

Political Ecology at University of Copenhagen

This note describes the Political Ecology course at the University of Copenhagen, based on the 2021 version of the course. The note sets out:

- The course description incl. intended learning outcomes
- Description of learning activities and preparations for the five modules of the course.

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The descriptions of the five modules set out the learning activities and preparations for the teaching days in the course. They follow the so-called block structure at the University of Copenhagen whereby courses of 7.5 ECTS are allocated one morning (9-12 am) and one full day (9 am – 3 pm) every week for 8 weeks. In the case of this course, Tuesday morning and all of Thursday. The descriptions thus reflect this structure. The course runs with ~40 participants who are divided into 8 groups named after PE scholars, which is also reflected in the description.

The course is taught by Christian Pilegaard Hansen, Jens Friis Lund and Mattias Borg Rasmussen, all University of Copenhagen. We are all happy to answer any questions you might have about the course.

Course description

Content

Environmental problems such as land degradation, deforestation and climate changes are complex processes and often cannot be understood in isolation from broader dynamics of economic and social development, struggles over access and rights to resources, or conflicts originating from historical grievances. Yet, their complexity is not always acknowledged by researchers, governments, and development practitioners seeking to identify, measure, and correct or alleviate them. Scientific measurements of the extent of environmental degradation are often inaccurate and/or highly uncertain, and knowledge of the underlying drivers is framed in ways that direct blame toward some actors, for instance farmers practicing subsistence farming, while leaving others out, such as large-scale investments in mining.

Political Ecology is a broad analytical and methodological approach which asserts that the way we know environmental problems affects the solutions we identify. This implies that Political Ecology sees science and knowledge of environmental problems as inherently political and intrinsically linked to economic and social context. Further, Political Ecology is keenly invested in understanding how local processes of environmental change are linked to past and present wider regulatory frameworks and market processes. It provides conceptual lenses that help unpack the entwined economic and political processes that drive environmental and social change.

Political Ecology draws on various disciplines to frame studies on resource and management challenges in fields such as environment and development, climate change, land-use, and conservation. This course invites students to explore how Political Ecology is used to understand processes of natural resource management, use, and contestations around these. Participants in this course will be challenged to re-think and reconsider mainstream understandings of environmental problems and how they are produced.

The course is primarily (but not exclusively) concerned with and draws its examples and cases from environmental problems in developing countries (Global South) including those concerned with forests, agricultural lands, water, wildlife and range lands.

The course is structured around an opening and closing week and three conceptually driven modules each lasting two weeks. The three modules are briefly described below. During the course you will be presented with critiques of much of mainstream practice in development and environmental policy. In the last week of the course, we will engage with what alternatives to the mainstream could look like.

Introduction week

During the course introduction week, we will introduce to political ecology – outlining the main characteristics of the field. We will situate the emergence of political ecology in its historical context. By pointing to colonial legacies in the relationship between the Global North and the Global South we discuss how it is a critique of a business as usual in the development world which too often served to sustain and deepen existing inequalities.

Environmental knowledge production

This module concerns the role of knowledge of environmental change and its drivers. We will look into questions such as: By whom and how is environmental degradation defined? How can we know/ascertain/measure environmental change? How is environmental knowledge produced and used? Who drives degradation? How and why have environmental crisis narratives emerged and persisted? What functions have they served? And what are the environmental and socio-economic consequences? We will also examine how the reproduction of crisis narratives has been furthered by the authority afforded to science. We will look at how feminist theory and science and technology studies help us unpack and situate the production and circulation of scientific knowledge.

The political economy of natural resource management and use

Political ecology may be defined as “the concerns of ecology and a broadly defined political economy” (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, p. 17). In this module we will discuss, among other, Marxist political economy which has formed a central element in political ecology as a critique of capitalism and neo-liberalism. We also broaden the view to other orientations of political economy. Focus throughout the module is on the analysis of cases and situations in relation to use of natural resources and conservation, on questions such as “who gains?”, “who loses?”, “how?” and “why?”

Politics and power

In this module we will build an understanding of how politics and power shape and is shaped by environments and how they are known, used, and managed by society. We will engage fundamental theory of power, and see how it has inspired classic concerns in political ecology. This includes an emphasis on hidden and open forms of resistance to perceived unjust or oppressive policies. It also includes an emphasis on understanding how power operates through the various forms of governance approaches that infuse environmental conservation.

Closing week

In this last week of the course, we will reflect on the implications of the insights into and critiques of much of mainstream environmental and development policy that we have gone through during the course. We will use these reflections to consider alternatives – other ways of thinking nature-society relations that are potentially more sustainable, more equitable, and more empowering of ordinary citizens. We end with a summary of the course learning and course evaluations.

Learning Outcome

Upon completing this course, the students should be able to:

Knowledge:

Explain various methods to assert environmental change and its causes;

1. Define environmental degradation and describe methods to assess it;
2. Describe what is understood by environmental orthodoxies/environmental crisis narratives;
3. Discuss major strains of political economy of relevance to political ecology;
4. Describe different approaches to examining power in environmental governance;
5. Discuss how political ecology analysis can be used to formulate alternatives to mainstream environmental and development policy

Skills:

1. Identify and assess underlying assumptions and empirical evidence supporting environmental crisis narratives;
2. Apply political economy to analyze concrete cases of policies, uses and practices pertaining to nature and natural resources;
3. Analyze how power operates in environmental governance.

Competencies:

1. Reflect on what constitutes environmental change/degradation;
2. Reflect on how environmental crisis narratives have emerged and what functions they serve;
3. Reflect on how political economy shapes environmental degradation and conflict;
4. Reflect on the role of environmental governance in shaping peoples' livelihoods and mindsets;
6. Reflect on the potentials of alternatives to mainstream environmental and development policy.

Literature

The curriculum for the course is indicated in the introductory and guidance notes for each theme of the course which are uploaded on Absalon.

The curriculum includes mainly book chapters and peer-reviewed journal articles. The course provides students ample opportunities to enhance their ability to read and analyze scientific texts, many of which will be in the social science domain or in the interface between social and natural science.

Recommended Academic Qualifications

No special academic qualifications are required. Some experience in reading scientific journal articles is an advantage.

Academic qualifications equivalent to a BSc degree is recommended.

