

Decolonizing Surf Tourism:
Alternatives to Development, Surfer Subjectivity
and Surfscape Commons Governance



Tara Ruttenberg

Propositions

1. “Sustainable surf tourism” promotes neoliberal strategies incapable of effectively reconciling conservation and development objectives.
(this thesis)
2. Global South surf localism represents a mode of *translocal* resistance to colonial processes of surf tourism development.
(this thesis)
3. Postcapitalist theory challenges neoclassical economics by redefining “the economy” to include non-capitalist forms of production, labor, exchange and consumption.
4. “Commoning” represents a critical mode of resistance to (neo)colonial forms of natural resource governance.
5. Our world view is the subjective lens we use to constitute our reality.
6. Wellbeing is as much a social condition as an individual one.

Propositions belonging to the thesis, entitled

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**Decolonizing Surf Tourism:
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Governance**

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Thesis

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To the Land, People, Seas and Surfscapes of Costa Rica

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Acronyms

ABCD	Assets-Based Community Development
ADI	Integral Development Association
CERN	Community Economies Research Network
CPR	Common Pool Resource
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DSST	Decolonizing Sustainable Surf Tourism
GEF	Global Environment Facility
ICT	Costa Rican Tourism Institute
IWS	Institute for Women Surfers
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MINAE	Ministry of Environment and Energy
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PLA	Participatory Learning and Action
PRA	Participatory Reflection and Action
SINAC	National System of Conservation Areas
SST	Sustainable Surf Tourism
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UPEACE	United Nations-Mandated University for Peace of Costa Rica
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WASS	Wageningen University & Research School of Social Sciences

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Summary

The theoretical and empirical research presented in this thesis examines decolonizing approaches to surf tourism through postdevelopment and diverse economic frames. These critical frameworks challenge conventional neoliberal approaches to sustainable surf tourism and explore the potential for alternatives to development, postcapitalist surfer subjectivities and surfscape commons governance to advance decolonial surf tourism research and practice. Engaging with poststructuralist and Marxian currents in postdevelopment scholarship, which confront the Western hegemony of sustainable development discourse for its continuity with global capitalism and modernization (Escobar, 1995, 1996; Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Esteva, 2009; Klein & Morreo, 2019; Kothari et al, 2019), the research presented here critiques the surf tourism-for-sustainable development model common to the academic-practitioner field of sustainable surf tourism (Buckley, 2002a, 2002b; Ponting et al., 2005; Martin & Assenov, 2012; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Borne, 2015; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Porter et al., 2015; Towner, 2015). This critique highlights the neocolonial and socioecological consequences associated with the irreconcilable policy objectives of economic growth-based models promoting both conservation and development through the proposed regulation of common pool environmental resources and leveraging of surf tourism revenue as a poverty alleviation strategy (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020).

Drawing on these conceptual frames, the primary research objectives for this study were to critically analyze existing forms of “sustainable” surf tourism and explore possibilities for developing decolonial, assets-based alternatives to existing models of surf tourism development. Linking discussions of power, knowledge and agency to non-Eurocentric, self-determined, and intersectional narratives of subjectivity, economy, development and wellbeing in surfing culture and tourism (Said, 1987; Escobar, 1995; Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Harcourt, 2019), this study thus centered decolonial and diverse economic, community-based approaches to socioecological wellbeing and surf tourism governance. Seeking potential “lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980) beyond the postdevelopment critique of sustainable surf tourism and toward identifying decolonial alternatives to neoliberal surf tourism governance, the research discussed here engages with a postcapitalist lens on surfer subjectivities, surf tourism community economies and a multi-perspective framework on the surfscape commons. This lens offers a means of: a) analyzing the postcapitalist potential and limitations of transcending the neoliberal and colonial-patriarchal norms of modern surf culture (see Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017a); b) recognizing critical translocalisms (Comer, 2010) and diverse modes of ‘commoning’ the surfscape (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham et al., 2016; 2013) as potential spaces for an emerging emancipatory politics in surf tourism governance; and c) exploring alternatives to development in surf tourism through diverse economic frames and assets-based participatory action research as decolonial postdevelopment praxis.

Through these explorations and analyses, principal theoretical contributions from this study include:

- i) the decolonizing critique of sustainable surf tourism challenging neoliberal models of surf tourism governance while advancing postcapitalist approaches to diverse economic, community-based development alternatives in surf tourism research and practice;
- ii) considerations of certain postcapitalist surfer subjectivities and critical expressions of surfscape localism as potentially revolutionary modes of resistance to, and emancipation within, the occupied surfscapes of what scholars have identified as the neoliberal, colonial-patriarchal “state of modern surfing” and its attendant surf tourism industrial complex (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019);
- iii) the identification of postcapitalist *translocalisms* (Comer, 2010) founded on networks of freedom and self-determination in “the here and now” (Gibson-Graham’s, 2008, p. 659) as already-existing modes of surf tourism governance and beyond-postmodern identity politics linked to decolonizing and surfeminist movements in surfing culture.

Empirical research in case study communities in Costa Rica explored existing surf tourism governance models and engaged with postcapitalist approaches to development alternatives in community-based surf tourism. Field research employed ethnographic methods including participant observation and poststructuralist participatory action research in and alongside surf tourism communities. Reflexivity provided a means of analyzing the field research experience across intersectional axes of gender, race, and class related to researcher positionality in decolonial surf tourism research. Together, these empirical contributions offer insight into the potential for decolonizing surf tourism studies through critical postdevelopment and postcapitalist conceptual frames and related diverse economies field methods. Research outcomes point toward a horizon for postcapitalist surfer subjectivities, alternatives to development, and critical approaches to surfscape commons governance to transgress what critical surf scholars have identified as the neocolonial “state of modern surfing” and its attendant “surf tourism-industrial complex” in both theory and practice (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017). Specific empirical contributions of this research include:

- i) furthering postcapitalist explorations into critical modes of “commoning” the surfscape (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016) and assets-based, diverse economic alternatives to development in surf tourism communities as viable decolonial praxis in critical surf tourism studies;
- ii) reflexive intersectional inquiry into researcher positionality to support future researcher considerations for field work in decolonial surf tourism studies; and
- iii) field-based insight into the potential for diverse economic frames and critical research methods to decolonize surf tourism studies beyond capitalocentric

surf tourism-for-sustainable development approaches and surfscape imaginaries otherwise occupied by the state of modern surfing.

Chapter I presents a critical overview of surf tourism, conservation and development under neoliberal governance in Costa Rica, drawing from field research among the local surfing community of Witch's Rock in Santa Rosa National Park. Chapter II functions as a literature review situating the non-essentialist postcapitalist lens on surfer subjectivities within the broader milieu of coloniality-patriarchy in the state of modern surfing. Together, these two chapters provide the theoretical framing for the decolonizing critique of surf tourism governance and engage with diverse economic concepts to posit examples of beyond-modern surfing subjectivities and alternative development possibilities in surfing tourism and culture. Chapter III takes this framing a step further through its engagement with the concept of occupied surfscapes, exploring postcapitalist approaches to the surfscape commons and *translocal* surfing subjectivities as critical sites of resistance to the state of modern surfing and its attendant surf tourism industrial complex. Chapters IV and V move this discussion on postcapitalist possibilities in surf tourism governance toward empirical examples of decolonial surf tourism research and praxis, sharing lessons gleaned from employing community economies methods in the field and reflexively analyzing experiences of "multiplex" surfer-researcher positionality in fieldwork, respectively (Sato, 2004). Together, these theoretical and empirical explorations center actually-existing possibilities of decolonizing surf tourism by making visible the ways in which surfers and surf tourism communities can enact, and already are enacting, decolonial alternatives in surf tourism governance and modern surfing culture.

Introduction

The participatory and embodied nature of going surfing as a research method.... situates me in the physical and cultural worlds... that my research focuses upon, so that instead of only talking about relationships, experiences and issues, I can place myself amongst them, sharing the experiences with other surfers in the water. Considering research in this way – as a collaborative process of mutual exchange – keeps the context, the research and the theory explicitly connected, and the analysis relevant to and reflective of participants' lives.

Olive (2020, pp. 122-126)

This thesis explores decolonizing approaches to surf tourism through postdevelopment and postcapitalist theoretical frames and discusses findings from empirical research among surf tourism communities. Engaging with postdevelopment scholarship challenging the hegemony of the sustainable development discourse (Escobar, 1995, 1996; Esteva, 2009; Klein & Morreo, 2019; Kothari et al., 2019), the research presented here critiques the surf tourism-for-sustainable development model common to the academic-practitioner field of sustainable surf tourism (Buckley, 2002a, 2002b; Ponting et al., 2005; Martin & Assenov, 2012; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Borne, 2015; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Porter et al., 2015; Towner, 2015). This critique highlights the neocolonial and socioecological consequences associated with the irreconcilable policy objectives of economic growth-based models promoting both conservation and development through the regulation of environmental resources and leveraging surf tourism revenue as a poverty alleviation strategy (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020). Seeking potential "lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980) beyond this critique and toward identifying decolonial alternatives to neoliberal surf tourism governance, the research project discussed here engages with a postcapitalist lens on surfer subjectivities, surf tourism community economies and a multi-perspective framework on the surfscape commons. This lens offers a means of: a) analyzing the postcapitalist potential and limitations of transcending the neoliberal and colonial-patriarchal norms of modern surf culture (see Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017); b) recognizing critical translocalisms (Comer, 2010) and modes of 'commoning' the surfscape (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham et al., 2016; 2013) as potential spaces for an emerging emancipatory politics in surf tourism governance; and c) exploring alternatives to development in surf tourism through diverse economic frames and assets-based participatory action research as postdevelopment praxis.

Empirical research in case study communities in Costa Rica explored existing surf tourism governance models and engaged with postcapitalist approaches to development alternatives in community-based surf tourism. Field research employed ethnographic methods including participant observation and poststructuralist participatory action research in and alongside

surf tourism communities. Reflexivity provided a means of analyzing the field research experience across intersectional axes of gender, race, and class related to researcher positionality in decolonial surf tourism research. Together, these empirical contributions offer insight into the potential for decolonizing surf tourism studies through critical postdevelopment and postcapitalist conceptual frames and related diverse economies field methods. Research outcomes point toward a horizon for postcapitalist surfer subjectivities, alternatives to development, and critical approaches to surfscape commons governance to transgress what critical surf scholars have identified as the neocolonial “state of modern surfing” and its attendant “surf tourism-industrial complex” in both theory and practice (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017).

In the pages that follow, I trace the evolution of this research project and offer a relevant literature review into critical surf tourism studies, detail the theoretical framework and methodology for this study, and share summaries of the chapters comprising the thesis presented here.

Going Surfing: Stories Beneath the Surface

It is hard to say for certain where exactly this research project begins.

Formally, of course, it began in May 2019 when my proposal on alternatives to development in surfing tourism was accepted by Dr. Bram Buscher, Dr. Robert Fletcher and the supervisory committee at the Wageningen University & Research School of Social Sciences (WASS). By then, however, I had been “going surfing” informally for more than a decade as a surfer, surf researcher and surf tourism worker (Olive, 2016, 2020). In fact, I had been going surfing nearly every day since I bought my first 7’4” blue-and-yellow fun-shaped surfboard in Playa Jaco, Costa Rica in January 2006, gathered the lessons I had overheard local surf instructor friends share with their clients on the beach, and taught myself to surf. Countless mornings spent struggling against the white water near the shore eventually gave way to smoother pop-ups, more technical turns on the face of the wave, communities of surfer friends, far-flung travels to the world’s both lonely and iconic surfing waves on six continents, and now, an entire life lived around swell directions, wind conditions and tide swings. But you could also say I have been “going surfing” as a participant observer in surfing culture since 1987, from my first memories sitting on the white-sandy shores of Malibu, California, where every summer for nearly a decade of my most formative years was spent on those beaches, making dribble sandcastles with my sister, collecting hermit crabs in tide pools with strangers, boogie boarding entire days away with my dad until mom called us back to the beach blanket to towel off and warm up before dark, singing along to the Beach Boys in our family-sized camper van, and of course, watching the surfer boys trot out to the waves with their bright-colored board shorts and *Endless Summer* tans (Brown, 1960).

For all intents and purposes, I was a California “surfer girl” before I even stood up on a surfboard; before I even knew what being a California surfer girl really meant in the context

of gendered confrontations with patriarchy in globalized modern surf culture and beyond (Comer, 2010). To be honest, I did not actually know what that meant until I read Krista Comer's (2010) *Surfer Girls in the New World Order* the year it was published, when it was assigned as required reading for fifteen study abroad students on the first year of the University of Georgia's Surfing and Sustainability: Political Ecology in Costa Rica program, for which I had been hired as Program Assistant to environmental anthropology professor, Dr. J. Peter Brosius. To be even more honest, before perusing the reading list of the program's Anthropology of Surfing course - which also included Ford and Brown's *Surfing and Social Theory: Experience, Embodiment and Narrative of the Dream Glide* (2006); Nendel's (2009) history of the American appropriation of Hawai'ian surfing culture; Evers' (2004, 2008) research on gender and race in contemporary surfing, and Ponting et al.'s (2005) analysis of surfing tourism in the Mentawaiis - I had not yet fully grasped the concept that surfing culture was something to be studied, let alone studied through a critical lens.

Before then, I had not truly contemplated how the physical, embodied act of surfing was entangled with surfing culture's whitewashed, appropriated, patriarchal and colonizing modern histories (see Walker, 2011, 2017; Westwick and Neuschul, 2013; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017a, 2017b; Wheaton, 2017). I simply knew that I loved surfing as a daily practice and burgeoning lifestyle pursuit; a seemingly apolitical experience for me as a then-intermediate level surfer. After having traveled quite a bit at that point in my surfing life, and having studied issues related to conservation and development as part of my undergraduate training in international politics and MA in international peace studies, however, I also knew that surf tourism-related development was a force to be reckoned with in local surfing destinations, as well as on a global scale. As a landmark experience inspiring the progression of my interest in critical surf studies, my relationship with Dr. Brosius, now co-author of several publications and co-conspirator of the Surfing and Sustainability program, currently in its twelfth year running, marks a significant turning point in the trajectory of what has now become my doctoral research project. Since then, the syllabus for Surfing & Sustainability has evolved to include additional texts influential in defining the field of critical surf studies, in which my research is situated, including: Scott Laderman's *Empire in Waves* (2014); Isaiah Walker's *Waves of Resistance: Surfing and History in Twentieth-Century Hawai'i* (2011); Karen Amimoto Ingersoll's *Waves of Knowing: A Seascape Epistemology* (2016); Kristen Lawler's *The American Surfer: Radical Culture and Capitalism* (2010); and Kevin Dawson's *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora* (2018).

Within this scholarly milieu, my work has found a resonant home within the emerging field of critical surf studies. Initial research on Decolonizing Sustainable Surf Tourism was presented at the Surf + Social Good conference in Bali in May 2015, leading to the publication of a co-authored chapter by the same name for Hough-Snee and Eastman's *The Critical Surf Studies Reader* (2017). Providing much of the theoretical framework for the postdevelopment critique (Escobar, 1995, 1996; Esteva, 2009; Sachs, 2009; Esteva & Escobar, 2019; Klein & Morrero, 2019; Kothari et al., 2019) of sustainable surf tourism (SST)

offered in the chapters comprising this dissertation, Decolonizing Sustainable Surf Tourism (DSST) made waves by carving its own line of critique in what otherwise seemed to be a very neatly prescribed discourse of scholarship and practice at the heart of the field of SST (see Buckley, 2002a, 2002b; Ponting et al., 2005; Martin & Assenov, 2012; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Borne, 2015; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Porter et al., 2015; Towner, 2015;). This decolonial postdevelopment critique challenged the field of SST's promotion of surf tourism-for-sustainable development by calling into question the capitalocentric and imposed Western-modern premises of the sustainable development discourse, offering a horizon for visibilizing diverse economic alternatives to development in surf tourism, instead (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017).

While SST scholarship centered a surf tourism-for-sustainable development paradigm aligned with neoliberal approaches to tourism governance, the decolonial postdevelopment critique of this paradigm had not yet been explored in SST research. In fact, the motivation behind developing the DSST framework arose the year prior to the Bali conference, in January 2014, following my participant-observation in and of the initial Groundswell educational surf travel program in Bocas del Toro, Panama, run by professor Dr. Jess Ponting, a leader in the field of SST. There, between Caribbean reef-break surf sessions with program facilitators and deeper exposure to the surf tourism certification and management standards being promoted through emergent SST research and praxis, the postdevelopment critique of SST seeded itself in my mind as a nascent framework deserving of further inquiry. As this line of study began to take form, the post-structuralist-Marxian theoretical frames posited by Fletcher (2010, 2012, 2013, 2014a, 2014b) in his critiques of neoliberal conservation and eco-tourism proved highly influential in the trajectory of my research. These frames centered a political ecology critique of neoliberal environmental governance models, exposing their contradictory objectives of pursuing conservation through growth-based approaches that promote eco-tourism and its associated amenity development adjacent to conservation areas as a sustainable development strategy. DSST thus pays homage to its Foucauldian and Marxian theoretical underpinnings in the field of political ecology, while offering a novel critical intervention in the field of SST. 'In Waves of Development: Surf Tourism on Trial in Costa Rica' (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2020), the DSST critique was extended to analyze surf tourism in Costa Rica as a case study for the contradictory nature of growth-oriented socioeconomic models seeking the twin objectives of conservation and development.

Prior to these publications, I had engaged significantly with postdevelopment scholarship, most notably in relation to post-neoliberalism in Latin America and the then-emergent trend of '*buen vivir*' as indigenous cosmovision promoting an economics of "living well" in harmony with nature in Ecuador and Bolivia (Ruttenberg 2013a, 2013b, 2019). This line of inquiry provided the foundation for my initial doctoral research proposal which I advanced formally for two years as a PhD candidate at the UN-mandated University for Peace of Costa Rica, under the supervision of Dr. Rob Fletcher as then Head of the Department of Environment and Development. This initial project centered wellbeing economics and *buen*

vivir as alternatives to development in post-neoliberal Latin America, and engaged with decolonizing methodologies for fieldwork aligned with postdevelopment theory. This project sought to test diverse economic concepts and methods in and alongside indigenous communities in Ecuador and Bolivia as case studies for postdevelopment in practice, toward supporting endogenous development alternatives aligned with the indigenous cosmovision and political articulation of *buen vivir* as a post-neoliberal approach to socioecological wellbeing. While I found great merit in the content of the project, I grappled with the ethical integrity of what would have been my positionality as a Western “outsider” researching with indigenous communities – a challenge I ultimately determined to be insuperable (Smith, 1999; Denzin et al., 2008; Kovach, 2012). As my research interests meandered into critical surf studies and I shifted the research focus of my doctoral project toward surfing tourism, the postdevelopment conceptual foundations and decolonizing methodological framework carried over into the collection of critical SST research presented here. At the same time, Dr. Fletcher left UPEACE so I could no longer work with him as a supervisor until I joined the external doctoral program offered through WASS at WUR, where he held a new teaching position. In the four years between leaving the PhD program at UPEACE, and enrolling formally with WASS, I furthered research, conference papers and publications in decolonizing sustainable surf tourism and developed the research proposal for my PhD candidacy with WUR, which centered the postdevelopment critique of SST and proposed decolonial methods for my surf tourism research in the field.

