

Neoliberalism and *Homo Consumens*: Critical Reflections on Ecotourism, and Seeking Possibilities in Sustainable Tourism

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The enchantment with Neoliberalism¹ could be dated back to the mid twentieth century. It marked the rise of a political and economic ideology that lords over almost every dimension of our lives in the twenty first century. Consumption is the prime signifier of identity/ies in the contemporary times, the paramount preoccupation of modern man. Erich Fromm's 1965 mock Latin category of *Homo Consumens*² to provide primarily a description of the individual tethered to her class, and perennially consuming to compensate for hidden voids, has turned out to be timelessly appropriate. "I shop; therefore, I am"³— this 1987 catchphrase has become our current sacred, the philosophy we live by. Free-market capitalism has provided the means for us to exist in this bewildering intermesh of time, space, matter, and speed. According to the World Bank, almost 4.5 billion inhabitants of this planet, which accounts for 56% of the world population, now live in cities that generate over 80% of the global GDP, thus pointing to one of the key motives of urbanisation – to serve commercial and consumption conveniences.⁴ And since nothing is free from the nurturing shadows of the free-market, nature too is marketized and bartered to consumer-initiates as the *authentic* means to gratify the hunger for getaways from the quotidian human domesticities. Commoditization of "nature" begins with the symbiotic production and kitschy circulation of myriad images/totemisations of nature in the free market, and the market-dictated fantasies and desires of "authentic natural experiences". In the current deluge of digital realities and techno-industrial advancements, nature is commodified in myriad ways, and in faster loops of time. The neoliberal philosophy of tourism industry is to carefully and subtly blur the line between the natural, the authentic, and the privatized, organized, curated and mediated representations of nature. In current times, mainstream tourism industries focus on subtly selling multidimensional, emotionally seductive consumeristic/touristic experiences, they now shape their clients' imagination of "nature" or a vacation, in radical departure from the earlier direct selling of services and goods that facilitated touristic acts and adventures. This transformation entails the manufacturing of desires, new strategies of market-growth. The social, cultural, economic and environmental implications of this new avatar of tourism have undergone careful, scholarly scrutiny, expanding the discourse of ecotourism. This paper is yet another academic exploration of nature-based tourism and sustainability, which seeks to take a close look at multiple dimensions of ecotourism and its global-local trail, followed by the quest for viable alternatives in sustainable tourism.

¹ According to David Harvey, "Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade." (*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, p.2). The free markets and free trade however have been seen to chain classes with less access to capital, and systematically deplete them of symmetries of access to life chances.

² Erich Fromm applies his almost mocking Latin term *Homo Consumens* to "the man whose main goal is not to primarily *own* things, but to *consume* more and more, and thus to compensate for his inner vacuity, passivity, loneliness, and anxiety" (*Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, p. 214).

³ In her artwork installation "I shop therefore I am" (1987), Barbara Kruger implies that the individual and mass are no longer defined by what s/he/they think, but by what they own or buy.

⁴ As the World Bank website further notes, "Today, some 56% of the world's population – 4.4 billion inhabitants – live in cities. This trend is expected to continue, with the urban population more than doubling its current size by 2050, at which point nearly 7 of 10 people will live in cities. With more than 80% of global GDP generated in cities, urbanization can contribute to sustainable growth through increased productivity and innovation if managed well".

See "Strengthening Urban Management and Service Delivery through Performance-Based Fiscal Transfers." The World bank, 8 Dec. 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment>.

Marx's poetic line "all that is solid melts in air" from *The Communist Manifesto* (p. 12) served George Ritzer and Paul Dean well while attempting to conceptualize globalization⁵ in their title *Globalization: The Essentials* (2019). Using the ideas of solidity⁶ and liquidity⁷ for the purposes of conceptualizing globalization, Ritzer & Dean reflect, "It is clear that if one wanted to use a single term to describe globalization today, liquidity (as well as the closely related idea of *flows*) would be at or near the top of the list".⁸

The above ideas of liquidity and flows⁹ correspond to what we generally perceive as globalization today — the interconnectivity and mobility amongst nations, people, objects, systems, and almost any social, political, economic and cultural data or entity across the globe. It could be seen as a colossal garage sale of uniformity and homogeneity, taking recourse to the euphemism of global interconnectedness. Global economy is interconnected/interdependent now more than ever, thus signifying that the reign of global markets on all micro and macro domains of life can be considered to have peaked. Free-market capitalism is enshrined as the nucleus of the neoliberal model, ensuring limited government interventions or regulations, privatization of enterprises and assets, and trans/cross national trade liberations — all for the sake of uninhibited market-oriented policies. One globalized plot seems to be to shepherd the world into a gigantic uniformity disguised behind universal unity, the other is of unregulated privatization leading to severe atomization of humans — but the nexus has one shared goal, to build and sustain a web of sheer profitability, and erase "items" that may not be marketable with profit. Within this nexus of globalization and neoliberalism, ecotourism has sensed an opportunity for exponential growth; modern advancements in information communication and transportation facilitate ample fluid mobility, fueling the late capitalist cravings for "authentic natural experiences" among consumers.

