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Environmentally induced displacements in the ecotourism–extraction nexus

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Around the world, we increasingly see the often-deemed incongruent activities of ecotourism, associated environmental conservation and natural resource or fossil fuel extraction happening in the same spaces, often supported by the same institutions. Rather than being incongruent, however, these seemingly uncomfortable bedfellows are transforming spaces, livelihoods and social, political and environmental geographies in tandem through what we call the 'ecotourism–extraction nexus'. Drawing on case studies from around the world, we show that physical, symbolic and historical aspects of environmentally induced displacements are an integral part of these transformations, though often in less than straightforward ways. The paper concludes that environmentally induced displacements are a key mechanism to understand why these seemingly uncomfortable bedfellows in empirical reality and within a broader context of capitalist modernity go together surprisingly well.

Key words: *ecotourism, extraction, environmentally induced displacement, political economy, conservation*

Introduction

Environmentally induced displacements (EIDs), according to the editors of this special issue, are

> a form of displacement whereby specific populations find their use of land irrevocably altered, whether as a living space, as a livelihood resource, as a cultural site, or any number of other claims to territory due to some form of environmental change.

In this article we look at EIDs in relation to what we call the 'ecotourism–extraction nexus'. With this nexus, we refer to how the seemingly opposing activities, discourses and political economies of ecological tourism and resource extraction are more intricately entwined than often assumed. Both ecotourism and extraction are activities that (can) drastically alter uses of land and claims to territory but in mainstream discourses are often interpreted in completely opposite ways.

Ecotourism is often seen as a (potentially) sustainable form of development, while extraction is habitually conceived as unsustainable. In academia, too, ecotourism is often perceived and studied as an alternative to resource extraction, while studies of resource extraction generally do not include ecotourism projects that may exist in the vicinity of extraction sites. Existing academic and policy literatures thus privilege oppositions and transitions between 'sustainable' and 'unsustainable' development, over congruencies and synergies, which could reveal the uncertainties, contradictions and fluidities inherent in this polarisation.

Because of this framing bias, the phenomenon of ecotourism in areas concurrently affected by extraction industries (such as oil production, mining, logging), has remained understudied, even though such a scenario is increasingly common in resource-rich developing nations in the political-economic context of late capitalism. Both ecotourism and resource extraction are activities that bear upon and can dramatically restructure land tenure, flows

of labour and capital, forms of subsistence, and local and regional demographics. Moreover, they can and often do lead to various forms of displacement, including environmentally induced ones and in this paper we use the EID lens to shed new light on the relationships between extractive industries, conservation, ecotourism and displacement.

In a recent anthology we brought together and analysed a wide variety of cases from around the globe illustrating the ecotourism–extraction nexus in all its variety and complexity (Büscher and Davidov 2013a). The present paper builds on this volume but does not rehearse the arguments presented there, which dealt primarily with the question of the (in)commensurability between the two activities (Davidov and Büscher 2013). Indeed, we believe it fills an important gap in the volume, namely the lack of conceptual attention to various forms of displacement, which in turn enables us to bring out new arguments in relation to the ecotourism–extraction nexus not covered before.

Concretely, we develop two arguments in this paper. First, we want to show that EIDs in the ecotourism–extraction nexus are never one-sided or unidirectional. Hence, we highlight empirical situations where both ecotourism and extraction lead to EIDs but also cases where EIDs in relation to one activity are mediated by or result in re-enfranchisement through the other. This feeds into the second, broader argument, that EIDs in the ecotourism–extraction nexus help both problematise and recognise the fluidness, commensurabilities and tensions that inhabit these often deemed incommensurable dynamics, while allowing us to complicate familiar narratives of how particular environmental industries – whether conservation or extraction-oriented ones – create or mitigate displacement.

In working out these arguments we heed the volume's message to pay particular attention to the political economy and lived realities of the ecotourism–extraction nexus. From an EID lens, this means looking at both ecotourism and extraction as profit-oriented activities where capital seeks returns on investment and whereby certain types of environmental changes (either as a direct result or as the cascading effects of ecotourism–extraction nexus activities) are necessary. The EIDs that result from this – or the threat of them – were an important element in most of the cases in the volume, yet what we had not made explicit is how they become commensurable through the production of what Li (2010, 66) refers to as 'surplus populations', namely rural labour 'surplus to the needs of capital'.