The connections between postdevelopment theory and decolonial methods coalesced most significantly, however, through participation in the ‘Social Emancipation Summer School: Postdevelopment, Decoloniality and Communnality’ organized by Gustavo Esteva at Unitierra in Oaxaca, Mexico in August 2018; and the ‘Boot Camp Summer Workshop: Decolonial Methods in Social and Solidarity Economies’ offered by El Cambalache in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico. Through these encounters, important conceptual maps were drawn across decolonial feminist (Mohanty, 1988; Lugones, 2003; Icaza & Vazquez, 2017) and black radical theoretical traditions (Harney & Moten, 2013), informing in large part the ideological basis for Chapter III, ‘Critical Localisms in Occupied Surfscapes: Commons Governance, Entitlement and Resistance in Global Surf Tourism’. Engaging with multiple perspectives on the surfscape commons, discussed in greater detail below, this ‘critical localisms’ framework built on a paper-turned-contributor volume chapter presented as ‘Sufscapes of Entitlement, Localisms of Resistance: Toward a Critical Typology of Localism in Occupied Surfing Territories’ at surf studies conference, Impact Zones and Liminal Spaces: The Culture and History of Surfing, held at San Diego State University in April 2020. That paper, in turn, draws in large part from an earlier non-academic article titled, ‘Does Localism Redress Neocolonial Privilege in Global South Surfing Destinations?’, and published with women’s surfing magazine, *Sea Together*, in May 2019 (Ruttenberg, 2019).

Moreover, the postdevelopment critique of SST draws in significant part from the work of J.K. Gibson-Graham, firstly through engagement with *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006) and

increasingly through the large and growing body of diverse economies scholarship that follows in its wake. That text, along with Cameron (2003), Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2005), and Gibson-Graham, Cameron and Healy's *Take Back the Economy* (2013), were seminal to the syllabus design for the course 'Postdevelopment: Theory and Practice' that I taught for University for Peace masters students in the Responsible Management and Sustainable Economic Development program in 2013 and 2014. Together with Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development* (1995) and *The Development Dictionary* (2009) edited by Wolfgang Sachs, these texts subsequently informed the theoretical frame, as well as the assets-based community engagement and poststructuralist participatory action research methods I employed for fieldwork in alternatives to development in surfing tourism, findings from which are shared in Chapter IV, 'Alternatives to Development in Surfing Tourism: A Diverse Economies Approach', and Chapter V, 'Gender, Race and Researcher Positionality in Decolonial Surf Tourism Research: Lessons from the Field'. Deeper immersion into the world of diverse economies has grown through membership with the Community Economies Research Network (CERN) and participation in the Researching Postcapitalist Possibilities Summer School at Western Sydney University in January 2019. At that seminar, engaging with an anti-essentialist lens on postcapitalist surfer subjectivities as a theoretical basis for Chapter II, 'Surfing Postmodernity: A Review of Critical Research on (Post)Modern Surfer Subjectivity', helped advance earlier research presented at the 'Surfing Social: Challenging Identities and Spaces' conference at the University of Waikato in February 2016.

Finally, I would be remiss in failing to mention the influence my affiliation with the Institute for Women Surfers (IWS) has had on the body politics of my daily surfing life, my critical surf research, and surfeminist ideology/scholarly activism as part of an intersectional network of women surfer academics, media creatives, and practitioners leading gender and social justice-based activism in global surfing culture. Originally co-convened by Dr. Krista Comer and three-time world longboarding champion Cori Schumacher, the Institute for Women Surfers is an international association of women surfers engaged in research and justice-based initiatives supporting other women surfers and BIPOC surfing communities toward more equitable access to surfing spaces, diverse representation in the surf industry and media, as well as gender and racial freedom and diversity in surfing culture (see Comer, 2017; Olive, 2019). Reflecting what Comer (2010, 2017) refers to as a "critical constellation" of 'girl localisms' and surfeminist activist networks, the Institute for Women Surfers provokes and amplifies social and gender justice in the world of surfing and beyond. For example, the solidarity networks of social justice in surfing resulting from connections forged through the IWS reached an apex moment on June 5, 2020, with dozens of Black Lives Matter paddle-out events organized simultaneously around the world in affiliation with IWS member organization Black Girls Surf. These paddle-outs, numbering collectively in the tens of thousands of participants, and ensuing conversations among surfers, connected often-marginalized BIPOC surfing communities to broader social justice coalitions, and even supported the land-back campaign that ultimately succeeded in the Manhattan Beach legislation returning stolen land to the Bruce family, rightful owners of Bruce's Beach, a once

popular mid-20th Century African American leisure space outside Los Angeles, California (Jefferson, 2020). Finally, building on these connections forged through the Institute for Women Surfers and other social justice surfing organizations, I drafted, in consortium with others in this network, a ‘Solidarity in Surf’ special issue pitch presented to mainstream surfing magazine, *The Surfer’s Journal*, which lamentably, though not surprisingly, has received no response to date.

Sharing the stories from beneath the surface of this collection of doctoral research, I am reminded that chronology is an unreliably partial arbiter of experience; and that the linearity of time proves an illogical construct in connecting the dots across the nodal moments of inspiration, relationship, thought processes and ideas in phases of incubation and development that define this work. My hope, in sharing these stories of connection that contributed to the evolution of the work presented here, is that they might illustrate the fluid nature of “going surfing” as an ethnographic research method (Olive, 2016; 2020), linked to critical surfscapes ethnographies (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019) not bound by time or place, but rather experienced in waves of memory, tide flows of reflection, swell seasons of experience; “critical constellations” (Comer, 2010) forged across the inertial space we inhabit as surfers suspended in the liminality of our impossibly oceanic existence. Building on Karen Amimoto Ingersoll’s (2016, pp. 5-6) Hawai’i-focused treatment of “seascapes” as places of knowing through a “visual, spiritual, intellectual and embodied literacy of the ‘*aina* (land) and *kai* (sea)”, *surfscapes* as a site of study acknowledges the experiences of place and belonging as negotiated through surfers’ subjective positioning relative to surfing’s cultural imaginaries and geographical territories (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019). If the presentation of this body of doctoral research were to represent a fifteen-second ride on a breaking wave, the formal and informal experiences that comprise the substructure of this work would include all the other energetic, geographical, institutional, ideological, cultural and material factors conspiring to make an epic ride possible; in my case nearly a decade of doctoral work, a lifetime of “going surfing” across multiple surfscapes as a California-turned-Costa Rica-based ‘surfer girl’, flattened here into five chapters built from the “saltwater in the blood” experiences of sweat, tears, and all that time - past, present, and future - spent at sea (Britton, 2021).

The following pages present a review of existing literature relevant to sustainable surf tourism, and related decolonizing critiques forwarded by critical surf studies, to contextualize the research gaps that my doctoral work endeavors to fill. From there, I describe the postdevelopment and diverse economies perspectives that comprise the theoretical framework for my research, followed by a discussion of the research methodology and specific methods employed. Finally, I provide a summary of the dissertation chapters, including the connections among them and their principal contributions to decolonizing surf tourism studies.

Surf Tourism Studies

The rapidly growing phenomenon of surfing tourism and its associated waves of development are studied by a niche field of surf tourism researchers at the intersections of

political economy, conservation and development, landscape and resource management, and sustainable tourism studies. In 2007, scholars estimated the global surfing population at twenty to thirty-five million and growing as fast as fifteen percent per year (Buckley, 2002a; Lazarow, 2007; Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; O'Brien & Eddie, 2013; Mach, 2014). 'Surfonomics' researchers quantified the monetary value of individual surfing waves in Hawaii, Australia, UK, Indonesia, and the US, at between \$13 and \$40 million USD annually (Lazarow, 2007, 2009; Wagner et al., 2011; Thomas, 2012; Margules et al., 2014). Mach and Ponting (2021) calculated global pre-COVID surf tourism expenditures at an estimated \$31.5 to \$64.9 billion USD per year. With the annual income value of tourism and amenity investment related to surfing waves estimated at between \$70 and \$130 billion globally, governments have begun marketing their countries as surfing destinations, actively encouraging higher volumes of surf tourism within their wider (eco)tourism promotion strategies (SINAC 2016).

Unprecedented growth in the global surf tourism market since the mid-1980s, attributed in large part to a media-constructed cultural imaginary stimulating desire for surf travel (Ponting, 2007), is driven by demand from a highly mobile, predominantly Global North surfing population, transforming the landscapes, cultures and economies of tens of thousands of coastal communities in nearly every country with a coastline. While tourism provides employment opportunities for locals in destination communities, scholars have identified the detrimental issues associated with conventional surf tourism to include environmental degradation, cultural marginalization, settler colonialism and land dispossession, depletion of coastal aquifers, sex trafficking, hyperdevelopment, and mafioso-style organized crime (Barilotti, 2002; Buckley, 2002a; 2002b; 2006; Ponting, McDonald, & Wearing, 2005; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ingersoll, 2016; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017).

Surf Tourism as Neocolonialism

Reflecting on these dynamics, critical surf scholars have argued that the global expansion of surfing tourism represents a process of (neo)colonialism in the Global South through imported modes of modern amenity and real estate development catering to visiting surfers largely from the Global North (Barilotti, 2002; Dolnicar & Fluker, 2003; Ponting et al., 2005; Hill & Abbot, 2009; Comer, 2010; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). This line of scholarship highlights how surf tourism destinations become similarly dominated by foreign investment and tourism development, transformed into modern surf cities by and for foreign surfers, where local people are often seen as obstacles to riding waves (localism), are valued as means of production (labor), or at the very best, are treated as cultures to be consumed when the surf has gone flat (Barilotti, 2002; Canniford & Karababa, 2012). Additionally, scholars have identified the detrimental issues associated with conventional surf tourism to include environmental degradation and cultural marginalization (Buckley, 2002a; 2002b; 2006; Ponting, McDonald, & Wearing,

2005; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013); settler colonialism and land dispossession (Ingersoll, 2016; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017); depletion of coastal aquifers, sex trafficking, hyperdevelopment, and mafioso-style organized crime (Barilotti, 2002; Tantamjarik, 2004; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). This literature identifies settler colonialism as marked by processes of indigenous displacement, exploitation, dispossession and assimilation by a foreign settler population facilitating, as a condition of possibility, the rise of surf tourism markets and associated real estate development as surfscape occupation (Westwick & Neuschul, 2013; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019).

Ruttenberg and Brosius (2017, 2020) propose that the challenges exacerbated by surfing tourism parallel the conservation dilemmas produced by other forms of both ecotourism and mass tourism, representative of the wider problematics associated with neoliberal tourism-for-development strategies that promote growth-based market economies and income-oriented approaches to poverty alleviation (Honey 2008; Fletcher 2012). Surf scholars also acknowledge that both ecotourism and mass tourism often follow in the wake of earlier surf tourism exploration and development as a precursor to both (Mach, 2014; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017), with an “inordinate number of major coastal cities expanding outwards in concentric waves from a quality surf break” (Barilotti, 2002, p. 92). Notwithstanding some critique asserting its oversimplified and linear nature (see esp. Lagiewski, 2006), Butler’s (1980) Life Cycle analysis of open-access, boom-and-bust tourism provides a lens for understanding the trajectory of surf tourism destinations under neoliberal governance (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). Butler’s model distinguishes the cyclical phases of tourism development as a linear process: 1) exploration, 2) involvement, 3) development, 4) consolidation, and 5) stagnation. Existing studies highlight that this common tourism trajectory is particularly worrying given the explosive growth in the number of surfers worldwide, estimated at 17 to 35 million and growing as fast as 15 percent per year, with the demand for tourism amenities consequently set to increase exponentially in a global surf tourism industry grossing an estimated \$31.5 to \$64.9 billion USD per annum (Lazarow, 2007; Lazarow et al., 2008; Mach & Ponting, 2021). In relation to this trend, critical surf scholarship identifies a “surf tourism industrial complex” as implicating surfers in processes of settler colonialism and dispossession of lands via neoliberal tourism/real estate development (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019).

Sustainable Surf Tourism for Sustainable Development

In response to the many issues associated with conventional surf tourism described above, the field of Sustainable Surf Tourism (SST) has emerged as a network of scholarly and environmentalist-activist interventions. The field of sustainable surf tourism (SST) comprises surfing academics (including Jess Ponting, Nick Towner, Ralph Buckley, Gregory Borne and others in the Association of Surf Researchers), philanthropists and environmentalist organizations like Save the Waves Coalition and Surfrider Foundation and includes a number of projects and models proposing solutions to issues of both conservation and development in surf tourism spaces (Martin & Assenov, 2012). These SST initiatives include: sustainability certification standards and best practices for resorts and surf tourism

providers; surf voluntourism for development; surf philanthropy through monetary assistance and environmentalist campaigns in surf tourism destinations; *surfonomics* as a policy-oriented mechanism for valuing and preserving surf breaks [waves] (Thomas, 2012; Lazarow, 2007, 2009); educational surf travel; academic publications, research and conferences; surf tourism management plans (Ponting et al., 2005; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013), and World Surfing Reserves (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017).

The field of SST represents both a discourse and action-oriented movement based on a shared vision that host communities should reap the socio-economic benefits of surf tourism and efforts should be made to minimize the environmental impacts of related development. Together, the emerging forms of SST seek to harness the 'potential' of surf tourism as a benevolent source of both environmental conservation and socio-economic development, the realization of which, it is argued, would contribute to greater sustainability in surf tourism spaces (see Buckley, 2002a, 2002b; Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Ramos et al., 2019). Promoting surf tourism as a sustainable development strategy (Borne, 2015; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Porter et al. 2015, Towner, 2015), leading scholars in the field of SST offer a five-part framework for sustainable surf tourism: (i) 'empowering' locals to participate as owners in their local surf tourism industries; (ii) 'formal, long-term coordinated planning' in the form of surf tourism management frameworks; (iii) 'systematic attempts to foster cross-cultural understanding' by way of educating locals on their wave resources and encouraging more 'sustainable' income-generating pursuits like surf tourism; (iv) local sport development; and (v) sustainable surf tourism as a poverty alleviation strategy (Ponting et al., 2005; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013). Recent surf tourism research has centered community-based approaches to researching surf tourism development, including Towner (2015) and Towner and Milne's (2017) multiple stakeholder approach to researching links between surf tourism and sustainable community development and Towner & Davies' (2019) sustainable livelihoods model evaluating local perspectives on the negative and positive impacts of surf tourism, all in Indonesia's Mentawai islands; Ramos et al.'s (2019) study into surfers' willingness to pay for ecosystem services as a driver for sustainable coastal preservation in Portugal; Ponting and O'Brien's (2014) analysis of stakeholder perceptions on common pool resource (CPR) regulation for the sustainability of Fiji's surf tourism industry; O'Brien and Ponting's (2013) study of the community-based management approach to SST in Papua New Guinea; and Porter et al.'s (2015) research into the potential for surfing tourism to serve as a development strategy for fishing villages in the Philippines. This body of research defines the socio-ecological issues related to surf tourism as a failure of governance related to CPR management, highlighting the detrimental consequences of the depletion of the surf 'resource' by too many resource users, and the associated environmental degradation of adjacent landscapes (Ostrom, 1991; Agrawal, 2003; Ponting & O'Brien, 2013; Mixon, 2014, 2018; Mach & Ponting, 2017, 2018). This perspective reflects a conventional capitalocentric understanding on the tragedy of the commons (Hardin, 1968), in which independent resource users were found to overuse commons resources for personal benefit at the expense of the collective, and whereby the proposed solutions support the regulation and management of surfing resources to prevent overcrowding and degradation (Mach et al., 2018).

As a means of regulating against the degradation of the surfing commons and adjacent environments through CPR management-based approaches to surf tourism governance (Mach & Ponting, 2017, 2018), SST scholarship makes the explicit case for surf tourism to serve as a driver for the sustainable development of Global South surfing destinations (Borne, 2015, Borne & Ponting, 2015), in much the same way that the sustainable tourism community offers ecotourism as a solution to mass tourism's impact on destinations around the world (Honey, 2005, 2008; Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2012). Critical surf scholarship notes, however, how this ideal produces a certain innocence common to sustainability discourse whereby broader problematics of climate change, capitalist neocolonial exploitation and concerns for social justice are seemingly eschewed by promoting more 'sustainable' forms of fundamentally unsustainable practices like international tourism (Brosius & Ruttenberg, 2019). This critique builds on existing work by decolonial surf scholars, including Gilio-Whitaker's (2017, p. 228) research on the culturally appropriative nature of surf culture and its modern surf tourism industrial complex as the "continual remaking of indigenous space into settler space"; Walker's (2011) historiography of native Hawai'ians resisting and renegotiating the neocolonial encroachment of surf tourism industry development; Ingersoll's (2016) reflections on surf tourism's impact on local cultures and environments within a native Hawai'ian epistemology linking people and seascape places to self-determined ways of knowing and being in the world; and Ruttenberg and Brosius' (2019) exploration of surf localism connected to surf tourism governance frameworks 'commoning' the surfscape through indigenous community autonomy resisting neocolonial occupation in surf tourism destinations, different from the CPR management approach.

Challenging the treatment of CPR management common to sustainable surf tourism discourse, Ruttenberg and Brosius (2019) explore surfscape commons governance through an alternative, multiple-perspective framework that engages with: a) 'commoning' as a relational post-capitalist process of reclaiming otherwise enclosed or occupied space (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham et al., 2016; 2013); b) notions of defending a non-commodified commons linked to indigenous and decolonial struggles for survival (Esteva, 2018; Esteva & Escobar, 2019); and c) coalition-building across fugitive subjectivities escaping surfscape occupation as experiences of "being with and for the undercommons" (Harney & Moten, 2013). This framework opens space for acknowledging diverse expressions of localism and community struggles against surfscape occupation as both discursive constructs and structural realities potentiating alternatives to the "ontological occupation of people's territories and lives" (Esteva & Escobar, 2019, pp. 23-27). These and other critical interventions center decolonial and feminist theories and methods in their critique of surf tourism research, explored in greater detail in the following sections.