Teaching and learning methods

The course makes limited use of traditional lectures. The key teaching and learning activities are group discussions and exercises, student presentations, student peer-to-peer feedback, and short written

assignments (article reviews). The learning activities draw on scientific articles and book chapters, but also on other media, such as podcasts and films. For each week of the course, there is an introduction and guidance note presenting the topic of the week, the intended learning objectives and the learning activities. The course requires students' timely preparation and active participation in order to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The indicated readings for each week must be read prior to class. Students who are unable to meet this requirement should not enroll in the course.

Feedback form

Written

Oral

Individual

Collective

Continuous feedback during the course of the semester

Peer feedback (Students give each other feedback)

Feedback is provided in multiple ways. The course involves many class discussions with continuous feedback (oral). Oral feedback will also be given to group exercises and group presentations. In addition, feedback in writing will be given to group essay assignments.

Exam

Credit

7,5 ECTS

Type of assessment

Oral examination

20 minutes oral examination with point of departure in one of the course modules of student's own choice followed by questions in the broader course curriculum.

Aid

All aids allowed

Marking scale

7-point grading scale

Criteria for exam assesment

The assessment will be based on the intended learning outcomes within knowledge, skills and competences listed above

Introduction to course and political ecology (week 1)

A warm welcome to the Political Ecology course! We look forward to interact with you over the coming weeks. The course is structured in five modules: introduction (week 1), political economy (weeks 2-3), environmental knowledge (weeks 4-5), politics and power (weeks 6-7), and conviviality and closure (week 8). For each module, we've created a reading guide (you're reading the one for the introduction now ☺). All the reading guides follow the same format: they introduce the theme, outline the learning activities of the module and list the required readings and preparations before class. It is therefore of crucial importance that you consult the reading guides carefully!

Intended learning outcomes

During this first course week, our aim is to introduce you to each other, us teachers, to the course and to political ecology as an academic field. We will also situate the emergence of political ecology in its historical context. By pointing to colonial legacies in the relationship between the Global North and the Global South we will see how political ecology can be understood as an academically founded critique of mainstream development policy and practice and the ideas underlying it.

This first week of the course relates to all the learning outcomes listed in the course description, but no one specifically.

Learning activities and how to prepare for class

Tuesday

We will start with a round of introductions. *Please prepare to present yourself, your nationality, study program, why you signed up for this course and your expectations from it.* That completed, we will try to define and describe political ecology. That may sound like a straightforward task, but it is not, because political ecology has many branches and approaches. In preparation for class, you should read Chapter 1 in Robbins (2012) as well as Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2018) both of which are attempts at a description of political ecology. We will do a quiz based the readings and use this as point of departure for a discussion of some of the core tenets of political ecology.

Then we will discuss the course itself: how it is planned, the learning outcomes, what we will do, and what we teachers expect of you. We will also discuss and give some guidance on how to read the texts. In preparation for this, please, if not already done, consult the course description.

Literature and links

Benjaminsen, T.A. and H. Svarstad 2018. [Political Ecology](#). In: Encyclopedia of Ecology, 2nd edition.

Robbins, P. 2012. Political versus apolitical ecologies. Ch. 1 in *Political Ecology*, 9-24 [in literature folder on Absalon]

Course description Political Ecology 2021-22 [you can find it at kurser.ku.dk]

Thursday

Having gained broad sense of what characterizes the field of political ecology, we'll spend this day seeking to contextualize the field, i.e. to understand the historical conditions within which the field arose.

Why is it so, that 'the division of labor among nations is that some specialize in winning and others in losing' (Galeano 2009, 1)? In the morning, we will look at the perpetuation of colonial relations. We will do so by looking at the case of mining in Latin America in a historical perspective, and understand the shift from colonialism to coloniality, that is, from a specific historical geopolitical formation to an enduring structure of domination.

In preparation for this morning's class, please read the text by Hector Alimonda (2015). Alimonda is an Argentine political scientist, who has been central in formulating a Latin American political ecology. Fundamentally historical, his work has been important in the endeavors to demonstrate how Latin American environments have been shaped by historical forces related to the accumulation of capital and regimes of exploitation of labor and nature. This link contains a neat summary of his core contributions: <http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2019/5/14/hctor-alimonda-the-american-task-of-political-ecology>.

The text shows how the modernity and progress of Europe was predicated upon the colonization of the Americas and the degradation of its environments. We use the text to pose a set of historicizing questions about environmental problems more broadly as these relate to historical legacies of domination, exploitation and accumulation.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

[Alimonda, H. \(2015\). Mining in Latin America: coloniality and degradation. In *The international handbook of Political Ecology*. Edward Elgar Publishing.: 149-161](#)

Supplementary readings:

Galeano, Eduardo (1973/2009) Introduction: 120 million children in the eye of the hurricane, in *Open Veins of Latin America. Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent*. London: Serpent's Tail: 1-8

In the afternoon, we'll continue by looking more specifically at the idea of development and the global policy apparatus and industry that has emerged around it since WWII.

In preparation for the afternoon's session, please read Kothari (2005), which recounts how the development industry grew out of colonialism and the changes that happened in terms of the forms of expertise that are valued within the industry. The author, Uma Kothari, is a professor of Migration and Postcolonial Studies at University of Manchester who has written extensively about development from feminist and post-colonial perspectives. You can meet her very briefly and hear her thoughts about some the things that have changed – and not – in development [here](#).

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

Kothari, U. 2005. [Authority and Expertise: The Professionalisation of International Development and the Ordering of Dissent](#). Antipode 37: 425–446.

Supplementary readings:

Gomez-Baggethun, E. and Naredo, J.E. 2015. [In search of lost time: the rise and fall of limits to growth in international sustainability policy](#). Sustainability Science 10: 385–395.

Hickel, J. 2017. [The Divide: A Brief Guide to Global Inequality and its Solutions](#). Penguin Random House.

Political economy (weeks 2-3)

Intended learning outcomes

A central element of political ecology is what Blaikie and Brookfield (1987), early political ecologists, have described as “a broadly defined political economy.” Blaikie and Brookfield examined “causal chains of explanation” to understand processes and outcomes at the local level, for example, the activities of a farmer and the resulting economic and ecological outcomes and how these activities are shaped by processes and structures at other scales (regional, national, international), e.g. legislation, market structures and exchanges. In line with this, Robbins (2012: 59) sees a fundamental link between political ecology and political economy because “...the systems that govern use, overuse, degradation, and recovery of the environment are structured into a larger social engine, which revolves around the control of nature and labor...No explanation of environmental change is complete, therefore, without serious attention to who profits from changes in control over resources, and without exploring who takes what from whom.”

