

## **Tourism and the Capitalocene: From Green Growth to Ecocide**

C. Michael Hall

Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship, University of Canterbury,  
Private Bag 4800, Christchurch 8140, New Zealand

Email: michael.hall@canterbury.ac.nz

Geography Research Unit, University of Oulu, Oulu, Finland

School of Business and Economics, Linneaus University, Kalmar, Sweden

Department of Service Management and Service Studies, Lund University, Helsingborg,  
Sweden

ORCID

C. Michael Hall: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8230-9519>

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Tourism, along with many other business sectors, makes substantial contributors to the Anthropocene, a supposed epoch that marks the impact of humanity on the global environment. Undoubtedly, the contemporary environmental crisis is existentially significant for many humans as well as biodiversity as a whole. However, it is argued here that the Anthropocene is highly uneven over space and time in a manner that is reflective of the uneven processes of capital accumulation. As a result, the Anthropocene, and tourism's role within it, is best understood as a system of power, profit and re/production in the web of life, what has been referred to elsewhere as the capitalocene. In other words it is the relationship of tourism to the epoch of capitalism that can best characterise how tourism/capitalism is not just an economic system but also serves to exploit cheap natures, bodies, and ways of life to enable surplus extraction. This is done via nature-based and ecotourism, among other tourisms, but also via the acceptance of the externalities that accrue from tourism. This paper therefore considers the inseparable connectivities between tourism and capitalism and its implications for how tourism is constructed in the managerial ecology of the SDGs and sustainable tourism and the ensuing contribution to ecocide.

Key words: capitalism, circulation of capital, convergence, fix, overaccumulation

### **Introduction: Welcome to the Anthropocene**

The Anthropocene is a comforting story with uncomfortable facts (Moore, 2017, p.2). It separates humans from the natural world but, just as significantly, by totalising or normalising that it is humanity as a whole that is responsible for the disastrous environmental mess humans have found themselves in, it has also served to separate analysis from broader issues of class, capital, and economic and political imperialism. It has served to create or perhaps even ignore that division because despite recognising that escalation of the environmental markers of the Anthropocene, including natural biodiversity loss, carbon dioxide, urbanization, and the development of mass transport systems, first begin during the Industrial Revolution. However, awareness that the Industrial Revolution and the Cartesian separation of humans and nature that presaged it are also embedded with the rise of capitalism and the features of modernity, including industrial tourism, is more limited. Clearly, humanity is a 'geophysical force' (Steffen et al., 2011, p.741), but examinations of the Anthropocene should be more than debates over the stratigraphic record and instead look to the factors that have driven such a radical shift in the presence and impacts of human consumption and production.

“While there is no question that environmental change accelerated sharply after 1850, and especially after 1945, it seems equally fruitless to explain these transformations without identifying how they fit into patterns of power, capital and nature” (Moore, 2017, p.3). As a result, is it a case that tourism is not just part of the Anthropocene (the age of humans) (Steffen et al., 2015a, 2015b), but is instead a part of the age of capital – the capitalocene – “an ugly word for an ugly system” (Moore, 2017, p.15), which is shaped by the seemingly endless accumulation of capital and its corresponding effects on nature and society. As Harvey (2017, p. 424) describes it, “compound growth (endless accumulation of capital) at three percent forever, which becomes more and more stressful as the exponential growth curve leaps upwards.” Indeed, the Capitalocene has also been described as a Necrocene in which the accumulation of capital serve to drive extinction (McBrian, 2016). Such a description should be surprising as capitalism is “premised on the separation of Humanity

and Nature” (Moore, 2017, p.7). The separation of humanity and nature in capitalist thinking allows nature to be acted upon and nature to be commoditised (Williams, 1972; Harvey, 2006, 2014). It is far more difficult to commodify and sell something if you are connected to it. For example, many indigenous peoples do not want to sell or allow mining on their sacred lands even if the minerals are significant to Western notions of sustainable development (Finn, 2021).

