



## Conflict, Environment and Transition: Colombia, Ecology and Tourism after Demobilisation

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### Abstract

In 2016, Colombia's left-wing guerrilla FARC-EP (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo) began demobilisation. While demobilisation and the ensuing peace accords brought renewed hope that the country could imagine different political and social relations—and new ecological and economic conditions—multinational corporations filled the 'void' left by FARC-EP forces. Corporate interests in Colombia's natural resources predated the demobilisation. However, extractive processes were restricted by the dynamics of the armed conflict. In 2016, immediately following the demobilisation, deforestation in Colombia jumped 44 per cent. In the transitional demobilisation period, huge swaths of the country were opened for economic development. Thus, while the environment is often a victim in armed conflict, in Colombia, conflict contributed to the preservation of some areas. Among the forms of development that have emerged in Colombia, 'ecotourism' has risen quickly to the fore. While ecotourism may offer some promise, it should be viewed with caution.

### Keywords

Colombia; ecotourism; pacification; transitional justice

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### Armed conflict and ecology in Colombia

The armed conflict in Colombia has been a dynamic affair and cannot be understood as a stable, static or homogenous dispute or process. Between the mid-1950s and the present, the political economy of war, and its causes, consequences, practices and actors, have been transformed. In the 1960s, initial hostilities between two political parties, *liberal* and *conservador*, developed into confrontations between left-wing guerrillas and the state (González et al. 2003). The escalation of the conflict that occurred in the 1980s with the growth of the drug business, the expansion of guerrilla forces and the incursions of right-wing paramilitary groups disputing control over territories, reached its most critical level between the end of the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s. The National Centre of Historical Memory, for example, estimates that between 1982 and 2007, 2,505 massacres were perpetrated, with 14,660 victims (CNRR 2008: 11). Between 1996 and 2005, 18,439 people were kidnapped (GMH 2013: 65), more than 3,000,000 people were forcibly displaced (GMH 2013: 71) and at least one person was the victim of landmines every day (GMH 2013: 34). Throughout the armed conflict, guerrillas, paramilitaries and state armed forces used violence against civilians, albeit in different ways. Thus, for example, massacres, economic blockades, selective killings of human rights defenders and sexual violence were more characteristic of the operations of paramilitaries, whereas kidnapping, forced recruitment, landmines and destruction of property were more representative of the repertoire of violence used by guerrillas. The government's armed forces, for their part, employed in greater measure arbitrary detentions and forced disappearances (GMH 2013).

The controversial demobilisation of paramilitaries between 2003 and 2006 gave rise to the emergence of 'neo-paramilitary' organisations operating in the same areas and with similar forms and methods of violence as paramilitaries (for a thorough discussion of the significance of these groups, see Nussio 2011). To date, these neo-paramilitary organisations have continued the paramilitary legacy of involvement with regional political projects of clientelism and have expanded their networks, disputing not just control over territories and resources with other armed groups, like guerrillas, but also developing different levels of management of illegal activities (Zelik 2015). The 2016 peace accord between FARC-EP and the government, which negotiated, inter alia, the demobilisation of guerrillas and their political participation has brought about a *de-escalation of war*. At the same time, however, the post-agreement scenario has also witnessed an *escalation of violence*, with neo-paramilitary organisations disputing control over former FARC-EP territories and the assassination of social leaders and human rights defenders—many of whom are involved in land restitution processes—reaching unprecedented levels.

While sociopolitical unrest and loss of human life have garnered the most attention, the environment—in particular, struggles over natural resources—is of significance when considering the origins and transformations of the armed conflict in Colombia. Brisman and colleagues (2015; see also Brisman and South 2018) proposed a four-pronged typology of conflict–environment relationships: 1) conflict over natural resources possession; 2) conflict over declining resources; 3) conflict that destroys environments; and 4) conflict over natural resource extraction processes. Rodríguez and colleagues (2017) identified four ways in which the armed conflict in Colombia has been related to the environment: 1) natural resources as a *cause of conflict*; 2) natural resources as a *source of funding* for and perpetuation of the war; 3) the *environment as a victim* of the prolonged conflict; and, somewhat surprisingly, we might point out, 4) the *environment as a beneficiary* of the dynamics of the armed conflict. Indeed, in Colombia, struggles over access to land and its related historical unequal distribution have underpinned and transformed the dynamics and economics of this long-lasting conflict (Sanchez Leon 2017), as have disputes over control (and exploitation) of natural resources, such as illicit crops and illegal gold mining. While these illegal activities funded and contributed to the perpetuation of the armed conflict,<sup>1</sup> armed groups also found a significant source of funding in their engagement with *legal* activities, such as exploitation of oil by multinational corporations, mono-cropping, and cattle ranches, for which forced displacement and land grabbing continue to be fundamental