Decoloniality and Feminist Theory in Critical Surf Studies

As the field of critical surf studies continues to grow and diversify, decolonial and feminist theories are increasingly relevant to scholarly discussions on surfing histories, socioecological relationships in surfing culture, surf tourism governance and surfer-researcher positionality (see Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017; lisahunter, 2018). The theoretical underpinnings for these discussions engage with decolonial frames that

challenge Western-modern sociocultural constructs and their colonizing impacts on people and places (see Wynter, 2003; Curiel, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018); as well as postcolonial and intersectional feminist lenses that reconsider gendered subject dynamics as operating in conjunction with race and class at the intersections of coloniality, capitalism, Western knowledge, and gender (Lugones, 2003, 2008, 2010; Icaza, 2015; Icaza & Vazquez, 2017; Harcourt, 2019). Decolonial theory links discussions on power, knowledge and agency to non-Eurocentric and anti-racist narratives of history, gender, body politics, subjectivity, economy, development and wellbeing (Said, 1987; Escobar, 1995; Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Harcourt, 2019), connected to the ideological project of decolonization as “a political and epistemological position which traverses individual and collective thought and action: our imaginaries... and our ways of being and doing in the world” (Curiel, 2016, p. 51). This scholarship aligns with a decolonial feminist definition of patriarchy as a tool of colonization intrinsic to modernization, within which decolonial and feminist struggles exist in resistance to both capitalist accumulation by dispossession and processes of gendered, racialized and class-based exploitation foundational to capitalist modernity (Mohanty, 1988, 2003; Lugones, 2003, 2008; Icaza, 2015; Icaza & Vazquez, 2017).

Critical surf scholars have engaged with decolonial and critical feminist frameworks to examine cultural dynamics related to coloniality-patriarchy in what Ruttenberg and Brosius (2019) refer to as occupied surfscapes territories and imaginaries, representing critical sites of cultural resistance and social emancipation (Icaza & Vazquez, 2017; Nemani, 2015; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019; Olive, 2019). This body of scholarship includes discussions on surf localism(s) and diverse surfing subjectivities as resistance to white-male-dominated heteronormative modern surfing culture and associated neocolonial tourism development, as well as counter-narratives on non-modern surfing histories existing both prior and in parallel to Western colonization and appropriation (Comer, 2010, 2017; Walker, 2011, 2017; Laderman, 2014; Ingersoll, 2016; Dawson, 2017a, 2017b; lisahunter, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2019; Wheaton, 2017; Olive, 2019). In their efforts to make more visible the indigenous, localized and often marginalized histories, bodies, knowledges and sociocultural experiences that exist both within and outside Western surfing culture, critical surf scholars engage with critical race theory and decolonial frames to critique surf-related colonization and appropriation (Walker, 2011; Comer, 2016; Comley, 2016, 2018; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017, 2019; Jefferson, 2020), exalt non-Western surfing histories and epistemologies (Walker, 2006, 2011, 2017; Ingersoll, 2016; Dawson, 2017a, 2017b, 2018), and support intersectional feminist resistance to patriocolonial constructs in surfing spaces (Comer, 2017; lisahunter, 2017; 2018; Olive, 2019).

Feminist and Decolonial Methods & Critique in Surfing Tourism Studies

Surfeminist scholars have engaged with feminist and decolonial methods in critical surf (tourism) research including participant observation, reflexivity and (auto)ethnographies related to gender, race, sexuality (and their intersectionality), socio-ecological sensibilities, coloniality-patriarchy and globalization in surfing culture and tourism (Comer, 2010; Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Nemani, 2015; Olive, 2015; Olive et al., 2018; Ingersoll, 2016; Comley, 2018; Mizuno, 2018). This body of scholarship includes applications of feminist methods of

reflexivity to analyze researcher subjectivity and embodied surfer experiences across multiple/intersectional axes in “patriocolonial” surfing spaces (Comer, 2010; Nemani, 2015; Olive, 2015, 2019, 2020; Comley, 2018; Mizuno, 2018). Comley’s (2018) intersectional analysis of Mexican-American surfing experiences in California drew from participant observation as a “cultural insider” connecting her own background as a Mexican-American surfer with the experiences of her research participants. Olive (2015, pp. 501-502) engaged with feminist methods of reflexivity to situate her researcher subjectivity relative to ecological sensibilities among community and place, through “local and non-local relationships to surfing places”, which she defined as mediated among multi-sited constructs of “sex, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, class, and so on.” Olive’s (2020) most recent discussion on reflexivity in surfeminist research offers an in-depth expression of the ways participatory surf researchers are critically situated in the research context, where reflexivity offers a means of grappling with the intersectional complexities of situated researcher identities/subjectivities and multiple positionalities. Nemani’s (2015) ethnographic experiences with female Maori bodyboarders in Aoteara/New Zealand centered a reflexive approach to her own Samoan/Maori “brown female bodyboarder” researcher subjectivity, navigating dynamics of “belonging and community related to settler-colonial politics” at the intersections among gender, ethnicity, nationality, coloniality, and type of surfboard/surfcraft (as cited in Olive, 2019, p. 49). Mizuno’s (2018, p. 88) autoethnographic account of surfing in Japan emphasized cultural hierarchies across surfcraft and gender, in which she “found [herself] marginalized dually from the culture as a bodyboarder and a woman”, in a similar way that lisahunter (2015, as cited in Olive, 2019, p. 49) described their autoethnographic research experiences with discrimination and violent aggression as a “fuckin’ woman” on a longboard in Australia. Finally, Olive, Roy and Wheaton (2018) engaged with intersectionality as a conceptual and methodological framework for critical surfeminist studies, revisiting their previous research in California, UK and Australia from an intersectional lens across axes of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and local/non-local status.

Other critical surf scholars emphasize the decolonial subject positionality of surfers confronting power dynamics in surfing culture and their attempts to subvert processes of neocolonialism exacerbated by global surfing tourism. These interventions include Walker’s (2017, 2011) discussions of contemporary Hawai’ian identities and uniquely Hawai’ian surf institutions as presenting a meaningful challenge to hegemonic imaginaries in modern surf culture. Similarly, Gilio-Whitaker (2019, 2017) offers multiple decolonial feminist interventions on unforgetting the native Hawai’ian histories foundational to modern surfing narratives, recognizing indigeneity and its appropriation in California surf culture, and calling for a broader historical remembering of colonized California surfscapes. Dawson (2017, p. 149; 2018) explores the indigenous surfing histories of Atlantic Africa and Oceania resisting colonial imperatives and persisting in “amphibious spaces Westerns sought to physically and intellectually colonize.” Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017, p. 101) describe the Salina Cruz surfing association in Oaxaca, Mexico as “a grassroots civil organization aiming to protect local autonomy and to disrupt the hegemonic model of North-South surf tourism”. These decolonizing approaches echo Ingersoll’s (2016, p. 3) call for a “seascape epistemology” to pull away from “the binary opposition between the ‘colonizer’ and the ‘colonized’” toward “alternative ways of knowing and producing knowledge that allow for

empowerment and self-determination” in surfing culture, tourism, and more-than-human seascape communities.

Highlighting alternative possibilities for engaging with decoloniality in surf tourism research, the field of SST described above is thus critiqued by decolonial surf scholarship for aligning itself with the persistently dominant discourse of sustainable development that continues to inform the neoliberal international development agenda (Wanner, 2015; Fletcher & Rammelt, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019), in which SST runs the risk of reproducing the same colonial-capitalist logics and practices it seeks to remedy in Global South surfing destinations. Contributing to both theoretical debates and empirical research in critical surf tourism studies, the decolonizing approach to SST advanced through the chapters presented here reconsiders the surf-tourism-for-sustainable-development model and its problematic alignment with the post-2015 international sustainable development agenda, while also exploring community-based alternatives to development as decolonial surf tourism praxis beyond current trends in the field of SST. Chapter V deals specifically with an intersectional analysis of decolonial surf tourism research at the intersections of coloniality-patriarchy as articulated through power dynamics related to gender, race, and class in Global South surf tourism studies (Olive, 2019).

Building on the existing body of critical research in surf tourism studies reviewed here, the conceptual framing of my research centers decolonial and postcapitalist approaches to surf tourism governance and engages with discussions on surfer subjectivities through decolonial and surfeminist lenses. Departing from CPR-management based approaches to community-based surf tourism governance common to the SST research reviewed above, the following section defines the theoretical foundations for my research, linking the postdevelopment critique of the international sustainable development paradigm to diverse economic frames useful for contemplating postcapitalist alternatives in (surf) tourism studies. Building on my related co-authored work in decolonizing sustainable surf tourism and critical localisms discussed above, my independent research engages with postdevelopment and postcapitalist conceptual frames to offer a noncapitalocentric lens on surfer subjectivity in relation to the state of modern surfing and centers participatory empirical research into diverse economic alternatives to development in decolonial surf tourism studies.

Theoretical Framework: Postdevelopment and Diverse Economies

The “postdevelopment” critique of economic development as a theoretical framework draws from both Foucauldian poststructuralist and Marxian perspectives on power and exploitation related to the discourse of sustainable development and its economic growth-based model as linked to the hegemony of global capitalism and modernization (Escobar, 1995; Santos, 2004; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Esteva, 2009; Sachs, 2009). Beyond critical surf studies, postdevelopment scholarship critiques international development as a discourse perpetuating a Western-modern materialist world view (Escobar, 1995; Maiava, 2002; Santos, 2004; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Esteva, 2009; Sachs, 2009) and growth-for-development socio-structural system whereby Development schemes

are perceived as reliant on insertion into the global economy through the promotion of neoliberal strategies of export-led growth and income-oriented approaches to poverty alleviation (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Harvey, 2005). Postdevelopment theory emphasizes the power dynamics at play in the process of establishing a singular hegemonic vision maintaining that economic development and social wellbeing are only achievable through capitalist production and Western-led modernization (Sachs, 1993; Escobar, 1995; Gibson-Graham, 2005). This dominant meta-narrative operates at the levels of culture, knowledge and practice and is founded on both a modern cultural habitus, understood as individuals' unconscious socialization into the values and behaviors of modern life (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Fletcher, 2014b), and the hegemony of scientific, linear-rational logic characteristic of Enlightenment thought whereby anything 'other' is denied as unbelievable to the point that it becomes functionally non-existent (Santos, 2004; Gibson-Graham, 2005). Decolonial and feminist theoretical contributions to postdevelopment frames similarly challenge Western-modern sociocultural constructs and their colonizing impacts on people and places (see Wynter, 2003; Curiel, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), while seeking to center postcolonial and intersectional feminist lenses to reconsider racialized, gendered and colonial power dynamics in the production of knowledge, the social relations of globalized capitalism, and experiences of socioecological wellbeing (Lugones, 2003, 2008, 2010; Icaza, 2015; Icaza & Vazquez, 2017; Harcourt, 2019).

A key focus of the postdevelopment critique concerns sustainable development's common grounding within the paradigm of neoliberalism, defined here as a global capitalist political-economic system, policy program and governance ideology founded on economic liberalization and marketization prioritizing extractive industry and export-led economic growth; privatization of public enterprise, social services and commonly shared resources; state deregulation of investment, finance and ownership (Escobar, 1996; Harvey, 2005; Foucault, 2008; Castree, 2010) and the "creation of 'free', 'self-sufficient', and self-governing individuals and communities" less reliant on state provision (Castree, 2010, p. 10). Sustainable development's continuity with the neoliberal paradigm has been critiqued as fundamentally problematic given that "redistributive effects and increasing social inequality have in fact been such a persistent feature of neoliberalization as to be regarded as structural to the whole project" (Harvey, 2005, p. 16). In this milieu, the postdevelopment perspective sheds light on the ways in which the "environment" has become a neoliberal construct of the sustainable development paradigm, whose purpose is to separate humans from nature and re-signify the latter as something to be conserved and/or commodified through practices of environmental governance and/or as a means of satisfying growth-based development strategies (Escobar, 1996).

The postdevelopment perspective is thus positioned in contrast to both: a) market-based 'solutions' characteristic of the status quo economic growth-for-development paradigm; and b) reformist strategies championing technical fixes that promote 'sustainable, equitable capitalism' within existing social and economic structures (Hopwood et al., 2005). Instead, postdevelopment advocates transformational approaches to sustainable development, arguing for deep socio-structural change to address environmental crises and social injustice (Pepper, 1993). In alignment with decolonial scholarship linking struggles for justice to the

colonial project of modernity, decolonizing development praxis seeks to visibilize ‘subaltern’ knowledges and self-determined futures as both resistance to dispossession and viable alternatives to global predatory capitalism (Icaza & Vazquez, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019). The challenge for decolonizing sustainable surfing tourism, then, is to transcend the “unequal discourse” and monocultural logics of a colonizing modernity (Escobar, 1995; Icaza & Vazquez, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019) by divesting them of their power and hegemony through imagining and enacting alternatives to Development and creating counter-hegemonic spaces within which to recognize diversity in knowledge, culture, and economic interaction (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Ingersoll, 2016; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017), providing opportunities for decolonial practice to elicit an emancipatory social politics, and/or cultivate alternative communal governmentalities (Foucault, 2008; Fletcher, 2019).

Diverse Economies as Postdevelopment Praxis

One such trend in the alternatives to development literature employs the postcapitalist perspective of diverse economies to de-center capitalist logics and social relations of production from singularly defining fixed notions of the economy (Gibson-Graham, 2005). J.K. Gibson-Graham’s (2005) framework for mapping community assets and diverse economies as postdevelopment practice provides the conceptual basis for the research and analysis offered here. This framing draws on a diverse economies approach to mapping: a) capitalist, alternative capitalist, and non-capitalist modes of interaction across the economic practices of enterprise, exchange, labor, transactions, and property (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013); and b) assets-based alternatives to development (building on existing skills, infrastructure and institutions) as expressions of postcapitalist possibility (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 2005; Gibson-Graham, 2005, 2006; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Shifting away from needs-based approaches common to development discourse, the assets-based community development (ABCD) approach is inspired in earlier work by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), emphasizing the importance of starting with an inventory of the skills, talents and capacities of the community, and then recognizing and mobilizing these assets so that local people are full and active contributors to their own community-building processes, rather than passive recipients of Western development aid interventions.

This postcapitalist approach promotes a non-capitalocentric reframing of economic interaction that highlights diverse practices of economy as already-existing alternatives to hegemonic notions of development (Gibson-Graham, 2000, 2005, 2006). Gibson-Graham describe capitalocentrism as both: a) a way of thinking about and/or representing economic life as centered on capitalist modes of exchange and practice, even in critiques of development and neoliberalism, which “confine the proliferative potential of economic difference” (2000, p. 13); and b) an approach born of the positive “(mis)interpretation” of Marx’s language of economic difference “as a historical stage theory of economic evolution in which capitalism is situated at the pinnacle of development”, within which subjects fit into structural categories of class and labor vis-à-vis capitalist modes of production and exploitation (2006, p. 59). Applied to the field of postdevelopment, this non-capitalocentric approach entails adopting a different stance towards the world as a means of first

recognizing existing local efforts to improve well-being and then moving to support and strengthen those existing efforts as localized, pluralistic grassroots movements and alternative development initiatives (Gibson-Graham, 2005; COMPAS, 2007).

Diverse Economies in Tourism

The diverse economies theoretical frame has been applied to a limited body of scholarship advancing diverse economies in tourism studies more broadly. These contributions include Mosedale's (2017) discussion of structure and agency as mitigating factors in diverse economic practices related to alternative capitalist and non-capitalist forms of organization, transactions, and labor relations in a range of tourism scenarios; Cave and Dredge's (2018, p. 474) compilation of scholarship comprising research on practices and initiatives that "rethink the status quo" of "extractivist and exploitative forms of tourism" by "valuing diverse economic spaces, modes of exchange, and diverse forms of value creation"; as well as Everingham et al.'s (2021) study of diverse economies in voluntourism as a means of promoting peace and justice beyond the commodification and colonization of the volunteer tourism industry. By identifying multiple economic forms, modes and practices, the diverse economies in tourism framework critiques the "hegemonic capitalist discourse of a single pervasive capitalist economy" and instead offers "a different view of our economies as open, plural and consisting of a variety of economic practices" (Mosedale, 2017, n.p.). This framework also offers a postcapitalist means of promoting tourism practices grounded in decoloniality, communal resource governance and social enterprise as alternatives to what Cave and Dredge (2020) refer to as the dominant "Tourism Operating System". As such, they and other scholars envision a "diverse economy of tourism" that embraces regenerative principles of degrowth and practices of mutual aid, economic re-localization, food security, and state support as "interventions that might establish a trajectory... for a global, collective and concerted response to climate change" (Cave & Dredge, 2020; Fletcher et al., 2020; Latour, 2020, all as cited in Healy, 2020, n.p.).

Building on this body of tourism literature, the diverse economies approach to development alternatives (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Cameron & Gibson, 2005) offers a lens for examining the capitalocentric logics of SST and exploring decolonial alternatives to development in surfing tourism different from the international sustainable development agenda (Escobar, 1995; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Kothari et al., 2019). As such, engaging with the diverse economies approach to postdevelopment in practice represents a novel exploration in decolonizing SST research by centering the local and the endogenous in moves toward self-determined alternatives to development, while rejecting what postdevelopment and decolonial surf scholarship might describe as the colonizing logics of the surf tourism-for-sustainable development paradigm (Gibson-Graham, 2000; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019). Specifically, the diverse economies approach provides a conceptual basis for analyzing postcapitalist surfer subjectivities in relation to colonial-capitalist modernity, as explored in Chapter II; and conceiving of multiple perspectives on the surfscape commons beyond the common pool resource management framework often employed in conventional SST scholarship, as discussed in Chapter III.

Discussions of subjectivity are included as a means of examining the ways surfers are differently subjected to occupied surfscape imaginaries and territories, toward recognizing the potential for certain critical subjectivities to transgress the colonial-patriarchal and capitalist state of modern surfing and its surf tourism-industrial-complex. In a capitalocentric framing, surfing subjectivities are understood through historical-materialist perspectives to be defined by and locked into the structures of the capitalist system. However, as an avenue for moving beyond the paralysis inherent in capitalocentric analyses that thus “place capitalism at the defining center of economic identity” (Gibson-Graham, 2000, p. 13), the diverse economies approach offers an anti-essentialist reframing of surfing subjectivities useful for identifying potential apertures in surfing culture that point to postcapitalist ‘new becomings’ (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 2011). This reframing makes visible certain surfer subjectivities that “disrupt the daily performance of power relations” (Woodward et al., 2009, p. 402) rather than continuing to “reproduce the world as seen by those who rule it” (Escobar, 1995, p. 203), which might be understood as enacting a certain (r)evolutionary politics in surfing culture, as explored in Chapter II.

