Political Ecology of Tourism

Drawing on recent trends in geography, anthropology and environmental and tourism studies, the chapters in this anthology employ a political ecology approach to the analysis of tourism development and impacts on the community and environment.

The volume begins by chronicling interdisciplinary perspectives on political ecology of tourism as well as how the subject has been treated in tourism studies to date. It addresses why political ecology has been given so little attention, despite the widespread consideration of the environment and politics in tourism studies. As the chapters in this anthology make clear, political ecologies of tourism are mediated by a range of political, economic and cultural relations of power. As a result of these relations, some ecological concerns are privileged while others are marginalized. This book advances our understanding of the role of political, economic and environmental concerns in tourism development and impacts on the community and environment. It offers the reader a critical and empirically grounded understanding of the contemporary relevance of political ecology to address tourism-related issues such as power, uneven development, environmentalism, globalization and political economy.

This book will be valuable reading for those interested in the intersection of geography, anthropology and tourism studies.

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Introduction

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As we write this introduction, there are more planes flying tourists across the globe than ever before and sea levels are rising faster than ever anticipated. Simultaneously, climate change threatens the lives and livelihoods of millions of people internationally as the global tourism industry continues to grow at unprecedented rates. Many small island nations – often economically dependent on international tourism – have been compelled to purchase land on higher ground to relocate their citizens. Kiribati in Micronesia, for example, has acquired 20square kilometers of land in Fiji, some 1,200 miles away. Meanwhile, the government of Fiji continues to explore new ways of increasing international tourist arrivals, while simultaneously striving to account for and address the integral links between tourism and climate change (in 2007 the country merged its Ministries of the Environment and Tourism). Tripadvisor.com's Best Hotel in the World award put the Maldives, an Indian Ocean island nation, back into the international tourism spotlight in 2015 (tripadvisor.com). And yet, by the year 2100, it is expected that much of the islands comprising the Maldives will be submerged. The Maldivian government now puts the revenue it collects from tourism towards the purchase of higher ground abroad on which to eventually relocate its residents, who are among the world's most at-risk climate refugees-in-waiting (Kothari, 2014). Emergent markets such as 'last chance' (Eijgelaar *et al*., 2010; Hall *et al*., 2010; Lemelin *et al*., 2013) and 'apocalyptic' (Tucker and Shelton, 2014) tourism are indicative of a growing societal consciousness about global environmental crises. More tellingly perhaps, is how tourism has emerged as an increasingly popular reaction to this emerging consciousness.

Tourism-as-environmental-end-game has in many ways become a seemingly logical outcome of the global nature of late capitalism. Newly emerging economies such as Myanmar (Burma) rapidly tap into the global tourism market as they simultaneously displace millions of residents for expeditious tourism development along coastlines, engendering a perhaps new kind of refugee: the 'tourism refugee'. In Kenya, meanwhile, tens of thousands of Maasai people have been dispossessed of their homes through the allocation of game reserves for tourists; they continue to battle with the government over access to their ancestral lands,

which they need to graze cattle, their primary livelihood, just as they are compelled to commoditize their local culture for tourists consumption (Bruner, 2001). These events represent the spread of tourist habitat and the myriad economic, ecological, social and political processes that accompany what is often described as neoliberal engagement with conservation (Brockington *et al*., 2008, p. 131).

In this introduction we lay out a framework for understanding the impact of the spread of tourist habitats, using a *political ecology* approach in order to better understand relationships between tourism, communities, politics and the environment. The chapters in this collection draw on theoretical and case studies that span Central and South America to Africa, and from South, Southeast and East Asia to Europe and the High Arctic. While geographically broad in scope, this collection of chapters illustrates how tourism-related environmental challenges are shared across vast geographical distances while also attending to the nuanced ways they materialize in local contexts and therefore demand the historically situated, place-based and multi-scalar approach of political ecology.

Political ecology is perhaps more relevant now than ever before as global economic, social and environmental integration intensifies at unprecedented rates. Part of this intensified integration is the expansion of our 'knowledge of, and sensitivity to, transborder and global forms of environmental harm (ozone depletion, global climate change, toxic dumping), and the extent to which green issues are legislated through inter-state agreements' (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 4). Political ecologists' perspectives on the environment illustrate how power and structural relations at different scales have implications for local people's natural resource management and land use practices. In addition to these multiple scales of analysis, political ecology scholarship has the benefit of being diachronic in that they attend to historical factors that contribute to land use change and variability as well as to human–environment relations.

Before examining emerging themes in the political ecology of tourism, this introduction first asks the fundamental question: What is political ecology? While never intended to be a unified theory, perspective or methodology, political ecology is an approach to enquiry that focuses on historically situated, place-based and multi-scalar perspectives of ecological change, and their deep linkages to a range of social relations. We then present a brief review of academic literature linking political ecology *with* tourism, as well as outline a starting point for developing a conceptual framework for the political ecology *of* tourism. Finally, we examine a triad of core, linked themes (communities and power; conservation and control; development and conflict) shared by political ecology and tourism studies scholars around which we have organized this collection, addressing the rationale for this tripartite division of chapters.

