municipalities (Marqués de Comillas and Benemérito de las Américas) in the Selva Lacandona of the state of Chiapas. The region is a resource and colonization frontier bordering Guatemala, populated by both mestizo and Indigenous communities (Leyva Solano & Ascencio Franco, 1996; De Vos, 2002). Selva Lacandona is Mexico's largest remaining patch of high-canopy tropical rainforest and one of the country's most biodiverse regions, but it faces high rates of deforestation for

agricultural and cattle ranching expansion (Carabias et al., 2015). In this context, we have documented a high and enduring interest in participating in PES schemes among individual households and communities. Demand for PES participation has exceeded availability of public funding since PES arrived to the region in the mid-2000s, and excess demand has grown significantly from 2016 onwards due to a reduction in the country's environmental budget.

Through several publications and ongoing projects, we have observed that voluntary participation in PES in the study region is highly strategic and at times harmonious or conflicting with the longer term, and changing livelihood needs and aspirations of those involved in conservation payments. We have discussed the various manifestations of such strategic behavior, and its consequences. For example, we have shown that interest in PES and more generally in conserving nature is at constant odds with a strong "cowboy-based" livelihood aspiration, which situates PES participation at the intersection between receiving a fair compensation for environmental stewardship, the capacity of landowners to diversify livelihood activities and land uses, and the ability of local leaders and PES intermediaries to influence collective action towards conservation (Izquierdo-Tort et al., 2019, 2021). We have highlighted how people decide which lands to enroll in PES and which to leave outside for continued agricultural expansion, and made evident that households can both receive payments for conservation while continuing to deforest other areas (Izquierdo-Tort et al., 2019).

Households and communities take advantage of the lack of coordination among various governmental institutions, providing subsidies to mix-and-match the latter and maximize income (Izquierdo-Tort, 2020). They can draw upon multiple notions of justice and preexisting land-related entitlements and norms to distribute PES payments within the community (Izquierdo-Tort et al., *in review*), which occasionally can result in increased social conflict (Corbera et al., 2020). Specifically, conservation payments provide a form of "rent" that has seemingly raised the economic value of forestlands (previously considered "idle" and invaluable) and thus has shielded small landowners against encroachment from land speculators. Overall, we have shown that communities respond and adapt to evolving PES designs, as well as to the changing demographic and institutions of households and communities in their struggle for a more prosperous future (Izquierdo-Tort et al., 2021).

We identify at least three features in the environmentalism of the paid. First, PES beneficiaries bring forward a discourse that emphasizes the positive role that conservation payments play in maintaining and enhancing their livelihoods. PES beneficiaries should neither be considered "noble savages" nor *homo economicus*, but somewhere in between. Their practical engagement with conservation – and what the PES programs expect in this regard – is one that fits with existing land tenure arrangements and with both social or individual norms, regulations, and expectations regarding resource management and conservation. They engage in PES because PES rules match, without excessive tweaking, with what they are willing or are socially expected to do with their forests. In other words, they engage in PES because conservation practice does not entail excessive costs or shifts in norms and behavior.

Second, the environmentalism of the paid connects very different types of stakeholders – from landowners, communities, and local organizations and public officials in rural contexts to national and international states, organizations, and markets – through a single exchange value (i.e., money in exchange for biodiversity conservation or specific ecosystem services), yet such exchange acquires different local meanings and values. In Mexico, payments are perceived as a recognition by the State of the cost that conservation entails for peasants holding both individual and communal lands. In other countries, for example in Colombia, payments are perceived as a compensation for the economic losses incurred because of abandoning coca cultivation and avoiding the expansion of cattle grazing. In this case, the payment does not contribute to reinforce existing social norms, but to acknowledge conservation efforts in a context where land-use pressure is increasing (Moros et al., 2020).

Third, the environmentalism of the paid counts with strong allies – including donors, governments, NGOs, and companies – who promote and make PES possible, since they act as key design, funding, or implementation actors. These allies contribute to the institutionalization of PES principles at national and local levels (Lima et al., 2019), and some of them may also do so with the prospects of establishing the foundations of a “conservation basic income” (Fletcher & Büscher, 2020). However, these allies are also often unable to design and implement PES in ways that can meet the long-term expectations of the targeted landowners and communities, given the short-term funding cycles and political uncertainties they operate in. For example, the overall positive ecological and social outcomes of Mexico’s national PES programs (Sims & Alix-Garcia, 2017) and in Selva Lacandona (Costedoat et al., 2015) may be soon jeopardized by a shift in government funding priorities, significant budget reductions in the environmental sector, and new policy programs that may contribute to land-use change.²

It is not our intention in this provocative chapter so far to overromanticize the environmentalism of the paid. PES beneficiaries, with their discourse and praxis, are only one side of local rural struggles. Much research, including our own, has shown that PES can reproduce and exacerbate preexisting inequalities in access to land and funding, exclude vulnerable actors from benefits and decision-making, and facilitate processes of “elite capture” (Corbera et al., 2007). PES can thus leave aside, either intentionally or unintentionally, some individuals or social groups, who may or may not be interested in joining PES and displaying their environmentalism.

²The “Sembrando Vida” started in 2019 and provides large subsidies to landowners for the development of agroforestry and reforestation activities. This laudable objective seems to have induced further deforestation. See, for example, (1) <https://gatopardo.com/reportajes/sembrando-vida-el-proyecto-milagro-de-lopez-obrador-para-el-campo-mexicano-2021-2020/>; (2) <http://movilidadadable.org/WRIMexico/WR1%20M%C3%A9xico%20An%C3%A1lisis%20sobre%20los%20impactos%20ambientales%20de%20Sembrando%20Vida%20en%202019.pdf>

32.6 Conclusion

This chapter has drawn on Martínez-Alier's concept of the environmentalism of the poor, and other varieties of environmentalism, to emphasize the growing importance that Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) play in the livelihoods of the rural poor, particularly in the Global South. We reviewed the foundations of PES, related academic debates, and suggested that PES beneficiaries should be understood as living examples of a new form of environmentalism: the environmentalism of the paid. Early on, we left some questions unanswered. Does PES, as a policy approach, respond only to one type of environmentalism? We can say with confidence that it does not. The disciplinary background – which influences one's theoretical and empirical lenses – or even her own ethical and political values determine if PES represents an instrument for fortress conservation, market-based resource management, or the emancipation of the rural poor.

We argued that PES beneficiaries portray an environmentalism that combines elements of ecosystem stewardship with livelihood-focused and utilitarian perspectives on local development. It is an environmentalism that combines the pride of conservation stewardship, with a demand for economic compensation in exchange for such stewardship, which seemingly resonates with wider calls for convivial conservation (Büscher & Fletcher, 2019) and for the establishment of a “conservation basic income” (Fletcher & Büscher, 2020). This environmentalism should not probably be circumscribed only to PES beneficiaries, however. Participants in conservation-oriented programs, such as resource comanagement schemes, or integrated conservation and development projects may also be part of this growing discourse and praxis.

The environmentalism of the paid obviously owes its existence to many allies, i.e., the donors, governments, NGOs, and companies that financially support the poor's conservation efforts. These allies probably channel economic incentives to the rural poor because they believe that conservation and development are compatible, which is a far-fetched assumption if one attends to the fact that global land-use trends point towards ecological disaster (IPBES, 2019). In this regard, we suggest that the environmentalism of the paid will only stand the test of time if conservation incentives are prolonged over time, adjusted to local economic realities, and come accompanied by decisive actions that tackle the pernicious effects of contradictory land-use policies in ways that do not harm local livelihoods (Meyfroidt et al., 2022).

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