The diverse economic frame also offers a unique approach to theorizing the surfscape commons (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, 2016), different from CPR management approaches employed by conventional surf tourism studies (Mach et al., 2018), and useful for recognizing alternative modes of surfscape commons governance as sites of resistance to neoliberal/neocolonial surfscape occupation (Ruttenberg & Brosius 2019). ‘Commoning’ in the diverse economic sense is understood as a relational process of reclaiming otherwise enclosed or occupied space – functioning at the physical site of the surfscape and at the level of collective imaginaries (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, 2016). This approach attends to a “diversity of practices for commoning different types of property” (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 198), focusing on “the suppressed praxis of the commons in its manifold particularities” (Linebaugh, 2008, p. 19) as a “different way of seeing and being” (Bollier, 2014, p. 147), and expanding “the political options that might be open to us to imagine and enact other possible worlds in the here and now” (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 198). Borrowing from Bollier and Helfrich (2019, pp. 15-17), this perspective defines the commons as both “living social systems through which people address their shared problems in self-organized ways” and insurgent space for “freedom-in-connectedness... in which we can rediscover and remake ourselves as whole human beings.” This perspective is useful for analyzing local enactments of surfscape commoning as processes of renegotiating relational dynamics in occupied surfscapes, in awareness of structural relationships of power and privilege, where decisions and attitudes toward sharing a surfing commons move beyond a capitalocentric understanding of entitlement in the CPR sense (land titles, property rights, resource ownership, etc.), toward a communal practice of commoning otherwise enclosed spaces.

Surf tourism-specific literature has touched on the potential role for diverse economies in decolonizing sustainable surf tourism (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020), but prior to the research presented here, had not yet explored this approach empirically in the field. Seeking to address this research gap, while also contributing a surf tourism case study to the growing

body of scholarship on diverse economies in tourism studies more broadly, the collection of research presented here explores the potential for diverse economic and non-capitalocentric approaches to foster novel discussions on surfer subjectivities, surfscape commons governance, and alternatives to development in surfing tourism beyond current practice in the field. As such, this research advances empirical contributions to decolonizing surf tourism, as well as theoretical contributions to critical surf tourism studies through engaging with diverse economic concepts related to postcapitalist subjectivity and localist expressions of “commoning” the surfscape beyond capitalocentric frames.

Case Study: Surf Tourism in Costa Rica

Costa Rica, located in southern Central America with a population of 5.1 million, is a popular surf tourism destination with surfing waves on both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. Surf tourism in Costa Rica represents nearly a quarter of the country’s \$1.92 billion annual tourism industry (Krause, 2012; Blanco, 2013). A small body of existing scholarship has addressed surf tourism in Costa Rica as related to a number of socio-ecological issues, including: localism due to overcrowding, territoriality and “transnational” surfer identities (Krause, 2012; Usher & Gomez, 2016; Usher, 2017); threats to the sustainability of surf-related resources given tourism overdevelopment and near-shore fishing industry encroachment (Tantamjarik, 2004; Evans, 2015); as well as the impacts of surf tourism experiences on pro-environmental behavior change (Hunt and Harbor, 2019).

The income value of tourism and amenity investment related to surfing waves – estimated at between \$70 and \$130 billion globally per year (SINAC, 2016) - has led governments like Costa Rica to market their countries as surfing destinations, actively encouraging higher volumes of surf tourism within their wider (eco)tourism promotion strategies. Past studies demonstrate that 20-25% of the country’s two million annual visitors are surf tourists, generating upwards of \$800 million USD in surf tourism-related revenue per year (Krause, 2012; Blanco, 2013; SINAC, 2016). There are currently an estimated 150 surf schools operating in Costa Rica (SINAC, 2016), where predominantly foreign clients range from first-timers to intermediate surfers looking to improve their skills.

A small body of existing scholarship has addressed surf tourism in Costa Rica as related to a number of socio-ecological issues reminiscent of the broader impacts of global surf tourism discussed above, including: localism due to overcrowding, territoriality and “transnational” surfer identities (Krause, 2012; Usher & Gomez, 2016; Usher, 2017); threats to the sustainability of surf-related resources given tourism overdevelopment and near-shore fishing industry encroachment (Tantamjarik, 2004; Evans, 2015); as well as the impacts of surf tourism experiences on pro-environmental behavior change (Hunt & Harbor, 2019). Representing close to a quarter of the country’s nearly \$1.92 billion annual tourism industry, surf tourism’s associated waves of development in Costa Rica threaten socio-ecological wellbeing while simultaneously accompanying the country’s otherwise progressive conservation agenda (Krause, 2012; Blanco, 2013). This policy paradox, of promoting

environmental conservation while also pursuing a high-volume approach to (surf) tourism as a driver for economic growth, underlies the contradictory nature of Costa Rica's neoliberal governance model analyzed herein.

The next sections describe the case study and fieldwork locations in Costa Rica, before defining the primary research objectives and specific research questions guiding empirical research. This is followed by a discussion of the methodological framework connecting the theoretical and empirical studies comprising this collection of research, along with the specific methods of critical surfscape ethnography, participatory field research and reflexivity employed for the decolonizing approach to surf tourism studies offered here.

Field Site Descriptions

The majority of fieldwork was conducted in two surf tourism destinations on Costa Rica's Pacific Coast – at Playa Naranjo, the beach adjacent to iconic surfing wave Witch's Rock located within Santa Rosa National Park; and Playa Hermosa de Cobano, a growing surf tourism community at the tip of the country's northwestern Nicoya Peninsula.

Witch's Rock (Playa Naranjo)

Witch's Rock (Roca Bruja) is a surfing destination made famous by the iconic surf film *The Endless Summer II* (Brown, 1993), located within the conservation area of Santa Rosa National Park in the Guanacaste province of northwest Costa Rica. Much of Costa Rica's surfing story begins with the *Endless Summer II* (Brown, 1993), the popular sequel to perhaps the most iconic surf film in history, and the original inspiration for waves like Roca Bruja (Witch's Rock) to be included on the majority of surfers' bucket lists. In the film, two white male surfers from California travel to Guanacaste, Costa Rica's Northwestern province, home to world-class waves located north and south of the town of Tamarindo, and frequently favorable offshore winds ideal for surfing. With the *Endless Summer II*, Witch's Rock became a sought-after surfing destination, an iconic surfing dream to be fulfilled, with waves of surf tourism-related development following in its wake.

Within Santa Rosa National Park, Playa Naranjo is the beach adjacent to the surfable waves at Witch's Rock, which break in a number of spots depending on swell direction off ocean floor sandbars both north and south of a river mouth at the north end of the beach, infamously known for the crocodile sightings warned against by trailhead signs leading into the dry tropical forest. Three kilometers south of the river, surfers could camp at the Playa Naranjo campground, where a ranger station and very basic amenities were provided for a nominal usage fee. Campground access is an hour's drive, off-road-vehicle-only through the forest, stone-cobbled dirt road and mangroves, from the main biological station inside the park, itself a half-hour's drive from the Interamerican Highway connecting visitors to the nearest major town of Liberia, another forty kilometers away. While the campground and

pedestrian-only trails at Playa Naranjo were frequented by local Costa Rican and foreign surfers for decades, Witch's Rock is currently only accessible by boat following indefinite COVID-related closures of the access road and camping area. Increasingly precise swell-forecasting has contributed to the fluctuating swell-based demand for waves at spots like Witch's Rock, whose challenging access is not a disincentive to those with the funds to make the trip and hire a boat.

Santa Rosa National Park was created in 1971 and encompasses 81,000 hectares of land, 43,000 of which are marine protected area. The park is home to 10 distinct habitats and 16 known archeological sites, and is set within the larger Guanacaste Conservation Area, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1999, with two-thirds of Costa Rica's species biodiversity within its 160,000-hectare landscape, managed under the auspices of SINAC. SINAC identifies surfing as an ecosystem service connected to the economic activity of the park, and cites a 2011 study by Reyes and Sanchez analyzing the perceived benefits of the park among neighbor communities, who identified tourism, including surf tourism, as a "means of generating income and as an alternative for developing associated businesses in the surrounding communities" (SINAC, 2016, p. 26). The operating framework for regulating surfing within Santa Rosa National Park is based on an executive decree established in 2005 called Requirements and Regulations for the Exercise of Surfing Activities in Santa Rosa National Park, which obliges the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) to regulate the activities of surf tourists and the seasonal carrying capacity at permitted surf breaks.

The management of surf tourism within Santa Rosa National Park offers an interesting case for understanding the contradictory aims of pursuing the conservation objectives of the park while also seeking to increase surf tourism as an ecosystem service with economic benefits to both SINAC and surrounding communities. Nowhere in SINAC's study is there mention of the potentially deleterious effects of increased surf tourism on the conservation efforts of the park; to the contrary, the report emphasizes the need to improve tourism amenities and infrastructure to encourage more paying visitors and surfers, specifically. While the National Park surrounding Witch's Rock is one of the most protected conservation areas in the country, surfers pursuing their *Endless Summer* invariably contribute to the growth of tourism and development in nearby towns like Tamarindo, whose expansion is blamed for decreases in nesting sea turtle populations, unsanitary ocean water conditions, and heavy pressure on resources like fresh water. While fences keep people and construction out of conservation areas with epic surf, adjacent towns grow exponentially in waves of development with no limits in sight. Still, with waves like Witch's Rock, the *Endless Summer* dream lives on for traveling surfers predominantly from the Global North. As surf scholars have discussed, however, this dream has regularly obscured the existence and perspectives of local surfers, their cultures and environments, displacing local realities with the colonizing narrative of a constructed surf travel nirvana (Ponting, 2009; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017; Wheaton, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). With overcrowding in the surf, tourism overdevelopment on land, and increasing environmental impact, foreign surfers' pursuit of

their Costa Rican surfing dreams has become an “endless bummer” for host communities facing the socioecological realities of these tourism-inflicted challenges (Ponting, 2007).

Playa Hermosa de Cobano

Playa Hermosa de Cobano is a modest surf town on the southwestern tip of Costa Rica’s northwestern Nicoya Peninsula. As it contends with its own surf tourism-related challenges, the field research community of Playa Hermosa is increasingly popular with international tourists for its accessible learning waves, expansive coastline and bohemian beach culture. The local community is comprised of fewer than a dozen Costa Rican families who settled in the area in the 1970s. Beginning in the late 1980s, much of this land has since been sold to foreign ex-pats, who have built family homes and vacation rentals and started small businesses catering to mostly foreign tourists, including a few restaurants and cafes, hotels, surf camps and a surf shop. Surfers from elsewhere in Costa Rica and South America have also moved to the area as small tourism business owners, employees and surf instructors. While the interconnectivities among foreign settler residents, local families and visiting tourists reflect the “contingent materiality” of coexistence described by Sheller and Urry (2006), socioeconomic, cultural, and language differences make for an incompletely integrated, however cordial, broader community experience, with power dynamics negotiated among the North/South relationships characteristic of surf tourism settler colonialism described above.

As foreign investment and development growth in Playa Hermosa accelerate in tandem with surfing tourism, a range of social and environmental challenges have emerged. With tax incentives pushing local landholders to sell their traditional holdings to foreign investors, the neocolonial nature of tourism development has provoked grave impacts related to river sanitation, watershed viability, theft targeting tourists and drug-related crime, social inequality, waste management, and dispossession of local lands via speculative real estate land grab (Tenorio, pers. comm. 2019; Grew, pers. comm. 2019; Nicoya Peninsula Waterkeeper, 2021). While many local surfers benefit from the steady livelihood opportunities of working as surf instructors for surf camps and visiting tourists, they also recognize overcrowding in the surf as a challenge to be reckoned with. The local surfing association of Playa Hermosa formed as a grassroots entity to regulate surf instruction, including restrictions on who is allowed to offer lessons, the creation of a price floor for lesson rates, and limiting the number of surf students per instructor in the water to ensure safety.

Despite the observed challenges described above, Playa Hermosa is in the early stage of the rapid development trajectory observed in other Global South communities with high-quality surfing waves. Other surf tourism studies have described the development of surf towns as aligned with Butler’s (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle Model tracing tourism destination trajectories under neoliberal governance along a continuum of linear phases: (1) exploration, (2) involvement, (3) development, (4) consolidation, and (5) stagnation, at

which point the destination will either rejuvenate and maintain its appeal or self-destruct due to mass tourism oversaturation (Krause, 2012; Mach, 2014; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; 2020). Currently undergoing the development phase of this trajectory, the community and sea-adjacent landscape of Hermosa thus sit at an important moment for exploring alternatives to development, while providing a window into the challenges associated with Costa Rica's characteristic conservation-and-development agenda situated within a growth-based model promoting a heavy-volume approach to tourism (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2020). As such, field research questions were designed to analyze these dynamics, and research methods were selected in effort to support community-driven solutions to some of the challenges described above.

Research Objectives and Questions

The primary research objectives for this study into decolonizing surf tourism sought:

- i) To critically analyze existing forms of “sustainable” surf tourism.
- ii) To explore possibilities for developing decolonial, assets-based alternatives to existing models of surf tourism development.

The *general research questions* for empirical and theoretical study centered community-based approaches to socioecological wellbeing and surf tourism governance:

- i) How can noncapitalocentric approaches to surf tourism nurture postcapitalist possibilities in surf culture and foster decolonial alternatives in surf tourism governance?
- ii) How are local communities responding to the social and environmental challenges of surf tourism-related development?

Specific research questions sought to identify existing experiences with surf tourism beyond capitalocentric frames to examine alternatives to development in surf tourism:

- iv) How is sustainability in surf tourism currently being promoted in the community? To what extent does this promotion reflect a conventional neoliberal model of sustainable development?
- v) Are there existing examples of alternatives to neoliberal surf tourism development? If so, what are these and how are they framed?
- vi) Are there aspects of the community's engagement with sustainable surf tourism that represent a shift toward decolonial post-development? Can an assets-based approach to understanding diverse community economies facilitate such a shift?

The methods discussed in the following section were selected in effort to satisfy research objectives and respond to these general and specific research questions.

Methodology

Broadly, my research design was based in grounded theory, whereby theory itself is constructed through social research as a process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Decolonial methods – permitting a role for non-local researchers, like myself, in working with communities – centered performative, “situated activity” toward the creation of counter-narratives and alternate possibilities, within an ethics of solidarity for postcapitalist alternatives (Denzin, 2007; Denzin, Lincoln and Smith, 2008). In alignment with decolonizing methodologies, this approach sought to transgress historical misrepresentations common to outside researchers fomenting colonial oppression and socio-cultural exploitation in the process of serving Western discourses on the Other (Said, 1978; Smith, 1999). As an “insider” within global surfing culture, but an “outsider-within” the communities where I conducted field research (Collins, as cited in Smith, 1999), considerations of researcher positionality and the selection of appropriate methods were foremost an effort to maintain the ethical integrity of the research project within a decolonizing methodological framework (Smith, 1999; Denzin et al., 2008). As such, piecing together methods, tools and techniques, Denzin and Lincoln’s (2003) depiction of the qualitative researcher as ‘bricoleur’ proved useful in creating a customized ‘bricolage’ of relevant methods for both the theoretical analyses of surfing cultural and tourism discourse and ethnographic, participatory and reflexive methods employed for conducting and analyzing empirical field-based research.

Specifically, this bricolage of research methods includes: a) a review of secondary sources relevant to surfing culture and surf tourism discourse, including popular surf media, such as magazines, film, advertisements, interviews, social media, podcasts, websites and blogs; as well as academic texts specific to critical trends in surfing culture and surf tourism scholarship; b) critical surfscape ethnography (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019), which centers empirical methods of self-reflective, “unorthodox” and critical ethnography (Canniford, 2005; Stranger, 2011; Koot, 2016), along with a critical review of secondary texts rooted in modern surfing discourse, representing a mixed-methods approach honoring a long-term ‘participant-as-observer’ role for critical surfer-researchers which “take[s] account of the relationship between the observer and the observed, but also the relationship between the... worlds they belong to” (Stranger, 2011, p. 11); c) community-based poststructuralist participatory action research (PAR) aligned with an assets-based community development approach (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) and diverse economies assessment (Cameron, 2003; Cameron & Gibson-Graham, 2005; Gibson-Graham, 2005) to explore alternatives to development in surfing tourism; and d) self-reflexive autoethnography to critically reflect on my “multiplex” researcher positionality related to gender and racial subjectivity as an “outsider-within” community-based decolonial surf tourism research (Collins, as cited in Smith, 1999; Gibson-Graham, 1994; Rose, 1997; Sato, 2004; Sultana, 2007; Faria & Mollett, 2016; Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Olive, 2016, 2020; Olive et al., 2018; Schneider et al., 2020). Together, this bricolage of research methods was selected in effort to transgress colonial patterns of representing ‘local’ people by instead highlighting alternative development possibilities and self-determined representations of culture and community, such that the

studies presented here might be “respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful” within a decolonizing approach to research (Smith, 1999, p. 10).

This bricolage of methods comprising the formal field research process traces the trajectory of my experiences as a surfer-researcher “going surfing” (Olive, 2020) across the period of July 2019 to December 2020, in the surfing communities of Witch’s Rock (Santa Rosa National Park), Costa Rica; Matapalo, Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica; Barra de la Cruz, Oaxaca, Mexico; and Playa Hermosa de Cobano, Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica. In the first field site of Witch’s Rock, located inside Santa Rosa National Park, informal interviews and participant observation coincided with my role as program assistant for the Surfing and Sustainability study abroad program discussed above, and informed the empirical analysis presented in Chapter I: Surf Tourism, Conservation and Development in Costa Rica. Informants included local surfers and members of the informal surfing association, and surf tourism providers who were also long-term Witch’s Rock surfers and residents local to park-adjacent areas. In Matapalo, interview participants included local Costa Rican surfers and expat surfer residents, who were selected to provide a diversity of perspectives on localism and area surf tourism governance from distinct positions related to nationality, class, and gender. In Barra de la Cruz, Oaxaca, informants included local area surf guides and leaders of the local indigenous community council connected to the town’s cooperative-run surf tourism enterprises and autonomous governance framework. Participant action research in Playa Hermosa de Cobano was conducted in collaboration with a self-selecting research team comprised of local and foreign residents, surfers and surf tourism providers, including myself. Together, we followed the poststructuralist PAR assets-based community approach outlined by Cameron and Gibson-Graham (2005) to map the Playa Hermosa diverse economy and local assets related to people and practices, institutions and infrastructure as a basis for contemplating alternatives to development in community-based surfing tourism (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

Aligned with Cameron and Gibson’s (2005) poststructuralist PAR methodology, this team designed and conducted a series of community engagement activities over the period from September 2019 to December 2019, loosely following the related methodology adapted to the SST context by Ruttenberg and Brosius (2017, p. 124-125):

- 1) Documenting and acknowledging existing community representations related to the current state of affairs in surf tourism and sustainability;
- 2) Contextualizing and deconstructing the current situation vis-à-vis Western constructs of development, while simultaneously creating space for new representations to emerge by tapping into existing skills, capacities, and assets of community members that may have been marginalized or denied by existing perceptions and self-understandings within status quo social structures;
- 3) Community inquiry and assets-mapping to strengthen new community representations;
- 4) Workshops and brainstorming sessions, as opportunities to create and implement strategies for action on sustainability in surf tourism governance, aligned with any new representations of community and self that may have emerged in the previous stages of the process.