Capitalism therefore inherently serves to alienate humans from nature, as it does with work, consumption, politics and, increasingly, with emotions and notions of friendship, home, community and daily life (Lefebvre, 1981; Harvey, 2014, 2018). Arguably, this is something that is inherent in the commoditisation of nature by tourism to develop eco-tourism and other ecological or species dependent tourism experiences. For example, as Fletcher and Neves (2012, p.66) observe, “In offering an experience of ‘nature-culture unity’... ecotourism promises to resolve this division [between nature and humanity] and the alienation it precipitates ..., and thus can be described as providing something of a ‘psychological’ fix for this existential crisis created by capitalist development”. According to Gorz (1989) alienation in production is, significantly for tourism, accompanied by the growth of alien but supposedly compensatory consumerism. As a result, “The individual potential to achieve self-perfection (in social relations, in the relation to nature and in the experience of the labour process) is denied” (Harvey, 2018, p.426). Indeed, one of the interesting things to note about the literature on alienation in tourism studies is that while the centrality of alienation to notions of escape and freedom in tourism motivation and marketing, as well as employment, are long recognised (MacCannell, 1976; Dann, 1977; DiPietro & Pizam, 2008; Xue et al., 2014; Vidon & Rickly, 2018; Cuong, 2020), its inherent basis within modern capitalist society is seemingly ignored. Capitalism is therefore very much the ‘elephant in the room’ of much tourism research.

The purpose of this paper then is to try to visualise the elephant better and outline how tourism’s contribution to the contemporary environmental crisis is part of a broader crisis of capitalism. It first provides a brief account of capitalism before critiquing proposals to make tourism greener via so-called green growth strategies. Instead, it is proposed that such strategies can be regarded as a form of managerial ecology that potentially represent a form of ecocide.

### **Capitalism (and tourism)**

Capitalism is the dominant economic and political system on the planet. As such it serves to frame most of the cultural, social, economic and political practices that humanity engages in. The very reason why it can be described as a political system is that it is so powerful and all-encompassing and serves to drive individual human behaviours that serve to reinforce the dominance of the system. Capitalism’s thought structures are such that they become, as Marx (1970, p.137) writes, ‘material forces’ that drive entire ways of thinking about political and economic expansion, such as empire and colonialism, changing notions of society and property, and perceptions of nature (Glacken, 1967; Moore, 2003, 2017, 2018). Fundamental to this, as noted above, is the Cartesian revolution that separated societies and nature and, as a result, drove the idea of the appropriateness of the control of nature. Indeed, Moore (2017, p.13) states, “The rise of capitalism cannot be reduced to economics. Capitalocene names capitalism as a system of power, profit, and re/production in the web of life”. So how then does capitalism reproduce itself?

Drawing on Marx, for Harvey it is the nature of the internal logics of capitalism that drive it. As Harvey (2018, p.426) suggests, “the coercive laws of competition force capitalists to extend the working day and intensify the labour process irrespective of their good or ill will”. This is not to suggest that capital is only negative, Both Karl Marx and Adam Smith recognised that the logic of the market contributed greatly to material well-being. According to Marx (1973, p. 410) capitalism tears “down all the barriers which hem in the development of the forces of production, the expansion of needs, the all-sided development of production, and the exploitation and exchange of natural and mental forces”. However, the problem with this situation is that humans are far more populous than in the nineteenth century and that capitalism and its consequences has now spread to almost all parts of the planet (just like tourism). A situation that represents Marx’s (1964, p. 148) observation on how “the extension of products and needs falls into contriving and ever-calculating subservience to inhuman, unnatural and imaginary appetites”.