In their paper *The Neoliberalization of Nature: Governance, Privatization, Enclosure and Valuation* (2005), Nik Heynen and Paul Robbins analyse the process of privatization and valuation of natural resources¹⁰ and the invaluable complex ecosystems that are reduced to commodities through pricing. In this paper they mention Marx and Engels twice at the very beginning of the introduction!

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus, the first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relationship to the rest of nature ... All historical writing must set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men. (*The German Ideology* 37)

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. (*The Communist Manifesto* 54)

⁵ Ritzer & Dean note that globalization constitutes "Planetary process(es) involving increasing liquidity and growing multidirectional flows, as well as the structures they encounter and create" (p. 2).

⁶ Also, Ritzer & Dean contend "Solidity: People, things, information, and places 'harden' over time and therefore have limited mobility" (Ritzer & Dean p. 11).

⁷ Ritzer & Dean look at the phenomenon of liquidity as "The increasing ease of movement of people, things, information, and places in the global ages." (Ritzer & Dean p. 14).

⁸ Ritzer & Dean p. 14.

⁹ "Flows: The movement of people, things, information, and places due, in part, to the increasing porosity of global barriers." (Ritzer & Dean p. 15).

¹⁰ Heynen & Robbins describe valuation as "the process through which invaluable and complex ecosystems are reduced to commodities through pricing." ("The Neoliberalization of Nature: Governance, Privatization, Enclosure and Valuation" pp. 5-8.)

Through these words, Marx and Engels emphasize upon the interconnectedness of nature and human societies to discuss the chase of profits and expansions by the capitalist class for the purposes of market growth and hegemonic dominance by any means necessary. Accordingly, neoliberalization of nature refers to incorporation of nature and its resources in the neoliberal framework, so that the free-market economy could then commoditize nature through convoluted processes of privatization, valuation, and marketization. In simpler words, what neoliberalism does to nature is to demarcate, organize, customize, put up specialized or general price-tags, and expose it accordingly to whet the fancies and appetites of different consumer classes. This involves the creation of images or representations of nature that the consumers/tourists fantasize, desire, and hope to consume.

In his book chapter “Nature, Inc” (2017), Paterson reflects about the complexities that steer nature-human interactions. He observes:

Natural phenomena and events are signposted, our attention is directed to certain things and not others, and so our consumption is often of particular signs and representations of nature. There is a particular way of seeing that becomes cultivated, partly the result of fantasies and daydreams concerning the natural world that we wish to buy into, and which are subsequently sold back to us in commoditized form, as advertisements, theme-park rides and eco-friendly products. (*Consumption and Everyday Life* p. 114)

Part of the first-person experience of consuming nature-the-commodity comprises a certain level of irrationality, of daydreaming and desiring paradoxes such as speed and being hearthed in alternatives at the same time. With the undercurrent of irrationality and the endless appetite of consumer societies, *advertisements*, the poetry of free-market capitalism, construct images that induce both the desire for consumption and the status quo that tags along. We become what we buy, and we buy what we desire to become — no better epigram to touch base with Pierre Bourdieu’s idea of *habitus*,¹¹ which refers to the convoluted processes, often of sameness, through which human beings desire certain things on the basis of personal and collective perceptions of social worlds, encompassing how choices are navigated, lifestyles are chased after and negotiated. Clothes, food, lifestyle, vacations to scenic, natural destinations to escape the dismal urbanity — all these determine the class of the consumer, dictate perceptions and aspirations to be catapulted to the fantasized/desired categories. Thorstein Veblen’s observation of the *nouveaux riches*¹² and the assumed model of social emulation¹³ explain that the dictators of fashion, luxuries, and even innovation are mostly emulated by people lower down the scales of economic class, thus indicating certain nodes of desires to ascend to and identify with the upper classes. Veblen’s category of “conspicuous consumption”¹⁴ thus helps understand that ecotourism is not just a matter of idling around in the wilderness to discover the

¹¹ Paterson, while writing on the notions of consumption and identity, reflects on *habitus*: “It is a function of the *habitus*, the way of perceiving and negotiating the social world, so that our choice of olive oil over vegetable oil derives from being socialized into choosing the supposedly healthier option.” (*Consumption and Everyday Life* p. 46).

