

(ECONOMÍA ECOLÓGICA DESDE ABAJO)  
ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS FROM BELOW

David Barkin

Abstract

If Ecological Economics (EE) is to inform the transition to societies capable of living within the bounds imposed by nature, it must assume the epistemological and ethical challenges that this involves. This requires a renewed commitment to explore alternative forms of social organization that remove themselves from the marketplace and the overwhelming influence of a single measure of value on all resources and activities. Indoamerican communities are directly engaged in a whole panoply of activities to protect the megadiversity of their ecosystems, strengthening their ability to manage collectively their territories by creating new spheres for social and political organization. These experiences offer a unique opportunity for us to apply EE to understand better the interaction of socio-economic and biological dynamics, now encapsulated in the concept of “social metabolism.” This paper explores the contributions that a number of these communities are making to integrate effectively the various dimensions of society and nature into a single process of ‘sustainable’ socio-ecosystem management. The varied practices of the many communities engaged in these activities reflect an epistemic break with “normal science” to add new meaning to the contributions of post-normal and transdisciplinary analysis. The analysis examines the ways in which these new forms of organizing social activity transform metabolic processes from below, contributing to the conservation of the global commons while also improving the quality of life of people in these communities.

Abstract theme: inter, trans, cross, and multi-disciplinarity, social conflict