practices (Sanchez Leon and Marin Lopez 2017). In essence, the use of natural resources as both a source of funding—regardless of whether the resources are exploited directly by armed groups—and their strategic use as a sanctuary helps explain the presence of the conflict in areas with high biodiversity (Rodríguez et al. 2017).

To be sure, the presence of armed groups in areas with high biodiversity has negative implications on a number of different levels, and Colombia has been no different in this regard. The establishment of camps often involves production of waste with inadequate treatment and pollution of hydric sources. Likewise, the National Department of Planning (*Departamento Nacional de Planeación*) (2016) estimated that between 1990 and 2013, 58 per cent of deforestation in the country was related to the armed conflict. In that sense, there have been high levels of deforestation associated with the creation of infrastructure and expansion of illicit crops, but also with the growth of settlements for internally displaced people and the transformation of land into cattle ranches and for mono-crop cultivation (PNUD 2014). Illegal gold mining—which results in unsafe levels of mercury—and attacks on oil pipelines have also had a devastating impact on the environment. According to the National Department of Planning (2016), armed conflict-related oil spills and illegal mining have affected 60 per cent of watersheds in the country, with around 75 tons of mercury released annually.

In legal terms, the environment of Colombia has been considered a victim of the armed conflict in several instances. For example, the *2011 Decree Law 4633* on reparation and restitution of territorial rights of Indigenous peoples acknowledges that the armed conflict—through its engagement with illegal and legal activities—has caused cultural and territorial harms that threaten the existence of Indigenous peoples (Orduz 2011). Rodríguez and colleagues (2017) noted that this understanding of the environment as a *victim* of the conflict is present in rulings of land restitution to ethnic groups, in which the state has ordered the restoration of ecosystems based on assessments of environmental harms caused by conflict-related activities, such as illegal mining and fumigation of illegal crops with glyphosate.<sup>2</sup>

As noted above, conflict can also contribute to the *conservation* of ecosystems (Rodríguez et al. 2017). In the case of Colombia, the presence of armed groups in areas with high biodiversity had two main effects. First, because the conflict had been restricted to specific parts of the country, it created out-of-reach areas for both the state and multinational corporations. As a result, this created de facto ‘nature preserves’ (or, to put it another way, prevented environmental devastation and natural resource extraction). Second, armed groups, in particular FARC-EP, imposed rules on the territories that, through the use of threats, coercion and physical violence, protected the environment with the purpose of guaranteeing cover and subsistence for the combatants; often, activities such as fishing with dynamite, extensive deforestation, pollution of water sources and indiscriminate hunting were banned areas under their control (Steffens 2018).

With the demobilisation of FARC-EP, the rich biodiversity of the territories under the control of guerrillas became available for research and enjoyment, but also for cultural and commercial exploitation. For example, at the same time that government-funded projects like ColombiaBio<sup>3</sup> produced documentaries with scientific expeditions that aimed to record the biodiversity of those territories, deforestation in those former out-of-reach areas increased by 44 per cent in the year after the peace accords were signed (Brodzinsky 2017). In the post-agreement scenario, ecotourism, to offer another example, as both a means of economic growth and a strategy of securitisation of the country (Ojeda 2012), has become a thriving industry.