The surplus populations produced through ecotourism–extraction nexus-induced EIDs, in turn, should be differentiated and complicated according to the fluidities and (in)commensurabilities of particular ecotourism–extraction nexuses and in relation to particular aspects of EIDs. Three aspects of EIDs, we argue, are of particular relevance in the cases we will present: physical, symbolic/discursive and historical aspects. These are not mutually exclusive: most, if not all, of the examples we discuss fall into more than one category. Our point in mobilising these distinctions – or perhaps facets – is to better frame and understand how EIDs come about, what impacts they have, especially on rural populations, and how they become more complicated through nexuses such as the ecotourism–extraction nexus. We start our discussion by further conceptualising displacement in relation to the ecotourism–extraction nexus.

Displacements in the ecotourism–extraction nexus

A lot has been written on displacement in relation to developmental and environmental interventions and dynamics and our objective here is not to give an overview of this literature (see Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau 2006; Brockington and Igoe 2006; West *et al*. 2006, Adams and Hutton 2007; Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington 2007; Agrawal and Redford 2009; Dowie 2009, and the introduction to this special issue). Rather, we aim to build on our discussion of the ecotourism–extraction nexus to offer a perspective on environmentally induced displacement that does not differentiate between displacement by extraction or conservation but instead brings into focus empirical links between the two.

Epistemologically, the ecotourism–extraction nexus works across a broad terrain of seeming contradictions or dichotomies such as 'good–bad', 'hope–despair', 'primitive–modern', 'green–brown', and so forth (Büscher and Davidov 2013b, 17). Settlement and displacement, as well as stability and mobility, are, of course also examples of such dichotomies, and are particularly relevant to the discussion at hand, and will be developed below. At the same time, these and other dichotomies do not just work between the two sides of the nexus, but also on ecotourism and extraction individually. This, however, is little recognised, like for example in the way the two sectors relate to common assumptions around the experiences and outcomes for local actors, namely that resource extraction degrades the environment and harms its denizens, while ecotourism conserves the environment and benefits its denizens.

One of the ways in which harm is conceptualised is expulsion, ejection, forced migration – the violent restructurings of landscape contours and land title provisions that happen in preparation for the oil starting to flow, or for ore deposits revealing themselves below stripped mountaintops. As oil flows and trucks transport copper or bauxite, populations of villages destroyed for extraction infrastructure must resettle, often into urban

or peri-urban areas, where their agricultural skills are not transferable. Conversely, one of the 'benefits' of ecotourism is the imaginary of continuity – a 'modern' solution to issues of environmental autonomy that allows communities to stay on their ancestral territories and continue to cultivate human–landscape relationships in the way that their ancestors did (or are imagined to have done). That imaginary, with those protagonists – the displaced villages, and the content indigenous or otherwise 'traditional' communities staying put and updating their huts with amenities for ecotourist visits – is a familiar diptych in the mainstream and even some academic conceptualisations of ecotourism and extraction.

While critical scholarship of both sectors does not (necessarily) reproduce those assumptions, it is clear that many studies so far have not engaged with the full range of experiences, dynamics and outcomes of the 'nexus' for local actors entangled with both phenomena simultaneously, beyond the aforementioned 'diptych' (see Bridge 2004; Duffy 2006; West and Carrier 2004; Fletcher 2011). How do such actors experience the nexus, and how does it affect their ability to live and work in a particular place? Can mobilities and immobilities arising from the nexus be linked to one kind of industry over another? Who is experiencing mobilities and immobilities, and for whom are they desirable? For one, there is an ever-growing body of literature on what Brockington and Igoe (2006) called 'eviction for conservation', with 'green' displacements occurring throughout the African continent, from Botswana (Brockington and Igoe 2006) to the Congo Basin (Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau 2006) to Ethiopia (Adams and Hutton 2007), and beyond. At the same time, we can look at the Chad–Cameroon pipeline as an example of a project that aligned with Cameroonian government initiatives to sedentarise the indigenous hunter-gatherer Bagyeli, whose traditional territories were traversed by the pipeline – hardly a welcome intervention (Swing *et al*. 2012), and one that can actually be characterised as eviction from terrain of desirable mobility. Elsewhere, extractive projects bring about another kind of mobility – not just the displacement of the locals, but the (concomitant) flooding of the area with migrant labour workers, boom towns quickly arising with all the attendant social, economic and health issues they bring. One of many possible examples is the city of Tete, the capital of Tete province in Mozambique, where dispossession of rural populations to make way for coal extraction has been going hand-in-hand with a massive influx of people into Tete-city (Büscher in press).