These community engagement activities included semi-structured group conversations among research team members, as well as focus-group workshops and food-sharing events with community members, through which we ultimately mapped the local assets and diverse economy of Playa Hermosa and facilitated dialogue toward envisioning community surf tourism governance and conservation priorities among local actors. As detailed in Chapter IV, this process followed J.K. Gibson-Graham's (2005) framework for mapping community assets and diverse economies as postdevelopment practice, drawing on a diverse economies approach to mapping: a) capitalist, alternative capitalist, and non-capitalist modes of interaction across the economic practices of enterprise, exchange, labor, transactions, and property (see Fig. 1) (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013); and b) assets-based alternatives to development (building on existing skills, infrastructure and institutions) as expressions of postcapitalist possibility (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Gibson-Graham, 2005, 2006; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013).

THE DIVERSE ECONOMY				
LABOR	ENTERPRISE	TRANSACTIONS	PROPERTY	FINANCE
Wage	Capitalist	Market	Private	Mainstream Market
Alternative Paid	Alternative Capitalist	Alternative Market	Alternative Private	Alternative Market
Unpaid	Noncapitalist	Nonmarket	Open Access	Nonmarket

Figure 1. The Diverse Economy. Source: Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. 13.

Complementing these methods, participant observation and self-reflexive autoethnography were employed throughout the course of formal fieldwork in research communities, as methods for interpreting the PAR experiences and diverse economies data gathered throughout the field research process, as well as prior to formal fieldwork and in follow-up to the PAR phase of the study. In my participant-as-observer role as a surfer-researcher in the years leading up to the start of my research project, reflexive methods of "going surfing" (Olive, 2020) and critical surfscape ethnography (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019) offered a complementary means of situating fieldwork among the decades of relevant experiences I have lived and observed in the surfscape imaginaries and territories discussed in the opening section of this introduction, and analyzed particularly in Chapter III. Similarly, though not originally planned as part of my research project, reflexivity provided the basis for analyzing my positionality as a white-assumed, female-presenting researcher engaged in decolonial surf tourism research at the intersections of race and gender, discussed in Chapter V. And finally, the review and analysis of secondary literature sources related to global surf culture and tourism, discussed most significantly in Chapter II, offered a comprehensive engagement with multiple, overlapping data sources to contextualize the research project

through the useful triangulation of formal field research, critical ethnographic methods and text analysis.

The concluding section below provides a summary of the chapters of this dissertation and offers a synthesis of their collective contribution to decolonizing surf tourism studies.

Summary of Chapters

While the chapters comprising this dissertation offer both theoretical and empirical contributions relevant to decolonizing surf tourism studies, each provides its own engagement with the broader postdevelopment/diverse economies theoretical framework, as well as specific methods of decolonial research and critical analysis discussed above.

Chapter I, 'Surf Tourism, Conservation and Development in Costa Rica' critically analyzes the conservation-and-development policy contradictions inherent in Costa Rica's high-volume approach to surf tourism as a case study for critiquing broader trends in neoliberal surf tourism governance. This analysis centers the case study of Witch's Rock (Roca Bruja), a surfing destination made famous by the iconic surf film *The Endless Summer II* (Brown, 1993), located within the conservation area of Santa Rosa National Park in the Guanacaste province of northwest Costa Rica. Drawing on ethnographic field research in conservation areas and surf towns adjacent to the Witch's Rock surf spot, along with a review of secondary sources related to surf tourism in Costa Rica, this analysis asserts the irreconcilability of simultaneously pursuing surf tourism-for-economic growth and maintaining the integrity of conservation objectives under neoliberal governance. The contradictions of Costa Rica's neoliberal governance model identified in this analysis are threefold: 1) the unsustainable nature of pursuing a high-volume approach to tourism undermining the integrity of the country's celebrated conservation agenda; 2) modern surf tourism development as a tragic consequence of surfers closing in on their own culturally constructed *Endless Summer* dreams of traveling to surf uncrowded waves in tropical destinations through processes of 'escaping' to the very same modernity they seek freedom from in the first place; and 3) the ways tourism- and development-driven modernization and cultural commodification are contributing to the loss of Costa Rica's *pura vida* lifestyle – which has traditionally linked social and environmental wellbeing as essential to collective quality of life. The ultimate objective of this intervention is to move the sustainability conversation beyond neoliberal non-solutions – including income-oriented strategies promoting tourism-for-development still mired in a fundamentally unsustainable growth paradigm – while offering a horizon for visibilizing viable community-based alternatives founded on local ways of being, knowing and doing as decolonial, postdevelopment and postcapitalist praxis in surf tourism studies. An earlier version of this chapter was published as 'Waves of Development: Surf Tourism on Trial in Costa Rica' in *The Ecolaboratory* (2020).

Chapter II, 'Surfing Postmodernity: A Review of Critical Research on (Post)Modern Surfer Subjectivity' offers a review of critical research concerning surfer subjectivity in the capitalist "state of modern surfing" (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b). Complicating the

historical-materialist framing common to discussions on surfing subjectivities, recent research engages with the phenomenon of industry-sponsored, non-competitive ‘free surfers’ in relation to (post)capitalism, highlighting potentially beyond-modern aspects of surfing subjectivities previously unexplored. Contextualizing these discussions of free surfers within broader debates regarding surfers’ subjection to late-capitalist (post)modernity, the literature review provided here synthesizes critical research on surfer subjectivity as a resource for furthering ‘truly radical creativity’ in surfing scholarship (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b). This review highlights research on postcapitalist surfer subjectivities enacting a potentially (r)evolutionary, beyond post-modern politics in contemporary surfing culture. Critical surf studies might draw from this review to identify the ways surfers are multiply subjected to late-capitalist modernity while also nurturing subjectivities resisting and reconstituting power within the state of modern surfing. This chapter is currently under review with *Annals of Leisure*.

Chapter III, ‘Critical Localisms in Occupied Surfscapes: Commons Governance, Entitlement and Resistance in Global Surf Tourism’, draws from critical surfscape ethnographies to examine surfscape ‘commoning’ and ‘translocalism’ as subversive modes of commons governance in occupied surfscapes. Localism in surfing regularly refers to acts of aggression and assertions of entitlement to waves by surfers considered ‘local’ to a particular surfing location. Critically, we understand surf localism as a ubiquitous phenomenon in which experiences of place and belonging are negotiated through surfers’ differentiated positioning relative to surfing’s cultural imaginaries and geographical territories we describe as “surfscapes”. Existing literature explores surf localism as a response to common pool resource dilemmas provoked by the overcrowding of wave resources. However, this perspective does not adequately account for the power dynamics produced through Global North/Global South relationships in the surfscape commons, obscuring certain localisms from being recognized as reproducing or subverting what scholars identify as the colonial-patriarchal and neoliberal foundations of global surf tourism. Instead, this analysis is situated within a multiple-perspective framework on the surfscape commons to recognize diverse surf localisms as enacting entitlement or resistance in occupied surfscapes, qualified as those built on historical legacies of structural violence and genocidal erasure reproducing settler colonialism. Critical surfscape ethnographies in California, Costa Rica, and Oaxaca, Mexico examine surfscape ‘commoning’ and translocalism to suggest that certain critical surf localisms may represent diverse modes of commons governance through an emancipatory politics in otherwise occupied surfscapes. This chapter is in review with *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*.

Chapter IV, ‘Alternatives to Development in Surfing Tourism: A Diverse Economies Approach’ offers a postdevelopment critique of the surf tourism-for-sustainable development model and discusses findings from empirical field research into alternatives to development in surf tourism. In response to what critical scholars have identified as the neocolonial socio-ecological impacts associated with conventional surfing tourism, the field of sustainable surf tourism (SST) promotes the sustainable development of Global South surfing destinations. However, while advancing community-based research and governance approaches, SST scholarship has yet to engage conceptually with a decolonial critique of the sustainable development paradigm, or employ decolonizing methods in empirical studies.

Grounded in a poststructuralist-Marxian critique of conventional economic development, this study draws on a postdevelopment conceptual frame useful for reconsidering SST-for-sustainable-development models. Fieldwork in the growing surf tourism community of Playa Hermosa de Cobano, Costa Rica employed poststructuralist participatory action research (PAR) aligned with decolonizing methodologies to explore alternatives to development in surfing tourism. Research outcomes and discussion examine the postcapitalist framework of diverse economies (Gibson-Graham, 2005) as a decolonial approach to SST research. Empirical and conceptual conclusions from this study contribute a field example from SST research to extend diverse economic frames and methods in sustainable and regenerative tourism more broadly. This chapter was published in June 2022 with *Tourism Planning & Development*.

Finally, Chapter V, 'Gender, Race and Researcher Positionality in Decolonial Surf Tourism Research: Lessons from the Field', examines gendered and racialized dynamics in ethnographic and participatory surf tourism research by drawing on reflexive lessons from the field. Current scholarship in the field of critical surf studies interrogates issues of gender, race and coloniality in global surfing tourism and culture. This literature focuses primarily on cultural discourse and tourism practice, yet has recently begun to examine researcher positionality in ethnographic and reflexive surf tourism research. As a novel empirical contribution to existing decolonial trends in surf tourism and intersectional surfeminist research, this article explores dynamics of gender, race and researcher positionality in conducting community-based participatory action research (PAR) in surfing tourism, through a year-long ethnographic project in Playa Hermosa de Cobano, Costa Rica. This contribution draws on discussions in feminist geography interrogating gendered and racialized dynamics in ethnographic and participatory research. Reflexive lessons from the field highlight the complexities associated with employing decolonial and poststructuralist feminist methods in critical surf tourism studies, particularly for white/white-assumed female-presenting researchers from the Global North working in Global South field contexts. These complexities include considerations of multiple researcher subjectivities related to postcolonial intersectional power dynamics in research team composition and throughout the PAR process. This chapter is accepted and in production with *Journal of Sport & Tourism*.

Table 1: Publication status of thesis articles

Article	1 (Ch.2)	2 (Ch.3)	3 (Ch.4)	4 (Ch.4)
Authorship	Sole Author	First Author	Sole Author	Sole Author
Status	In Review	In Review	Published	Accepted / In Publication
Journal	<i>Annals of Leisure</i>	<i>Sport & Social Issues</i>	<i>Tourism Planning & Development</i>	<i>Sport & Tourism</i>

Together, this collection of research provides a set of postcapitalist approaches to engaging in novel ways with decoloniality in critical surf studies and surf tourism scholarship through discussions on alternatives to development, surfer subjectivity and surfscape commons governance. Chapter I presents a critical overview of surf tourism, conservation and development under neoliberal governance in Costa Rica, drawing from field research among the local surfing community of Witch's Rock in Santa Rosa National Park. Chapter II functions as a literature review chapter situating the non-essentialist postcapitalist lens on surfer subjectivities within the broader milieu of coloniality-patriarchy in the state of modern surfing. Together, these two chapters provide the theoretical framing for the decolonizing critique of surf tourism governance and engage with diverse economic concepts to posit examples of beyond-modern surfing subjectivities and alternative development possibilities in surfing tourism and culture. Chapter III takes this framing a step further through its engagement with the concept of occupied surfscapes, exploring postcapitalist approaches to the surfscape commons and *translocal* surfing subjectivities as critical sites of resistance to the state of modern surfing and its attendant surf tourism industrial complex. Chapters IV and V move this discussion on postcapitalist possibilities in surf tourism governance toward empirical examples of decolonial surf tourism research and praxis, sharing lessons gleaned from employing community economies methods in the field and reflexively analyzing experiences of "multiplex" surfer-researcher positionality in fieldwork, respectively (Sato, 2004).

In this way, the confluence of these chapters offers conceptual and empirical contributions toward decolonizing surf studies through engagement with diverse economic frames relevant to postdevelopment approaches to surf tourism governance and associated critiques, methods and modes of surfscape commoning, and contemplations of postcapitalist subjectivity beyond surfing neoliberal, colonial-patriarchal (post)modernity. As a means of forwarding decolonial alternatives to the surf tourism-for-sustainable development model common to the field of SST, this collection of doctoral work centers critical (trans)localist approaches toward "truly radical creativity" (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b) in surf studies discourse and cultural practice. The concluding chapter of this research presentation connects theoretical foundations and empirical findings to explore the potential applications of decolonial surf tourism research, discuss research limitations of the studies collected here, and suggest relevant avenues for future critical surf scholarship. It is my hope that my doctoral research, as an outcome of my life "going surfing" (Olive, 2020), can help forward meaningful debates in decolonizing approaches to surfing studies and support existing surf-scholar-activist networks advancing intersectional movements toward self-determined emancipatory futures in local-to-global surfing spaces, places, and cultures.

Chapter I

Surf Tourism, Conservation and Development in Costa Rica

Introduction

The rapidly growing phenomenon of surfing-related tourism to Global South coastal communities, and the pace of associated modern amenity development burgeoning in its wake, are subjects of increasing concern in surf tourism research. Existing scholarship on the socioecological impacts of surf tourism pinpoints issues like fresh water access and quality, inadequate waste management, ocean pollution, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, overcrowding, gentrification, neocolonial modes of social interaction, prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse, and homogenization of surf towns around the world as key dynamics of concern (Barilotti, 2002; Buckley, 2002a, 2002b; 2006; Ponting et al. 2005; La Tourrette, 2006; Walker, 2006; Hugues-Dit-Ciles, 2009; Ponting, 2009; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Mach, 2014; Ruttenberg, 2014a, 2014b, 2016; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). Grossing an estimated \$31.5 to \$64.9 billion USD in annual expenditure (Mach & Ponting, 2021), and driving tourism-related development in nearly every country with a coastline, surf tourism sits at the intersection of important debates related to the potential to reconcile socioeconomic development and environmental governance in a sustainable manner. In Costa Rica in particular, surf tourism represents close to a quarter of the country's nearly \$2 billion annual tourism industry, where associated waves of development threaten socio-ecological wellbeing while simultaneously accompanying the country's otherwise progressive conservation agenda (Krause, 2012; Blanco, 2013).

This policy paradox, of promoting environmental conservation while also pursuing a high-volume approach to (surf) tourism as a driver for economic growth, underlies the contradictory nature of Costa Rica's neoliberal governance model analyzed herein. Seeking the twin objectives of environmental conservation and socioeconomic development, this model welcomes tourism investment and related development to increase GDP as a legacy of tourism promotion strategies championed by the international development agenda since the 1960s and throughout the second half of the twentieth century (Mowforth and Munt, 2003; Honey, 2008). Promoted by financial institutions and development agencies like the IMF, World Bank and USAID, tourism was forwarded as a revenue generating strategy for indebted countries throughout the debt crises of the 1980s, and in concert with conditional loans tied to structural adjustment programs in the 1990s (Honey, 2008). As the conservation ethic in tourism gained popularity in the 1990s, in conjunction with the push toward more 'sustainable' modes of both tourism and development, eco- and nature-based tourism are commonly promoted by international development and environmental agencies like UNEP, UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (Mowforth & Munt, 2003; Honey, 2008). These institutions, rooted in the ideology of neoliberalism through their

promotion of growth-oriented, market-based approaches to socioeconomic development and environmental governance, have come to define the foundations for nature-based tourism as a strategy for promoting both conservation and development in the Global South. This approach is similarly promoted by the academic-practitioner field of “sustainable surf tourism”, which seeks to leverage surf tourism revenue for the sustainable development of Global South surf tourism communities (Buckley 2002a; 2002b; Ponting & O’Brien, 2013; Ponting & O’Brien, 2014; Borne 2015; Borne & Ponting 2015; Towner, 2015; Martin & Ritchie, 2018; O’Brien & Ponting, 2018; Towner & Davies, 2019).

The approach to sustainable surf tourism offered in this analysis is different, however, and aligns itself instead with decolonial, post-development, and postcapitalist perspectives. These critical perspectives fundamentally challenge the neoliberal growth-based paradigm and center local/endogenous/subaltern alternatives to development, instead of promoting modernizing, market-oriented approaches to governance and socioecological wellbeing (Escobar, 1995, 1996; Ahorro, 2008; Sachs, 2009; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Klein and Morreo, 2019). While postdevelopment perspectives center endogenous expressions of knowledge, life and livelihood as intrinsically valid and distinct from the modernizing approach of the international sustainable development agenda (Escobar, 1995; Esteva, 2009; Klein & Morreo, 2019), the postcapitalist lens offers a means of reframing socioeconomic realities in surf tourism beyond capitalist notions of “the economy” toward strengthening diverse economic, community-based alternatives to development (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020). Together, these perspectives are useful for critiquing growth-oriented models of tourism-for-conservation-and-development, and also recognizing alternatives to development as counterhegemonic, decolonial praxis in surf tourism governance.

Contributing to a more nuanced debate in the field of sustainable surf tourism, and seeking alternatives to the surf tourism-for-sustainable-development paradigm, this chapter critically analyzes the surf tourism experience in Costa Rica as a case study for broader trends in neoliberal surf tourism governance. As a basis for interrogating the conservation-development contradictions inherent in Costa Rica’s tourism model, this analysis centers the case study of Witch’s Rock (Roca Bruja), a surfing destination made famous by the iconic surf film *The Endless Summer II* (Brown, 1993) (discussed further below), located within the conservation area of Santa Rosa National Park in the Guanacaste province of northwest Costa Rica. Drawing on ethnographic field research in conservation areas and surf towns adjacent to the Witch’s Rock surf spot, along with a review of secondary sources related to surf tourism in Costa Rica, this analysis asserts the irreconcilability of simultaneously pursuing surf tourism-for-economic growth and maintaining the integrity of conservation objectives under neoliberal governance. Based on this analysis, I question the narrative of inevitability commonly attributed to Costa Rica’s current tourism development trajectory as well as the aura of innocence conjured by conventional sustainable surf tourism discourse more broadly in its ostensibly neutral, apolitical pursuit of market-based solutions for both conservation and development via surf tourism promotion.