After this module, students will be able to:

Knowledge:

- Discuss major strains of political economy of relevance to political ecology;

Skills:

- Apply political economy to analyze concrete cases of policies, uses and practices pertaining to nature and natural resources;

Competencies:

- Reflect on how political economy shapes environmental degradation and conflict.

Learning activities and how to prepare for class

Tuesday 14 September

Much work in political ecology is influenced by Marxist political economy. So, Marxist political economy is a natural starting point for our venture into this field. In preparation for today’s class, you should first read the assigned chapters in Stillwell (2002). The idea is to introduce you to the key concepts of Marxist political economy. These include: commodification, surplus extraction, primitive accumulation, dispossession, alienation, classes, the growth of monopoly power, the expansionary nature of capitalism and uneven development. Try to get a general understanding of these concepts. Take note of issues you do not understand and bring to class.

Before coming to class, you should also read, Caceres (2015) which is a study of recent developments of agribusiness in Argentina and the consequences on different groups of farmers and on the environment. Caceres frames his study closely along Marxist political economy, so you should be able to pinpoint (at least some of) the key concepts mentioned above (commodification, etc. ...). Make note of them as you read and bring your notes to class! The paper is fairly long and touches on many issues and developments. You may read the last pages of the paper (from 137 onwards) lightly.

As supplementary reading, we have uploaded a few more chapters from Stillwell (2002); in case you want to dig deeper into Marxist political economy.

In class, there will be a brief introductory lecture on Marxist political economy. Then we will do a group exercise on the Cáceres (2015) text focusing on the key concepts of Marxist analysis (see above) followed by presentations and discussion in class. The morning will conclude with a second (brief) lecture on additional elements of Marxist political economy.

Before we close this morning's session, we will introduce the *presentation assignment* (in groups) for next week Thursday and there will be time for the groups to have an initial discussion on the assignment. There is a full description of the assignment in Absalon, but the task for the group is to do a 15 minutes presentation of one of the below papers (the group chooses the text they want to work on):

Isakson, S.R. 2014. Maize diversity and the political economy of agrarian restructuring in Guatemala. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 14(3): 347-379. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/joac.12023>

Ascher, W. 1998. From oil to timber. The political economy of off-budget development financing in Indonesia. *Indonesia* 65: 37-61. <https://search-proquest-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/docview/221582115?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&accountid=13607>

Hirald, R. 2018. Experiencing primitive accumulation as alienation: Mangrove forest privatization, enclosures and the everyday adaptation of bodies to capital in rural Senegal. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 18: 517-535. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/joac.12247?af=R>

Pastor, G., Torres, L., Pastor, L. 2020. Landscape enclaves: wine capitalism and luxury tourism in Mendoza, Argentina. *Journal of Political Ecology* 27: 580-593. <https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/jpe/article/2249/galley/2458/view/>

The presentation should be elaborated and performed in such a way that students who have not read the paper should be able to get a good idea of the paper and its key message(s) from the presentation.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

Stillwell, F. 2002. Political economy. The contest of economic ideas. Oxford University Press, Melbourne. Chapters 12-15 (pp. 93-127). [found in Absalon in Literature folder].

Cáceres, D.M. 2015. Accumulation by dispossession and socio-environmental conflicts caused by the expansion of agribusiness in Argentina. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 15 (1): 116-147. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/doi/10.1111/joac.12057/full>

Supplementary readings:

Stillwell, F. 2002. Political economy. The contest of economic ideas. Oxford University Press, Melbourne. Chapters 16-17 (pp. 128-143). [found in Absalon in Literature folder].

Thursday 16 September

Today we will continue our exploration of (Marxist) political economy. The focus is on neo-liberalization of nature and political ecology critique of neo-liberalization with the use of Marxist analysis. Neo-liberalism may be defined as the doctrine that market exchange should serve as a guide for all human action (Harvey 2005). In turn, neo-liberalization, is “the process of reforms and ideological transformation that seeks (at least in theory) to implement the doctrine of neoliberalism” (Bakker 2015: 447). Neoliberalism and neo-liberalization have been high on the political agenda in Global South and North since the 1980s in virtual all sectors of society involving reforms such as free trade agreements, the privatization of public utilities, titling and marketization of property rights in agricultural land, forests, fisheries and pastures previously under public ownership, as well as cuts in public expenditure. Neoliberal reforms of nature and natural resource sectors have been promoted as win-win solutions for both nature and people, but the analyses of political ecologists show a different picture, one of dispossession.

In the morning, we will focus on neoliberalization in the case of wildlife conservation in Tanzania. In the afternoon on cobber extraction in Zambia.

In preparation for class, you should read three papers: Bakker (2015), Benjaminsen & Bryceson (2012) and Benjaminsen, Goldman, Minway and Maganga (2013). Start with Bakker (2015) which is a brief, general introduction to neo-liberalization in relation to nature and the environment. You can skip the last section on “Future research direction.” The two other papers both deal with the case of wildlife conservation in Tanzania, but seen from different theoretical angles. Start with Benjaminsen & Bryceson, and focus on the discussion of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). You should also read the part on conservation of coastal areas, but in class, we will focus on the wildlife conservation. While reading the text, consider how the authors apply a Marxist analytical lens, but also how and where they move outside the Marxist framework. Then read Benjaminsen, Goldman, Minway and Maganga and consider how their analysis differ from the former.

In class (morning), there will be an introductory lecture on neo-liberalization of nature. We will do a group exercise and discussion on the wildlife conservation case with point of departure in a Marxist analysis, but also what the Marxist lens may not explain. We will also engage into a deeper discussion of accumulation by dispossession, including watching a short video with David Harvey.