We intend for this collection to serve as a thoughtful point of departure for new conversations that address the overlapping agendas of political ecology and tourism studies, as well as broader academic engagements with the relationship between tourism and communities, conservation and development. It is our hope that scholars from across a range of disciplinary backgrounds will find connections between their own work and the critical issues addressed in these chapters.

What is political ecology?

In this anthology, we examine both what political ecology is and how it is a productive – if under-utilized – analytical lens in tourism studies. Political ecology is an interdisciplinary framework with which to examine ecological matters from a broadly defined political economy perspective (Bryant and Goodman, 2006; Peet and Watts, 2004; Rocheleau *et al*., 2013; Sparke, 2007; Paulson *et al*., 2005). Yet, as Paul Robbins has notably declared, '[o]ne need not be a political ecologist to mobilize the resources, or learn from the insights, of political ecology' (2012, p. viii). Furthermore, political ecology signifies a community of practice and denotes various qualities of a text, rather than standing as a method, theory or *single* perspective. Rather, political ecology as:

> an urgent kind of argument or text (or book, or mural, or movie, or blog) that examines winners or losers, is narrating using dialectics, begins and/or ends in a contradiction, and surveys both the status of nature and stories about the status of nature.
>
> (Robbins, 2012, p. viii)

Political ecology studies:

> (t)rack winners and losers to understand the persistent structures of winning and losing; are narrated using human–non-human dialectics; start from, or end in, a contradiction; simultaneously make claims about the state of nature and claims about claims about the state of nature.
>
> (Robbins, 2012, p. 87)

Stories of winning and losing are 'stories of justice and injustice', where environmental actions 'have causes and consequences that are uneven between communities, classes and groups' (ibid.). These consequences must be understood as being 'non-incidental, persistent and repetitive: a structure of outcomes that produces losers at the expense of winners'. Political ecology attempts to understand the complexities of how 'winners and losers' come to be situated within 'lose-lose' outcomes. In terms of human–nonhuman dialectics, 'things are relations' and

> dialectical stories, as those typically narrated by political ecologists, rarely focus on how individual things . . . cause outcomes or explain other things in a straightforward way, but instead how things and relations change by becoming entangled with one another . . . things come to explain one another.
>
> (ibid., p. 94–5)

This idea of mutual entanglement is at the heart of political ecological thinking. Building on this analytical framework, each chapter in this collection examines ways in which some of the most critical issues of our time – e.g. global economic and social inequality, human displacement, environmental degradation, natural resource competition – are linked to tourism. Indeed:

> [c]entral to the new political ecology is a sensitivity to environmental politics as a process of cultural mobilization, and the ways in which such cultural practices – whether science, or 'traditional' knowledge, or discourses, or risk, or property rights – are contested, fought over and negotiated.
>
> (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 4)

Originating as a critique of an allegedly apolitical cultural ecology and ecological anthropology, political ecology illustrates the unavoidable entanglement of political economy with ecological concerns (Zimmerer, 2006). Additionally, in political ecology scholarship, we observe a shift in focus from local to cross-scale analysis. Political ecologists are often concerned with the influence of transnational political and economic processes on local, cultural-specific contexts (Clarke *et al*., 2008, p. 28; Peet and Watts, 2004; Robbins, 2012). Additionally, the almost exclusive focus on 'Third World' political ecology has broadened to include 'First World' political ecology scholarship as well as opened up to include the relationship between the two (McCarthy, 2002). Thus clear distinctions between so-called First and Third World political ecologies are increasingly blurred by more nuanced understandings of global and local environmental relationships (Bryant and Bailey, 1997). Despite its now widespread use by social scientists, political ecology has never occupied a single coherent theoretical position, in part, because the specific definitions of politics, ecology and political economy are themselves hard to isolate and delineate (Igoe, 2010; Igoe, 2013; Watts and Peet, 2004). In its broadest sense, political ecology scholarship examines how the various articulations of politics and the economy are interconnected with ecology. Studies of neoliberalism and its entanglements with the environment, for example, are frequent topics of political ecologists' examination (Heynen *et al*., 2007; McCarthy, 2005; McCarthy and Prudham, 2004). Building on critical theory approaches such as green Marxism and post-structuralism, political ecology scholars foreground the dialectics of nature and society and provide new ways to think about the relationship between tourism, politics, economics, culture, and the material world. Watts and Peet explain that,

> [i]f political ecology stood for anything from the beginning, it was not about blaming the poor or the rich for environmental change, but examining the social relations of production and the broader political economy of which actors, particularly but not exclusively land-based managers, were part.
>
> (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 41)

In their seminal text, *Land Degradation and Society* (1987), Blaikie and Brookfield define political ecology as considerations of ecology inflected by a broadly defined political economy, encompassing 'the constantly shifting dialectic between society and land-based resources, and also within classes and groups within society itself' (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987, p. 17). Blaikie and Brookfield were instrumental in pushing forward the 'plural approach' to the meaning of ecological practices in so far as 'one person's profit was another's toxic dump' (Blaikie and