¹² *Consumption and Everyday Life* p. 39.

¹³ Thorstein Veblen (1857–1929) wrote about emulation through consumption practices in his classic 1924 title *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1994). In it he looks at the then newly wealthy bourgeois leisure class in New England. These *nouveaux riches* mostly gained their great wealth from manufacturing and industry, and Veblen noted how, through their consumption patterns such as styles of dress and food, they emulated upper-class life in Europe.” (Qtd. in *Consumption and Everyday Life* p. 19).

¹⁴ “Veblen noted there were two ways that their wealth could be displayed, to provide them with an elite social status. What he called “pecuniary standing” could be indicated by “conspicuous consumption”, the purchase and display of expensive and tasteful commodities, and “conspicuous leisure”, the ability to distance oneself from the dirty, sordid details of production through living a life of leisure, learning and travel.” (Qtd. in *Consumption and Everyday Life* p.116).

leisure and pleasures that nature had to offer or which consumers could ingeniously tap into or even extract, it is an act of demarcating social positions. Tourism is predominantly a first-world pursuit that often involves the consumption – and pollution – of third-world resources. “‘Right to roam’, ‘back to nature’, ‘natural retreat’” — are slogans braided into the proliferating narratives of particular consumer classes, not exclusively from developed countries anymore, that help to access how something “other” and “outside” of the everyday urban, human domesticity is desired. According to John Urry, “Central to much tourism is some notion of departure, particularly that there are distinct contrasts between what people routinely see and experience and what is extraordinary” (Paterson 117).

One of the foundational pillars of the neoliberal model is the continuous increase of the desire to consume more and more in order to gratify a paradoxical nexus of the personal urge to attain the freedom of making choices to consume, and the counter social urge of becoming one with the fantasized/desired, dictating social classes. For the financially ableist, including the rich folks, upper class, upper and middle middle-class, financial and social capitals lead to decisions, thus turning their fantasies into desires and decisions that could be implemented. Whereas, in case of the lower middle classes, regardless of however much the exposure, consuming those very digital contents of tourism becomes the means to the end of gratification. It is evident that due to the lack of resources and capacities, the level of gratification does not surpass fantasy or daydreaming for the lower economic classes, making it somewhat, but not entirely similar to attaining voyeuristic pleasures.¹⁵

At the beginning of all acts of consuming nature, the free market cultivates for both kinds of consumption a specific kind of attention, a particular way of seeing, with the support of a vast network of resources. The political economy¹⁶ of this special kind of attention is hinted at in the previous sections: this attention is predominantly performed by the upper categories of social classes, mostly from the developed countries, and the objects of consumption and the connected network of supporting services are associated with the lower classes, predominantly from the less-developed countries. John Urry famously defines this particular way of seeing as the “tourist gaze”,¹⁷ similar to Laura Mulvey’s “male gaze”¹⁸ or Michel Foucault’s “medical gaze”,¹⁹ where he exemplifies how knowledge is entangled with power dynamics and how particular forms of knowledge assert control over individuals. In the context of tourism, this knowledge can be compared to the spectacle, meaning that particular forms of spectacles can exert control/hegemonic dominance over individuals and collectives interacting with these spectacles. As Paterson argues, “Central to this mode of heightened

¹⁵ Voyeuristic pleasure corresponds to the idea of attaining excitement or interest in watching others in their privacy, usually the invocation of voyeuristic pleasure has sexual and illicit connotations in most cases. The term has been extended in its application to other kinds of forbidden pleasures across domains, as in this paper.

¹⁶ “Political Economy”, as described in the Encyclopedia Britannica, is the “academic discipline that explores the relationship between individuals and society and between markets and the state, using methods drawn from economics, political science, and sociology. The term is derived from the Greek terms *polis* (city or state) and *oikonomos* (one who manages a household). Political economy is thus concerned with how countries are managed, taking into account both political and economic factors.” (“Britannica, Encyclopaedia.” *Britannica concise encyclopedia*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 2008.).

¹⁷ “It is the consuming of images, representations, and predominantly visual experiences at first hand, yet also involves the consumption of a vast supporting network of resources in order to facilitate this gaze, such as use of transport systems, accommodation, finance and monetary circulation, and much else besides.” (Paterson p.117).