In the afternoon, there will first be a short lecture on some international aspects of Marxist analysis (core-periphery theory). Then we will move to another case of neo-liberalization: the extraction of copper in Zambia. We will watch the documentary: “Stealing Africa” (53 minutes) by Danish documentarist Christoffer Guldbrandsen and discuss it with the theoretical tools we have developed over this first week of the module. The discussion will also touch upon some of the issues we discussed in the morning, and forms a bridge to other forms of political economy than Marxist analysis which we will turn to next week.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

Bakker, K. 2015. Neoliberalization of nature. Chapter 34 in Perreault, T., Bridge, G. and McCarthy, J. (Eds): *The Routledge Handbook of Political Ecology*. Routledge, London and New York, 446-456.
<https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/books/e/9781315759289> [Download Part IV, section C. Environmental Governance]

Benjaminsen, T. A., Bryceson, I. 2012. Conservation, green/blue grabbing and accumulation by dispossession in Tanzania. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39: 335-355.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03066150.2012.667405>

Benjaminsen, T.A., Goldman, M.J., Minwary, M.Y., Maganga, F.P. 2013. Wildlife management in Tanzania: State control, rent seeking and community resistance. *Development and Change* 44(5): 1087-1109.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/dech.12055>

Supplementary readings:

Kelly, A.B. 2011. Conservation practice as primitive accumulation. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38(4): 683-701. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/doi/full/10.1080/03066150.2011.607695>

Hall, D. 2013. Primitive accumulation, accumulation by dispossession and the global land grab. *Third World Quarterly* 34(9): 1582-1604. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2013.843854>

Levien, M. 2015. From primitive accumulation to regimes of dispossession. Six theses on India's land question. *Economic & Political Weekly* 1(22): 146-157. https://www-jstor-org.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/stable/24482497?sid=primo&seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

Tuesday 21 September

Today we will leave Marxist political economy and focus on another type of political economy, which we may broadly call New Political Economy (NPE). It will also bring us to into a discussion of the phenomenon you probably heard of called the "resource curse", that is, countries rich in natural resources on average do worse in terms of growth and economic development. We will discuss if it is true, and especially, what explains that countries rich in natural resources oftentimes do not have efficient institutions and policies to govern them sustainably, both in economic and environmental terms. We have already touched upon this question and the explanations in the first week of the course, but now we will expand our understanding and discuss the theoretical bases for these explanations. It will bring us into a discussion of the interests of politicians, (political) corruption and lobbying.

In preparation for class, you should first read the paper by Kolstad and Wiig. It introduces the resource curse and provides an overview of models to explain it, divided into centralized political economy models and decentralized political economy models. Try to get an idea of what the two models are, in particular the concepts of patronage and rent seeking.

Then you should read Ross (2001) which is a case study of Sarawak (Malaysia) and how its forests have been degraded, tax revenues have remained low despite rising international timber prices and livelihoods

and rights of local people eroded as the result of poor policies. The case is rich and there are many persons and events mentioned, so there is a risk of getting lost, but while reading, try to keep focus on what is the main argument made by Ross and if you can find parallels to the centralized and decentralized political economy models of Kolstad and Wiig.

In class, we will do a detailed discussion of the Sarawak case, followed by a lecture which will try to give you an overview of de centralized and decentralized political economy models and new political economy. At the end of the morning there will be time for the groups to continue working on the paper presentation for Thursday.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

Kolstad, I., Wiig, A. 2009. It the rents, stupid! The political economy of the resource curse. *Energy Policy* 37: 5317-5325. <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/science/article/pii/S0301421509005722>

Ross, M. 2001. Sarawak, Malaysia. An almost uncontrollable instinct. Chapter 6 in *Timber Booms and institutional breakdown in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 127-156. [found in Absalon under Literature].

Supplementary readings:

Grindle, M. 1991. The new political economy: Positive economics and negative politics. Chapter 3 in Meier, G.M. (ed): *Politics and policy making in developing countries. Perspectives on the new political economy*. ICS Press, San Francisco. [found in Absalon under Literature].

Thursday 23 September

In the morning, we will examine "A Theory of Access", a prominent framework, very popular among political ecologists, to analyze who get to benefit from natural resources and through which means. The framework also incorporates aspects of political economy. It is included here to illustrate a way in which political economy may be operationalized and to introduce you to a framework that may be a useful tool in your future careers, whether inside or outside of academia.

In preparation for class you should read Ribot and Peluso (2003): *A Theory of Access*. In class, we will do a group exercise, trying to apply the Theory of Access on an empirical case. Following that, there will be lecture/discussion to expand on the theory.

In the afternoon, we will do student group presentations of the selected papers. Each group will do a 15 minutes presentation followed by discussion. These presentations and discussions will also serve as a re-cap of what we have discussed over the past two weeks.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

Ribot, J.C., Peluso, N.L. 2003. A theory of access. *Rural Sociology* 68(2): 153-181.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1549-0831.2003.tb00133.x>

Supplementary readings:

Ribot, J. 1998. Theorizing access: Forest profits along Senegal's charcoal commodity chain. *Development and Change* 29: 307-341. <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/doi/abs/10.1111/1467-7660.00080>

Myers, R., Hansen, C.P. 2020. Revisiting A Theory of Access: a review. *Society & Natural Resources* 33(2): 146-166. <https://www-tandfonline-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/doi/full/10.1080/08941920.2018.1560522>

Knowing the environment (week 4-5)

Intended learning outcomes

Shedding light on the politics inherent to knowledge claims of the environment has been a key concern of Political Ecology. Political ecology research has problematized claims of environmental change and degradation and the drivers behind it. Environmental degradation generally denotes changes to the environment (e.g. a forest, a grassland, soils, water resources, a sea or the atmosphere...) resulting from human activity. Political ecology challenges claims of environmental degradation resting on faulty assumptions of a past pristine nature and/or equilibrium ecologies. Similarly, political ecology demonstrates that processes of environmental change have multiple causes – near and far, present and past – and that the unravelling of such causes is always partial and political. Finally, political ecology observes how peoples' knowledge of the environment is shaped by their positionality (nationality, gender, educational background, worldview, etc.) and that some persons' knowledge tends to carry more weight than others.

In the first week of this module we will address questions such as: What is environmental degradation? What methods can be used to make claims about environmental degradation? Then we will move on to examine a phenomenon called environmental crisis narratives (or environmental orthodoxies). These can be understood as “generalized statements referring to environmental degradation or causes of environmental change that are often accepted as fact, but have been shown by field research to be both biophysically inaccurate and also leading to environmental policies that restrict socio-economic activities of people living in affected zones” (Forsyth 2003: 38). We will read and discuss various examples of what may be considered as environmental crisis narratives and look into how political ecologists have countered such narratives. We will also consider what implications such narratives have had on environmental policies and management, in particular the socio-economic consequences for rural dwellers relying on access to environmental resources.