Brookfield, 1987, p. 10), a point reiterated by Robbins (2004; 2012), among others. Political ecology now contains a sort of 'phenomenology of nature', building upon the notion that environmental problems are understood in sometimes disparate ways (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 20). Thus, in political ecology analyses, the plurality, dynamism and complex interrelated nature of ecological concerns are brought the fore. Perhaps most obviously, what political ecology has done, especially for tourism studies, is to denaturalize the environment as a discursively constructed category itself and offer opportunities to examine its myriad forms in tourism contexts (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 19). This opening up to scrutiny of the category of 'environment', while readable as an admonition against reification of processes, continues to be problematic, and political ecology scholars remain instrumental in uncovering the complexities, ambiguities and productive potential of historically rooted terms such as *ecology*, *ecological practices*, *nature*, *environment*, *environmental degradation*, *restoration* and *production*. Characteristic of a political ecology approach to the production of knowledge, is the notion of action; 'political ecology as *something people do*' (Robbins, 2012, p. 4). As such, a contextual analysis of political, economic, social, and ecological relations has the potential to provide a broader understanding of the power structures concerning people and their surroundings.

The origins of contemporary political ecology studies typically are traced to the 1970s, when anthropologist Eric Wolf, environmental scientist Grahame Beakhurst and journalist Alexander Cockburn employed the term to address the relationship between the distribution of access and control over resources and environmental degradation The emergence of political ecology as a framework coincided with the historical awakening of a global consciousness and social action aimed at addressing real world and pressing environmental issues. In the US the natural world came to be called 'the ecology', an act of reification creating an entity perhaps best described as 'nature plus connectedness'. Barry Commoner's (1990) persistent goal of *Making Peace with the Planet* through John Bellamy Foster's (2009) *The Ecological Revolution: Making peace with the planet* in many ways find their origins in Earth Day of 1970, which remains a significant turning point in environmental activism. The *United Nations Conference on the Environment*, which took place in 1972, is also considered a defining moment that marked early calls for examining the 'environmental crisis' from a political economy perspective with 'a sensitivity to the dynamics of differing forms of, and conflicts over, accumulation, property rights, and disposition of surplus' (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 7). These perspectives, largely informed by Marxian forms of analysis, were different from earlier accounts of environmental crises which often sought to draw links with forces such as technology, population growth or land use practice.

Such critiques, arising out of peasant studies and structural Marxism, provided important frameworks that drew attention to new kinds of explanations of environmental degradation (Shearer *et al*., 2009), and that presented economic-based arguments to support ideas such as sustainability and biodiversity. This tradition, involving the wise use of land and economics, is often informed by the principles of

the broad intellectual histories of Marxism. 'Marxian' values are predicated on the claim that there can be no universal environmental protection without concomitant social justice (e.g. Smith, 1984). Thus, poverty reduction through a reallocation of resources is a central plank of conservation strategies emanating from this tradition.

Marxists' engagement with the environment was called into being in part through the publication of Neil Smith's (1984) *Uneven Development*, Ted Benton's (1996) *The Greening of Marxism* and Foster's *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and nature* (2000). These authors paved the way for an analytic project allowing political ecologists a soft Marxian (as opposed to a much more determined Marxist) engagement with environmental protection despite their lack of a unified critical position. As such, ideas of surplus appropriation, marginalization and relations of production were applied to the analysis of environmental relationships. In addition to political economy, disciplinary approaches from geography, anthropology and environmental studies collectively contributed to the establishment of this field of inquiry.

Core elements of political ecology analyses: history, place and scale

While political ecologists lack agreement on the nature of political ecology analysis, the shared objects of study among political ecologists are typically related to human–environment relations and the concomitant ways in which access to and control over land and natural resources are distributed (Watts and Peet, 2004). This focus allows political ecologists theoretical flexibility to move away from the structural Marxist focus on systems of production towards a more nuanced understanding of the significance of discourse and post-structural thought. Additionally, the politics of scale figures prominently in political ecology narratives that examine work from the body, to the community, to the state, to the region and to the globe. While political ecology focused scholars apply the framework to a variety of contexts and in sometimes disparate ways, most agree that political ecology analysis should be: (1) historically situated; (2) place-based; and (3) multi-scalar (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987; Peet and Watts, 2004; Robbins, 2012). We will now elaborate on what these perspectives each mean and offer some thoughts on what they can lend to scholarly enquiry.

Historically situated

Political ecology frameworks are linked, at least in part, by a common acknowledgement that all ecological practices and environments require historical contextualization. In the context of tourism, this means paying attention to, for example, the legacies of practices of colonialism, migration and institutionalized discrimination. Adams (2003) traces attempts to decolonize colonial notions of nature or, as is more common, retain vestiges of a colonial imaginary better suited to the development of contemporary ecotourism. Additionally, political ecology is concerned with writing alternative histories that often challenge previously accepted unilinear explanations of agriculture and environmental change (Watts

and Peet, 2004, p. 15). In this way, the analysis of, say, local resistance to tourism development initiatives, should be considered within the broader historical relationship between, for instance, colonizers and the colonized, community members and tourism developers, and indigenous people and the state. While these kinds of ongoing power struggles have been the subject of significant tourism scholarship to date, political ecology framework necessitates historical contextualization. Nixon (2011, p. 175), for example, historically situates how 'South Africa's traumatic history of colonial conquest, land theft, racial partition and racist conservation places particular pressure on those conservation biologists, political ecologists, writers and activists committed to reimagining, during the post-apartheid era, their society's inherited culture of nature'. This inherited 'culture of nature' is where much of South Africa's inbound tourism takes place.