The ongoing generation of the desire to consume products and their provision is central to capitalism. This is the treadmill that is the essential nature of the capitalist system together with the ongoing expansion of the scope of what constitutes a commodity to be purchased. Within capitalism, workers may accept the alienation arising from their labour in exchange for the products and commodities that satisfy their desires and needs together with the wages to pay for them. As a result, consumerism is a form of compensation for wage labour, although this is only a part of the wider circulation of capital.

An attempt to portray the totality of capital is shown in Figure 1 which shows the circulation of capital. Harvey’s (2018) interpretation of Marx suggests that there are three main moments in the circulatory system:

- the *moment of production* where capital is valorised by those engaged in a labour process of commodity production;
- the *moment of realisation*, where the value created in commodity form in production is monetised through its sale in the market; and
- the *moment of distribution* when the realised money is allocated between capital and labour as well as between landlords (rent), merchants (trading), financiers (interest, the provision of debt), industrial producers, and the state (taxation).

There are several drivers that keep this process in motion. First, the search for profit, which includes the generation of wants, needs and desires via marketing and promotion. Second, is the role of the state in seeking to maintain levels of demand during periods of economic recession. For example, during COVID-19 many countries have sought to support business so that employees are retained and can then spend to maintain the economy or they have sought to stimulate demand by providing financial support for expenditure. Financial incentives were introduced in Italy and Greece in 2020 to help promote domestic tourism as a substitute for the loss of international tourists. In the UK in August 2020 the government launched an “Eat Out to Help Out discount” voucher worth £500 million (US\$625 million) to the public in order to boost spending at restaurants, cafes and pubs. Meals eaten at any participating business, Monday to Wednesday, were 50% off, with a maximum discount of £10 pounds per head for everyone, while a temporary cut in VAT sales tax for restaurants, cafes and pubs from 20% to 5% was also provided for eat-in or hot takeaway food (Reuters, 2020). An important element of state intervention at period of recession is the capacity to input money into the system via borrowing from organizations with surplus capital, such as banks, pension funds, and deficit finance, including bond issues. As Harvey (2018, pp. 434-5) observed with respect to how this influences the circulation of capital, “All of these institutions want a rate of return and they are going to push the system of endless

accumulation through circulation as much as they can”. Furthermore, debt becomes a form of social control and a claim on future labour with the future being “dictated by the need to redeem our debts” (Harvey, 2018, p.435), including the introduction of austerity measures including cuts to welfare measures.

