

BRAM BÜSCHER



My research and writing look at different aspects of nature-society relations in their political-economic, social and developmental contexts. Most fundamentally, I have been interested in empirically investigating and theoretically exploring the intersections between contemporary neoliberal or 'late' capitalism and the environment. I start from the assumption that neoliberal capitalism has deeply yet unevenly influenced the ways humans exploit, conserve or otherwise relate to nature and that this process fundamentally influences broader dynamics of development and change. Methodologically, I combine multi-level, engaged ethnography with discourse analysis and 'deep reading' to understand how actors and their lived realities influence and are influenced by structural power dynamics over time.

From this starting point, I have developed several research projects. My PhD research focused on transfrontier conservation in Southern Africa and explored the effects of emerging transnational governance structures on local and regional socio-ecological realities in the Maloti-Drakensberg between Lesotho and South Africa, as well as other 'peace parks' in the southern African region. More recently, I developed a project on what I call Nature 2.0. This research investigates how new online media such as Facebook, Twitter and other web 2.0 tools are changing global and local politics of conservation. Another project, which arose out of my postdoctoral fellowship with the University of Johannesburg, focused on the political economy of energy in relation to fossil and timber resource extraction. Its primary aim was to understand the local and regional socio-ecological impacts of increasing energy and resource investments by (emerging) global powers in Southern Africa. Through these various projects, I have further explored how both the conservation and the exploitation of nature relate to and function within broader structures of power, and how they relate to each other. Over the next couple of years, I hope to build on this work to investigate the violent impacts of recent surges in wildlife crime and resource extraction on ecosystems and wildlife.

SUPERVISION

I like to supervise theses that broadly deal with the links between environment and development and relate these to, for example, power, politics, economy, exclusion, inequality, new online media and technology, governance, the role of different actors (state, NGOs, private sector, influential individuals), violence, conflicts, etc. Specific topics could include:

- Global environmental politics and global environmental meetings (like the world summit on sustainable development)
- Community-Based natural resource management or conservation
- Peace parks and transboundary resource management
- Biodiversity and protected area politics and governance
- Energy and resource extraction politics and governance
- Payments for ecosystem services
- Tourism and ecotourism

- Capitalism, neoliberalism and the environment
- Environment and social media
- Branding, marketing and celebrities in environment and development
- Forestry, water or other resource conflicts
- Links between agriculture and environment, including urban agriculture
- Violence and the environment
- Relations between social and natural sciences in (conservation) biology
- Ethnography, multi-level research, organisational and event ethnographies
- Politics and anti-politics
- Regional specialisation: Africa, especially southern Africa
- Social and environmental justice and alternatives for capitalist development
- And general questions on theory and philosophy in relation to environment and development (especially Marx, Foucault, Arendt, Harvey, and post-Marxism more generally)

My current research deals mostly with the links between social or new media and the environment, and issues of 'green violence': violence perpetrated in order to save nature.

For more information, and access to publications, see: www.brambuscher.com.