Place-based perspective

Political ecologists tend to conduct place-based research where they engage with local communities to experience firsthand the meanings ascribed to ecological practices. Often wielding an ethnographic approach, political ecologists are frequently familiar with local languages and create social bonds with local community members that allow them privileged access to the more nuanced understandings of nature, the environment and political, cultural, and environmental change. Critical to political ecology analyses that foreground the significance of 'place-based perspectives', locally based fieldwork contributes to the more subtle ways these meanings are co-constructed and negotiated within social and environmental geographies. A place-based perspective tends to depart from other forms of research that uncritically apply place-less models or theories across diverse social and geographic contexts. Similarly, empathy and sensitivity to cultural, religious, linguistic, social and economic contexts (among others) is a critical aspect of political ecological research. Feminist political ecologists, for example, have helped define the field through place-based investigations of, for example, gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity and disability. Sociological categories such as these play into access and control over land and natural resources and are critical to effective environmental planning and policy initiatives, including tourism-based initiatives. Significantly, feminist political ecology has contributed to advances in political ecology research around several of these concerns (Harcourt and Nelson, 2015; Mollett and Faria, 2013; Rocheleau and Edmunds, 1997; Rocheleae *et al*., 1996; Schroeder, 1993). Feminist political ecologists are often focused on 'the ways in which environmental concerns are traced through gender roles, knowledges and practices' (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 13) through issues such as the 'silencing' of women's environmental knowledge. In an instructive example of this kind of work, Dianne Rocheleau and David Edmunds re-examine resource use and access in the context of trees and forests through their analysis of the gendered inequalities. They illustrate how tree tenure is embedded in overlapping rights which rather than being represented on two-dimensional maps, requires an understanding of the fluidity

of power relationships between different stakeholders and the flexibility of their subject positions – positions, they argue, that need to be recognized in legal and theoretical understandings of property rights. As a result, they argue that artificial dichotomies between 'haves' and 'have nots' – which they suggest tend to be respectively linked with men and women – are more negotiable than previously assumed and thus more equitable distributions of resource tenure regimes can be realized (Rocheleau and Edmunds, 1997).

Thus, they draw our attention to the fact that, within communities themselves, there are complex and ongoing struggles over the discursive and material conditions of the livelihoods of individuals that are mediated by social categories such as gender. These insights are critically relevant to tourism studies where considerations of gender, race, ethnicity, class and so on are at times overlooked. Additionally, also significant here is the way the 'community' becomes much more dynamic and hard to pin down in the same way that a 'placeless' perspective might suggest, or indeed encourage. As tourism scholars continue to embrace political ecology as a social science framework it will be important to consider the diversity of perspectives from any research community as well as the flexibility of what 'counts' and the 'community' more broadly and further, that there may still be unheard, but equally valid, voices among the non-participants.

Multi-scalar approach

Finally, political ecology analyses foreground multi-scalar approaches that examine relationships between and across individuals, communities, the state, regions and international agencies (Painter, 1995). Political ecologists follow a mode of explanation that evaluates the influence of variables acting at a number of scales, each nested within another, with local decisions influenced by regional policies, which are in turn directed by global politics and economics (Robbins, 2012). Research pursues decisions at many levels from the very local – where individual land managers make complex decisions about cutting trees, plowing fields, buying pesticides, and hiring labor – to international – where multilateral lending agencies shift their multi-billion dollar priorities from building dams to planting trees and farming fish (Robbins, 2012, p. 20).

A multi-scalar approach is of critical importance to understanding how power circulates through and mediates relationships and socio-environmental and economic behaviors. Duffy (2002), for example, examines how ecotourists and the structures that introduce and support them in a politics of exploitation while Brockington *et al.* (2008) linked conservation and capitalism, as they are likely to influence the future, at the scale of large protected areas. More recently, Brockington and Duffy (2011) collected illustrations of the power of capitalism to produce and reproduce itself through conservation and now biodiversity in a multi-scalar conservation effort.

Political ecology of tourism: a review

In a recent article Douglas (2014) rhetorically asks, '(w)hat's political ecology got to do with tourism?' Indeed, while there is a significant body of work in tourism

studies that addresses issues relevant to political ecology analyses, (Scott *et al*., 2012 cf.; Albrecht, 2010; Hall and Higham, 2005) with a few notable exceptions there has been relatively little work that specifically applies a political ecology framework to the study of tourism practices (Cole, 2012; Douglas, 2014; Gössling, 2003; Mostafanezhad, 2015; Stonich, 1998). In this section we explore what we believe to be promising – if not yet fully developed – collaborative opportunities between political ecology and tourism studies. We begin with a brief review of the limited-yet-emerging literature approaching tourism from a political ecology framework.

