Impacts of Narco-Degradation on Protected Areas in Central America: A Critical Ecological Economics Approach

Brief Summary

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- We document the monetary value of environmental degradation in five PA drug trafficking hot spots. Between 2001 and 2010, we estimate net losses reaching approximately $88 million per year, equivalent to almost twice the national budgets that Central American nations dedicate to their PAs in 2016 (47 million).
- Our included areas only amount to about 40% of the total area under protection. If our estimate is extrapolated to all the area under protected areas it would amount to about $214.6 million per year.
- We also document the social costs of DT in terms of “ecological distribution conflicts” (EDC). We identify sixteen EDCs occurring in the protected areas studied that may be related to DT.
- The majority of EDCs identified show high intensity, implying violence against social and environmental systems.
- The most affected populations are indigenous and rural communities. DT aggravates the environmental injustices already present in the region, linked to neo-extractivist activities like large plantation activities, cattle ranching and mining.
- Our findings suggest that strengthening participatory environmental governance may help prevent these impacts of drug trafficking.