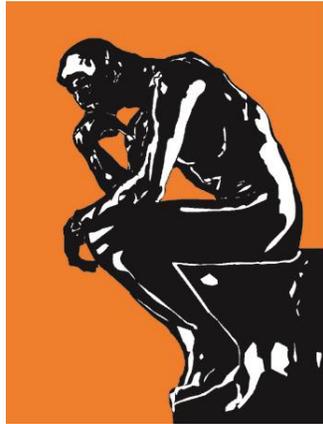


The weight of “philanthropic” money on the research agenda of environmental conservation

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The study of Enrici et al. (2023) in *Ecology and Society* [1] is one of a few in-depth discussions of the significance of money on how people (including academics, politicians, and residents) understand the impact of humans on the environment. These insights are critical, especially given the urgency of understanding anthropogenic influences on the ecosystem in the face of the unpredictable dangers of climate catastrophe.

The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Ecology & Society journal website. It includes the journal logo, navigation links for 'Current Issue', 'About the Journal', 'Open Access Policy', 'Submit an Article', and 'Sign In'. Below the navigation bar, the article title 'Who's setting the agenda? Philanthropic donor Influence In marine conservation' is displayed, along with the authors' names: Ash Enrici, Rebecca L. Gruby, Michele M. Betsill, Elodie Le Cornu, Jeffrey E. Blackwatters, Xavier Basurto, Hugh Govan, Tarita Holm, and Stacy D. Jupiter. The article is categorized as 'RESEARCH'. The abstract text is visible, starting with 'We are in a period of unprecedented growth in conservation philanthropy. How will this influx of private funding affect conservation agendas? Inspired by a collaborative research co-design process, this paper addresses questions about how foundations influence conservation agendas in the places they work. We draw from a case study of the world's largest philanthropic funder of marine conservation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and their 20 years of investment in marine conservation'. On the right side, there is a sidebar with a 'Figures, Tables' section containing links for 'Table 1', 'Table 2', and 'Appendix 1'.

Illustration. <https://ecologyandsociety.org/vol28/iss3/art2/>

There have been several analyses regarding the financial influence, as well as the power (i.e., the power to access experts and use scientific information) of foundations with statements of “philanthropic” activities (e.g., in nature reserves). Nevertheless, the study of Enrici et al. [1] also concentrated on examining how those foundations were organized, used resources, and directed the agenda. In other words, the information society can obtain from research activities is substantially influenced by the money invested in those activities.

In the study [1], only one “philanthropic” Foundation was discussed, but that Foundation is the largest Foundation for marine ecosystems conservation: David and Lucile Packard Foundation. The Foundation has been operating for around 20 years for conservation activities in Palau and Fiji.

Thus, it is conceivable that the information the world has received about Palau and Fiji’s marine environment for many years has been governed by Packard’s methods, quantity, and allocation mechanism of information.

The authors mentioned:

“As the global conservation agenda and associated funding travel to local contexts, donors must avoid overriding local conservation priorities and agendas.”

Then, they also addressed:

“We call upon the donor and practitioner communities to ensure that locally-based practitioners and associated communities play a significant role in shaping that influence.”

Both of these perspectives, directly and indirectly, are closely related to the semiconducting principle of economic-environmental value exchange [3]. More specifically, the study [1] contributed significantly to providing analysis and arguments for strengthening major propositions of the principles [3].

However, two critical factors were either not identified or were discussed very briefly in the study [1]: (a) The actual meaning of progress toward environmental sustainability and (b) Cultural systems. Although the words “value” and “culture” were hardly mentioned, their fundamental connotations appeared in the article.

References

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