Political ecology of tourism has, to date, been most clearly spearheaded by work that highlights the familiar dilemma that exists between the simultaneous desire for much needed foreign exchange from tourism development, and environmental sustainability. In one such groundbreaking article, 'Political Ecology of Tourism' (1998), Susan Stonich examined how the poorest community residents in Bay Islands, Honduras, were adversely affected by unchecked tourism development while those who benefited the most were the more powerful national and international stakeholders. Stroma Cole and Nigel Morgan (2010) build on Stonich's work through Cole's examination of water equity and tourism in Bali (Cole, 2012; Cole and Browne, 2015; Cole and Ferguson, 2015). Cole highlights the relationship between social power and ecology in water distribution on Bali where 80 percent of the economy depends on tourism. In pointing out how developing countries are often more vulnerable to some of the issues related to water inequity as a result of power differences between stakeholders, she paved the way for future tourism scholars to examine relationships between tourism development and unequal access to land and natural resources. Stonich's and Cole's works are indicative of how political ecology can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the ways tourism is implicated in broader, historically rooted social and economic inequalities at local, national and international scales. Other scalar approaches involving tourism include Stonich's (2000), *The Other Side of Paradise*, where she calls for the broadening of focus on tourism, conservation and development to include consideration of unintended negative consequences for a group of islands. Gössling has been particularly prolific in writing on the political ecology of tourism, especially in relation to climate change and small island states (Gössling, 2002; Gössling, 2003; Gössling *et al*., 2008; Patterson and Rodriguez, 2003; Scott *et al*., 2012; Stonich, 2003). Indeed, islands as well as other topographically isolated regions have proven a solid fodder for calling into relief issues of concern via political ecology frameworks. Gezon's (2006) edited volume *Global visions, local landscapes*, for instance, provides a political ecological analysis of conservation, conflict and control in one section of a large island, northern Madagascar – an analysis demonstrating simultaneous global implications. Kütting (2010) examines the relationship between the environment and tourism development in Greece while Sharma, Manandhar and Khadka (2011) examine the political ecology of tourism on Mount Everest in Nepal. In contrast to Smith's (1984) focus on the production of space, these authors attend to particularized place, either in separate countries or in collective insights into tourists experiencing 'poverty, power and ethics' within slums (Frenzel and Koens,

2012). In a related vein, Brockington and Duffy (2010) as well as Brockington *et al*. (2008) examine the political economy of biodiversity conservation and protected areas, and while not their explicit focus, this collection addresses myriad issues relevant to the political ecology of tourism (Brockington and Duffy, 2010; Brockington *et al*., 2008; Duffy, 2008).

Despite notable exceptions such as those addressed above, political ecology of tourism is still a fledgling, yet provocative, framework with the potential to radically shape the way we think about the relationship between tourism and environmental change. Indicative of this lack of attention, the index of the first edition of Robbins's (2004) wide-reaching book *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* has no entry for *tourism*, while the second edition has just two. This is perhaps not surprising, since tourism scholars themselves have rarely engaged with or illustrated the relevance of political ecology to tourism – the largest and most far-reaching industry in the world. Additionally, there are numerous points of intersection between current work in tourism studies and political ecology that are rarely brought to their fullest potential.

Political ecology of tourism: towards a conceptual framework

In this section we offer a point of departure for a conceptual framework for analyzing the political ecology of tourism. Specifically, we illustrate how the diversity of tourism forms, as well as the theoretical and topical foci of analysis in tourism studies, could be productively reconsidered using political ecology as an analytical lens. While it is beyond the scope of this introduction to address all potential topics of relevance to political ecology of tourism, we do however offer some initial (and, we believe, critical) considerations from which to examine several core concerns in tourism studies.

Drawing extensively from post-structuralism, political ecology scholars emphasize the role of power, knowledge and discourse in the construction of what passes as the 'environment' (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 20). Since the 1990s, political ecologists have foregrounded the role of a number of key issues summarized by Watts and Peet as 'knowledge, power and practice, and justice governance and ecological democracy' (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 20). Environmental knowledge is plural and contested. Watts and Peet point out how 'most knowledges are not simply local but complex hybrids drawing upon all manner of knowledges', and identify three core issues in regards to these knowledges: '[f]irst a recognition that environmental knowledge is unevenly distributed within local societies; second that it is not necessarily right or best just because it exists . . . ; and third, that traditional or indigenous knowledge may often be of relatively recent invention' (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 20). In this way, environmental knowledge itself is always, already political and the ways in which some knowledges are privileged while others are marginalized are a significant focus of research among political ecology scholars.

Since political ecology is something people 'do' rather than something people 'are', many people do political ecology who do not necessarily call themselves

political ecologists (Robbins, 2012, p. 20). Three common assumptions link political ecology analysis including:

> the idea that costs and benefits associated with environmental change are for the most part distributed among actors unequally . . . [which inevitably] reinforces or reduces existing social and economic inequalities . . . [which holds] political implications in terms of altered power relations to other actors.
>
> (Bryant and Bailey, 1997, p. 289 cited in Robbins, 2012, p. 20)

Core considerations for political ecology scholars include questions such as: What causes regional forest loss? Who benefits from wildlife conservation efforts and who loses? What political movements have grown from local land use transitions? (Robbins, 2012, p. 20). These questions attend to the five dominant narratives in political ecology including: (1) degradation and marginalization; (2) conservation and control; (3) environmental conflict and exclusion; (4) environmental subjects and identity; and (5) political objects and actors (Robbins, 2012, p. 20).