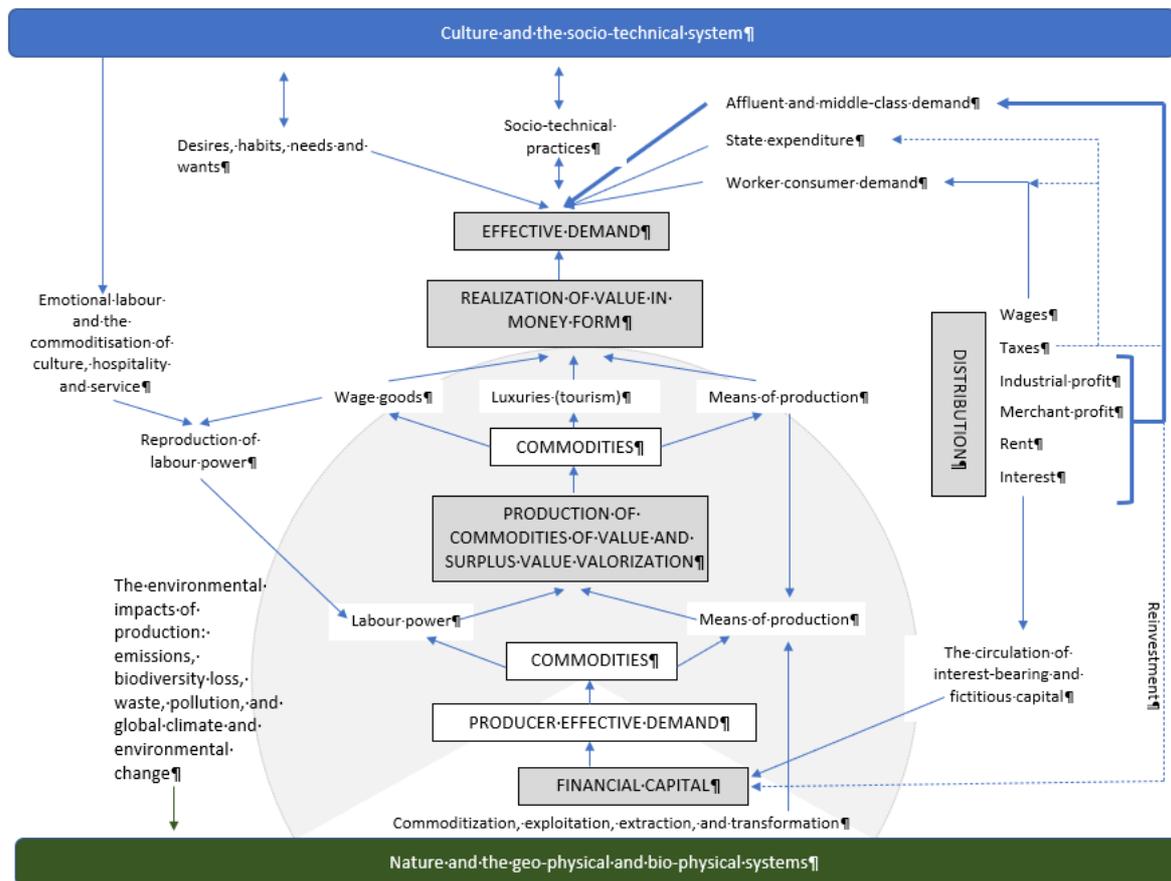


Figure 1 The circulation of capital

As a result of the extent of debt, governments have to grow their economies in order to try and cover their debt levels. Yet economies are faced with the problem of ‘convergence’ because as they “generate more debt and material goods, as they grow wealthier, it becomes more and more difficult for them to sustain growth” (Di Muzio & Robbins, 2016, p. 96). Compound rates of interest, essential to the functioning of the global financial and banking system only accentuate the problem. As Harvey (2010) argues

When capitalism was made up of activity within a fifty-mile radius around Manchester and Birmingham in England and a few other hotspots in 1750, then seemingly endless capital accumulation at a compound rate of 3 percent posed no big problem. But right now think of endless compound growth in relation not only to everything that is going on in North America, Oceania and Europe, but also east and south-east Asia as well as much of India and the Middle East, Latin America and significant areas of Africa. The task of keeping capitalism going at this compound rate is nothing if not daunting. (Harvey, 2010, pp.27–28)

Capitalism therefore puts people and nature to work via the organisation of markets and production, with costs being minimised by securing new supplies of the ‘four cheaps’ of

energy, food, labour and raw materials to help renew capital accumulation (Moore, 2015). This has resulted in the expansion of capitalism from Europe by virtue of imperialism and colonialism, which provided access to cheap resources and labour (e.g. slavery and indentured labour) to more recent forms of neocolonialism and contemporary globalisation, with the latter predicated of space-time compression to move materials, goods and capital faster, reductions in trade and financial barriers, and new forms information and communication technologies.

Tourism is very much bound up in the above processes. Dating from the colonial period the expansion of tourism went hand-in-hand with the expansion of empire and the associated transport routes as well as the opportunity to gaze on colonial subjects. More recently it became part of the discourse of development, which itself was often based on the colonial legacy, but with economic growth via tourism being a major focus in the development process (Harrison, 1992). Similarly, tourism is now embedded in new forms of consumption and production, such as the so-called sharing economy enabled by ICT developments, as well as growth in the global transport network. As noted in Figure 1, within the tourism-related circulation of capital various intangible aspects such as culture and hospitality, including the unpaid work of women, have gradually been commoditised and valorised, with service capacities and emotional empathy becoming significant aspects of tourism labour and products. However, as is well recognised, the commoditisation of culture and hospitality for tourism also can serve to change the nature of culture itself and what attracted people in the first place.