¹⁸ The term was popularized fifty years ago, by the British film theorist Laura Mulvey, who wrote in a 1973 essay titled “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” of how the “male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly”.

Qtd. Jackson, Lauren Michele. “The Invention of ‘The Male Gaze.’” *The New Yorker*, 14 July 2023, www.newyorker.com/books/second-read/the-invention-of-the-male-gaze.)

¹⁹ Foucault, Michel, and Alan Sheridan. *The Birth of the Clinic*. Routledge eBooks, 2002, doi.org/10.4324/9780203406373, pp. 30-31.

receptivity is the consumption of particular signs, markers, or representations, the tourists' attention being directed to them through an anticipative engagement with discourses of travel and nature through brochures and advertisements for example." (p. 117).

Veblen's idea of "spectacular consumption"²⁰ is the kind which involves consuming these signs, markers, images, representations, or in one word "spectacles", of the mediated experiences of nature. The visuo-locus²¹ preservice/motive regarding any ecotourist attraction is now routed in seconds through the marvels of advanced, digital media platforms like Metaverse (formerly Facebook), Instagram, YouTube, to billions of spectators all over the world, gazing towards nature through the simulacra generated by the touristic activities of travel influencers. Influencer industry today constitutes the key cultural and economic phenomena that imagineer the fantasies of the consumers/tourists to see themselves in the objects of desires, or in other words, the exact, showcased experiences and perfected perfections. It is obvious that the relationship of tourism and advertisements plays a pivotal role in the growth of tourism industry. Advertisements induce the travel-bug desires in the consumers with its showcased narratives and glossy visuals, while also disseminating essential information like tourist packages and their prices, accommodation and transport facilities, overall costs, promotional deals and offers, available options of facilities and amenities, and the rest of the experiences that fit into a package and are sold for a price to the seeking and willing customers. Destination branding to maintain branding identities is not limited to the traditional modes of ad circulation anymore — the visuo-locus preservice is done in better ways through the internet and especially social media, serial storytelling, user generated contents, influencer marketing, reviews and recommendation facilities. Despite such avowed graces, grave concerns like over-tourism, invasion of privacy, and potential for proliferation of misleading information and disinformation lurk as the shadow-narratives to branded ecotourism.

On that note, the illusory promises of satisfaction made by both economic and culture industries have been noted by Adorno and Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) in the context of the "pseudo-pleasures" that are being offered through different media platforms as "authentic" or "real":

The culture industry endlessly cheats its consumers out of what it endlessly promises. The promissory note of pleasure issued by plot and packaging is indefinitely prolonged: the promise, which actually comprises the entire show, disdainfully intimates that there is nothing more to come, that the diner must be satisfied with the menu. (p. 111)

And the menus are full of many items, comprised of needs far too many for consumers to choose from. This has led to depoliticized conformity,²² effectively limiting our goals and actions to those realizable within the neoliberal framework, signifying the dimming possibilities of heterogeneity, and the slow wreckage of the capacity to have any authenticity, dream of alterity, or uniqueness of experience, or of memory. Consumer capitalism breeds types of consumers who are alienated, unreflexively inward-looking and routinised, where there is no real separation between work and leisure, and the natural and not-natural, where the most that can be obtained are forms of pseudo-

²⁰ "Spectacles are rich, complex visual images and environments which convey cultural meanings that are then integrated into consumers' understandings of reality" (Paterson p.111).

²¹ The term is used to convey the capture of any particular place, or in this context, tourist destination through visuals or images.

²² The phrase "depoliticized conformity" conveys the state of individuals or collectives conforming to the mainstream and established practices and codes without any critical, mindful, or thoughtful examinations or questioning of the rites and their subtexts, as in our contemporary context.

enjoyment. The free-market, like an organism, is aware that consumers have the urge of relief from what is urban, industrial and domestic, mostly to create the perfect Instagram or TikTok moment. And the escape from the mundane might happen for a moment, but the rejoice and contentment of the mind and soul remain perpetually unfulfilled in the urge to poach that moment for the camera and experience-hungry browsers on social media. Greater, more innovative and powerful forces of capitalism at play, consistently lure consumers towards purchasing newer packages of promises, pleasures, and most importantly, experiences.