In the second week, we will look into how such narratives emerge and persist. This will bring into focus questions about how science is produced. Many tend to regard science and scientists as objective and neutral – untainted by the surrounding society and its politics. Yet, this characterization is too simplistic. We will see how scientific knowledge is always shaped by who and how it is produced, and how such knowledge is never complete, but always only a partial perspective on reality – and thereby political (in the sense of shining light on some aspects of reality, while leaving others in shadow). We will also examine how scientific knowledge travels through society and the role of media, development institutions, and higher education in this regard. We will see how some scientific claims travel easily, while others do not, and reflect on how this tends to reproduce some narrative and thereby contribute to shaping wider public understandings of nature-society relations.

The module relates to the following learning outcomes mentioned in the course description:

Knowledge:

- Define environmental degradation and describe methods to assess it
- Describe what is understood by environmental orthodoxies/environmental crisis narratives

Skills:

- Identify and assess underlying assumptions and empirical evidence supporting environmental crisis narratives

Competencies:

- Reflect on what constitutes environmental change/degradation
- Reflect on how environmental crisis narratives have emerged and what functions they serve

Learning activities and how to prepare for class

Tuesday week 1

A detailed understanding of the biophysical processes underlying environmental change and the causes of such changes, whether human-induced or caused by natural factors (climatic variability, natural fire) is a prime theme in political ecology. Contemporary political ecology is sometimes accused of having diverged from its original aim of combining a careful examination of environmental change and the biophysical state of the environment with political and economic analyses, into being politics without ecology. To stay true to the origins of political ecology, and because it is fundamental for the discussions in this course, we will spend this day on the ecological aspects and biophysical processes of environmental change. We will focus on two central questions: i) What constitutes environmental degradation? and ii) how can claims about environmental degradation be substantiated, i.e. what methods can be applied in measuring, quantifying and asserting environmental degradation (or not). These questions may appear uncomplicated, but the papers, class and our discussions will illustrate that they are not and that they involve many choices that are inherently political.

This day there will be an initial group exercise to set the scene, followed by a lecture that gives (some) answers to the two questions raised above. To prepare, read Chapter 5 of Robbins (2012) which gives some basics for defining and measuring environmental degradation. The text illustrates that claims of degradation (or the opposite) crucially depend on criteria of degradation, method and scale.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

- Robbins, P. 2012. Challenges in ecology. Ch. 5 in *Political Ecology*, pp. 103-121. [found in literature folder in Absalon].

Supplementary readings:

- Sprugel, D.G. 1991. [Disturbance, equilibrium, and environmental variability: What is 'natural' vegetation in a changing environment?](#) *Biological Conservation* 58: 1-18.
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- Ahlborg, H., Nightingale, A.J. 2012. [Mismatch between scales of knowledge in Nepalese forestry: Epistemology, power and policy implications.](#) *Ecology and Society* 17 (4): 16.

Thursday week 1

This day we will start by investigating the case of deforestation in Kissidougou (Guinea, West Africa). The work of James Fairhead and Melissa Leach on this case has become one of the most cited studies in Political Ecology. The study is famous and illustrative of classic Political Ecology; it provides a detailed and solid investigation of the case drawing on multiple methods and scales crossing the natural/social science divide. To prepare for class, you should read chapter 2 of Fairhead and Leach (1996). In class, we will watch and discuss the documentary *Second Nature* which builds on the study and we'll do a group exercise and discussion on the case.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

- Fairhead, J., Leach, M. 1996. [Forest gain: historical evidence of vegetation change.](#) Chapter 2 in *Misreading the African Landscape* (pp. 55-85). Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

In the afternoon, we'll shift our focus to environmental crisis narratives (environmental orthodoxies). We will mainly emphasize one such environmental crisis narrative: desertification. In preparation for class you should read two texts: Chapter 2 of Forsyth (2003) and Davis (2005). The first text introduces the concept of environmental crisis narratives and provides many examples. The second is a case study on desertification in North Africa (Morocco). In class, we'll start with an introductory lecture, followed by a group exercise and discussion of the Davis (2005) paper. We'll cover Davis' examination of the crisis narrative of desertification, the counter-narrative suggested by Davis, and the implications the prevailing crisis narrative has had for policy and ultimately for the livelihoods of local camel herders. Then we will watch and discuss the documentary *The Timbuktu documentaries (part 2) – Where water is life and milk is food* by Tor Benjaminsen. The documentary addresses the same desertification crisis narrative, this time in Mali.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

- Forsyth, T. 2003. [Environmental science and myths.](#) Ch. 2 in *Critical Political Ecology*, pp. 24-51.
- Davis, D.K. 2005. [Indigenous knowledge and the desertification debate: problematizing expert knowledge in North Africa.](#) *Geoforum* 36: 509-524.

Tuesday week 2

This week we will continue the investigation of environmental narratives we started last week. The specific focus this week is the question: How (and why) do environmental narratives (explanations) emerge and persist even in cases where research has shown that they are inaccurate? From there we will move to the larger question on how science influences policy, and the other way around.

Today we will work on Leach and Mearns (1996). So, you need to read this text prior to class. Leach and Mearns (1996) commence by discussing what environmental narratives (or received wisdoms as they prefer to name them) are, so this part will serve as a kind of repetition of what we discussed on Tuesday. In the latter part of the text, they discuss the emergence and persistence of the narratives. You may find this text somewhat difficult to grasp, but do not despair! If not before, the issues will become clearer once we have discussed them in class! When reading the text, try to identify the various explanations given for the emergence (and persistence) of the narratives. Leach and Mearns categorize them as:

- Scientific theory
- Scientific method
- Sociology of science in public policy
- Sociology and practical effects of development
- Popular culture and the social construction of environmental meaning

In class, we will discuss and exemplify these five broad ways in which environmental narratives are reproduced.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

- Leach, M. and Mearns, R. 1996. Environmental change and policy. Challenging received wisdom in Africa. Chapter 1 in: *The lie of the land. Challenging received wisdom on the African environment*, 1-28 (i.e. you do not need to read the last section: Ways forward in research). [found in literature folder in Absalon].

Thursday week 2

We will continue discussing the emergence and persistence of environmental narratives (explanations) by introducing aspects of how science is produced, applied and re-produced, including how environmental knowledge and politics co-evolve. We will do this, first, by examining what science is and what sets it aside from other activities in society. This discussion will depart from a concrete example of contestation around science. To prepare for this discussion please read Naidoo et al. (2016) with the following questions in mind, that you in groups will get some time to work on and discuss during class:

- How well are the policy recommendations drawn by Naidoo et al. supported by their modelling results?
- What assumptions and data are used to arrive at a figure for the tourism income losses associated with poaching?
- What assumptions and data are used to arrive at a figure for the costs associated with anti-poaching?
- What potential costs associated with elephants are not included in the model?

