

### **Mobility, Immobility, and the Green Economy**

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Political ecologists have grappled extensively with the green economy and problematized the relationship between green capitalism, enclosure, and displacement (Heynen and Robbins 2005; West et al. 2006; Brockington and Duffy 2011). Their efforts have demonstrated that many purportedly progressive approaches to pursuing sustainable development through ‘greening’ are made possible by new or renewed acts of enclosure that delimit and restrict the movement of people, nature, and things (Corson and MacDonald 2012; Benjaminsen and Bryceson 2012; Fairhead et al. 2012). Such enclosures tend to reproduce existing patterns of accumulation, exclusion, and inequality under the pretext of sustainable development (Igoe and Brockington 2007; McAfee 2009; Brand 2012). Political ecologists have also demonstrated that accommodating the green economy often necessitates displacing existing land users from their access to and autonomy over land and natural resources (Brosius 2004; West 2006; Kelly 2011; Ojeda 2012; Lunstrum 2016). By restricting the movement of people and things and by displacing existing ways of accessing and managing land and natural resources, the green economy arguably forecloses pathways to alternative sustainabilities (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2017; see Ramutsindela 2007, Chapter 8).

Although the green economy has clear implications for mobility – e.g. enclosure and displacement – mobility as an analytic has yet to gain traction among political ecologists analysing, discussing, and thinking about the green economy (White et al. 2012; see also Igoe 2017, xii; Enns forthcoming). This panel aims to explore the possibilities and limitations that come with using a critical mobilities perspective to contribute to ongoing debates about the green economy. Understanding mobility as ‘the movement of people (human mobility), social networks and relations (social mobility), trade and capital (economic mobility), and information and images (symbolic mobility)’ (Ilcan 2013, 3), a critical mobilities perspective recognizes that ‘mobility is a resource to which not everyone has an equal relationship’ (Skeggs 2004, 49). This panel intends to consider the different forms of mobility and immobility generated by the green economy, as well as who wins and who loses when mobilities come into contact, friction, and competition with one another as a result of green economy practices.

By employing mobility as an analytic, this panel endeavours to introduce what might be a useful framework for future empirical, conceptual, political, and methodological work on the green economy by political ecologists. Specifically, the panel includes papers that engage with the green economy in ways that complement two central themes: mobility and immobility. Although not all the papers on the panel adopt a critical mobilities perspective explicitly, they focus on how the green economy either delimits and restricts or enables and forces the movement of people, nature, and commodities. Topics range from new forms of enclosure and displacement to changing migratory patterns of humans and non-humans and from shifting flows of natural resources (e.g. water) to emergent patterns of commodity exchange (e.g. carbon or illegal wildlife trading). Collectively, the papers on this panel also lead to questions about how people and things move (both figuratively or literally) in

response to the green economy; for example, through social mobilization in reaction to green capitalism or labour migration towards ecotourism sites.

With this in mind, this panel seeks to address themes related to the following questions:

- How does the green economy enable or force the movement of certain peoples, natures, and commodities? What are the cultural, ecological, economic, social, and/or political implications of the mobilities introduced by green economy practices?
- How does the green economy delimit or restrict the movement of certain peoples, natures, and commodities? What are the cultural, ecological, economic, social, and/or political implications of the immobilities introduced by green economy practices?
- What types of struggles occur when different mobilities come into contact, friction, or competition as a result of green economy practices? Who gets to decide who and what moves through places and spaces associated with the green economy?
- How, when, where, and why do people and nature move (both figuratively or literally) and mobilise in response to the green economy?
- How might a critical mobilities perspective contribute to debates about the green economy? What does adopting a critical mobilities perspective in research on the green economy reveal about challenges for and pathways to alternative sustainabilities?

#### **Panel Abstracts:**

##### **Routes and Roots of Belonging: Politics Under a Green Economy in the Kitam Bird Sanctuary, India**

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The village adjoining the Kitam Bird Sanctuary, in India's northeastern Himalayan state of Sikkim began marketizing its nature-culture through ecotourism. Sikkim is emerging as a popular green destination, associated in the Indian imaginary with its biodiversity hotspot status, alpine landscapes and colorfully-clothed, prayer-wheel spinning Buddhist ethnic groups. Kitam, inhabited predominantly by non-Buddhist nepali ethnic groups, seeks a share in this growing green economy. The stakes for the villagers is not only increased income, but a recognition/affirmation of their national belonging through the tourist gaze. As a community whose "name itself indexes foreignness", they are often perceived as outsiders, despite multi-generational presence in the landscape. How does participation in ecotourism's green economy enable a renegotiation of the disadvantage associated with the nepali community's historical mobility? How does their suspiciously-cast mobility tarry with the valued mobility of ecotourists visiting this landscape? Clifford (1997) juxtaposes routes, that privilege cosmopolitan travelers with roots signaling the arborescence attributed to communities as index of their powerlessness. In challenging this simple cosmopolitan traveler-local community binary of power-relations, I draw attention to the strategic invocation of routes in the politics of belonging. The green economy, a creative site for seeking recognition refracts such recognition through a lens of tourism aesthetics. Here Kitam's less-distinct Hindu culture, and the sanctuary's less-distinct tropical landscape, in appearing un-exotic to tourists, presents an aesthetics deficit. To overcome this, villagers turned to the patina of the sanctuary's colonial routes, highlighting it as an entry-point for British colonial visitors from India into the then semi-autonomous Sikkimese kingdom. I explore how in contemporary

trekking-route development, the historical power of colonial routes, and the economic power of contemporary ecotourists' routes are being deployed towards the political end of seeking affirmation of the rootedness of the local community. The potentials and pitfalls of this strategy and its inversion or re-inscription of power-inequalities is the topic of inquiry.