Similarly, as capitalism expanded via colonial and imperial power not only were people incorporated into the system so to was nature. Initially, this was via the availability of access to cheap resources, what Moore (2017) describes as ‘cheap nature’. However, over time it also became a new way of organising nature, of creating new environments by introducing species and developing commoditised agriculture and forestry (Crosby, 1972, 2004; Grove, 1995). “Ecological imperialism has meant that the worst forms of ecological destruction in terms of pillage of resources, the disruption of sustainable relations to the earth, and the dumping of wastes – all fall on the periphery more than the centre” (Foster & Clark, 2004, p.198). As a result, economic growth, grounded in debt, and globalised in its spread has created its own set of problems with it being unsustainable in economic, social and environmental terms (Daly 1997; Caradonna, 2017). As Speth (2008, p. x) observes, “even if our economic output remained at its present level, the world would be virtually uninhabitable by the end of this century”. As a result, Jackson (2009, p.86) argues that it is “entirely fanciful to suppose that deep emission and resource cuts can be achieved without confronting the structure of market economies”. Tourism has also served to utilise ‘cheap nature’ (Hall, 1994) by giving value to land that was otherwise ‘worthless’ for other commercial purposes (Hall, 1988). Initially, this process was undertaken via the creation of national parks, but more recently it has been focused on ecotourism and other forms of nature-based tourism by which economic value can be extracted from the experience of ecologies and charismatic species.

As Fletcher and Neves (2012) observed, tourism is therefore employed as a capitalist mechanism to address problems of capitalist development. Tourism is advocated as a poverty reduction mechanism that can address issues of equality (UNWTO, 2004, 2006; Ashley & Mitchell, 2009) (a social fix); as a response to biodiversity loss, environmental change and familiarity with the natural environment (Christ et al., 2003; UNWTO, 2010; Chung et al., 2018) (an environmental fix); and, as noted above, as a means to overcome economic

stagnation or recession (a spatio-temporal fix) (Jessop, 2000; Harvey, 2001, 2003; Duffy, 2013, Bianchi, 2018; He, 2019). Such an approach is only reinforced by the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) “to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all” by 2030 “as part of a new sustainable development agenda” and tourism’s contribution to them (UNWTO & UNDP, 2017). However, the problem with this ‘fix’ is that it is not a fix at all and, instead, just serves to reproduce and recirculate the circuits of capital (Figure 1) and perpetuates the crisis of the Anthropocene.

### **From Green Growth to Ecocide?**

Although there have been divergent perspectives, the dominant policy perspective in government and in the tourism sector has long been that growth is good. “The common argumentative line was that technological progress and the market mechanism could prevent scarcity and pollution from constituting a substantial limitation on long-term economic growth” (Perez-Carmona, 2012, p.91). The SDGs, as with many ‘sustainable’ tourism initiatives are grounded in the notion of so-called green growth, also referred to as ‘green’ or ‘ethical’ capitalism (Henderson & Seth, 2006). Although there is a long discourse on the relationship between economic growth and the environment, from a tourism context the notion of green growth became fashionable in the emergence of the concept of sustainable tourism and especially in the post global financial period (2008) when numerous institutions were looking to respond to economic stagnation by promoting a more environmentally friendly form of growth (Hall, 2015). According to the UNEP (2011a, p. 16) the green economy is “one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities”. The UNEP also argued that, “The concept of a ‘green economy’ does not replace sustainable development, but there is now a growing recognition that achieving sustainability rests almost entirely on getting the economy right” (UNEP, 2011b, p.2).