Moreover, we are also interested in comparing the cultural, social and other environmental economies behind the convergence of ecotourism and extraction. Resource extraction, especially oil, has been shown to be instrumental in the development of a 'cultural politics of entrepreneurial life' (Huber 2013). Ecotourism, similarly, has been shown to resonate with particular cultural values under late capitalism, particularly those of 'white, upper-middle-class Westerners' (Fletcher 2014). Exactly how these assessments compare and get complicated in the process, however, is seldom investigated. And as ecotourism and extraction are epistemologically decoupled from each other as tandem objects of inquiry, the impact of their co-occurrence on local displacements remains obfuscated.

As such, the central purpose of this paper is to use the lens of environmentally induced displacements to bring out these experiences, dynamics, outcomes and political economies and in so doing illuminate and complicate both the nexus and EIDs. EIDs, we believe, are appropriate here because they help to bring into view both the ethnographic lived experiences of people in particular places as well as how they are intersected with, influenced by and influence the global political economy of neoliberal capitalism. After all, a nexus is not just the connection between things, but also the *means* of connection: ecotourism and extraction are actively connected by actors, ecosystems, ethnoscapes and a myriad of political-economic, social, cultural and geographical flows, many of which come together – or become more visible – through particular events or dynamics such as EIDs.

Illustrating the complexity and variety of environmentally induced displacements

In the 11 cases we brought together (Büscher and Davidov 2013a), we note a wide variety of EIDs. Three interrelated and non-exclusive aspects of EIDs, we argue, are particularly prominent and will inform our discussion of some of the cases. These are: (1) physical; (2) symbolic/discursive; (3) historical. Physical aspects of EIDs relate to the actual, material removal of people from a particular place due to ecotourism, conservation or extractive activities or interventions. This is the most 'direct' form of displacement that has received a lot of attention in the literature and the popular press, as the effects on people's living conditions and circumstances are often most severe. People may of course lose and/or gain access to resources, markets, connections, job possibilities in the displacement process, but clear from the literature is that physical displacements are always wrought with difficulties and pain (Chatty and Colchester 2002).

The case studies in our volume offer a unique glimpse of how material removal (or the threat thereof) played out in sites of the ecotourism–extraction nexus. In her study of the Intag Valley in Ecuadorian Highlands, Linda D'Amico (2013) chronicles a social mobilisation that fits common imaginaries of the roles of extraction and ecotourism in

land disputes. This copper-rich and highly biodiverse valley has attracted interest from transnational mining companies and conservation NGOs alike. A robust anti-mining movement has been in existence in Intag for over a decade because of local anxieties about mining prospects, but the trigger for the initial mobilisation was the threat of dislocation when Bishi metals, a Japanese company, planned demolition of village houses to clear the land around their concession. Local farmers-turned-environmentalists burned down Bishi's mining camp and forced the company out of the valley. By the time the concession was taken over by Canadian Copper Mesa several years later, there was a network of local environmental NGOs in place, who, with the help of international conservation organisations troubled by the prospective destruction of the valley's biodiverse habitat, developed a strategy of resistance to mining through conservation initiatives and ecotourism and agritourism. So, in Intag, mining – supported by international capital – is associated with the threat of displacement, while ecotourism has come to signify re-entrenchment in the soil.

This particular symbolic assignment of roles maps neatly onto mainstream imaginaries of what extraction and ecotourism do to communities. But further south in Ecuador, the relationship between the ecotourism–extraction nexus and EIDs is more complicated. Oil extraction history in the Ecuadorian Amazon is founded on displacement. In the 1970s, Texaco, unrolling its operations in the Eastern part of the rainforest, colluded with the missionaries from Summer Institute of Linguistics to transport Huaorani Indians indigenous to the concession area to a mission compound using oil company helicopters. But now, 40 years later, as Timothy Smith (2013) shows, both ecotourism and oil extraction are overlapping and at times complementary sources of livelihoods for indigenous villages in the Napo region – ecotourism is lucrative in the area, but is historically enabled by the network of oil roads into the jungle; furthermore, financial compensation from oil companies like Perenco have funded various community initiatives, including ecotourism. While both industries are problematic in different ways for local communities, environmental displacement is not one of the current issues they have caused – if anything, the co-presence of the two industries – and the particular needs that these forms of capital represented – has reduced rural–urban migration, mitigating lack of 'domestic' economic opportunities as a push factor.