### **'Mobile Caviar': The Geopolitics of 'Non-Human' Migration and Mobility**

Hannah Dickinson

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The mobility of commodities is an on-going focus of work in Geography that seeks to '*Follow-the-Thing*' (Cook, 2004; Cook & Harrison, 2007; Lepawsky & Mather, 2011; Hulme, 2017) and 'de-fetishize' commodities by tracing and revealing the hidden 'social lives' embedded at each stage of the commodities' circulatory journeys': from production to final consumption and/or disposal. Although this body of work paved the way for geographical considerations of how commodities move and interact with humans in an increasingly globalized world, '*Follow-the-Thing*' scholars pay little attention to how the commodities they engage with are enrolled as both objects and subjects of Geopolitics<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, Geopolitical scholarship has extensively engaged with questions of migration and mobility (see Hyndman, 1997, 2000, 2012; Mountz, 2010; Squire, 2010). However, such scholarship has exhibited a human-centrism in its appraisal of migration and mobility, and demonstrated a relative lack of attention to the Geopolitics of 'non-human' migration and mobility. This paper, based upon preliminary PhD analysis, seeks to bridge the identified gaps, by revealing the hidden 'Geopolitical lives' of mobile commodities. Specifically, the paper will outline and develop the idea of a Geopolitics of 'commodity migration' via the lens of caviar: a luxury commodity derived from critically endangered sturgeon, and traded both legally and illegally on a global scale. The high ecological and monetary value of sturgeon has seen these fish become embroiled in issues inherent to the 'green economy' such as biodiversity conservation and sustainable/ethical resource extraction. Concurrent efforts to conserve wild sturgeon stocks whilst at the same time enabling an expanding global 'green' caviar trade through aquaculture, have had considerable implications for the transforming mobility of sturgeon. Wild sturgeon have become increasingly immobile in their ecological ranges; farmed sturgeon have experienced trans-continental migratory journeys as the burgeoning aquaculture industry explodes in unlikely locations; and, once rendered into caviar sturgeon take on new liveliness as a highly mobile commodity. The paper makes the case that engaging with sturgeon and caviar as Geopolitical subjects and objects, can aid in the understanding of their transforming (im)mobilities.

### **Palestinian Wastewater: The Scramble for a New Resource**

Jeanne Perrier

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The 2014 Initiative for the Palestinian Economy, drafted under the leadership of Quartet Representative Tony Blair, set up the priorities for Palestinian agricultural development: more land must be irrigated through the re-use of treated water. Programmes promoting Green agriculture in the West Bank are encouraging the reuse of treated wastewater as a mean to improve water use efficiency. The Palestinian Authority plans the treatment and re-use of 52 millions of cubic meter by 2022. Projects of wastewater treatment plants and re-use schemes are flourishing in the West Bank. While it appears as a good solution for water scarcity issues and environmental sustainability, these projects are changing the way water flows. Changing trajectories involves a new territorialization process for agriculture in the West Bank, and modify considerably the institutions through which this new resource will flow. Various mobilities underpinned by different notions of water efficiency interact and compete with each other. Treated wastewater is a *paracommon*, the appropriation of which needs to be governed. The term *paracommons* designates the material gains potentially generated by the efficiency improvement within various systems. These gains are largely

unmeasured and misunderstood but crucial to assess the real outcomes of re-use projects in agriculture. In Nablus West, re- using treated wastewater on more than 250 hectares implies a change of crops, and a change in land tenure and social organization. In Nablus East, three villages are strongly opposed to the construction of the wastewater treatment plants on their lands, as they already lost land to the nearby Israeli settlement of Elon More. Exploring the trajectories water can follow makes visible previously ignored interactions and disregarded consequences of re-use projects.

### **Scales of Empowerment: A Socio-spatial Exploration of Recycling Networks in Brazil**

Tatianna M. P. Silva

International Development, University of Edinburgh

Studies concerned with waste pickers' empowerment are commonly limited to a municipal scale of analysis (Gregson and Crange, 2015) that ignores the scalar geometry of socio-political-ecological processes linking cities to dispersed geographical locations (Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003; Brenner, 2003). Aware that scales are imbued in politics (Latour, 2005; Smith, 1995) and may hide relations of domination and exploitation, this paper aims to understand the phenomenon of waste picker's deprivation using a process-based networked approach to scale that celebrates authors proposing a "mobilities turn" to the social sciences (i.e. Sheller, Urry, Gille, Swyngedouw). It follows the recycling networks of PET bottles from the moment they are reclaimed by waste pickers at the biggest dumpsite of Latin America located in Brasília, Brazil, until they are physically/chemically transformed into new products ready to return to the consumer market. While unveiling these superposed scales that shape and are shaped by the informal recycling market, it discusses how power traverses scales (Gille, 2012) and reflects upon the co-implication of spatial and social processes (Soja, 2010). Inspired by Massey's (1994) concept of *power geometry*, the paper then examines how space constrains the possibilities presented to waste pickers in terms of *what* (object), *where*(directionality), *when* (timing), and *how* (conditions) they sell with consequences to their positionality in the recycling network and, hence, to their prospects of socioeconomic empowerment. The paper is structured around an analysis of waste pickers' relationship *with* space, in terms of access to physical space and to the means of transposing it, and their relations *on* space as parties of the PET recycling network.

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