In sum, if the natural environment and non-human ecologies are often victims of human conflict, in Colombia, we encounter a situation in which the conflict has both *harmed* and *preserved* some environmental and ecological spaces. While embers of the conflict remain, with neo-paramilitary organisations, FARC-EP dissidents and other guerrillas still operating, the implementation of the peace accords between the Colombian government and FARC-EP hold the promise of new

ecological, economic, political and social transformations. In what follows, then, we consider further the various ways the contemporary moment of transition might continue to harm or preserve marginalised ecologies and eco-cultural practice. First, we describe briefly the frameworks of transitional justice that currently configure internal debates and struggles in Colombia, noting the position(s) and prominence (or lack thereof) of environmental and economic justice within transitional justice agendas. We then turn our attention to issues of development, describing the ways ongoing processes of conflict, transition and peace have created new opportunities for development. Following that, we turn our attention to one increasingly popular form of so-called 'community-driven' economic development—ecotourism. We describe the ways that the development of an economy based on ecotourism relies routinely on capitalist conservation logics and the related processes of dispossession, primitive accumulation, securitisation and pacification. We conclude by turning to questions raised by critical conservation scholars (see generally Marijnen and Duffy 2018) surrounding the promise of conservation and development, the role of conservation in peacebuilding and the possibility and ability of new forms of conservation and ecological and economic development to offer meaningful transitional intervention into ongoing ecological and ecocidal harm.

### **Transitional justice and conflict ecologies**

In the wake of the armed conflict, new micro-, individual family-level (e.g., small businesses) and macro-level economic opportunities (e.g., industrial agriculture) have begun to emerge in Colombia. Although frameworks of transitional justice, in general, are more attuned to and interested in the post-conflict dynamics of *governance*, we can also understand 'transitions' as *economic*. Following that, we can begin to think about economic justice as a necessary *dimension* of transitional justice. Similarly, the period of social and governmental transition following the armed conflict also has environmental dimensions and impacts; just as the armed conflict itself conditioned Colombian ecology, so too does the post-peace accords transition period. Here, we can note, at the risk of overstating the obvious, that the armed conflict touched nearly every dimension of life in Colombia, from ecology to economy.

Transitional justice is, first and foremost, a perspective or mechanism concerned with the formal legal architectures of rights; frameworks of transitional justice emerge most notably as formal and codified frameworks of accountability and reparation in social and material geographies conditioned by conflict (Arthur 2009). Conversely, social justice frameworks are more conceptual than they are legal, more informal than they are formal: they usually seek justice in the myriad realms of social life that fall, generally, outside the scope of law and formal rights regimes. Social justice often encircles and encompasses the complementary spheres of economic justice, environmental justice, and restorative or reparative justice for social groups affected by conflict or historical oppression. While there are some key distinctions between formal paradigms and processes of transitional justice and the informal struggle for social justice, proponents of both are fundamentally interested in how conflict and oppression might be addressed, the means and mechanisms whereby redress and reparation might emerge, and the ways that conflict and oppression condition and configure the post-conflict social landscape.

Because conflicts, such as that experienced by Colombia, have clear economic effects at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, transitional justice (or more generally, post-conflict political and social transition) efforts must address the economic needs of those affected. Similarly, because the Colombian armed conflict despoiled and destroyed parts of the country's ecology—degradation that adversely and disproportionately affected poor people, ethnic minorities and Indigenous people, women, and other oppressed groups—'environmental justice' (for more general overviews of environmental justice see Bullard 1990, 1994; Gould et al. 2004; Lynch et al. 2015) must necessarily be a goal of transition and transitional justice. Accordingly, we consider the ways 'transition' is not only the central concern of *transitional* justice, but also a configurative dimension of *economic* justice, *environmental* justice and *social* justice. In so doing, we



contemplate the ways goals of economic and environmental justice in a transitional geography coexist, sometimes complementarily and sometimes with significant and meaningful tension.

Transitional justice is, in many ways, founded on notions of human rights (see De Greiff 2006, 2012). As research in green criminology has noted, environmental degradation is often accompanied by violations of those rights (see Brisman 2014; Short 2016; Short et al. 2018; Brisman et al. 2016). As transitional justice generally centres on ‘the ways countries emerging from periods of conflict and repression address large-scale or systematic human rights violations’ (ICTJ 2018) through legal architectures of redress outside of the traditional justice system, some of those ‘ways’ and ‘violations’ are necessarily connected to environmental and ecological harms. Following that, we find here an opportunity to think about the role of the natural environment in transitional scenarios, and to consider the ways that the formal structures of transitional justice and informal frameworks of social justice might approach and address environmental harm.