- What potential *benefits* associated with elephants are not included in the model?
- Who are the authors of this study?
- What kind of media attention did this study generate (feel free to try google:-)?

We'll end the morning's session by considering the role of education in shaping the worldviews of resource professionals and, thus, create the conditions for the reproduction of particular environmental orthodoxies. We will do this with a basis in a study on higher education on forestry in Tanzania, which will be contextualized in a lecture and discussion in plenum. To prepare, read Sungusia et al. (2020) on *decolonizing forestry* and consider, while you're reading, the different ways in which the curriculum and teaching practices described come to reinforce the reproduction of certain ideas about proper forests and the role of non-professionals in their management. We'll discuss these in class and talk about why the curriculum and teaching practice looks the way it does. And you will hear about the background for this study and the larger debates that it sits within.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

- Naidoo, R., Fisher, B., Manica, A. & Balmford, A. (2016). [Estimating economic losses to tourism in Africa from the illegal killing of elephants](#). Nat. Commun., 7, 13379.
- Sungusia, E., J.F. Lund and Y. Ngaga 2020. [Decolonizing forestry: overcoming the symbolic violence of forestry education in Tanzania](#). Critical African Studies 12(3):354-371.

In the afternoon, we will continue on the notion of decoloniality. Specifically, we will reflect on and discuss the proposals for a more ethical ecology put forward in Triosos et al. (2021). The authors here want to "build a more anti-oppressive and decolonial ecology" and propose five ways forward for this to happen – illustrated by the figure here below.



When reading this paper, keep the following questions in mind.

- What are the five practices of decoloniality?
- What would a study of the costs and benefits of elephants (a la Naidoo et al. 2018) look like, if guided by decoloniality?

- What would be key things for you to keep in mind in the classroom, your everyday practice and your coming MSc thesis work to practice the kind of decoloniality the authors sketch out here?
- What challenges would you likely face if you were to pursue these five practices?

We end with a short lecture summarizing the module.

Literature and links

Compulsory readings:

- Trisos, C.H., J. Auerbach and M. Katti 2021. [Decoloniality and anti-oppressive practices for a more ethical ecology](#). Nature Ecology and Evolution.

Supplementary readings:

- Sultana, F. 2020. [Political ecology 1: From margins to center](#). Progress in Human Geography 45(1) 156–165
- Lahsen, M., and Turnhout, E. (2021). [How norms, needs, and power in science obstruct transformations towards sustainability](#). Environ. Res. Lett. 16:025008.

Politics and power (week 6-7)

Intended learning outcomes

This module revisits Robbin's (2012) distinction between political and apolitical ecologies, which we discussed in the introductory week. The modules that have preceded this one have all demonstrated different aspects, which combine to define *who gets what*, and *how*. We have seen how distribution is affected by knowledge and narratives, by broader political economies and specific encounters around conservation, degradation, and community land-uses. Yet, paradoxically, power and politics remain undertheorized in much political ecology.

The aim of this module is to inquire into different perspectives on power. We will work from a minimalistic definition of politics understood as the contests over access to and use of resources and discuss how we can conceptualize the unequal relations of power that shape these contests. Political ecology has evolved from its original actor-oriented and Marxist foundations with its emphasis on either actors (like in *A Theory of Access* by Ribot and Peluso) or class and relations of production (see in particular the political economy module) to a Foucauldian concern with the different rationalities of government, knowledge regimes, and discourse. The module builds on the perspectives on power so far discussed in the course before turning the attention to the more recent approaches which have in large part been inspired by Michel Foucault.

Knowledge

- Discuss key conceptualizations of power such as hegemony, resistance, governmentality and biopolitics.

Skill

- To identify and distinguish the different approaches to power and apply them critically to empirical cases

Competencies

- To reflect on how unequal relations of power shape access to and use of resources

First Tuesday: Politics and Power

This first lecture introduces the module. We will use Benjaminsen and Svarstad's recent paper from *Journal of Political Ecology* to help us get an overview of the dominant strands of power-analysis within political ecology. As you prepare for the module, please think about the readings you have had so far and consider whether these fall under any of the three domains, they highlight: actor-oriented, neo-Marxist, or Foucauldian.

In the second part of the lecture, we turn to an empirical case: that of territorial reordering in Colombia (Asher and Ojeda 2009). This case will allow us to do two things: first, we can use it to develop an understanding for what the Italian political philosopher Antonio Gramsci has famously called hegemony. It is a concept that you may have encountered either in your readings or in your everyday life. It is a dense

concept used to describe why people not only consent to but also actively reproduce structures that are fundamentally unjust. Such as capitalism, for example. It is therefore useful to identify how the interests and worldviews of a dominant group appears as natural, legitimizing their position of power and imparting norms, values, ideologies on the dominated. Second, Asher and Ojeda will give us an empirical case to understand how state power, in this case in Colombia, operates.

Mandatory readings:

Svarstad, H. Benjaminsen, T.A., Overå, R. 2018. Power theories in political ecology. *Journal of Political Ecology*. [This text gives a short and fairly easy-to-understand introduction to power and various perspective]

Asher, K., & Ojeda, D. (2009). [Producing nature and making the state: Ordenamiento territorial in the Pacific lowlands of Colombia](#). *Geoforum*, 40(3), 292-302.

Supplementary readings:

Ekers, M., et al. (2009). ["Gramsci Lives!"](#) *Geoforum* 40(3): 287-291.

First Thursday: Governmentality

Today we will look into governmentality: what it means and how it can be used as an analytical tool. There is some confusion, ambiguity and disagreement on the concept. We will dig into it and hopefully you will come out with a more clear understanding of the concept and the disagreement.

In preparation for class, start with Fletcher (2010). It provides an introduction to governmentality. It refers to the different modes or mentalities of government; how we think about government; the different rationalities involved in different types of government; the "conduct of conduct". Fletcher with reference to Foucault suggests four government rationalities, which are not mutually exclusive but overlap, lean and challenge each other. They are sovereign, disciplinary, neoliberal and government according to truth. Fletcher main interest is in the neoliberal governmentality, but try to get a sense from the text of what characterize each of them. We will discuss and expand in class.