More recently, notions of green growth has become integral to the SDGs. For example, in discussing the “roadmap” for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Gloria Guevara, President of the World Travel and Tourism Council, commented, “Sustainability remains the bedrock of our activity. We will continue to drive the conversation on planning for and managing tourism growth...” (UNWTO, 2017a). Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the UNWTO suggests, in introducing the relationship between tourism and the SDGs emphasised industry growth: “2016 was a momentous year for tourism. International tourist arrivals continued their upward trajectory in their seventh straight year of above-average growth despite many challenges, reaching 1.2 billion. A comparable sequence of uninterrupted solid growth has not been recorded since the 1960s” (UNWTO, 2017b, p. 5). As well as noting opportunities for business profit: “The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 [SDGs] sets the path that we all must embrace. ... the private sector, which is the key player in tourism, ... is beginning to recognise that the SDGs offer true business opportunities as sustainable business operations can spur competitiveness and increase profit” (Taleb Rifai in UNWTO-UNDP, 2017, pp. 6–7).

As Hall (2019) suggests, the development and implementation of the SDGs in the context of tourism, reflects the main actors “mutual coercion mutually agreed upon through the self-organising disciplinary power of the market’s invisible hand” (Bavington, 2011, p. 9). In building on Bavington’s (2011) insights from natural resource management, Hall (2019) argued that a management ecology approach was being used towards the SDGs, involving “the instrumental application of science and utilitarian economic approaches in the service of

resource utilisation and economic development” (Hall, 2019, p.6). “Managerial ecology seeks to maximise energy production, economic yields and environmental quality through ecosystem modelling, manipulation, and prediction of outcomes,” and is characterised by an “unquestioned faith in management as the solution to deep seated ecological and social problems” (Bavington, 2002, p. 5). In the case of the SDGs, for example, the UNWTO-UNDP (2017, p.56) argued, “effective management requires consistent measurement of impact’, while simultaneously observing, “impact is still difficult to measure given that there is no universal means by which travel and tourism businesses and destinations can measure and monitor their progress or contribution towards the SDGs”. Nevertheless, greater efficiency, use of new technologies, market competitiveness, improved governance and measurement, and growth are regarded as the means by which tourism will contribute to the SDGs (Hall, 2019; Saarinen, 2020), with COVID-19 making no fundamental difference to this perspective as, if anything, this focus has only become more pronounced (Hall & Seyfi, 2021). The dominant perspective in tourism policy and tourism’s contribution to planetary sustainability is clearly articulated by Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General of the UNWTO, who states, “Tourism’s sustained growth brings immense opportunities for economic welfare and development” (UNWTO, 2018).

Such strategies are “entirely congruent with prevailing neoliberal economic doctrines emphasising the challenges of complexity, conflict and uncertainty in economic systems” that help frame the world “as a set of problems they have the capacity to fix” (Wynn, 2011, p.xvii). As such, they reflect the managerial ecology critique that such management strategies constitute a form of “managed annihilation” (Bavington, 2001, 2011). As Hall (2019, p.10) suggested, “the overall sense of crisis engendered by the SDGs, sustainable tourism and, the more recent, overtourism [to which can now be added the COVID-19 pandemic], only appear to encourage the UNWTO and the WTTC to advocate ‘more of the same’ neoliberal strategies, even though they are not working”. Indeed, the many years of tourism growth and policies that encourage tourism to grow have clearly not led to greater environmental sustainability or socio-economic equity, but it has served the circulation of capital.