The contradictions of Costa Rica's neoliberal governance model identified in this analysis are threefold: 1) the unsustainable nature of pursuing a high-volume approach to tourism undermining the integrity of the country's celebrated conservation agenda; 2) modern surf tourism development as a tragic consequence of surfers closing in on their own culturally constructed *Endless Summer* dreams of traveling to surf uncrowded waves in tropical destinations through processes of 'escaping' to the very same modernity they seek freedom from in the first place; and 3) the ways tourism- and development-driven modernization and cultural commodification are contributing to the loss of Costa Rica's *pura vida* lifestyle – which has traditionally linked social and environmental wellbeing as essential to collective quality of life. The ultimate objective of this intervention is to move the sustainability conversation beyond neoliberal non-solutions – including income-oriented strategies promoting tourism-for-development still mired in a fundamentally unsustainable growth paradigm – while offering a horizon for visibilizing viable community-based alternatives founded on local ways of being, knowing and doing as decolonial, postdevelopment and postcapitalist praxis in surf tourism studies.

The following section provides a review of existing literature on surf tourism in Costa Rica to situate the case study within a broader critique of conventional approaches to sustainable surf tourism. Then, after a brief methods section, I offer a discussion of the Witch's Rock case study, followed by the chapter's core analysis of the relationship among surf tourism, conservation, and development under neoliberal governance. The concluding discussion offers an alternative framework that draws on decolonial, postdevelopment and postcapitalist approaches to support critical research in Global South surfing destinations.

Surf Tourism in Costa Rica

Unprecedented growth in the global surf tourism market since the mid-1980s has transformed the landscapes of tens of thousands of coastal communities in nearly every country with a coastline. Surf tourism growth is driven by demand from a wealthy, highly mobile global surfing population estimated at twenty to thirty-five million and growing as fast as fifteen percent per year (Buckley, 2002a; Lazarow, 2007; Barbieri & Sotomayor, 2013; O'Brien & Eddie, 2013; Mach, 2014). Drawing on developments in the economics of ecosystem services to determine the financial value of surf tourism to society, 'surfonomics' researchers have quantified the monetary value of individual surfing waves in Hawaii, Australia, UK, Indonesia, and the US, at between \$13 and \$40 million USD annually, as a means of lobbying for wave resource conservation (Lazarow, 2007, 2009; Wagner et al., 2011; Thomas, 2012; Margules et al., 2014). Mach and Ponting (2021) calculated global pre-COVID surf tourism expenditures at an estimated \$31.5 to \$64.9 billion USD annually, calling for surf tourism to receive greater attention in discussions on the "blue economy" as part of the United Nations Development Program's sustainable development agenda.

The income value of tourism and amenity investment related to surfing waves – estimated at between \$70 and \$130 billion globally per year (SINAC, 2016) – has led governments like

Costa Rica to market their countries as surfing destinations, actively encouraging higher volumes of surf tourism within their wider (eco)tourism promotion strategies. Past studies demonstrate that 20-25% of the country's two million annual visitors are surf tourists, generating upwards of \$800 million USD in surf tourism-related revenue per year (Krause, 2012; Blanco, 2013; SINAC, 2016). There are currently an estimated 150 surf schools operating in Costa Rica (SINAC, 2016), where predominantly foreign clients range from first-timers to intermediate surfers looking to improve their skills.

Surf Tourism for Sustainable Development

The majority of sustainable surf tourism literature makes the case for leveraging surf tourism as a driver for sustainable development in Global South surfing destinations (Buckley 2002a, 2002b; Ponting & O'Brien, 2013; Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Borne, 2015, Borne & Ponting, 2015; Towner, 2015; Martin & Ritchie, 2018; O'Brien & Ponting, 2018; Towner & Davies, 2019). This objective is proposed in much the same way that sustainable tourism discourse offers eco-tourism as a solution to the socio-ecological impacts of mass tourism on popular destinations around the world, including overdevelopment, environmental pollution, waste management, resource contamination, and cultural marginalization (Honey, 2005, 2008; Global Sustainable Tourism Council, 2012). Eco-tourism promotion has followed in the wake of the broader promotion of Global South tourism championed by institutions like the IMF, World Bank and USAID as part of the international development agenda since the 1960s (Honey, 2008). Tourism as an income-generating strategy for indebted countries throughout the debt crises of the 1980s ran in concert with conditional loans tied to structural adjustment programs in the 1990s (Honey, 2008). As the conservation ethic in tourism gained popularity in the 1990s, international development and environmental agencies like UNEP, UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) began promoting eco- and nature-based tourism in conjunction with the push toward more 'sustainable' modes of both tourism and development (Mowforth & Munt, 2003; Honey, 2008). As an outgrowth of structural adjustment, and through their promotion of growth-oriented approaches to socioeconomic development and environmental governance, these institutions came to define the neoliberal foundations for nature-based tourism as a strategy for promoting both conservation and development in the Global South.

In countries like Costa Rica, eco-tourism is promoted in concert with a heavy volume approach to mass tourism, appealing to the investment and revenue demands of a growth-oriented economy, however at significant cost to social and environmental wellbeing. Literature on the impacts of surf tourism on Global South surfing destinations, specifically, pinpoints issues like fresh water access and quality, inadequate waste management, ocean pollution, environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, tourist overcrowding, exclusionary access to beaches and surf breaks, social marginalization of local residents, gentrification, land grabbing, neocolonial modes of social interaction, prostitution, alcohol and drug abuse, loss of local culture and homogenization of surf towns around the world

(Barilotti, 2002; Buckley, 2002a, 2002b, 2006; Ponting et al., 2005; La Tourrette 2006; Walker 2006; Hugues-Dit-Ciles, 2009; Ponting, 2009; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Mach, 2014; Ruttenberg 2014a; 2014b, 2016; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). These challenges parallel the conservation dilemmas produced by other forms of both eco-tourism and mass tourism, representative of the wider problematics associated with neoliberal tourism-for-development strategies (Honey, 2008; Fletcher, 2012).

The centrality of surf travel to the surfing lifestyle (Ormrod, 2005; Ford & Brown, 2006; Ponting, 2009; Comer, 2010; Kavanagh, 2011; Canniford & Karababa 2012; Ponting & McDonald, 2013; Ponting & O'Brien, 2013; Tom, 2013; Mach, 2014), combined with its internationally appealing post-modern 'cool' factor (Ruttenberg, 2016), motivates surfers to seek new frontiers in tourism, paving the way for eventual crowding and contamination in the process. This process entails surf tourists predominantly from the Global North 'discovering' new surfable waves in remote areas, setting up tourism businesses and rapidly ushering in a seemingly linear growth trajectory of tourism development, infrastructure and amenities, as budding surf towns find mass appeal among both surfers and non-surfing tourists alike. As wave-exploring 'pioneers' at the vanguard of surf discovery, location exploration, settlement, development and eventual exploitation, surfers and the surf tourism phenomenon mirror traditional forms of colonialism (Barilotti, 2002; George, 2003; Tom, 2013; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017) and more contemporary styles of neocolonialism (Ponting et al., 2005; Hill & Abbot, 2009; Ruttenberg, 2015; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017).

As Ruttenberg and Brosius (2017) explain, however, this tragic surf tourism-development-contamination trajectory is not inevitable but rather the result of the pervasive neoliberal governance and governmentality common to surf tourism destinations around the world. This discussion brings deeper awareness to the conservation-development conundrum at the center of both *neoliberal governance*, as the "organization and regulation of human behavior in the interest of exercising power and accumulating capital" (Sullivan, 2012, in Fletcher, 2013), and *neoliberal governmentality*, which Foucault (2008) describes as an 'art of governance' approach to influencing human behavior whereby power seeks to produce and regulate the realities within which people live and relate (Fletcher, 2013). Deeply ingrained in the modern paradigm, the hegemony of neoliberalism as foundational to development discourse allows it to be perceived as a default normal to the point that it has become nearly invisible, such that development is generally seen as both desirable and inevitable; and 'sustainable' development is believed to be indeed possible, and therefore rarely challenged in either discourse or praxis (Escobar, 1995).

The sustainable development discourse is fundamentally questioned by post-development, post-capitalist, and decolonizing perspectives (Escobar, 1995, 1996; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Ahorro, 2008; Sachs, 2009; Klein & Morreo, 2019). These perspectives challenge the growth- and income-oriented strategies championed by the global sustainable development agenda and instead highlight alternatives to development, including diverse economic, local/indigenous/subaltern, and community-based approaches to environmental governance and socio-ecological wellbeing (Gibson-Graham 2005; Gibson-Graham et al.

2013; COMPAS 2007). By centering human-nature relationships and decentering the role of capital in understanding socio-ecological wellbeing, these approaches offer relevant lenses for contemplating alternatives to development different from the market-based growth- and income-oriented strategies regularly employed under neoliberal governance/governmentality. Drawing on existing critiques of sustainable development, eco-tourism (Fletcher, 2014a, 2014b) and sustainable surf tourism (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017), the post-development, decolonizing, and post-capitalist perspectives challenge these and other tourism-for-conservation-and-development strategies for their fundamentally flawed attempts to simultaneously pursue the irreconcilable aims of development and conservation within neoliberal governance models.

As such, the objective of this critique is to move the sustainability conversation beyond neoliberal non-solutions, including income-oriented strategies promoting tourism-for-sustainable development still mired in an unsustainable growth-based paradigm. As a basis for interrogating the conservation-development contradictions inherent in Costa Rica's neoliberal approach to surf tourism governance, the analysis that follows centers the case study of Witch's Rock (Roca Bruja), a surfing destination made famous by iconic surf film, *The Endless Summer II* (Brown, 1993) (discussed further below), located within the conservation area of Santa Rosa National Park in the Guanacaste province of northwest Costa Rica. This analysis follows the brief methods section offered here below.

Methods

To develop this analysis, ethnographic methods of participation observation and informal interviews were employed in the field site of Playa Naranjo, home to iconic surfing wave Witch's Rock, and located within the conservation area of Santa Rosa National Park. In my role as Program Assistant for the University of Georgia's study abroad program, Surfing and Sustainability: Political Ecology in Costa Rica, I visited, surfed, studied and conversed with local and foreign surfers, park personnel and surf tourism providers for several months annually from 2011 to 2019. Under the auspices of this program, I guided students to visit several surf towns on Costa Rica's Pacific Coast, where they (learned to) surf, studied issues related to conservation, development, tourism and sustainability, and met with local residents, surfers, business owners, non-profit leaders, environmental activists, real estate agents and developers, and national and foreign (surfing) tourists. While this work-based experience was not originally designed as a research project, my dual roles as a surf tourism worker and surf tourist while on the program provided a basis for developing a formal research project focused on the local surfing industry alongside my student-oriented work. Building on the decade-long relationships I forged and maintained with local surfers and tourism operators at Playa Naranjo, the ethnographic field experiences for this study draw from informal conversations and interviews. Interview informants included local Costa Rican surfers and members of the informal Witch's Rock surfing association, foreign ex-pat

surfer-residents in the area, surf tour operators, visiting surf tourists, as well as national park employees. Aligned with the ethnographic methods proposed by Bernard (2004) for critical case studies, interview informants were selected through purposive/judgmental sampling to target specific people with expertise and experience related to surf tourism, conservation and development in the areas surrounding Witch's Rock; as well as snowball sampling, in which targeted informants recommended others to help grow the quantity of sources interviewed. In addition, ethnographic research drew from my embedded participant observation as a surf tourist, service provider and surfer-researcher. The embodied tensions among these positions offer insight into the global phenomenon of surf tourism and provide multiple, overlapping lenses for analyzing the surf tourism-conservation-development nexus in Costa Rica and elsewhere.

While the material comprising this study is the result of multiple field visits over the course of many years, much of the following discussion draws on a particular period of intensive, target research entailing participant observation and informal interviews with surf tourism operators and local surfers in July of 2019. Due to the off-grid, tent camp, and rainy season beach environments of the research site located inside a national park, I was unable to carry a digital recorder for interviews. Instead, I used a notebook to jot down observations during interviews and informal conversations, which I then detailed further in more elaborate field notes afterwards. As a result, ethnographic details from field notes and interviews are paraphrased in the research site description and subsequent analysis, rather than included as direct quotes from informants.

In the following analysis, this field work is complemented by a review of secondary sources related to surf tourism in Costa Rica to contextualize the study within broader discussions of environmental governance in Costa Rica. Specifically, these secondary sources include a 2016 study of surfing in Santa Rosa National Park by the National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC); Tantamjarik's (2004) research on sustainability and surf tourism in Costa Rica; Pera's (2008) study of citizenship and community in nearby Playa Tamarindo; and Fletcher's (2014a) analysis of ecotourism as extractive industry in Costa Rica. Together, these texts complement field research methods and allow for deeper analytical engagement with the study of surf tourism governance at Witch's Rock as a case for critiquing Costa Rica's conservation and development model.

Drawing on these methods to contribute to a more nuanced debate in the field of surf tourism, and seeking alternatives to the surf tourism-for-sustainable-development paradigm, the following sections develop the case study of Witch's Rock, then pull back from this to critically analyze the current state of surf tourism in Costa Rica more generally.

Witch's Rock (Roca Bruja) - Forever the Endless Summer?

Much of Costa Rica's surfing story begins with the *Endless Summer II* (Brown 1993), the popular sequel to perhaps the most iconic surf film in history, and the original inspiration for waves like Roca Bruja (Witch's Rock) to be included on the majority of surfers' bucket lists. In the film, two white male surfers from California travel to Guanacaste, Costa Rica's Northwestern province, home to world-class waves located north and south of the town of Tamarindo, and frequently favorable offshore winds ideal for surfing. On the perfect adventure, which begins with a plane crashing on the beach, they climb through the jungle and paddle across a crocodile-infested river to surf the incredible barreling waves of Witch's Rock - for hours, all by themselves. Experiences like that - a bit of adventure, perfect waves all day, warm water, offshore winds and not another soul in sight - are the stuff surfing dreams are made of; a nirvana constructed by the media and perpetuated through surf industry branding and marketing (Ponting, 2009).

The *Endless Summer* dream, inscribed in modern surfing culture from the film's first iteration in 1966 and reinstated in the decades of subsequent surf travel films that have followed, thus created and perpetuates what critical surf scholars refer to as the surf tourism-industrial-complex, propelling a multi-billion dollar surf travel industry as a defining feature of modern surfing (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman 2017b). Linking "surf culture and exploration to freedom and nonconformity" vis-a-vis modern life, Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017b, p. 98) describe the conflation of "blatant colonialism" of the 1996 film and the ensuing international travel surf travel boom, "as surfers from the Global North set out in search of their own discoveries and creative freedom." With the *Endless Summer II*, Witch's Rock in Costa Rica became a sought-after surfing destination, an iconic surfing dream to be fulfilled, with waves of surf tourism-related development following in its wake. In fact, the local Witch's Rock surfers we met with on the Surfing and Sustainability program in July 2019 contended that the *Endless Summer* surfing dream was perhaps the "most significant factor" propelling the initial development of Tamarindo, now Guanacaste's most popular tourist destination and known access point for boat trips to Witch's Rock. Yet given surfing's global expansion and Global North surfers' high mobility, today the sorts of idyllic surfing experiences depicted by the *Endless Summer* and desired by surfers everywhere are increasingly fewer and farther between, with overcrowding a serious issue for surfers, communities and natural environments in and adjacent to surf spots around the world (SINAC, 2016). This 'discovery'-to-development growth trajectory, occasioned by the processes of settler colonialism and surf neocolonialism described above, is surfing's contemporary paradox (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Barilotti, 2002).

Witch's Rock, however, still lives on as an iconic dream surf trip for many Global North surfers. Set within the conservation area of the Santa Rosa National Park (see Fig. 1), Playa Naranjo is the beach adjacent to the surfable waves at Witch's Rock, which break in a number of spots depending on swell direction off ocean floor sandbars both north and south of a river mouth at the north end of the beach, infamously known for the crocodile sightings warned against by trailhead signs leading into the dry tropical forest. Three kilometers south of the river, surfers could camp at the Playa Naranjo campground, where a ranger station and very

basic amenities were provided for a nominal usage fee. Campground access is an hour's drive, off-road-vehicle-only through the forest, stone-cobbled dirt road and mangroves, from the main biological station inside the park, itself a half-hour's drive from the Interamerican Highway connecting visitors to the nearest major town of Liberia, another forty kilometers away. While the campground and pedestrian-only trails at Playa Naranjo were frequented by local Costa Rican and foreign surfers for decades, Witch's Rock is currently only accessible by boat following indefinite COVID-related closures of the access road and camping area. Surfers can hire boats from adjacent areas, including Playas del Coco, Playa Tamarindo and Peninsula de Papagayo, albeit with prohibitive prices for most local surfers who would otherwise regularly drive to Playa Naranjo and hike the three kilometers from the ranger station to the surf.



Figure 2. Map of Santa Rosa National Park. Source: SINAC. www.sinac.go.cr

Increasingly precise swell-forecasting has contributed to the fluctuating swell-based demand for waves at spots like Witch's Rock, whose challenging access is not a disincentive to those with the funds to make the trip and hire a boat, and free time enough to fit their journey within the "strike mission" of an optimal swell window, which quick trips planned around favorable swells are often referred to in surf culture. Costa Rica's National System of

Conservation Areas (SINAC) 2016 report on surfing within Santa Rosa National Park describes how surfing access operates on a seasonal quota system, though enforcement by park authorities is notoriously negligible. According to the existing decree law regulating the practice of surfing within the park, 30 to 35 surfers can be in the water at any given time, depending on the season, with 20 spots reserved for those who access the waves by land, and 15 for those arriving by boat (SINAC, 2016). Local surfer members of the informal surfing association interviewed in July 2019 commented that they negotiated this quota system with the park and were considering expanding it to accommodate increasing demand. Enforcing the quota would fall under the jurisdiction of park authorities by land and sea, and the local surfers stated that they would also help regulate if crowds became excessive or disrespectful. At the time of writing, there were 15 boat tour operators registered with the park and legally permitted by the Conservation Area of Guanacaste (ACG). Given the lax enforcement of the quota system, the crowds are known to get heavy during the peak wave season. In theory, Costa Rican surfers pay a park usage fee of \$2 per day, and foreigners pay \$15 per day. The strategy of encouraging more surf tourists to the park is proposed explicitly as a means of increasing revenue specifically for SINAC. As the number of boats increases to cater to heightened demand, surf localism and aggression are predicted to increase along with the crowds. However, indefinite road access restrictions in the park have effectively foreclosed an important point of access for local surfers for the indeterminable future, while (predominantly non-local) surfers chasing their *Endless Summer* dreams benefit from virtually unrestricted boat access and less threat of confrontation with locals, for the time being.

