

Igoe, J. 2017. *The nature of spectacle: on images, money, and conserving capitalism*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press. ISBN 978-0-8165-3044-1; US\$29.95.

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The nature of spectacle is a captivating book that expands our understanding of the relationships between imaginaries of nature, conservation strategies, and circuits of global capital. Drawing productive theoretical connections between Debord, Tsing, Marx, and Lefebvre, Igoe focuses on nature spectacle, "which refers most basically to a kind of nature that is heavily mediated by mass-produced and –disseminated images (p. x)." Indeed, Igoe argues that modernist conservation is not possible without this spectacular nature, without fantastic narratives about nature that are driven by the power of these images that seem like reality itself, but, in truth, conjure desired realities into being by making them appear to have always already been achieved.

The introduction lays out the general theoretical framework for the book and provides an outline of the chapters to come. Chapter 1 presents the historical background of nature as spectacle in the Serengeti, importantly demonstrating that there are deeper roots to the commodification of nature beyond recent attempts at pricing and payments for ecosystem services. Noteworthy is the role of Austrian conservationist Bernhard Grzimek, who, in 1960 called on viewers of his popular TV show, *A place for wild animals* to purchase Serengeti safaris, even though they did not exist at that time. In perhaps the best illustration of the power of nature as spectacle given in the book, tour companies then rushed to create actual safaris to meet the rising demand created by Grzimek's program.

Chapter 2 focuses on how the images selected for nature as spectacle present certain spaces and times as representational of larger landscapes, while at the same time concealing other types of landscapes and livelihoods. Indeed, the spectacularization of nature goes beyond excluding people to elide conflict and competing imaginaries. For example, wildlife tourism is seen as a source of revenue that can incentivize people to move away from livelihoods based off the land, where conflicts exist with elephants and other charismatic megafauna.

Chapter 3 zooms in to the specific spatial logic ordering the tourist's spectacular consumption along the safari circuit, explaining how desired encounters with nature are achieved while hiding the labor it takes to achieve them. Similarly, cultural aspects of Tanzanian tourism also construct representations where the same groups of people are always doing the same things, selecting specific views to translate into a singular vision suitable for circulation and exchange.

Chapter 4 jumps scale to look at broader shifts in conservation that are reflected in the Tanzanian landscape. Specifically, Igoe outlines a shift from wise use to wise exchange, where the exchange of nature will allow for it to remain available for future generations. While demonstrating the scope of the neoliberalization of conservation, Igoe also makes the important point that as with any hegemonic formation, it remains contingent and partial despite its representation as a totality.

Continuing to examine the global context reflected in the Tanzanian case study, Chapter 5 examines how spectacular narratives of green consumption appeal to conscientious consumers. In this chapter, Igoe begins by revisiting the role of celebrity conservation advocates, before outlining how the power given to them through spectacular narratives is translated to regular consumers. Thus, in green consumption product marketing, by buying a set of goods or services, we can simultaneously give by protecting nature through our purchase. However, as Igoe makes clear, the spectacle hides deeper contradictory socioecological contradictions in green consumption while promoting an advancement of runaway consumer culture.

Finally, Chapter 6 provides some tantalizing hints as to how we might work towards other imaginaries of conservation, imaginaries that resist capitalist enclosure and return lands to indigenous and local communities. For Igoe, the potential for the realization of such imaginaries seems to rest in the expansion of emergent encounters across difference and the amplification of alternative narratives. In the playful and creative praxis of the Situationists, he locates a generative source of critique and resistance that can multiply encounters and facilitate collaboration in an alienated and commodified world.

Overall, *The nature of spectacle* is a powerful book that serves to extend and complicate long-standing bodies of research on conservation and capitalism. Many of the processes described extend beyond the Tanzanian and African context and speak to more generalizable trends in conservation worldwide. For me, the most important points made included:

- 1) that the commodification of nature has deep historical roots that extend beyond the neoliberal period,
- 2) the insistence that despite the dominance of neoliberal conservation currently, like any other hegemonic formation, it remains contingent and partial, and
- 3) how the spectacle of nature works to present selected parts as the whole by concealing livelihoods and locations that don't "fit" into desired narratives of saving the environment through economic growth and green consumption.

However, I occasionally found myself wanting more from this book, perhaps not a surprising result from such a slim volume (161 pages). First, while Igoe recognizes the concealing of political ecological complexities by spectacular imaginaries of nature, he is more interested in and focused on the way such imaginaries are constructed. This is fair, but I would have liked more exposition of what is excluded in the process of conjuring spectacles. Which imaginaries, which types of livelihoods, which lives are not taken into consideration by focusing instead on the potential of green conservation? While the processes of representational constructionism that Igoe explains so well are an essential part of the picture, what are the material results on the ground, especially for those who are not the "winners" in these processes? Second, and relatedly, while the presence of resistance to the spectacularization of nature is acknowledged, specifics on how resistance takes place are not included. Which groups are resisting? What is their potential for success, however defined? Could they create international alliances with similar groups? Or use spectacular images for their own purposes to disrupt the green conservation efforts of international capital and the BINGOs? While the answers to these questions are probably outside the scope of this book, and might be addressed in future work, I still believe that they would have helped present a more complete set of arguments and serve to further our understanding of the current conjuncture in Tanzanian conservation.

Despite these minor and friendly critiques, I would recommend the book to anyone interested in critical approaches to nature and conservation, especially those who work on how nature is imagined and/or those investigating the neoliberalization of nature. Part of what makes the book so appealing is the way Igoe inserts himself into and personalizes it, making connections between theoretical points and experiences from his decades of fieldwork in Tanzania. Furthermore, this helps the book present complex and theoretically sophisticated arguments in a clear and accessible manner, making it suitable for teaching.

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