As described previously, the remarkably biodiverse ecologies of Colombia are only now being made accessible to new forms of development. It is becoming increasingly evident that as the ecological landscape emerges as a key site in economic transition, though, the conflict-conditioned geography must first be securitised and further pacified. By this, we mean that security measures conducive to the maintenance of capital flow must be introduced to dispossess, exploit and commodify local and insecure populations.<sup>4</sup> For many Indigenous communities already affected intensely by the conflict, this means that culturally and economically significant territories have been subjected to various forms of influence and control, as palm oil plantations and tourism—along with gas and oil extraction and other industries scrambling to find footholds in the transitional and post-conflict economy—have emerged as the only viable future. Ecological, economic and social harm has followed. In some instances, communities have been uprooted, and rural populations have been forced into the urban core of cities like Bogotá and Medellín, leaving behind important cultural and agricultural practices (Ibáñez 2009). In other cases, rural and agrarian peasant populations have been displaced from agriculturally and culturally significant ancestral lands and forced to pursue economic security through often-illicit practices, such as coca production. Economically and ecologically sustainable practices, such as agroforestry and agroecology, have ceased or diminished in favour of more profitable forms of ecological exploitation (Baptiste et al. 2017). And, of course, the extractive and productive industries that take root in newly securitised transitional territories of displacement routinely bring with them significant environmental harm and risk.

Already, territorial lines are being reconsidered and redrafted in Colombia, as extractive industries limited in the past by the conflict seek to redouble their efforts to exploit the country’s natural resources, such as gold and oil. Perhaps, however, the conflict’s largest impact on the nexus of ecology and economy appears in the nation’s palm oil industry. In Colombia’s South Pacific region, post-conflict accumulation and development is most clearly evident in the growth of the palm oil industry. As Mol (2013, 2017) has described, the palm oil industry in Colombia has serious effects on a vast array of material, social and economic ecologies. Clearcutting, a necessary part of the construction of a large-scale palm oil operation, threatens biodiversity and contributes to community displacement. As Mol explains (2013: 242 [quoting Fedepalma 2006]), industry literature presents palm oil production as a network of ‘diverse and complimentary endeavors [that] merge to form a chain of production, generating wealth and fomenting social development’. The palm oil industry, then, frames its activities positively, leaving out any mention of community displacement, ecological harm, economic hardship or labour exploitation. Indeed, the reality of palm oil is far different; research in biology and forest ecology suggests that the expansion of oil palm plantations occurs at the expense of biodiversity and forest ecologies (Koh and Wilcove 2008), to say nothing of human rights abuses.<sup>5</sup>

## Community economic development in Colombia: The case of ecotourism

Like palm oil production and other forms of development gaining traction in a transitional Colombia, ecotourism has been approached critically by a number of academic disciplines including anthropology, geography, security and conservation studies, and sociology. It has not, however, been taken up thoroughly by green criminology (for a passing exception outside the Colombian context, see Sollund 2017: 254. For a more thorough treatment, within the Colombian context, see Sollund 2019; for a criminological perspective grounded in the emergent area of 'deviant leisure', see Smith and Raymen 2018). It is clear, though, that the industry deserves criminological scrutiny, as it illustrates the dynamic tensions between ecophilosophical positions of anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism and econocentrism (see Halsey and White 1998; McClanahan 2017), calls attention to connections between political economy and environmental harm (see Stretesky et al. 2013; Schnaiberg et al. 2002), and reveals trends and truths at the intersection of environment and culture (see South and Brisman 2013, 2014). An analysis of ecotourism rooted in green criminology might, then, consider the myriad ways the industry presents potential harm to ecologies and cultures by drawing them into the capitalist market economy, thereby removing community management and control, how it might therefore further or instantiate increasingly corporate ownership and control of natural ecologies, how it might rely on the corporate and cultural practices of 'greenwashing' and so on. In this section, we will offer a brief and broad snapshot of what a green criminological critique of ecotourism in Colombia might look like.