We will then look into governmentality and how it can be used as analytical lens. It examines practices of government, often through "how" or "what" questions: what authorities of various sorts wanted to happen, in relation to problems defined how, in pursuit of what objectives and through what strategies and techniques? It typically involves an analytics with four elements i) problematization: how "problems" in need of a solution are defined while other issues are ignored; ii) knowledge production: the production of "truth" about the problem; iii) intervention: the techniques and technologies put in place to shape conduct; and iv) subjectification: the subjects assumed and subjects proposed formed as a result of the practices. In preparation for class, you should watch a lecture by Tania Li (see link below) taking about her book "The will to improve" which applies a governmentality approach. While watching the video take particular note of her talk about "the technical matrix" and "rendering technical".

The other two texts for the day are empirical cases. The first, Zhang (2018) is about government of herders and sandstorms in Inner Mongolia, the second, Birkenholtz (2009) is about governance of groundwater

resources in Rajasthan (India). While reading the two texts, try to consider how the cases they present, fit into a governmentality lens (the four elements) and the government rationalities discussed by Fletcher (2010) because that is what we will discuss in class.

In the afternoon, we will do a group exercise that examines the Belo Monte dam project in Brazil. We will watch a documentary about the project “Belo Monte – after the flood” <https://vimeo.com/173122375> and analyze the project with a governmentality lens.

Mandatory readings:

Recorded lecture (video) with Tania Murray Li talking about her book: *The will to improve: Governmentality, development and the practice of politics* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzFB3HxJ3P8> (the first 54:00 minutes, if you are short of time you can stop at 39:30)

Fletcher, R. 2010. Neoliberal environmentality: Towards a poststructuralist political ecology of the conservation debate. *Conservation & Society* 8(3): 171-181. <https://www-proquest-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/docview/850420555?pq-origsite=primo>

Zhang, Q. 2018. Managing sandstorms through resettling pastoralists in China: how multiple forms of power govern the environment at/across scales. *Journal of Political Ecology* 25: 364-380. <https://journals.librarypublishing.arizona.edu/jpe/article/id/2087/>

Birkenholtz, T. 2009. Groundwater governmentality: hegemony and technologies of resistance in Rajasthan’s (India) groundwater governance. *The Geographical Journal* 175 (3): 208-220. <https://www-proquest-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/docview/231479396?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&accountid=13607>

Supplementary readings:

Dean, M. 2010. Basic concepts and themes. Chapter 1 of “Governmentality. Power and rule in modern society”. Sage, Los Angeles. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kbdk/detail.action?docID=743643&pq-origsite=primo>

Li, T.M. 2007. Introduction. First chapter of “*The will to improve: Governmentality, development and the practice of politics.*” <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/kbdk/detail.action?docID=1170540&pq-origsite=primo>

Youdelis, M. 2013. The competitive (dis)advantages of ecotourism in Northern Thailand. *Geoforum* 50: 161-171. <https://www-sciencedirect-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/science/article/pii/S0016718513001899>

Second Tuesday: Counter-practices/resistance

In the first week of this module, we have already seen some examples of what happens when interventions ‘meet realities on the ground.’ Foucault talks about a “witches’ brew” of practices and counter-practices

that produce outcomes and effects not quite what the planners envisaged. Today we will look into counter-practices as resistance.

We will in particular discuss James Scott's seminal writings about 'infrapolitics' – the hidden forms that resistance may take under certain circumstances, which pushes the notion of conflict beyond the visible and spectacular forms. We will discuss Scott's points and the criticisms raised to them and then engage with an example of resistance in the context of wildlife conservation in Tanzania.

In preparation for class, you should read two texts. First, read the book chapter 'The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups' by James Scott (1992) and pay particular attention to how it argues for the importance of paying attention to infrapolitics (hidden forms of resistance) as a pre-condition for more open forms of resistance by emphasizing both its symbolic and material dimensions. (Part of) the text may be difficult comprehending, but do not worry: we will do an exercise in class that hopefully will make the key points clear. Second, read the paper by Mariki et al. (2015), which exemplifies the application of resistance thinking as a way of understanding the motivations behind the killing of elephants. While reading, try to link the case to Scott's framework. We will discuss the paper in class: what it does well and perhaps less well. We will end the day by discussing the critique raised against Scott's 'infrapolitics.'

Compulsory readings:

Scott, J.C. 1992. The Infrapolitics of Subordinate Groups. pp. 183-210. Chapter 7 *In: Domination and the arts of resistance: hidden transcripts*. Yale University Press. [In literature folder]

Mariki, S.B., H. Svarstad and T.A. Benjaminsen 2015. [Elephants over the Cliff: Explaining Wildlife Killings in Tanzania](#). *Land Use Policy* 44:19-30.

Supplementary readings:

Li, T.M. Situating Resource Struggles – Concepts for Empirical Analysis. pp. 193-217. *In: Bavisar, A. (ed.) 2008. Contested Grounds: Essays on Nature, Culture, and Power*. Oxford University Press. [In literature folder]

Cavanagh, C.J., Benjaminsen, T.A. 2015. Guerrilla agriculture? A biopolitical guide to illicit cultivation within an IUCN Category II protected area. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42 (3-4): 725-745. <https://www.tandfonline-com.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/doi/full/10.1080/03066150.2014.993623>

Second Thursday: Agribusiness and biopower

Agribusiness and monocrops are reshaping rural environments. Southern Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina have become some of the primary suppliers of soy worldwide thanks to the ready acceptance and lax regulations of GM modified RoundUp-ready crops. While increasing yields and lessening required labor input, the soy boom has arrived with a number of bills that are passed on to rural communities in the form of dispossession and land concentration, adverse impacts on bodies and environments, and the general erosion of rural life.

In this session, we pursue a double purpose. First, we shall unpack the relationship between GM crops and the transformation of rural spaces. We do so through an engagement with two texts (Hetherington 2020, Lapegna 2016) which discuss the soy boom in Paraguay and Argentina, respectively. As you read the texts, please observe the different mechanisms the two authors describe and the respective vocabulary they

employ. Think about the difference between them and what those approaches allow them to see. Our second purpose is to understand Foucault's notion of biopower. Like hegemony, which Lapegna uses and which we discussed in the opening session, biopower and biopolitics (Foucault sometimes use these interchangeably) have emerged as part of the political ecology conceptual toolbox.