In 2010 Hall argued that given estimates by the Global Humanitarian Forum (GHF) (2009) that climate change was already responsible for over 300,000 people dead annually, 325 million people seriously affected, and economic losses of US\$ 125 billion (more than all of the then world aid), then tourism was proportionately responsible (5% of greenhouse gas emissions) for about 15,000 deaths, seriously affecting 8.25 million people, and producing economic losses of US\$ 6.25 billion. The latter figure being greater than tourism expenditure in the 49 least developed countries (Hall, 2010). [Interestingly, a reviewer of the paper did not want such a claim to be included arguing that it misrepresented tourism’s impacts]. Homer (2021) suggests that by 2060, and depending on the economic and emissions scenarios, there will be between 2.96 and 4.91 millions of deaths per year, plus a lowering of life expectancy, and between 1062.6 and 1109.0 millions of person-years lost per year. These estimates do not even include the potential of ecological tipping points being reached while, as Homer (2021, p.10) concludes, “The projected adverse impacts on deaths and years of potential life lost are substantial, and they are only partially reversed by gradually lowering GHG intensities over the next 20 years”. According to the UNWTO and the International Transport Forum (ITF) (2019), against a current ambition scenario, by 2030 transport-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from tourism were expected to grow 25% from 2016 levels (from 1597 Mt of CO<sub>2</sub> to 1998 Mt of CO<sub>2</sub>), representing 5.3% of anthropogenic emissions (UNWTO & ITF, 2019). Even given the effects of COVID-19, tourism is expected to continue to grow and, even in an optimistic ‘green growth’ scenario, continue to increase emissions for many years

to come unless there is some radical change in direction (Gössling et al., 2015; Peeters et al., 2019; Scott, 2021).

However, climate emissions are only one part of the wider assault on nature and environment. Given the knowledge that leading bodies have of the effects of present forms of visitor growth on the environment, as well as on communities, is there then a case that tourism is responsible for ecocide? There is increasing demands for the implementation of an international law of ecocide. “Ecocide is the extensive damage to, destruction of or loss of ecosystem(s) of a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished” (Higgins, 2010, proposed amendment to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, in Higgins et al., 2013). More recently, in a further set of proposed amendments to the Rome Statute the Independent Expert Panel for the Legal Definition of Ecocide (IEALDE) (2021) proposed the following addition to Article 8.

For the purpose of this Statute, “ecocide” means unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.

For the purpose of the above:

- a. “Wanton” means with reckless disregard for damage which would be clearly excessive in relation to the social and economic benefits anticipated;
- b. “Severe” means damage which involves very serious adverse changes, disruption or harm to any element of the environment, including grave impacts on human life or natural, cultural or economic resources;
- c. “Widespread” means damage which extends beyond a limited geographic area, crosses state boundaries, or is suffered by an entire ecosystem or species or a large number of human beings;
- d. “Long-term” means damage which is irreversible or which cannot be redressed through natural recovery within a reasonable period of time;
- e. “Environment” means the earth, its biosphere, cryosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere, as well as outer space (IEALDE, 2021).

Such a definition would apply to both business and nations to encourage a duty of care, although it seems remarkable that invoking a duty of care for the planet is necessary. Nevertheless, if crimes against humanity are regarded as significant then so too are crimes against the environment. Whether such a law will be implemented is yet to be decided but the moral, if not existential, force of such arguments are substantial. In 1972 the Swedish Prime Minister, Olof Palme, referred to ‘ecocide’ in his opening speech at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm (Higgins et al., 2013), providing a direct link in terms of global environmental governance to the development of the UN SDG initiatives. Despite 50 years of UN efforts and proclamations, including those of the UNWTO, the prospects of ecocide appear even more likely. Given the available evidence tourism and its growth is responsible for ecocide. According to Higgins (2015, p. xii), “To eradicate ecocide means to forcibly remove the systems that are killing and destroying our habitat”. This not only means that the current tourism system is not working but, very importantly, it means that the capitalist system within which tourism is situated must change if notions of environmental, economic, and social wellbeing are to have any real meaning. A paper such as this perhaps makes no difference but, if at least the role of capitalism in environmental degradation and

alienation become over in tourism education and research it is at least speaking truth to power.