In social and material ecologies configured and affected by conflict, 'ecotourism' emerges increasingly as part of post-conflict transition plans. The International Ecotourism Society, an international association of national and industry partners, defines 'ecotourism' as 'travel to natural areas that conserves the environment ... [and] sustains the well-being of the local people' (TIES 2015). There is, it should be noted, a 'sustainable tourism' industry growing alongside and frequently within the ecotourism industry—one that focuses less on the ecological immersion and education of traditional ecotourism and more on minimising the negative social and environmental impact of travel. While that distinction is important, for the purposes of this article, we consider 'ecotourism' to be that which follows the TIES definition offered above. Public efforts to promote ecotourism have been initiated around the world, and private businesses in the sector are similarly ubiquitous. As ecotourism is generally 'clumped' together with sustainable tourism and other forms of nature tourism in hospitality industry reports, it can be difficult to find reliable data to illustrate the industry's growth and magnitude (Hawkins and Lamoureux 2001: 66). It is, though, a widely-held industry belief that ecotourism is the most rapidly growing sector of the global tourism industry (Fritsch and Johannsen 2004), with annual growth rates of 10–15 per cent (Panos 1995). Such data, however, are mostly secondary; any trip to a region or destination popular among ecotourists—including Colombia's Amazonia region and other biodiversity hotspots within the country—will reveal the ubiquity of the industry, as constantly present in those material spaces and their virtual online counterparts are advertisements touting 'green' or 'eco' options for tourists.

In addition to promising travellers the opportunity to experience sustainable immersion in local ecologies and environments, ecotourism also represents economic promise in post-conflict transitional geographies. Ecotourism is sometimes considered 'an economic component [of] ... cooperative and peace-building ... conservation efforts' (Strong-Cvetich and Scorse 2007: 1). Conflict-conditioned spaces, like the coal-producing regions of central Appalachia (AP 2017), Uganda (Obua 1997) and Wales (Burek 2012),<sup>6</sup> have turned, in the wake of conflict, to ecotourism as a possible solution to the joined problems of post-conflict economy and ecology. Interest in ecotourism in these spaces is understandable. Following the ways conflict, particularly the sort of decades-long violent armed conflict experienced by Colombia, severely limits economic stability and opportunity, and harms ecology, it is little wonder that as a conflict subsides, new opportunities for environmental and economic stability emerge. In post-conflict Colombia, vast

expanses of the natural ecosystem that were previously unsafe or inaccessible—due to the threat of land mines, firefights, kidnappings and other forms of routine violence during armed struggle—have become accessible and available. We turn now to the promises of economic development and stability made by ecotourism and the relationship(s) of those promises to the need for stable economic transition.

While economic development at the small scale of local communities is, in some sense, outside the scope of formal mechanisms of transitional justice—at least in the much larger sense of ‘economic justice’ advanced within the social justice perspective—it remains the case that the sort of *social* transition experienced by Colombian communities will necessarily involve a transition into the post-conflict economy. Community economic development (CED) is often presented as a progressive form of development ‘premised on the idea that poor [communities] are underutilized markets in need of private sector investment’ (Cummings 2001: 399). However, CED, as the logic underpinning the development and promise of ecotourism in Colombia and elsewhere, has been understood increasingly as a mechanism that demands the transformation of poor, peasant or rural subjects into sufficiently productive capitalist subjects.

Ecotourism may present opportunities for that transition by opening service markets to small or independent operators. The ecotourism industry, though, requires the social and economic production of spaces and actors that are sufficiently ‘green’. Ojeda (2012) describes the ways the neoliberal model of CED built into the ecotourism industry model requires that economic actors within emergent ecotourism communities perform a certain type of ecological subjectivity that often reflects a neoliberal capitalist ecophilosophy. Ojeda notes that in Colombia’s Tayrona National Park, a nearly 40,000-acre reserve on Colombia’s Caribbean coast that hosts over 200,000 visitors annually and has been affected significantly by both the armed conflict and the post-conflict ‘touristification’ of the region, local populations on the park’s borderlands have undergone a forced transformation from ‘unacceptable’ ecological subjects (owing to their prior involvement in the production of coca) to the sort of ‘proper conservationists’ necessary for the eco-service economy. Put simply, the already-displaced populations of budding ecotourism geographies like the area around Tayrona must integrate themselves adequately into the global neoliberal eco-service economy or face further economic insecurity and marginalisation. As Kitossa (2014) notes, these are conditions of epistemic violence that work to dismiss as unscientific or irrational other ways of knowing, a point echoed in green criminology by Goyes and South (2017). Rather than offering the self-determination touted by CED, then, ecotourism (and, it should be noted, other forms of CED [see Cummings 2001; Jessop 2002]) constructs new economic subjectivities that reflect the logics of global capitalism.