Related to governmentality but distinct from it, biopolitics is used to describe a shift in governmental techniques and regulatory regimes. Foucault famously described this as the shift from the sovereign power's 'take life or let live' (picture the medieval King and his thumbs up or down at the scaffold) to a more subtle power to "make live or let die." In particular, he describes how 'the population' emerged as an object of both science and government. Demography, public health, the census and so on – a lot of what we have witnessed very explicitly during the pandemic – were all targeting the well-being of the entire population, thus also providing normative visions for the relationship between individual and population.

We will spend the morning session discussing biopolitics and biopower. You are asked to read a short excerpt from the final chapter of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality*. Take notes and underline sentences that make you curious, wonder, or shake your head. Select your favorite quote and bring it to class. We will collectively discuss these to make sense of the text. The afternoon will be dedicated to our discussion of monocultures and how we might conceptually make sense of this. We engage in particular with the recent work of Gregg Hetherington, who proposes to understand biopolitics to encompass not only human beings but also the government of life more broadly. Thus, the production of soy in large agribusiness plantations can be understood as a form of prioritizing the life of some (soybean, consumers) while others are either deliberately killed (pests) or left to die from the harmful impacts (peasants). In the last hour of class we will be joined by Hetherington via zoom to engage in a direct discussion with him around his analysis of soy and the contemporary biopolitics of agribusiness.

Compulsory readings:

Foucault, Michel (2020/1976) Excerpt from Part Five: The Right to Death and Power over Life, in *The History of Sexuality Vol 1, The Will to Knowledge*. Penguin Modern Classics, 135-145 [in files folder]

Hetherington, Gregg. "[Agribiopolitics: The Health of Plants and Humans in the Age of Monocrops](https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820912757)." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38, no. 4 (August 2020): 682–98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820912757>.

Lapegna, P. (2017) [The political economy of the agro-export boom under the Kirchners: Hegemony and passive revolution in Argentina](https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12205). *J Agrarian Change*. ; 17: 313– 329. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12205>

Supplementary readings:

Cavanagh C. J., (2018) "[Political ecologies of biopower: diversity, debates, and new frontiers of inquiry](https://doi.org/10.2458/v25i1.23047)", *Journal of Political Ecology* 25(1). doi: <https://doi.org/10.2458/v25i1.23047>

Li, T.M. (2010), [To Make Live or Let Die? Rural Dispossession and the Protection of Surplus Populations](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00717.x). *Antipode*, 41: 66-93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00717.x>

Conviviality and closure (week 8)

This course focuses on ways of viewing and thinking that pose critical questions to much of mainstream practice in development and environmental policy. This may leave us with a sense that any attempt at acting and doing are meaningless given the difficulties of doing 'right'. Yet, as Paul Robbins argues, political ecologists wield both the hatchet and the seed; the hatchet being the deconstructing and discarding of dominant narratives, and the seed being the search for and forwarding of more equitable and sustainable ways of knowing, being and doing.

During this last week of the course, we will examine one such 'seed', which goes under the name 'convivial conservation'. We will examine what it is, how it may respond to the challenges of environmental crises and inequality, and what actions could help bring it about. After this, we will have reached Thursday afternoon where we will reflect on what we have learned during the course and evaluate the course. We end with discussing the exam and other pending questions we might have before we close the course.

Tuesday

This morning we will engage with the proposal for convivial conservation. We will examine a bit of the history of conservation and then see how recent debates among conservationists point in widely different directions when it comes to understandings of what nature is and ought to be, who are allies and enemies in the enterprise of conservation, and through what strategies conservation can succeed. We will see how the proposal of convivial conservation grew out of this debate and discuss what the proposal entails. We will see how the proposal resonates with related sets of ideas, such as those under the umbrella of degrowth.

To prepare, please check out the interview with Bram Büscher, one of the two authors of the book 'The conservation revolution', which sets out the proposal for convivial conservation. Having seen the interview, you can continue by reading the Büscher and Fletcher (2019) article, which summarizes the proposal.

Compulsory materials:

[Video interview](#) with Bram Büscher on the book 'The Conservation Revolution'. 23 min.

Büscher, B. and R. Fletcher 2019. [Towards Convivial Conservation](#). *Conservation & Society* 17(3):283-296.

Supplementary readings:

Asiyanbi, A. 2019. [Decolonising the environment: race, rationalities and crises](#). Blog. Sheffield Institute for International Development.

Further readings:

Büscher, B. and R. Fletcher. 2020. *The Conservation Revolution – Radical Ideas for Saving Nature beyond the Anthropocene*. Verso.

Thursday

This morning we will engage with pathways towards the vision of convivial conservation (and related visions for more equitable and sustainable futures). We will engage with the question of how we can contribute towards seeing such futures realized.

Often, this question is posed either at the level of the individual (consumer changes, activism) or the collective (pushing for policy changes). Some see value (only) in policy change, arguing that individual efforts don't count in the larger scheme of things, whereas others believe that change must come from the individual. This morning we will discuss this conundrum and see if we can find ways of overcoming it. In doing this, we will examine how we, in different ways, can be part of the change we want to see in the World.

To prepare, please read the short chapter 'Making changes on the ground' from the book by Kallis et al. 2020 'The case for degrowth'. Notice how the authors connect individual action to more systemic changes. Furthermore, please read the short piece by Paulson (2015), which provides some hints as to how political ecology may help us to imagine and make possible other Worlds.

Compulsory readings:

Kallis, G., S. Paulson, G. D'Alisa and F. Demaria 2020. The case for degrowth. Polity Press. Chapter 3 entitled 'Making changes on the ground'. In literature folder on Absalon.

Paulson, S. 2015. Political Ecology. In: Demaria, F., Kallis, G. and G. D'Alisa. [Degrowth: A Vocabulary for a New Era](#). Routledge.

Supplementary readings:

Paulson, S. 2019. [Pluriversal learning: pathways toward a world of many worlds](#). Nordia Geographical Publications 47: 5, 85–109.

Further readings:

Wright, E.O. 2021. How to Be an Anticapitalist in the Twenty-First Century. Verso.

Afternoon

In the afternoon, we start with a discussion of what you consider your key learning outcomes from the course. Then we will give you a bit of time to complete the written evaluation of the course. Following a break, we will go over and discuss the results of the written evaluation. Following that, we will present the exam form again and answer any questions you may have in relation to it and to the curriculum. If you have any questions for the curriculum at this point, we would appreciate it if you could forward them to Jens, jens@ifro.ku.dk, no later than November 2 at 4 pm. You can, of course, also pose questions on the day of.