Santa Rosa National Park was created in 1971 and encompasses 81,000 hectares of land, 43,000 of which are marine protected area. The park is home to 10 distinct habitats and 16 known archeological sites, and is set within the larger Guanacaste Conservation Area, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1999, with two-thirds of Costa Rica's species biodiversity within its 160,000-hectare landscape, managed under the auspices of SINAC. SINAC identifies surfing as an ecosystem service connected to the economic activity of the park, and cites a 2011 study by Reyes and Sanchez analyzing the perceived benefits of the park among neighbor communities, who identified tourism, including surf tourism, as a "means of generating income and as an alternative for developing associated businesses in the surrounding communities" (SINAC, 2016, p. 26). The operating framework for regulating surfing within Santa Rosa National Park is based on an executive decree established in 2005 called Requirements and Regulations for the Exercise of Surfing Activities in Santa Rosa National Park, which obliges the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAEC) to regulate the activities of surf tourists and the seasonal carrying capacity at permitted surf breaks. Prior to the establishment of this decree and absent the regular enforcement of carrying capacity quota regulations, local surfers are known to "regulate" behavior in the surf through common practices of "localism", including exerting priority on the waves vis-à-vis foreign tourists and aggressive or threatening language/actions if visiting surfers are disrespectful in the water.

Endless Bummer?: Socioecological Impacts of Surf Tourism

In a July 2019 interview with a local Witch's Rock surfer at Playa Naranjo beneath the shade of the makeshift "rancho" pieced together with driftwood, dried palm fronds, and a worn strip of shade cloth, we discussed the surfer quota system and boat regulation mandates. As we waited for the tide to fill in, he confirmed that these systems were poorly regulated, but that the informal local surfers' association was negotiating with SINAC and park officials to increase the quota numbers and give a greater share of spots to surfers who access the waves by land as a means of guaranteeing local priority over visiting surf tourists. Before we paddled out, a few more local surfers had joined the conversation at the rancho, and I shared that I was surprised to see boats full of beginner surfers from Tamarindo on all three days of our trip there, since it was usually experienced surfers who were willing to pay for the boat trip to satisfy their bucket list surfing dreams, as opposed to beginners who could learn to surf anywhere and who, I conjectured, were probably mostly unaware of the iconic status of Witch's Rock. They responded that since Tamarindo was getting so crowded with beginner surf tourists, the camps had started offering boat trips to Witch's Rock on smaller days as a less crowded alternative for beginners. As we paddled out, I was grateful that the boats had chosen another peak closer to the rock for their clients to surf, and we had the spot to ourselves for an hour or so.

The management of surf tourism within Santa Rosa National Park offers an interesting case for understanding the contradictory aims of pursuing the conservation objectives of the park while also seeking to increase surf tourism as an ecosystem service with economic benefits to both SINAC and surrounding communities. Nowhere in SINAC's study is there mention of the potentially deleterious effects of increased surf tourism on the conservation efforts of the park; to the contrary, the report emphasizes the need to improve tourism amenities and infrastructure to encourage more paying visitors and surfers, specifically. However, visiting surfers with endless Witch's Rock dreams are still tourists at the end of the day, and the majority stay in hotels, homes and condos in the Tamarindo area and its vicinity. In turn, Tamarindo has developed into a generic-feeling beach town catering primarily to tourists seeking an easy beach vacation. It is loved by the majority North American tourists who visit for the resorts, spas, nightlife, shopping and amenities; and disparaged by many residents of other Costa Rican surf towns who fear that their communities might soon become another 'Tamagringo' (Pera, 2008), a sentiment of disdain toward the loss of local culture and Americanized development commonly expressed by residents interviewed on our program. Often, visiting surfers will stay there because it's the most central, amenity-rich and least expensive option to travel to the many surrounding surf breaks both north and south, including Witch's Rock. Beginning surfers can hire lessons, stay in surf camps and rent boards from one of many beachfront surf shops lining the main strip in town.

In an interview with Robert August – Tamarindo foreign resident from California, surfboard shaper, and iconic surfer from the original *Endless Summer* film, who also appeared in the

Costa Rican segment of *Endless Summer II* – he attributed much of the development of Tamarindo as a surf tourism destination to his appearance in the film, which put both Witch's Rock and Tamarindo on the map for visiting surfers. August, now in his 80s, offered a weekly 'history of surfing' lesson in a small theater next door to his surfboard shaping room, where on the occasion we attended, he both celebrated his role in Tamarindo's surf tourism development and lamented the increasing crowds both there and at Witch's Rock.

Crowds, however, were not the only issue mentioned by local surfers and area residents as challenges resulting from surf tourism-related development. In conversations with surfers, residents and service providers, the issue of water scarcity resulting from increased tourism development emerges as a common theme. Access to water in Guanacaste, Costa Rica's driest province, has become a significant challenge, particularly in the late summer months when aquifers run low, and eventually, empty. Resorts and large-scale development projects are known to siphon water from public aqueducts to keep golf courses green and pools full for tourists, leaving local towns vulnerable to drought and toxic water conditions. And private water trucks, colloquially referred to as the 'water mafia', make a living delivering siphoned river water to hotels in need at the height of the tourist season, while reports of deadly levels of arsenic in local drinking water make the national news (Fendt, 2014). This, in a country where every citizen is technically born with the constitutional right to water.

While the National Park surrounding Witch's Rock is one of the most protected conservation areas in the country, surfers pursuing their *Endless Summer* invariably contribute to the growth of tourism and development in places like Tamarindo, whose expansion is blamed for decreases in nesting sea turtle populations, unsanitary ocean water conditions, and heavy pressure on resources like fresh water. While fences keep people and construction out of conservation areas with epic surf, adjacent towns grow exponentially in waves of development with no limits in sight. Still, with waves like Witch's Rock, the *Endless Summer* dream lives on for traveling surfers predominantly from the Global North. As surf scholars have discussed, however, this dream has regularly obscured the existence and perspectives of local surfers, their cultures and environments, displacing local realities with the colonizing narrative of a constructed surf travel nirvana (Ponting, 2009; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017c; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Wheaton, 2017). With overcrowding in the surf, tourism overdevelopment on land, and increasing environmental impact, foreign surfers' pursuit of their Costa Rican surfing dreams has become an "endless bummer" for host communities facing the socioecological realities of these tourism-inflicted challenges (Ponting, 2007).

The Contradictions of Neoliberal Surf Tourism Governance

As demonstrated by the case of Witch's Rock, surf tourism-related development in Costa Rica is a significant phenomenon worthy of deeper critical analysis. While seemingly congruent with Butler's (1990) projections for growth in tourism destinations, the neocolonial waves of development ushered-in by surf tourism and their associated social and environmental challenges are neither 'natural' nor inevitable. Rather, they are the contradictory result of

incompatible conservation and growth-for-development objectives sought as twin aims of Costa Rica's neoliberal policy framework, within which the high-volume approach to tourism is itself an outgrowth of the structural adjustment conditions imposed by international institutions to drive economic growth, as discussed in greater depth above. Similarly, the associated welcoming of foreign investment in land and tourism development has fueled an increasing population of ex-pat settlers in the country's top surf tourism destinations, whose impacts mirror the processes of gentrification and settler colonization discussed in the critical surf scholarship referenced above.

These contradictions, explored further in the critical analysis offered here, are threefold:

- 1) While Costa Rica's conservation efforts are applauded worldwide, and also serve as a motivating factor for attracting both surf and nature-based tourism, the country's reliance on tourism revenue to propel its neoliberal growth-based economy, including the 'more-is-better' approach to tourism promotion, threatens the long-term sustainability of nature-based tourism as well as Costa Rica's celebrated conservation agenda given the many environmental ills of tourism development, resource pressure, pollution and overcrowding;
- 2) While surfers share the *Endless Summer* dream of surfing uncrowded waves in tropical destinations, Costa Rica's experience with surf tourism and its associated development is a classic example of how surf tourism governed under a neoliberal framework is responsible for closing surfing's *Endless Summer* frontier, contributing to the demise of surfers' collective (constructed) dream, whereby surfers are now 'escaping' to the very same modernity they seek freedom from in the first place;
- 3) While the heart of Costa Rican culture is the spirit of the tranquil-paced *pura vida* lifestyle, which links social and environmental wellbeing as essential to quality of life, the modernization of Costa Rica via tourism and development threatens the soul of the *pura vida* lifestyle and the long-held sense of collective wellbeing it represents (Trester, 2003). Meanwhile, tourism is rarely questioned and instead regularly perceived in a positive light, representing both cause and consequence of the neoliberal tourism-for-economic growth-for-development paradigm, selling (out) Costa Rica's *pura vida* one visiting tourist at a time.

First, while the heavy volume approach to surf tourism may seem counterproductive to most surfers, who travel principally to avoid crowds, the 'more-is-better' mentality is central to a neoliberal tourism economy, where growth and development are requisite components. Surf tourism scholars argue that surfers will stop visiting places once they become overcrowded, or saturated, projecting that surf tourism economies will eventually suffer the consequences (Mach, 2014; Tantamjarik, 2004). Based on the experience of Costa Rica, my analysis suggests that this is only half-true, with important consequences for surfers, tourism economies and conservation efforts. Given surfing's growth in popularity, the boom in global surf tourism and its associated waves of development under neoliberal governance result in exponentially more people traveling to surf, crowding previously uncrowded spots and beginning to close surfing's *Endless Summer* frontier. While experienced surfers may consequently begin to avoid these overcrowded spots, the reality is that there are increasingly fewer uncrowded waves to surf given the sheer number of travelling surfers,

increasingly precise swell forecasting, and media exploitation of newly discovered or relatively uncrowded waves. This means that experienced surfers can choose to stop surfing, continue braving the crowds at increasingly developed and newly crowded spots, travel to select spots with regulated surf tourism management, or seek uncrowded waves elsewhere, at the vanguard of surf tourism's narrowing frontier.

Despite what experienced surfers choose, however, the popularity of surfing is driving a powerful wave of mass surf tourism that is more compatible with the heavy volume approach to tourism, satisfying neoliberal growth economies - albeit to the detriment of conservation efforts - in the process. In other words, while surf scholars' projection may be true that some surfers will travel elsewhere once a spot becomes overcrowded or saturated, the popularity of surf tourism means that beginner surfers and mass tourists who want to take a surf lesson will frequent places like Tamarindo and elsewhere in Costa Rica, where amenities are plentiful, until the place itself reaches the saturation point as a mass tourist destination (Butler, 1990). Before that point is reached, however, surf tourism for beginners and mass tourists who want to try surfing while on vacation, as well as those surfers willing to brave the crowds, will still be of economic benefit to tourist destinations and the government's growth-based revenue priorities. Thus, while surf imagery being used in marketing may seem contradictory where experienced surfers seeking uncrowded waves are concerned, its appeal to a mass market feeds off the growing popularity of surfing to mainstream tourist culture, and can therefore be used as an advertising tool to satisfy a high-volume approach to surfing for years to come. Conservation efforts, of course, will suffer the consequences. That is, assuming that conservation efforts are indeed sought with the demands of the biosphere in mind, rather than merely used as another marketable attraction for tourists and their dollars.

The postcapitalist lens is useful here in recognizing how the growth requirements of capitalist tourism economies foreclose important apertures for recognizing the "proliferative potential" of economic diversity (Gibson-Graham, 2000, p. 13) in surf communities, which serve as a foundation for socioecological wellbeing beyond the overdependence on tourism-related income and development strategies characteristic of the neoliberal approaches critiqued here. Instead of requiring an ever-greater number of tourists to fuel capitalist surf tourism economies, postdevelopment alternatives center non-capitalist and alternative capitalist modes of economic interaction and leverage community assets to satisfy local wellbeing needs, lessening dependence on income generated from tourism in the process (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Ruttenberg, 2022). As such, this decolonizing approach to surf tourism governance nurtures endogenous alternatives to the modernizing narrative of the surf tourism-for-sustainable development paradigm, while countering the colonizing logics of Western-modern neoliberal governance models.

Secondly, perhaps of greater concern for *Endless Summer*-dreaming surfers specifically, is the reality that the surf-tourism-development-overcrowding phenomenon in surfing destinations around the world, coupled with the ever-increasing global population of experienced surfers with both the will and means to travel, means that surfers find their frontier for discovery and uncrowded surfing experiences closing in on them quickly, perhaps signaling that the end of the *Endless Summer* dream is soon upon us. Interestingly,

it also signals another phenomenon tied into the modernization via tourism development matrix. While many Global North surfers travel to escape the crowds, often in pursuit of freedom from, and nonconformity to modern life, the forms of development that accompany surf tourism in a neoliberal framework demonstrate how these surfers themselves contribute to the displacement of the modern lifestyle into the sociocultural landscape of the emerging surf towns where they travel. This phenomenon of escaping *from* modernity *to* modernity, inherent in the neocolonial relations of surf tourism development, parallels the dynamic highlighted by Fletcher (2014a) with respect to eco-tourism more generally, in which discontented moderns seek eco-tourism experiences as respite from modern life, yet end up reproducing the very same conditions and lifestyle values of modernity in the process.

Again, this contradiction is neither natural, nor inevitable, but rather born of the hegemony of neoliberal governmentality as it operates in the development trajectory of towns transformed by surf tourism within a neoliberal governance framework. Moreover, the colonizing imaginary of the constructed nirvana surf travel narrative propelling global surf tourism, whether consciously rooted in surfers' desire to escape modernity or not, still produces an equally damaging freedom-seeking *Endless Summer* dream-turned-reality by subjecting surfing destinations to the neocolonial implications of Global North surfers' constructed fantasies, heavily commodified by the growth-oriented tourism agenda and resulting in the modernization of previously undeveloped coastal towns adjacent to quality surfing waves. (Ponting, 2009; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017c; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). We might call this the (post)modern surfer's paradox embedded within the surf tourism-industrial complex: in the pursuit of freedom and nonconformity through their *Endless Summer* dreams, Global North surfers contribute to the growth, development and crowding of their favorite surf escapes-turned-modern-tourist-towns in just a few short years, effectively narrowing their own surfing frontier, occasioning a range of socio-ecological impacts in host communities, and defeating their own dreams in the process of bringing them to fruition.

However, and significant to this analysis, while surfers' frustration grows as their frontier continues to shrink, capitalist tourism economies thrive, satisfying the growth demands of neoliberal policy approaches. While tourism booms in Costa Rica, surfers are not the only ones suffering the ills of overcrowding. In fact, the rampant and minimally regulated tourism-related development of coastal areas has grown to such an extent that it calls into serious question the viability of the country's well-respected conservation agenda. Reflecting Fletcher's (2014a) critical analysis of the ways that conservation in Costa Rica encourages adjacent development in close proximity to conservation areas, this dynamic is most apparent in the country's top surfing destinations – not a coincidence since surfing waves often exist within pristine, unpopulated areas, including national parks and protected landscapes. While more than twenty-five percent of Costa Rican territory is protected as national parks and wildlife reserves, surf tourism destinations and their surrounding coastal landscapes are undergoing a process of exponential growth and development – arguably as a result of government conservation efforts – with no limits in sight. Despite the serious social and environmental challenges described above, tourism and investment numbers are on the rise and encouraged ad infinitum. As another legacy of growth-oriented structural

adjustment policies, land sales are heavily promoted by the government, including the ethically questionable practice of increasingly high taxation of large coastal landholdings owned by Costa Rican nationals who now have a significant financial disincentive to not sell their undeveloped land adjacent to popular surf tourism destinations (Tenorio, pers. comm. 2019). In this milieu, the postdevelopment perspective sheds light on the ways in which the “environment” has become a neoliberal construct of the sustainable development paradigm, whose purpose is to separate humans from nature and re-signify the latter as something to be conserved and/or commodified through practices of environmental governance and/or as a means of satisfying growth-based development strategies (Escobar, 1996). Through this lens, we might understand the contradictory nature of land conservation/commodification as a self-defeating feature of neoliberal tourism governance, similarly representative of what Fletcher (2014a) describes as Costa Rica’s “eco-tourism-extraction nexus” in which tourism to conservation areas is promoted as a revenue-generating strategy for commodifying *in situ* nature-based resources while contributing to adjacent tourism-related development.

Finally, at the heart of Costa Rica’s irreconcilable contradiction of simultaneously pursuing an internationally reputed conservation agenda and promoting a more-is-better approach to tourism and its associated waves of development is the paradoxical relationship between *pura vida* and paradise, the twin foundations of the country’s global reputation, national cultural identity, and conservation and development objectives. Intrinsically linked in sustaining social and ecological wellbeing in one of the ‘happiest’ and ‘greenest’ countries on Earth (see Fletcher et al., 2020), this paradox becomes even more complex at the levels of both socioeconomic policy and sociocultural ideology. That is, where the Costa Rican government pursues a model of economic growth for development and seeks to boost GDP through tourism and land sales as a means of strengthening social wellbeing, or contributing to the *pura vida* lifestyle, they also endeavor to conserve its rainforests, marine protected areas and paradise landscapes to satisfy both conservation and growth objectives, including through the promotion of surf and eco-tourism to conservation areas (SINAC, 2016). While *pura vida* existed long before tourism as a unifying expression of Costa Rican cultural identity, its integration into tourism promotion has transformed it into a marketable cultural commodity for service providers, souvenir companies and kitschy sales strategies, including the government-sponsored *Costa Rica es Pura Vida* campaign promoting both eco- and mass tourism to the country’s national parks and other nature-based destinations (Trester, 2003). As illustrated in this analysis, however, when both *pura vida* and paradise are commodified through growth-oriented tourism strategies, the neoliberal approach to conservation and development is both contradictory and unsustainable, threatening the very socio-ecological wellbeing that defines Costa Rican *pura vida* beyond the very short term. Similarly, settler colonialism, through the promotion of both eco-tourism and surf tourism development, continues to usher in waves of modernization, marginalizing traditional culture, ways of life and livelihood through the loss of *pura vida* to the colonizing modes of capitalist accumulation analyzed here.

Toward Alternatives to Development in Surf Tourism

In attempt to move beyond the contradictions inherent in neoliberal surf tourism governance, as analyzed in this chapter, the critical framework of decolonizing sustainable surf tourism is offered as a means of envisioning, enacting, and making more visible postcapitalist realities in surf tourism scenarios (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). Decentering the unsustainable modern-materialist metanarrative on socioeconomic development, of which the neoliberal governance paradigm is a fundamental component, alternative development possibilities align with the discourse of post-development (Escobar, 1995; 1996; Maiava, 2002; Santos, 2004; COMPAS, 2007; Ahorro, 2008; Esteva, 2009; Sachs, 2009) and praxis of diverse community economies (Cameron, 2003; Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Gibson-Graham, 2005). As described in greater detail elsewhere (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Ruttenberg, 2022), this approach supports critical participatory action research toward three interrelated strategies for strengthening decolonial and postcapitalist alternatives to development in surf tourism:

- 1) Engaging with practices and activities geared toward decolonizing Global South surfing communities' internalization of the modern-capitalist, growth- and income-based notion of economy (Cameron & Gibson, 2005), as well as processes of "decolonizing the colonizer" that address the colonial imaginaries inherent in Global North surfers' *Endless Summer* dreams (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018);
- 2) Supporting communities toward envisioning ecologically sustainable modes of socio-economic interaction based on postcapitalist explorations into the diverse forms of practicing and experiencing the economy as 'networks of flow' among an interdependent more-than-human community, contributing to what Fletcher (2019) offers as "communal governmentality" centering local 'resilience, identity and wellbeing' (Gibson-Graham, 2005);
- 3) Working alongside local residents in surf tourism communities to visibilize, envision and enact assets-based community development alternatives (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993, 2005; Cameron, 2003; Gibson-Graham, 2005) by drawing on community members' existing skills and local assets to strengthen non-capitalist activities, lessen tourism dependence, and allow for the emergence of endogenous, self-determined socio-ecological futures and alternative productive rationalities (Escobar, 1996).