In another iteration of how ecotourism and extraction intersect around displacement, Fletcher (2013) discusses how the creation of an ecotourism destination, the Corcovado Park in Costa Rica, resulted in the expulsion of the local population – many of whom happened to be artisanal gold miners:

> consolidation of the park required the expulsion of numerous homesteading families and artisanal gold miners . . . In addition, in 1978 a 61,350 ha swath of land surrounding the park . . . was designated the Golfo Dulce Forest Reserve to serve as a multiple use buffer zone, compelling the expulsion of still more settlers – some of these the same previously expelled from Corcovado . . . (2013, 76)

While funds were promised to resettle those displaced, much of this never materialised. Although ecotourism displaces extraction in this scenario, Fletcher's example challenges the commonly imagined 'good' scenario where the little David of ecotourism projects successfully forces out some extractive company Goliath – the scale is flipped here, and the small-scale artisanal miners are displaced by a large, top-down state ecotourism project.

The second aspect of EIDs here discussed concern symbolic or discursive elements. This relates to those elements of displacement that are *not* physical or material, but in any other way 'irrevocably alters' people's relations or access to land or resources. Obviously, this general aspect of displacement is well covered in the literature, particularly in relation to environmental conservation. West *et al*. (2006, 260), for example, state that protected area creation depended both on 'physical and symbolic erasure of former residents'. Former residents of parks, as they and others show (Neumann 1998; Chatty and Colchester 2002) were not only written out of the landscape itself, but also out of the histories and symbolic and discursive representations of the landscape. In many cases, as with the Mount Rushmore memorial in South Dakota, the erasure of certain histories was accompanied by the cementing of other histories in the landscape. This battle in the symbolic and discursive realms continues up to this day and is often the struggle that receives most investment in terms of financial and human resources (Büscher 2010).

In terms of the ecotourism–extraction nexus, the Ankarana National Park in Madagascar has experienced a symbolic process by which its 'uniqueness has been rendered generic' (Walsh 2013). Andrew Walsh shows that the artisanal mining of sapphire gems in Ankara is considered bad for the park by conservationists, while at the same time sapphires are seen as 'natural wonders' that signify Madagascar's special status in terms of global, threatened resources. Both the park and the sapphires are connected through ecotourism activities in the region, which in turn, if they are to become international capital capable of attracting foreign tourists, depend on an 'image of Madagascar as a source of both extractable and endangered natural wonders' (Walsh 2013, 37). In a parallel process though, as Walsh shows, local subjectivities and ways of life have been effectively marginalised and displaced from the landscape. In guidebooks, documentaries

and park brochures, complex histories are simplified as residents of the region are represented either as 'primitive' people whose customs and taboos reveal their traditional conservationist leanings, or as people who pose threats to the region's distinctive biodiversity through their mining. Ankarana, Walsh concludes, is caught up in a 'paradox of plenty', whereby the potential to benefit from the conservation and extraction of resources translates into symbolic, and physical, EID for local people.

The third and final aspect of EIDs we here distinguish is 'historical', through which we want to emphasise the temporal dimension of physical or symbolic/discursive displacements that have occurred in the past but still strongly influence the present and the future. Without necessarily calling it 'historical EIDs', the literature abounds with examples of 'environmental colonialism' (Nelson 2003): from coercive conservation in Indonesia (Peluso 1993) via resource displacements in Namibia (Bridge 2001) to colonisers romancing the land and so writing themselves outside of local social relations and thereby displacing the black population in Zimbabwe (Hughes 2010). But, we must ask, what makes historical EIDs distinct? As the above brief examples already show, they harbour physical and symbolic/discursive sides, so how are these different? The crucial point is that the prime, and direct (physical and/or symbolic/discursive), dislocation happened some time ago in the past, but that their effects linger and continue to structure the way populations currently access, control and relate to land and resources.

From this point of view, an interesting case in relation to the ecotourism–extraction nexus is that of the Saami in Swedish Lapland, discussed by Revelin (2013). Revelin traces the 'pre-histories' of both extractive and tourism activities encroaching on traditional Saami lands today by looking at the 'frontier' colonisation period during the 19th century, which lay the groundwork for both extraction and nature tourism. As she shows, the mining boom happened in parallel with 'pioneer tourism' stemming from a scientific-romantic fascination with the region: 'the Laponian mountains constituted a prized field for observing natural history, and scientists' curiosity was sharpened by the new pleasures of contemplation born out of the Romanticist movement' (2013, 197). As in Smith's example from the Amazon, the infrastructure of the industries was entwined:

> the same railways that were used (and were originally built) for the transportation of extracted ore were soon used to bring tourists to the area, and especially to places of 'wild' nature that fixed interests for conservation policies. Buildings used to host the labour force during the railway construction were reconverted for hosting tourists, and became the first tourist infrastructures in the area. Thus, infrastructures originally linked to extraction have played a catalytic role in tourism development in Northern Sweden. (Revelin 2013, 198–9)