### **Conclusions: “It was not supposed to end this way” (Mann, 2019)**

Tourism is emerging from a pandemic, wrapped in a technological revolution, inside a biodiversity, climate, and economic crisis. Whether it is described as the Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene, or the Plantationocene (Haraway, 2015; Davis et al., 2019; Mann, 2019) society and the environment are under greater stress than ever before. As Haraway (2015) comments, “The boundary that is the Anthropocene/Capitalocene means many things, including that immense irreversible destruction is really in train ... The edge of extinction is not just a metaphor; system collapse is not a thriller. Ask any refugee of any species.” Objective conditions have subjective consequences (Zhang, 2011). Tourism is intimately bound up with the Anthropocene (Gren & Huijbens, 2016). However, as has been stressed in this paper, the Anthropocene is not just a marker of humanity as a geophysical force, it is also reflective of the socio-economic and political factors that created the material conditions of the Anthropocene. Hence, the value of the term Capitalocene as a descriptor because capital and the capitalist system of overaccumulation is at the heart of the problem(s) that humans now face with tourism being inseparable from this system. Indeed, as noted, tourism is often regarded as a way to respond to or fix overaccumulation but, as highlighted, the nature of capitalism is such that the ‘fix’ only serves to reinforce the system that created the problem in the first place because it remains predicated on expansion and growth (Hall et al., 2021).

There is substantial focus in tourism education and research on the impacts of tourism. Probably every undergraduate student has at least a lecture on the subject if not an entire course. What is important in trying to understand the impacts of tourism is that it is not just the footsteps of visitors or the carbon they generate that creates negative externalities. From a system perspective even the supposed positive features can rebound through the spider web of the tourism system with negative effects over space and time. For example, while a tourist to a national park in a developing country may contribute to the conservation of a species or area, the emissions of the tourist in getting to and from the destination will have a long-term contribution to the carbon budget that may still contribute to devastating ecological impacts. The visitor is just the tip of a vast iceberg, a system in which capital is moved around in which to maximise profit and economic value. This is why laying bare the embeddedness of tourism in contemporary capitalism is so important. “Taking a step back for a moment, there are only two ways out of [the dilemma of growth]. One is to make growth sustainable, the other is to make de-growth stable. Anything else invites either economic or ecological collapse” (Jackson, 2009, p.128). And it is to these issues, with a wider understanding of tourism beyond a narrow growth context and realising how it operates in an inherently unsustainable capitalist system, that we now need to urgently address.

### **Post-script and dedication**

This piece is written in dedication to the memory of David Harrison. Although it might not immediately seem like it, especially to those not familiar to writings from the pre-Google Scholar era, this work has a direct lineage to David’s work on modernization, development and underdevelopment which looked at how tourism was embedded in the stretching of capitalist relations over space and time. David’s work, together with those of David Harvey and David Held, provided a primary source for my geographical imagination of the way tourism is structured and how this operates over various scales within contemporary

globalisation processes. At a personal level I also owe David a substantial personal debt in that, through the matchmaking of the late Iain Stevenson, David invited me to submit a chapter on sex tourism to his seminal 1992 edited work on tourism and the less developed countries. As a nearly completed graduate student David was encouraging and supportive of me, which is something that has always stuck with me. As someone who never intended to have a career in tourism studies looking at the way bodies became product under sex tourism and how this was deliberately utilised for economic development and the attraction of foreign exchange provided a way to see tourism in a very different way from much that was being written at the time, and perhaps still is, with respect to hospitality, service and labour. It also gave me publications for jobs and a point of difference, even though thinking and writing about travel, sex and sexuality still comes back to haunt me (Hall & Wood, 2022). David was always someone worthwhile talking to as we remained in contact over the years. As with all these things we have regrets when people we value die and, as in the 'plague years', we are unable to be with people we want to be with when we need to. For David I would have just liked to have said thanks one more time and to sit down, preferably with a pint or two of Shepherd Neame (my shout!), just to take quiet stock of the inherent absurdity of life, the universe, everything.

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