In recent years, a widespread turn of transition in touristic practices and growth strategies is being observed throughout the world. With the rise of “experience economy”,²³ the industry now focuses upon the much-heralded authentic and emotionally moving encounters with nature or “experiential ecotourism” — the game is to sell *experiences* rather than selling *services*. According to Pine & Gilmore, in their paper *Welcome to the Experience Economy* (1998), commoditization of experiences has emerged as the “next step in what we call the progression of economic value.” (Pine & Gilmore, p. 2). They continue:

Commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible, and experiences *memorable*. Buyers of experiences ... value what the company reveals over a duration of time. While prior economic offerings — commodities, goods, and services — are external to the buyer, experiences are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of the individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level. Thus, no two people can have the same experience, because each experience derives from the interaction between the staged event ... and the individual’s state of mind.²⁴

Modern ecotourists now long for emotionally resonant encounters that could create connections and memories rather than the enjoying of externalities such as facilities, and amenities. The desire for ever-elusive authenticity through meaningful interactions – even as the individual’s world gets increasingly atomized, mechanized, and robbed of meaning – have presented newer horizons of commoditization in the realm of ecotourism, making experiential ecotourism²⁵ yet another exciting package to subscribe to. Imagination, apparently the last forte of dissent and incubating alternatives, seems to have at last been harnessed to the corporate harpooning of “experience” for clients.

The apparent much circulated “delicate” quality of experiential ecotourism lies in its immersive character, it is argued, signifying the tapestry of emotional, intellectual, and personal experiences that tourists can gain from their adventure expeditions. In the context of experiential ecotourism, the theoretical paradigm²⁶ of political economy reveals the multiplex intricacies of social, cultural, economic, and political aspects that shape and are shaped by touristic and industry practices, offering insights into the structure and impact of experiential ecotourism. This can genuinely foster cultural exchanges between visitors and locals, allowing tourists chances to take part in customary and cultural

²³ Experience economy is a concept/practice that indicates the shift in economic value from the mere exchange of services and goods to the delivery of emotional, intellectual and spiritual experience to consumers in the context of ecotourism. See Pine, B. Joseph, and James H. Gilmore. *The Experience Economy*. Harvard Business Press, 2011.

²⁴ Pine, B. Joseph, and James H. Gilmore. “Welcome to the experience economy.” Vol. 76. No. 4. Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1998, pp. 3-4.

²⁵ Experiential ecotourism refers to the globally widespread, commercial touristic practices of selling immersive tour packages.

²⁶ Theoretical paradigm corresponds to an architecture of ideas or discursive framework around any particular phenomenon or domain of study, which could introduce one to the major positions and debates in the domain.

practices which aid to shift focus from external perspectives to internal storytelling. As a result, local communities get to share their history, values, and ways of life on their own terms, empowering their individual and collective agencies, and their narratives of community cultures and heritages. Local artists, business owners, and service providers benefit from the direct payments from activities like culinary courses, handicrafts, workshops, and escorted nature excursions which cause an economic boost resulting in new jobs, lower unemployment rates, and better general living conditions. Communities too could thus be nudged into retaining their ancient customs, crafts, and traditions to cater to the touristic needs of authentic experiences, creating the urge to preserve social and cultural practices that may otherwise have been in danger of dissipation. The promise of environmental and ecological benefit is to be noted, it is argued, due to the possibilities of the enhancement of physical, spiritual and “true” value of nature, ecosystems, wildlife and biodiversity, and diverse communities. Hopes are subsequently raised for the development of individual and collective consciousness towards eco-sustainability, conservation and pluralism amongst tourists, through touristic practices. The economic support created by experiential ecotourism could also potentially aid protection and preservation activities, recovering natural landscapes and biological and social diversities from the existing impairments.

Using the lens of political economy, the counter-arguments to the above alibis for the rage of eco-tourism could be that these very touristic activities can perpetuate post/neocoloniality by exoticizing/commoditizing local cultures and traditions of different communities considered to be tourist attractions, potentially leading to erosion of authenticity, real manifestations of identities, and cultural significance of those communities due to the superficial performances that are organized, sanitized, and overblown exclusively to deliver touristic expectations. The economic benefits generated from ecotourism are often disproportionately funneled to the dictating corporations, foreign and domestic investors, agencies, enterprises and local groups that facilitate tourism, leaving local and marginalized communities with illusory promises, very limited influence or ownership over developmental decision-and-policy-making, directions and interests, and insignificant amounts of economic gains/revenues. Such inequalities exacerbate the already existing social, political, and economic disparities in the communities. The concern of overtourism in this context would involve the inundation of tourists, thus potentially leading to the exploitation of local resources, infrastructures, and ecosystems, lowering the qualities of lives of natural environments and communities, with possibilities of inducing the sense of invasion. And the communities that rely too much on tourist revenue become vulnerable to economic downturns, or changes in traveler preferences that may stifle the growth of diverse and robust local economies.

