



CONVIVA

Convivial Conservation

Convivial Conservation:

A novel approach to
protecting biodiversity





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Despite decades of intensifying conservation efforts, Earth's biodiversity is diminishing rapidly. Any hope of preserving what remains depends on transforming conservation policy and practice in innovative new directions.

Various strategies have been proposed to achieve better results. Two prominent ones point in opposite directions: to either [dramatically expand and connect the global system of protected areas](#); or to integrate conservation more directly with development by [subjecting biodiversity to the types of monetary valuation and accounting](#) that characterise business-as-usual economics.

Principles of Convivial Conservation

Our research shows that both strategies are ineffective and unjust. In our ongoing [global research project](#) we have developed an alternative, convivial form of conservation that goes beyond protected areas and economic valuation. It is grounded in the following principles:

Coexistence: Convivial conservation transcends protected areas to focus on building spaces where humans and other species can co-exist in relative harmony. This requires proactive measures to mitigate and manage potential conflicts.

Diversity: Convivial conservation protects biological and [biocultural diversity](#) equally. It respects different ways of being, knowing and doing practiced by peoples around the world.

Decommodification: Convivial conservation does not view nature as an economic resource or collection of "ecosystem services". Instead, it focuses on how the living environment is used and valued in different ways by integrated human and nonhuman communities.

Decolonization: Convivial conservation must actively decolonize. This means going beyond privileging institutions and forms of knowledge grounded in western rationality and imperialism that marginalize other ways of knowing and relating to the natural world.

Direct Democracy: Social justice in conservation demands that all relevant stakeholders are able to participate in deliberation and decision-making. All decisions that can effectively be reached at a local level should be, with higher-level processes supporting local autonomy and only intervening when action is needed that cannot be handled locally.

Redistribution: Mechanisms to redistribute wealth and resources are needed to support local people's ability to live without depending either on destructive resource extraction or submission to global markets.

Global Connections: While local communities should be supported in their conservation efforts, they should not be made solely responsible for biodiversity. After all, the greatest threats to biodiversity are not local people, but industrial extractive operations and the global connections that sustain them.

Moving Forward

These principles are inspired by real-world examples from around the globe. We understand that bringing them altogether into a coherent programme at scale will not be easy. It will require organization, political struggle and holistic policy-making grounded in a realistic theory of change. But these principles can help guide future action, even as actual interventions always need to be adapted to local circumstances in different places.

Indeed, we must do so. After all, the stakes – the very future of life on our planet – could not be higher.

Guided by these principles, we believe we can transform conservation into a formidable force for progressive transformation.

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**“CONVIVIAL
CONSERVATION
PROTECTS
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EQUALLY.”**



About the project

The CONVIVA - convivial conservation - research project develops new convivial (literally: 'living with') approaches to understanding and practising environmental conservation, with a particular focus on bears, jaguars, wolves and lions. It aims to establish a truly transformational approach to conservation that benefits both wildlife and humans, and that combines structural change with grassroots solutions to promote co-existence, (cultural and bio)diversity and justice. It is funded by the generous support of NORFACE/Belmont Forum. All views expressed are those of the authors, not the funding body or other organizations.

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