The first narrative – degradation and marginalization – is based on the observation that land degradation is often blamed on marginalized people rather than the political and economic forces that compel environmentally unsustainable practices (Robbins, 2012). The second theme – conservation and control – highlights how conservation efforts can sometimes – albeit inadvertently – contribute to political and economic marginalization. Third, Robbins refers to conflict and exclusion by which he points to how environmental conflicts are embedded in broader power struggles that are often entangled in race, class, gender and ethnic politics around access to land and natural resources. The fourth theme – environmental subjects and identity – addresses how identities (including new and emerging ones) are linked to access to control and struggles over livelihood and environmental resources. The fifth and final theme – political objects and actors – foregrounds the role of nonhuman actors (e.g. trees, cattle, climate, volcanoes, palm tree oil etc.) in political and economic struggles for control over them. Thus, Robbins views political ecology as offering both 'a "hatchet" to take apart flawed, dangerous, and politically problematic accounts, and a "seed," to grow into new socio-ecologies' (2012, p. 20) characterizing a certain kind of narrative.

These themes serve as a framework upon which political ecology scholars often situate their own work and also provide useful analytical starting points from which to revaluate the framework for the analysis of tourism practices. Political ecology relates to a variety of different issues that are of relevance to tourism practices. Below we elaborate on several themes that tourism scholars have traditionally been concerned with and how they might be re-examined from a political ecology perspective.

Douglas explains how '[b]roadly speaking, political ecology scholars seek to understand how the human–environment relationship is produced, reproduced, and altered through discursive and material articulations of nature and society' (Douglas, 2014, p. 9). From this perspective, the extensive literature on tourism

discourse and the environment (cf. Norton, 1996) could aptly engage with what Watts and Peet (2004) refer to as 'discursive ecological formations'. Discursive ecological formations can be used to analyze the role of the media and popular culture in creating environmental imaginaries of a region, people and/ or place as well as how tourism imaginaries are mediated by history, politics, economics and culture (West, 2012). Cultural and historical representations intersect with colonial legacies and postcolonial rule that plays out in unique and place-based ways in tourism practice. While there is a significant literature on postcolonialism in tourism (cf. Hall and Tucker, 2004), the relationship between tourism, power and the environment is ripe for a political ecology of tourism critique. Concepts such as 'green governmentality' (cf. Chapters 6 and 7 in this volume) as well as the role of what Michel Foucault referred to as the 'conduct of conduct' – by which he means the ways thought and behavior are managed through multi-scalar power relations – are deeply relevant to tourism studies. We may, for instance, consider the now widespread use of the concept of 'sustainable tourism'.

Sustainable tourism advocates have sought to distinguish its practices from mainstream mass tourism through their facilitation of tourism, which they often intend to be sensitive to ecological, cultural and social contexts as well as helping generate income for the community while contributing to minimal or positive impacts on the destination. Douglas highlights how 'sustainable tourism and tourism more broadly are not merely rooted in developmentalism, but are fundamentally political, economic, social, and ecological' (Douglas, 2014, p. 11). As a result, discursive imaginaries of place are core elements of understanding possibilities for sustainable development in the context of people and nature (Escobar, 1995; 1999; West, 2008; West and Carrier, 2004). Sustainable and community-based tourism research has drawn attention to 'the panoply of political forms – movements domestic struggles over property rights, contestations within state bureaucracies – and the ways in which claims are made, negotiated and contested' (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987, p. 12). The focus on community and justice approaches in political ecology creates a number of critical implications. Watts and Peet (2004, p. 25) highlight the cultural politics of the 'community'. They explain how the community is a political unit and as such, there are methodological implications for social science research on communities. For example, they highlight the importance of understanding the multiple and often competing voices within communities and community-based development initiatives. This perspective politicizes the role of the 'stakeholder' in the sense that it draws attention to their sometimes disparate access to power and authority. Thus, they note how:

> First, and most obviously, the forms of community relations and access to resources are invariably wrapped up with questions of identity. Second, these forms of identity (articulated in the name of custom and tradition) are not stable (their histories are often shallow), and may be put to use (they are interpreted and contested) by particular constituencies with particular interests. Third, images of the community, whether articulated locally or nationally, can be

put into service as a way of talking about, debating and contesting various
forms of property (and therefore of claims over control and access). Fourth, to
the extent that communities can be understood as differing fields of power –
communities are internally differentiated in complex political, social and
economic ways – we need to be sensitive to the internal political forms of
resource use or conservation . . .

They further explain situations in which power is non-local, such as when
ecotourism – clearly a frequent foci for tourism researchers – works through
local chiefs, which are often directed by local elites who may be directed by
local, national and/or transnational corporations. Ecotourism, as defined by the
International Ecotourism Society (TIES) is 'responsible travel to natural areas
that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people and
involves interpretation and education' (TIES, 2015). Ecotourism is particularly
apt for political ecology analysis in that many of the laudable and perhaps benign
aims of ecotourism set up, in Robbins' terms, winners and losers.

