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Voluntourism and multispecies collaboration: Life, death, and conservation in the Mesoamerican Barrier Reef is a welcome addition to the anthropology of tourism and conservation that grapples with the internal contradictions of the green economy. Brondo specifically tackles voluntourism—a form of neoliberal conservation where activists travel to other locales to conduct conservation work—in the richly biodiverse landscapes and marine ecosystems of Utila, an island in the Bay of Honduras. Through a wealth of historical analysis and ethnographic content, this text advances political ecology by highlighting the irony that the "expanding global tourism industry be positioned to mediate the capitalist contradictions to which it is also a central contributor" (p. 19). The irony of using a capitalist approach to address capitalism's woes foregrounds the premise of Brondo's book, as she explores the emerging, affective green economy of voluntourism "that is predicated on both the exploitation and conservation of specific place-based species" through a multispecies lens (p. 20).

The book's Introduction frames the interwoven relationships of human livelihoods and non-human species and centers their role in both the conservation industry and tourist development. In these relationships, Brondo explores how non-human/human interactions create human socialities and questions why only some species are worthy of conservation investment—and conversely "why are some species killable?" (p. 20). She grounds her work as an extension of the contributions in Büscher, Dressler and Fletcher (2014), who demonstrate that neoliberal conservation has developed to legitimize and sell novel relations between human and nature to reinforce a dichotomic separation of the two. Brondo argues that voluntourism is one of the forms "of commodification and commercialization of nature that emerge in order to fund conservation efforts" (p. 23). These methods of commodification are oft-represented as the hallmarks of neoliberal conservation: innovative means of a market-driven panacea to environmental problems (Arsel and Büscher, 2012). Brondo provides a view of neoliberal conservation through an affect economy, relying on a rich foundation in feminist political ecology to expand critiques of neoliberal conservation by identifying how affective labor produces value in its midst. The Introduction also delves into ontological aspects of coloniality—grappling with how a one-world ontological view shapes many artifacts of Utila's history and how the tourism industry today reproduces the colonial model. The book explores critiques of these neo-colonial aspects and seeks to challenge the ontological assumptions of the island's history oft told from the perspective of white settlers.

Chapter 1 focuses Utila's historical context to provide a framework to interpret the complex human and non-human entanglements on the island. As Brondo explains, this chapter presents a multi-faceted narrative on the complex cultural makeup and identity of the island filled with "alternative histories" that are "punctuated by the telling of the island's history through the words of Utilians" (p. 32). The narratives of the chapter illuminate many of the existing, highly complex social hierarchies on the island today—the results of thousands of years of migration and colonialism: Indigenous Pech settlement, Spanish colonization, slave raids, battles between pirates, waves of migration, and Honduras taking control in 1860. This chapter effectively weaves this complex tapestry of historical narratives that form the backdrop for the book's remaining content: highlighting how colonialism, migration, tourism, contemporary party culture, and voluntourism on the island all result in capitalist degradation. This reality illustrates "the entangled history of Utila, with narratives of exploration, enslavement, and conservation science"—from the mangroves constantly altering the ecosystem's landscape to the people who still call the island home (p. 41; p. 68-69).

The second chapter highlights a new assemblage altering the socioecological fabric of Utila: dive tourism. Utila has grown from a small fishing community "immersed in the global market...at the point of extraction" to an international hub for drug-fueled parties and paradisiacal, exoticized experiences (p. 71-73). This chapter explores the motivations of tourists and locals alike, demonstrating how tourists' search for the sublime and the local desires for freedom from government intervention are part of a colonial process by which

"images of the Caribbean reproduce colonial power relations, imagining and narrating lands, seas, bodies, and cultures as open to be occupied, invaded, used, viewed, bought, or consumed" (p. 73). Brondo finds that this rise in the hedonistic behavior of dive tourists creates problems for young Utilians while attracting like-minded future travelers, as the newly-minted social media imaginary of the island is remarkably different residents' experiences, "...which is having tangible impacts on the local population and ecology" (p. 79). Dive tourism remains central to the neoliberal development strategy of the Caribbean; and on Utila, this strategy brings both material and cultural dispossession, as well as opportunities for the emergence of new multispecies assemblages.

As Chapter 3 explores, it is not just the dive tourists and party seekers "transforming material and affective relations between and among species, human and more-than-human," but also the conservationists themselves (p. 111). On Utila, a clear "paradox emerges as tourism officials anchor the 'tourism product' in the vulnerability and nature of islands themselves" (p. 113). This internal contradiction is in many ways responsible for the reframing and reconstruction of material and biological assemblages on the island—endangered species are fetishized by predominantly western millennials in search of resume experience, blinding them of the socioecological impacts of their actions. These voluntourists never truly 'become with' the local community—both human and not. Instead, conservation is increasingly tied to development, in ways that prioritize the experiences of dive tourists and voluntourists over the multispecies communities they temporarily inhabit. These divergences stem from many failures of neoliberal conservation including funder's mandates amidst growing decentralization, failures to engage with local perspectives, disrespect for local knowledge or custom, and a social media presence dominated by savior discourse (p. 123-126; 141-144). The result: conservationists privilege a western ontological view of 'nature' devoid of human activity other than that of the noble scientist; thus, these voluntourists are "left only to focus on conserving resources away from local peoples" while portraying conservation work as a flexible and fun adventure, attracting the next crop of workers in Utila's newfound affect economy (p. 127). This amounts to little more than a renewed cycle of dispossession on Utila following the muddied footsteps left behind in the mangroves by the island's colonial histories.

The concluding chapters utilize the Brondo's ethnographic experience alongside new materialisms literature to investigate multispecies encounters and inequalities, as well as how they create widescale changes to economies and landscapes. The inequalities in Utila's multispecies assemblages stem from the reality that the "affect economy privileges the external systems of science, conservation, and care, and it generates and exchanges multispecies experiences for new forms of capital in the global economy" (p. 149). Brondo's work is of great value in thoroughly cataloguing how the spectacle of humanitarian imagery and the social media crusade against suffering blinds us into accepting "that the only path to action is through consumption" (p. 150). In this path it seems unlikely for the human exceptionality and domination that so define the Anthropocene to fade away (p. 166). Brondo reminds us that "as we attend to the agency and autonomy of other beings that are coinhabiting and collaborating for survival in a landscape wrecked by capitalist destruction," the settler narrative often looms large in Utila (p. 168). But never forget the agency of nonhuman species and "how their movements are influencing life, death, and collaboration" as well (p. 170).

This ethnographic work is an excellent addition to the evolving literature employing multispecies methodologies—demonstrating how critical analyses of more-than-human assemblages can provide unique insights into anthropological work in political ecology. Political ecologists focused on the interactions of humans and non-humans or curious about the artificial human/nature divide would benefit greatly from reading this text. Conservationists might find this text intriguing and amicably enlightening too. As Brondo cautions, conservationists and voluntourists generally have good intentions and care deeply for the socioecological communities to which they travel. It is just amidst the spectacle and the one-world ontology of life in the imagined Anthropocene that humans too often forget that "other beings are vibrant and entangled in making their own worlds, sometimes in relation with us in ways we may yet to fully comprehend" (p. 31).

References

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