While Colombian communities—and in particular rural, agrarian, Indigenous and peasant communities—are clearly in need of solutions to the economic problems that arise in the transition from decades of armed conflict, the CED-derived model offered by ecotourism requires both the production and reproduction of neoliberal capitalism within those communities and fundamental shifts in ecophilosophical approaches to non-human nature. Further, the measurable economic benefits of ecotourism are unclear for marginalised communities. As Sebastian Castaneda (2008) notes, ‘the hard cash that [eco]tourism generates is not actually helping Colombians that really need it’. The promised economic benefits of ecotourism in Colombia, then, should be approached cautiously and critically. The industry should be understood, at its best, as reproducing subjects that exchange traditional cultural and ecological practices for purported economic security to be enmeshed in the logics of capitalism, and, at its worst, as offering no real meaningful economic security or sustainability.

### **Conservation, security, accumulation and pacification**

As suggested in the previous section, on some level, ecotourism represents the entanglement of conservationist ideology with the tourist economy. In addition to its economic effects and

dimensions, ecotourism has a range of effects on the specific environment in which it is implemented. These effects can be positive or negative. Among the potential ecological benefits of ecotourism are the ways it might function as a force for conservation by attaching monetary value to the maintenance of ecological health.<sup>7</sup> Conservation, while ostensibly beneficial, can be implemented in various ways. Among the most popular methods of contemporary conservation is what critical bio-security experts call the 'fortress model', in which local people and traditional communities are removed or excluded from a given area, while scientific research and tourism are constructed as the only legal or legitimate use of land (see Brockington 2002).

In some conservation efforts, however, the logics of 'security' rise to the fore. The securitisation of material ecological spaces often manifests as a program of exclusion and demarcation that favours capital over the needs and desires of human and non-human populations. Conservation itself is 'circumscribed by security and neocolonial' practice (McClanahan and Wall 2016: 123). More often than not, the conservation of a material ecology requires the securitisation of space evident in the construction of borders, the use of patrols and other techniques of policing. The securitisation of ecological space, though, is not only useful for conservation. As ecologies emerge from conflict, they are understood routinely as newly opened for resource exploration and ecological exploitation. As FARC-EP disarmed and demobilised in 2016—and as peace agreements emerged as a real possibility—'one of the government's central goals for peace was to expand economic ... investment ... especially in areas that were previously off-limits due to conflict' (Volckhausen 2018). With the landscape increasingly 'pacified'<sup>8</sup> by the de-escalation of the conflict, new opportunities for capitalist accumulation emerged. Conservation logics, of course, operate in symbiotic function with accumulation and extraction. The construction of conservation spaces justifies the construction of extractive spaces, while both practices—conservation and extraction—harm local and marginalised communities.

Before ecologies can be subject to the primitive accumulation of capital (whether the extractive capital of resource extraction or the service capital of ecotourism), they must first be pacified. In tourism ecologies, such as those emerging in Colombia, pacification (see Neocleous 2011, 2013; Neocleous et al. 2013; Wall and McClanahan 2015; McClanahan and Wall 2016; Wall et al. 2017; Brisman and South 2017) appears as economic justice, stability and sustainability promised by involvement in the tourism economy. Communities are granted the opportunity to engage in the service economy *only* if they adopt the position of the sufficiently 'green' ecological subject, with the definition of 'green' determined only by capital. This pacification serves the interests of capital, security and the state in three key ways. First, it transforms communities and individuals that were previously insufficiently captured by the logics of capital into firmly capitalist subjects. Second, it produces materially 'secure' space(s) that can then be reproduced, according to the desires of capital, as extractive, productive or service spaces. Finally, the pacification-by-inclusion of insufficiently green or insufficiently capitalist communities and populations confirms the legitimacy of the state by transforming the ungovernable into the governed.

Ecotourism, like other articulations of the conservationist logic, demands the accumulation of securitised space. As the ongoing and unending processes of pacification progress, accumulation draws those pacified ecologies into the material, economic and social geographies of capital, security and state power. In the emerging geography of Colombian ecotourism, the state violence required to pacify and securitise the landscape is justified by the very possibility of tourism. 'Look at our astounding biodiversity', visitors are told, with the clear implication that each foray, each glance, is made possible only by the exercise of state power and violence. In this subtle narrative, the outcome of a securitised ecology that can be safely enjoyed by ecotourists justifies the violence that produced the space.