In contrast (to political economy's focus on commodity chains and globaliza-
tion), post-structuralism and neo-Marxism have come to the fore in an analysis
of how people remake nature through their everyday interactions and broader
societal understanding of the relationship between people and nature. Ecotourism
may happen on a local level but the conservation implications of the activity has
international implications that can be analyzed using political ecology theory as
demonstrated in Campbell's critique of global discourse and sea turtle conserva-
tion in Costa Rica (2007). As such, the conceptual framework of political ecology
provides a contextual lens for analyzing the problems and potentials of tourism
in the context of people, nature and power by examining ecological issues from
a place-based, multi-scalar and historically situated perspective (Douglas, 2014,
p. 12).

The role of late capitalism and inequality in tourism practices is a frequent topic
of consideration in tourism studies (cf. Cole and Morgan, 2010) that could, in the
contextual of human–environment relations, offer new insights when analyzed
from a political ecology framework. Adopting this approach, Fletcher (2010,
p. 172) highlights:

> The creation of capitalist markets for natural resource exchange and
> consumption . . . privatisation of resource control within these markets
> . . . commodification of resources so they can be traded within markets
> . . . withdrawal of direct government intervention from direct market
> transactions; and . . . decentralisation of resource governance to local
> authorities and non-state actors such as non-governmental organisations
> (NGOs).

In a similar vein, the introduction in 2009 of *the conservation economy* to New
Zealand 'signals a move from intrinsic valuation of the (conservation) estate to
extrinsic valuation: the question being, what are the ecosystem services delivered

and how is tourism serviced?' (Shelton, 2013, p. 184). Duffy's groundbreaking work on the politics of ecotourism as it intersects with broader trends in sustainable development, transnational capital and economic globalization in the Global South is also instructive here in that it lays the groundwork for later work in political ecology of tourism.

Political ecology themes of development and marginalization are deeply relevant to tourism studies. For example, what is often referred to as 'Pro-Poor' tourism is of particular relevance to political ecology analysis in its aim to facilitate opportunities for marginalized people to benefit economically and politically from tourism development (cf. http://www.propoortourism.info). Pro-poor tourism advocates highlight the ways in which mainstream mass tourism development often leads to benefits for some groups while further marginalizing the poor (Scheyvens, 2010; 2012). On the other hand, cultural, political, economic and environmental implications of mass tourism similarly call out for political ecology analysis. Political ecology frameworks for understanding relationships between development and marginalization in the context of tourism and the claims, evaluation and outcomes of pro-poor and mass tourism analysis would be welcome and much needed contributions to tourism studies.

Non-representational theory urges us to conduct geographical research that goes beyond representation to focus on 'embodied' experience (Thrift, 2004; 2008). In a related vein, relationships between human and nonhuman actors are of critical importance to political ecology and tourism studies scholars. Tsing's work is particularly instructive for tourism scholars in that she draws attention to the unsatisfactory way in which researchers approach or construct relationships between human and nonhuman animals, since in her view, '[c]onservation biologists segregate nonhumans; political ecologists too often take them for granted as resources for human use' (2005). Thus, Tsing's critique presents an opportunity for political ecologists of tourism to engage further with research questions about the often integral role of animals in tourism, engaging with issues of e.g. authenticity, captivity, representation and/or animal rights.

Themes and structure of the book

Situated at the intersection of politics, ecology and tourism, the chapters in *Political Ecology of Tourism* offer theoretically rich case studies that span the globe. From Africa to North and South America and the Asia-Pacific region, these chapters are illustrative of how a range of political, economic and cultural relations mediate all tourism practices. As a result of these relations, some ecological concerns are privileged while others are marginalized. *Political Ecology of Tourism* is organized into three sections: (1) *Communities and power*; (2) *Conservation and control*; and (3) *Development and conflict*. The chapters in these sections provide theoretically situated, empirically grounded illustrations of how several core themes in political ecology research can be productively applied to the analysis of tourism practices. *Political Ecology of Tourism* concludes with an overview of the new interdisciplinary terrain that is carved out by these

preceding chapters and possible routes for new research on the intersection of political ecology and tourism studies followed by an afterword (authored by James Igoe), which addresses ways forward for political ecology-inspired and tourism-focused scholars. To be clear, we recognize that many of the chapters in each section overlap theoretically and topically with chapters in other sections. Indeed, these overlaps, articulations and convergences are both unavoidable and productive in that they draw attention to the ways politics, economics, culture and the environment are so tightly entangled that any attempt to disengage one from the other inevitably leads to a partial perspective at best. These are the challenges of political ecology of tourism analysis and of any attempt to separate out these related entry points of analysis.