As modern tourism becomes increasingly intensive and ever-more commercial, sustainable tourism practices comprise the avenue now being explored by different countries, cultures, and concerned stakeholders. Tourism, no matter how often it provides decent scope to develop economic opportunities and local populations, is stitched to risks of commoditization of ecology, heritage, culture, and communities. Striking a balance between the external inputs and local uniquenesses is a difficult, but not impossible act. Since the discussions above have been about the commodity-consumer nexus regarding ecotourism, the individual and collective touristic practices would deem to hold very significant weights. Tourists making conscious choices of prioritizing non-encroachment into local cultures, communities, and ecosystems, supporting local artisans, and sensitively conducting responsible cultural exchanges are ways that can possibly do some damage control, given the norm of hyper-consumeristic activities. The role of government and regulatory bodies is pivotal in shaping ethical and sustainable ecotourism with the implementation and enforcement of regulations that promote responsible tourism practices, such as waste management, building codes, providing handloom or GI tags and regular monitoring of the use of such tags, and visitor limits in sensitive

areas. It is also crucial to designate protected areas, invest in infrastructures, and ensure that tourism development aligns with long-term environmental and social goals since the challenges and resistances presented by neoliberal ideologies prioritizing profit growth over everything are extremely resilient. Engaging in productive dialogues with community and corporate stakeholders, non-government entities, activists, as well as multifarious academic and research experts would ensure nuanced understandings in shaping the necessary policies to ensure collaborative efforts, transparent governance and regulations, and long-term, innovative planning to achieve sustainable ecotourism. Environment and culture friendly practices, transparency in supply chains, supporting fair labor practices, investment in local community development, and balancing accountability and profitability are some of the corporate responsibilities that need to be implemented in praxis, as opposed to corporate lip services and adverse realities. The ongoing endeavors of academia, concerned organizations, and activist groups creating platforms of scrutiny, dialogue, and knowledge sharing kindle the hope of transforming individual perceptions and states of mind, consequentially causing mass awareness and amelioration in times of cacophonous consumption.

Acknowledging the abundance of inter/multidisciplinary scope to further explore the issues discussed, and given their virulent spread, we humbly convey the difficulty to even allude to a conclusion or solution. But, given the discussions above, two subtle, enigmatic questions arise: 1) Will there be any scope left to trek the mountains, see the sea, explore the most of this beautiful, diverse planetary ecology without subscribing to neoliberal plutomania²⁷? 2) Will we allow hegemony to triumph over harmony? Because the ways in which “nature” is being neoliberalized everyday induces premonitions difficult to shake off: the further amputation of essences of life, alienation, secession from uniquenesses and planetarity, diversity, and continued cultivation of crude homogeneity — our cameras becoming the primary medium to see and adjudicate, screens becoming the world to scroll, the perpetuity of competition and consumption as sole means of pleasures dictated by class and money, the rush of promotions, card swipes, narcissistic extremities, and emptiness — all in order to serve the grand design of markets and enterprises to generate profits, free to benefit the way it wants, when it wants, feeding off us, the subject and object of the grand neoliberal scheme, the *Homo Consumens*. Without further logorrhea from this perpetually perplexing feeling, here go the lyrics of a song by Jack Johnson, entitled *Gone*, on our cannibalizing times:

*Look at all those fancy clothes
But these gonna keep us warm, just like those
What about your soul?
Is it cold?
Is it straight from the mold and ready to be sold?*

...

*Look at you out to make a deal
You try to be appealing but you lose your appeal
What about those shoes you're in today?
They'll do no good on the bridges you brought along the way, oh
You willing to sell anything, gone with your head*

²⁷ Plutomania is a term used to describe an extreme obsession with wealth, accumulation of material possessions, and the pursuit of financial success. It is a combination of “Pluto”, the term for the Greek god of wealth or riches, and “mania”, which denotes an intense and often irrational enthusiasm or obsession. The term is often used to critique excessive materialism and prioritization of financial gain over possibilities of other values.

*Leave your footprints, well shame them with our words
Gone people, all careless and consumed, gone*

Gone

Goin'

Gone everything

Gone give a damn

Gone be the birds if they don't want to sing

Gone people all awkward with their things

Gone

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