The state violence that has configured the pacified spaces of ecotourism also animates ecological conditions in Colombia. As Colombian marijuana cultivation gave way to large-scale coca cultivation, the Colombian state began coca eradication programs (the crop had long been



produced on a smaller scale for traditional and local consumption, but plantations grew to meet the demands of an export market in the 1980s). Chiefly, these involved the widespread use of aerial herbicidal spraying, most frequently using glyphosate (a highly effective and toxic herbicide produced and sold by Monsanto as RoundUp) across the Andean foothills and the Amazonian frontier (Fjeldsa et al. 2005). The Andean forests sprayed most heavily with glyphosate, however, have biological diversity and significance that far out measures illicit agricultural crops; humid Andean forests are home to the most biologically rich floral and faunal assemblages in the world, as well as a vast number of rare and endemic species alike. The virtually indiscriminate spraying of glyphosate and other material means of eradication, then, constitutes significant ecological harm. Simultaneously, coca cultivation on the scale required to bring economic stability to producers by meeting the demands of the global drugs market also entails significant environmental harm (Santana and Chin 2015). Like palm oil cultivation, large coca plantations require clearcutting of forests and contribute to the construction and spread of monocultures that threaten biodiversity, human sustainability and non-human biotic life.

Eradication efforts, then—which were essential in the transformation of a conflict ecology into a pacified ecology suitable for new transitional economic modalities such as ecotourism—destroyed vast swaths of the ecological landscape, while at once doing the same to the economic opportunity presented by the peripheral drugs market. As United States (US)-backed and financed eradication initiatives—efforts that, it must be noted, defy the reality of the US role in the demand that drives the global narcotics trade—transformed the ecological and economic geographies of rural Colombia, an ecological landscape that has been increasingly configured around neoliberal logics of fortress conservation has emerged.

## Conclusion

The ongoing implementation of the Colombian peace process has brought new opportunities and new challenges alike to the country's social and material ecologies. While the de-escalation of armed conflict has begun to create conditions of peace, the economic development of rural and poor communities presents a challenge for an emergent Colombia increasingly configured by the mechanisms and logics of not only the conflict, but of transitional justice. The question, then, concerns the space in those agendas for forms of economic and social development that recognise the importance of biodiversity ecology, Indigenous and peasant cultural practice and continuity, and, more broadly, social, environmental and economic justice. While ecotourism may offer an economic model and framework for the simultaneous protection and development of important ecologies and communities in transition, unfortunately it seems more likely that ecotourism will continue to serve as something like the Trojan horse of global capital. Were an ecotourism model to emerge in Colombia that respected the self-determination and intrinsic rights and value of Indigenous people and non-human animals—one that preserved the vast ecological insights of traditional and Indigenous ecological practice, and that put sustainability before inclusion in the global markets of capitalism—ecotourism could play a meaningful role in a just transition.<sup>9</sup>

Just as the armed conflict has had significant effects on Colombian ecology—both positive and negative—the ongoing moment that combines both violence and transition will likewise determine the future of ecological, economic and social conditions for the most marginalised and peripheral spaces and populations. As we have described throughout this article, a transitional justice that is at odds with social and environmental justice will only further the scope, extent and spectrums of violence that has configured the contemporary moment in Colombia. The populations already most affected by the history of the conflict are likely to now be subjected to the routine and everyday pacification and securitisation that produces and maintains global capitalist order. It seems, then, that for those ecologies and populations, the 'transition' in transitional justice will be only a transition into new subjectivities of violence. As Sanchez Parra (2018) notes, the logics and mechanisms of transitional justice have already produced new political economies of victimhood, and the introduction and rise of ecotourism and capitalist

economic development will likely introduce new forms of violence and produce new conflicts, inequalities, and human and non-human victims.