Part I, Communities and power

Communities and tourism stakeholders are core foci of analysis in tourism studies. The community itself has been thoroughly deconstructed and political ecology focused scholars now regularly ask: Whose community? (cf. Watts, 2000; Young *et al*., 2001), Whose knowledge? (cf. Escobar, 1998; Peluso, 1993), Whose nature? (cf. Escobar, 1998; Peluso, 1995; Zimmerer and Bassett, 2003) and Whose landscape? (cf. Walker and Fortmann, 2003). Stronza, for example, examines the sometimes disparate implications of tourism for community members and between communities (Stronza, 2001; Stronza and Gordillo, 2008). The chapters in Part I examine complex relationships between communities, the landscapes or settings within which they live or have attachments, and tourism practices. Theoretical concepts such as *sense of place*, *traditional ecological knowledge* and *alternative ways of knowing* are used to investigate issues facing communities – including indigenous communities – which are too frequently disenfranchised from their traditional lands as a result of tourism development (see Chapter 2 and 3). The involvement of local communities within specific ecological and environmental management issues provides both theoretical and practical insights into the management of tourism at contentious landscapes and sites where traditional land occupiers are being recognized within political structures. The roles of race, class, gender and religion within communities are investigated in the context of tourism practices (see Chapters 1 and 4). Additionally, the boundaries of what constitutes a community in urban spaces are examined (see Chapter 5). Each chapter emphasizes the discursive construction as well as the relationship between communities and the management of ecosystems, including protected areas and/or species. Finally, the politics of community 'voice' regarding research as well as the management of places at international, national, regional and local levels are examined throughout the collection.

Part II, Conservation and control

The chapters in Part II engage with critical approaches to the study of the deliberate production and sustainable consumption of 'natural' environments (Peluso,

1993; 1995). The political ecology approaches put forth here illustrate how the production of tourism in protected areas is never purely a question of conservation or sustainability (Duffy, 2002; Duffy and Smith, 2003). Rather, nature-based tourism is deeply embedded in broader questions of conservation for whom, and concerns over the control of land and natural resources, and the power of discourse to produce environments (Walker, 2005; West, 2006). For example, Watts and Peet explain how practices of 'green governmentality' refer to both relationships between people and resources/environment as well as governable spaces (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 32). In this way, '[t]he scales at which government is "territorialized" – territory is derived from terra, land, but also terror, to frighten – are myriad: the factory, the neighborhood, the commune, the region, the nation' (Watts and Peet, 2004, p. 28). Contemporary trends in ecotourism studies often stray from Ceballos-Lascuráin's postulation that central to ecotourism is the observation and protection of nature (1996). The Brundtland Report, invoking natural environments as a set of natural resources, drew ecotourism to a position within political economy. By empirically and theoretically highlighting the existence of social processes such as the distribution of power, disenfranchisement and marginalization within tourism more broadly, the chapters in this section move critical nature-based tourism research from political economy to political ecology. Thus, through the lens of political ecology, the so-called 'winners' and 'losers' of conservation are identified and historically contextualized within a place-based and multi-scalar analysis. Additionally, environmental discourse (see Chapter 9) as well as 'eco-governmentality' (Goldman, 2001; 2004; 2005) and 'green governmentality' (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2006; Dressler, 2014; Rutherford, 2007; Watts and Peet, 2004) are examined by the authors in this section from multiple geographical locations (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

Part III, Development and conflict

Some of the most critical issues of our time such as climate change, indigenous rights, urban pollution and human displacement, as well as sociocultural resilience, are addressed in Part III. The chapters here examine core points of convergence between political ecology and tourism studies including how tourism development often leads to both 'winners' and 'losers' as well as how this relationship is often embedded in, or can lead to, long-standing environmental conflict. Initiatives to facilitate tourism to new areas such as 'cleaning up the streets' (see Chapter 11) or the development of infrastructure and nature viewing areas are examined (see Chapters 10, 12 and 14), as is the discursive construction and negotiation of development through embodied tourism experiences (see Chapter 13). The examination of climate change debates through the context of tourism development can highlight the political, socio-economic and cultural (e.g. lifestyle) differences between global consumers and local citizens and producers, which are reflected in differential access to tourism experiences as well as disparate consequences from the effects of climate or ecological change. For example, they illustrate how climate politics and cultural politics intersect with tourism in ways

that beckon political ecology analyses. We can think of, for instance, how climate change discourse in popular culture is a mediating force in tourists' experience (Boykoff, 2008). Tourists are appealed to by reports of how to reduce their carbon footprints through washing their towels less frequently and buying off their carbon footprints. In this way, the media plays a key role in addressing climate questions, but in sometimes unproductive or even pernicious ways. Like celebrity cultures, tourism cultures have become 'a currency that spends (overly) well in the neoliberal spaces carved out by the increasingly marketized, privatized, voluntary and individualized ways of addressing climate questions' (Boykoff and Goodman, 2009, p. 148). As a result, popular representations of individualizing and neoliberal responses to climate change are perpetuated (Prudham, 2009). Tourism practices are similarly represented through, for example, green consumption and carbon capitalism which are also embedded in market-based development approaches and 'actually existing neoliberalisms' (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Ferguson, 2010; Peck and Tickell, 2002).

Together, these three sections comprise the major themes around which this book is structured as well as topics representing critical spaces of analytical overlap between political ecology and tourism studies. While this collection does not engage in 'pro' versus 'anti' tourism debates, or address all of the seemingly endless examples of how these impacts play out in local contexts, it does consider tourism practices through the lens of political ecology in the anticipation of future research that informs practice and theory. We hope that the contributions in this collection will spark meaningful discussions among critically engaged tourism scholars and industry practitioners and planners, thus addressing the numerous ecological problems affecting communities and the ecosystems they inhabit.

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