This pre-history links directly to the displacement the Saami experience through to today. Although during the development of the region at the end of the 19th century the Saami were able to continue to use both the industrially exploited and the 'conserved' lands for their traditional practices of reindeer herding, the industrial growth demanded reconfiguration of the landscape in its service. Both ore extraction and transportation capital created a need for energy, which in turn resulted in the development of power stations utilising local rivers and waterfalls. The dam construction necessary to create this energy flooded entire valleys and

> resulted in an important loss of reindeer pastures. The Saami had to abandon some ancient lands and settlements and move their summer villages to higher ground. A Saami from Vaisaluokta for instance explained that his family was forced to move their summer settlement four times in three generations. Consequently, hydropower production extracted land from the Saami by transforming pastures and dwelling lands into expanses of water. (Revelin 2013, 200)

Through such interventions in the landscape, over time, physical encroachments transformed Saami demography and residence patterns. Furthermore, resonating with the previously discussed symbolic displacement, Revelin points out that the contemporary national celebration of the Swedish mountains as 'Europe's last remaining wilderness' amounts to symbolic erasure on top of physical displacement for the Saami who 'regard this image as a form of denial of their historical ties to, and use of, the region' (Revelin 2013, 205). As they 'view the various forms of encroachments and exogenous decisions applied to their lands as an ensemble of diverse forms of colonialism' (2013, 205), we can see yet another iteration of how the ecotourism–extraction nexus plays out with regard to EID in time as well as space: ecotourism initiatives compound historical physical displacement produced by extraction by adding a layer of symbolic displacement.

It is clear from the above cases that the three aspects of EIDs cannot and should not be separated. A final case further emphasises this point. In Northern Russia, as Veronica Davidov (2013) shows in her study of the indigenous Veps of Karelia, the mining–ecotourism combination historically created livelihoods and stability for the residents of the *krai*, but in the recent past, as both industries have become privatised and deregulated, they have combined to create double dispossession and displacement. Vepsian villages are emptying out as the local mining industry, formerly a source of multigenerational job security and prestige, now marginalises Vepsian

labour and triggers increased migration to cities and regions with better economic possibilities. At the same time, private developers are buying up the lakeshore that has been crucial for Vepsian subsistence livelihoods, and physically restricting access to land that will be the site of new expensive 'health tourism' resorts, displacing local fishermen. Hence, contrary to the Intag case above, ecotourism and extraction here work in tandem to displace people due to various forms of environmental change. Through their convergence, Veps find their use of land (and water) altered as a livelihood resource, and as a cultural site, specifically around their beliefs in forest spirits, who are imagined to have departed as a result of environmental transformations.

Conclusion and further research

We conclude that engaging two industries commonly associated with displacement and stability as a nexus offers a key mechanism to understanding environmentally induced displacements as complex, multifaceted phenomena. We both challenge the common imaginaries of displacement/entrenchment dichotomies associated with extraction/ecotourism, respectively, and complicate the critical perspective on green dispossession, which often does not engage empirically with the extraction side. Through the cases, we show that ecotourism and extraction working through a nexus are never one-sided or unidirectional. The empirical situations profiled in the article demonstrate scenarios where both ecotourism and extraction lead to EIDs, but also instances where EIDs in relation to one activity are mediated by or result in re-enfranchisement through the other.

In the process, we highlight various dimensions of EIDs and distinguish between physical, symbolic/discursive and historical displacements that bear on the ecotourism–extraction nexus cases. These dimensions illuminate how, as nature becomes natural resources and as environments become commodified, residents of such landscapes may experience displacement – both in the literal sense of becoming dispossessed of land, home and residence – but also in becoming alienated or erased from their environment and their established socio-ecological relations. At the same time, the ecotourism–extraction nexus lens shows that common imaginaries of which forces and industries cause displacement, and which ones mediate it, are complicated by empirical reality; the intersection of environmental 'development' industries with local realities resists a simple formula of who exactly is 'surplus' and who is not.

Rather, and following Li (2010), the various cases showed that the 'interests and needs of capital' – often in conjunction with the state and uniquely configured by local socio-ecological configurations – predominantly influence displacement effects in particular places. It is the political economy of capital and ethnographic lived realities that allow us to both problematise and recognise the fluidness, commensurabilities and tensions that inhabit the often-deemed incommensurable dynamics in the ecotourism–extraction nexus while allowing us to complicate familiar narratives of how particular environmental industries – whether conservation or extraction-oriented ones – create or mitigate displacement.

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