As Colombia's transition continues, the country's ecology will likely be increasingly exploited by the global extractive economy. Ecologies that were previously unsafe or otherwise inaccessible for resource extraction and harmful agricultural production will continue to be securitised and pacified. However, as Neocleous (2000) and Rigakos (2016) note, pacification and securitisation are *productive* forces, fabricating the social order demanded by global capitalism. What is being produced in Colombia's transition, then, is a social and ecological order responsive to the demands of capital, not to the demands and needs of those already most affected by the armed conflict.

Here, we might turn to questions suggested by Marijnen and Duffy (2018): can the emergence of conservation logics like ecotourism help to build lasting peace in geographies and ecologies conditioned and configured by conflict? While we do not purport to have a definitive answer, we do note that, thus far, it appears that the rise of ecotourism and other conservation logics in a transitional Colombia is only reproducing the conditions of a capitalist political economy of extraction and ecocide that is unlikely to produce the conditions of peace and justice. Thus, while ecotourism may offer some promise (in some situations), it should be viewed with caution as it imposes a specific relationship between humans and non-human environments—one that serves primarily to perpetuate the logics of capitalism. Perhaps then, what is needed is a critical rethinking of the ways that the logics and mechanisms of transitional justice and post-conflict development approach the always-already-joined issues of ecology, non-human and human life, economy and justice.

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<sup>1</sup> FARC-EP and other groups active in the armed conflict engaged in mining for gold and emeralds, coca production, and illegal logging and trafficking in timber as sources of funding throughout the conflict. For a thorough discussion, see Lavaux (2007).

<sup>2</sup> Rodríguez and colleagues (2017) referred to the judgments of the cases of Emebera Katíos (23 September 2014) and Timbiquí (1 July 2015).

<sup>3</sup> For an in-depth description and explanation, see e.g., <http://www.todoesciencia.gov.co/Colombia-bio>.

<sup>4</sup> For Rigakos (2016), these are the three central tenets of a 'general theory of pacification'. Rigakos (2016) also noted that commodification emerges in three secondary processes: valorisation, prudentialisation, and fetishisation. Each of these commodifying processes is evident in the development of a Colombian ecotourism industry and economy.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of how palm oil plantations are the leading cause of rainforest destruction (and increased landslides and floods) in Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as air pollution from forest fires and contaminated water sources, see Willow (2018); see generally Fishwick (2018).

<sup>6</sup> While Appalachia and Wales have not experienced the sort of widespread armed conflict that Colombia has, both regions have been conditioned significantly by economic conflict, environmental conflict and labour struggle that follow community reliance on a single extractive industry. Interestingly, as Buscher and Davidov (2014) described, there is a growing 'ecotourism-extraction' nexus that indicates that formerly extractive geographies are of particular interest to ecotourism. Here, we note that, in some ways, tourist interest in these geographies follows broader trends in 'dark tourism' (see generally Sharpley and Stone 2009; Tarlow 2007).

<sup>7</sup> This logic, it should be noted, is questionable and often applied perniciously, such as in statements made by Nestlé chairman Peter Brabeck-Letmathe, in which he asserted that 'it's better to give ... a value' to water 'so that we're all aware it has its price'. In the case of the logics of ecotourism and other forms of securitising conservation, the argument becomes one in which the only value that matters is economic value, and that intrinsic value—and, by extension, intrinsic rights—can be protected only by commodification (Brisman et al. 2018: 201).

<sup>8</sup> Although a comprehensive definition of "'pacification'" is outside the scope of the present article, we note here that we adopt the model(s) put forth by Neocleous (2000) and Rigakos (2016) and in Wall and colleagues (2017).

<sup>9</sup> The Québec Declaration on Ecotourism (<http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/quebec-declaration.pdf>), a statement released following the 2002 World Ecotourism Summit, seeks to address some of the issues raised here. The document's authors recognise that a just and viable ecotourism 'must contribute actively to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage, include local and indigenous communities in its planning, development and operation, and contribute to their well-being, and interpret the natural and cultural heritage of the destination to visitors'. While we recognise the efforts of the document to present guidelines for a more just ecotourism, and while we agree with Sollund (2019: 206) that 'if these requirements were to be accomplished ... ecotourism may be viable, and not just another capitalist way of exploiting the environment and humans and nonhumans therein', we must also note that the document lacks an enforcement mechanism and, moreover, remains silent as to ecotourism's power to produce new capitalist subjects and to draw ecologies into the system of global capitalism.

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