Applied to surf tourism scenarios, this framework is proposed as a broader means of nurturing postdevelopment and diverse economic realities in surf tourism communities as viable, already-existing alternatives to the harmful tourism-for-development narrative at the heart of Costa Rica's ill-fated heavy-volume approach to (eco)tourism. Expanded to the global field and discourse of sustainable surf tourism, this critical approach can support community-based alternatives to development in surfing destinations beyond the contradictions of neoliberal surf tourism governance discussed in this chapter.

Chapter II

Surfing Postmodernity: A Review of Critical Research on (Post)modern Surfer Subjectivity

Introduction

It's perfectly logical to me that surfing is the spiritual aesthetic style of the liberated self. And that's the model for the future.... The reason that I define myself as an evolutionary surfer is because surfers have taught me the way you relate to the basic energies, and develop your individual sense of freedom, self-definition, style, beauty, control.... Surfers are the future people being thrown forward by our species..., predictive of the next step in human evolution.... You could almost say surfers are mutants, throw-aheads of the human race.

-- Timothy Leary, "The Evolutionary Surfer" Interview published in Surfer Magazine (Pezman, 1978).

The modern sport and culture of surfing offer a unique lens for analyzing broader trends in late-capitalist (post)modernity, with relevance for political-economic discussions in the fields of surf, sport and leisure studies. While surfers have often been portrayed in popular media as countercultural subjects resisting conformity to modern life, critical surf-related scholarship critiques this representation for the ways it obscures the implications of the capitalist 'surfing-industrial-complex' (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017) and 'state of modern surfing' in which 'the right to surf... is governed by pressures exerted by those seeking to institutionalize and profit' from it (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b, p. 86; see also Booth, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017c; Laderman, 2017). Within this milieu, scholars have established the dominant trans-local identity politics of modern surfing's hegemonic cultural narratives as embodying ethics of a racially whitewashed and heteronormative masculinity in terrestrial/littoral surf culture geographies, the global surf industry, and politics of professional surfing (Evers, 2004, 2008; Waitt, 2008; Woods, 2011; Anderson, 2014; Thompson, 2017; Wheaton, 2017).

Much of the scholarship on the state of modern surfing draws on an historical-materialist framing to situate surfers as inescapably mired within and exploited by the conditions of (post)modern capitalism despite their countercultural ethos and popular representation as an 'evolutionary vanguard' (Leary, as cited in Pezman, 1978; see also Stranger, 2011; Booth, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Laderman, 2017; Lawler, 2017). This body of scholarship identifies surfers' (post)modern subjectivity in their attempts to escape the confines of modern life by going surfing instead, while the countercultural 'outlaw' surfer is simultaneously branded and commodified for surf industry profit. The conceptual framing of 'surfing postmodernity' builds on this cultural paradox and is offered as a means of problematizing Timothy Leary's culturally iconic characterization of surfers as 'evolutionary' subjects (Pezman, 1978) aligned with the ideological currents of

postmodernism (Stranger, 2011), defined for our purposes as ‘some kind of reaction to, or departure from, “modernism”’ (Harvey, 1989, p.7), driving an at-once nostalgic and future-seeking pursuit of social alternatives in surfing culture.

Complicating existing literature linking ‘surfing (post)modernity’ and associated subjectivities to the material conditions of capitalism, however, recent research analyzes the contemporary phenomenon of the professional ‘free-surfer’ – a category of industry-sponsored, non-competitive surfing subjectivity – in relation to (post)capitalism in surfing culture, beyond the capitalocentric discourse common to the historical-materialist analyses described above (Comer, 2010; Lawler, 2011, 2017; Booth, 2017; Evers, 2018). Gibson-Graham (2006, p. 59) describe capitalocentrism as born of the positive ‘(mis)interpretation’ of Marx’s language of economic difference ‘as a historical stage theory of economic evolution in which capitalism is situated at the pinnacle of development’, within which subjects fit into structural categories of class and labor vis-à-vis capitalist modes of production and exploitation. In this framing, (post)modern surfing subjectivities are understood to be defined by and locked into the structures of the capitalist system. In order to move beyond the paralysis inherent in capitalocentric analyses that ‘place capitalism at the defining center of economic identity’ and ‘confine the proliferative potential of economic difference’ (Gibson-Graham, 2000, p. 13), this literature review engages with an anti-essentialist read on (post)modern surfing subjectivities to identify ‘truly radical’ (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b) apertures in surfing scholarship that point to postcapitalist ‘new becomings’ (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 2011), which might be understood as enacting a certain (r)evolutionary politics of interest to critical scholar-activists.

I begin with a brief methodology section followed by a review of the critical literature on surfing and (post)modernity linked to the material conditions and associated subjectivities of late capitalism. From there, I draw on Marxian and poststructuralist critiques of modernity and postmodernity to situate the subsequent review of the literature related to surfers’ (post)modern subjectivities. Finally, I synthesize current discussions on free surfers as a particular category of surfing subjectivity, with attention to critical research on postcapitalist surfing subjectivities potentially enacting other possible, beyond-(post)modern worlds in the here and now (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, 2016).

Methodology and Source Selection

This literature review draws from secondary sources to synthesize research on surfer subjectivity in late-capitalist (post)modernity. The secondary sources reviewed here include academic texts specific to critical trends in surfing culture and scholarship, as well as popular surf media, such as magazines, film, advertisements, interviews, social media, podcasts and blogs. For the discussion of literature on surfer subjectivities common to twentieth-century cultural narratives, I draw specifically from older media sources such as *Surfer Magazine*’s culturally iconic 1978 interview with Timothy Leary; Bruce Brown’s 1966 film, *The Endless Summer*; Paul Wendkos’ *Gidget* films of the 1950s and 60s, Matt Warshaw’s (2003) *Encyclopedia of Surfing*, and critical academic scholarship (Westwick and Neushul, 2013; Laderman, 2017). For the review of literature on freesurfers and (post)modern surfer

subjectivity, I engage with current website and social media content from and about sponsored freesurfers and popular surf brands Vissla, Billabong, and Quiksilver; as well as academic literature related to surfing, political economy and social theory, including Booth (1995, 2017), Comer (2010, 2017); Ford and Brown (2006); Frank and Weiland (1997), Lawler (2011, 2017); Lanagan (2002); Schumacher (2017); Evers (2018); and Warren and Gibson (2017). Together, these texts were selected to help define modern and postmodern trends in surf culture vis-à-vis capitalism and foreground the cultural emergence of the free surfer as a category of surfing subjectivity worthy of deeper critical study. Limitations to this review include its emphasis on predominantly Western surf studies scholarship, surf media, and brand websites. Similarly, these sources were selected with reflexive awareness of the origins of knowledge they represent as specific and partial rather than universal, highlighting important spaces for further engagement with diverse knowledges and experiences in non-modern and beyond-modern surfing discourses.

Critical Scholarship on Surfing and Capitalist Modernity

Existing research situates surfers as challenging both capitalism and modernity through a form of countercultural postmodernism aligned with Leary's sentiments expressed in the quote above (Stranger, 2011; Lawler, 2017). Others, however, engage with critiques of postmodernity as materially and ideologically constrained by the very tenets of capitalist modernity it attempts to transcend, in which surfing culture's postmodern elements simply represent capitalism's evolution in the post-Fordist era (Jameson, 1991; Harvey, 1989; Booth, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b). This historical-materialist critique is founded on the framing of capitalism as structurally definitive of modernity, as analyzed in the seminal work of David Harvey (1989) and Fredrick Jameson (1991), who posit that postmodernity, rather than representing a divergence from modernity, is instead understood as 'the cultural logic of late capitalism.'

As surf scholarship engages with (post)modernity vis-à-vis capitalism in different ways, the history of modern surf culture has been alternately, and often paradoxically, described as both countercultural resistance and conformity to (post)modern capitalism. In the second half of the twentieth century, surfers were popularly perceived as a hedonistic counterculture employing surfing as a means of rebelling against, resisting and otherwise 'bucking the system' by going surfing instead (Ford & Brown, 2006; Comer, 2010; Lawler, 2011, 2017; Stranger, 2011; Slater, n.d.), as the quotation from legendary countercultural icon Timothy Leary opening this article makes clear. For example, in the 1950s, surfers were perceived to be 'at the forefront of consumer reactions against the blandness and conformity of standardized mass production' (Booth 2017, p. 86). By the 1970s, they were viewed as a subculture defined by 'individualized self-realization through a distinctive "new left" politics, through the embrace of anti-authoritarian gestures, iconoclastic habits (in music, dress, language and lifestyle), and in the critique of everyday life' (Harvey, 1989, as cited in Booth, 2017, p. 330). And today, critical scholars have admonished the image of the 'surf slacker' or contemporary 'food stamp surfer' as in 'contraposition to work', and even potentially as 'a symbol of liberation, "a culture of freedom that inspires workers to resist work" by slowing

down, enjoying life, and embracing the omnipresence of the avatars of leisure in their midst' (Lawler, 2017, as cited in Hough-Snee & Eastman 2017c, p. 20).

Paradoxically, however, critical scholars also identify the capitalist-conforming history of modern surfing as foundational to the subculture, embedding it within the structures and ideology of modernity, particularly those associated with capitalist commercialization, commodification and accumulation. Rather than perceiving surfers as Leary's evolutionary subjects, critical researchers thus assert that it is more appropriate to see them as representative of postmodern trends in adventure/risk sports more generally in their tendency to reproduce the hegemonic social constructs of late-capitalist modernity (Fletcher, 2008, 2014). Fletcher's (2014) treatment of (post)modern subjectivity explains the ways in which modern subjects' oscillating relationship to adventure is woven into the very fabric of capitalist modernity, identifying a certain *ambivalence* to adventure, and the avenues for capitalist accumulation it entails, as one of the most definitive features of modern life. This framing builds on Fletcher's (2008, p. 310) earlier analysis of participation in risk sports more generally as both satisfying and providing a sense of escape from subjection to a particularly professional middle-class set of values. Surfers might experience their relationship to adventure as a) internalized adventure becoming domesticated into the functions of everyday, ordinary life; e.g. going for a surf to blow off steam before going to work; or b) as a postmodern escape to adventure as an attempted means of resisting or escaping the confines of modernity. This framing adds nuance to Harvey's (1989) critique of postmodernity as both symptomatic of and defined by the material conditions of capitalist modernity, central to existing scholarship on surfing and (post)modernity.

With respect to surfing specifically, Stranger (2011) contends that the commodification of surfing solidified its status and standing as a subculture by binding constituents to brand-specific patterns of consumption and lifestyle definitive of the surfing culture. The conflation of modern surfing with capitalist commercialization, industrialization and commodification is described as resulting from the rise of competitive surfing in the mid-20th Century, representing a significant turning point in surfing's cultural narrative and material evolution (Ford & Brown, 2006; Booth, 2017; Schumacher, 2017). Scholars identify the advent of professional competitive surfing and its associated industry as marking the beginning of surfing culture's codification into two categories of surfer subjectivity: soul surfing and competitive surfing, the cultural signifiers of each representing their own modes of subjection to capitalist modernity as countercultural resistance and conformity, respectively (Booth, 2017; Schumacher, 2017).

This ambivalent reading in surf culture discourse of surfers as both counterculturalists and mainstream conformists reflects and reinforces a distinction between 'soul' and 'competitive' surfer subjectivities common to popular modern surf culture narratives in the twentieth century. This framing situated soul and competitive surfers as contrasting extremes vis-à-vis dominant social constructs, wherein competitive surfers were perceived as consenting to and embodying the social norms associated with capitalist modernity, while postmodern soul surfers were seen as rejecting, resisting and rebelling against them. Culturally contemporaneous with the beginning of formal competition in modern surfing, the *Gidget* books and films of the late 1950s and '60s set up a persistent separation in popular American culture between surfers and mainstream society, where surfers were portrayed as

the delinquent yet desirable antithesis to middle class values associated with daily life in capitalist modernity (Comer, 2010; Ford & Brown, 2006). In their ostensive rejection of the cultural values and material conditions of modernity expressed through competitive surfing and the commodification of surfing culture, these 'soul surfers' were seen to align with the ideological currents of postmodernism (Stranger, 2011). Citing Harvey's (1990, pp.125-172) description of counterculture as coinciding with 'a crisis in the regime of accumulation and the transition from Fordism to flexible accumulation', Booth (2017, p. 330) contends that soul surfing 'articulated this new politics and social critique, and conjoined surfing with the counterculture' in its associated 'images of communal living, country farms, vegetarianism, ritualistic inhalation of the herb, yoga, meditation, and the majestic poetry of uncrowded light and space (Lovelock 1995, p. 114)'. Others contrast competitive and soul surfers in terms of their relative subjection to the capitalist mode of production, while shedding important light on the blurring distinctions between competitive and soul surfing from an historical-materialist perspective given soul surfers' participation in the consumer capitalist surf industry outside of competitive events (Booth, 2017; Hough-Snee and Eastman, 2017b; Schumacher, 2017).

Similarly, the paradoxes underpinning these once popular cultural categories, and the (post)modern subjectivities they represent, are further complicated by the contemporary emergence of a third category of industry-sponsored, non-competing 'free surfers'. Free surfers have emerged as an increasingly prevalent surf cultural phenomenon beginning in the late 1980s, considered to have 'sprung... from the tensions between the soul surfer and the competitive surfer', not coincidentally 'right at the time that surf brands were strategizing an expansion of their market to nontraditional surfing markets through surfing's "lifestyle message"' (Schumacher 2017, p. 293). Booth's (2017, pp. 328-329) historical-materialist approach categorizes competitive and free surfers as distinct forms of labor, with competitive surfers categorized as exploited 'workers' in 'perpetual struggle', and free surfers as countercultural 'aristocrats' whose 'ownership of aesthetic ingenuity and the ability to create and mobilize cultural authenticity is a critical source of wealth'. Much of this ability has relied on the concomitant shift in the surf media landscape, from more traditional outlets like magazines to personalized social media platforms, facilitating greater exposure for a proliferative diversity of surfer subjectivities beyond the dominant identity politics of modern surf culture described above, as well as a direct role for freesurfers to promote themselves and the brands that sponsor them (Evers, 2018). While the role of the sponsored free-surfer has shifted over time from industry lifestyle icons to neoliberal brand ambassadors and/or advocates for diverse social and environmental causes, Evers (2018) goes so far as to say that 'professional freesurfers are commodities' selling the surf lifestyle and the promise of its associated 'aspirational journey' through brand sponsorship and their own social media platforms, implicating freesurfers in the multibillion-dollar modern surf industry complex, and arguing that 'every part of surf culture is entangled with capitalism and commodification to some extent'.

While industry-surfer relationships diversify and surfer identity categories grow more complex with shifting media and branding landscapes, discussions such as these lead many researchers to conclude that 'it is fairly safe to say that the relationships in the industry will remain capitalist for quite some time' (Booth, 2017, p. 363). Yet notwithstanding such

dynamics, others question whether surfers might still employ their agency to creatively 'surf beyond capitalism' by 'pushing the limits of surf-related activity further into potentially radical futures beyond, or even outside of, the surfing state and its institutions' (Hough-Snee and Eastman 2017b, pp. 85-86). While critical surf studies literature offers a foundation for identifying the ways in which postmodern trends in surfing and society continue to replicate the material conditions and cultural perspectives of late-capitalist modernity, Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017b) identify a dearth of 'truly radical creativity' in the field toward envisioning (r)evolutionary roads through and beyond this important moment of critique. However, the anti-essentialist read of critical research on surfer subjectivities offered here is useful for recognizing postcapitalist possibilities beyond the capitalocentric frames common to historical-materialist analyses of (post)modern subjectivity in surfing culture.

Engaging with the contrasts, overlaps and complexities within the tripartite heuristic division among competitive, soul and free surfers, this review engages with existing literature blurring the lines among these surfing categories, pointing instead toward diverse postcapitalist subjectivities (Gibson-Graham, 2006) with (r)evolutionary potential to envision, enable and enact a beyond-postmodern politics in surfing culture. While existing literature establishes free surfers as surfing's 'aristocrats' (Booth, 2017) or as an avenue for the industry to reinvent itself via new forms of commodification and capital accumulation (Schumacher, 2017; Evers, 2018), the non-capitalocentric review of this literature helps situate research on free surfers as embodying multiple postcapitalist subjectivities useful for recognizing economic diversity in the political economy of surfing culture.

Surfing Postmodernity and Postcapitalist Subjectivities

This review of critical discussions on the potential for surfers to 'surf beyond capitalism' (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b) draws on Gibson-Graham's (2000, 2006a, 2006b, 2008) treatment of postcapitalist subjectivity and diverse economies, informing the relationship between 'seeing anew' and 'being anew' as background for conceiving of (r)evolutionary 'new becomings' in surfer subjectivities and social politics. This anti-essentialist re-framing of economic subjectivity is centered around a vision of political economy that explores 'the multidimensional nature of economic existence', wherein 'capitalism becomes just one particular set of economic relations situated in a vast sea of economic activity' (Gibson-Graham, 2006b). The postcapitalist perspective offered by Gibson-Graham (2006a, 2006b) enables us to examine (post)modern surfing subjectivities, as treated in critical surf scholarship, as diverse, rather than singular or monolithic, in the ways they perform economy and inform the cultural perspectives of which they are a part. From this perspective, for example, while participation in the capitalist 'state of modern surfing' via industry sponsorship and patterns of consumption may comprise an important part of free surfers' political economy, it only tells a partial story, particularly in cases where many of them are involved in social and environmental activist campaigns and post-work lifestyles representative of alternative- and non-capitalist practices that work to de-center capitalist modes of production and subvert their associated structures and social relations (Comer, 2017; Lawler, 2017). Using the postcapitalist lens to see into the ways diverse economic surfing subjectivities have been treated in the literature across the soul, competition, and

free-surfer categories allows for identifying apertures for possibility in places often ignored in orthodox Marxist analyses.

As such, this non-essentialist review of the literature also engages with tensions between historical-materialist and poststructuralist approaches to (post)modern subjectivity. While the former analyzes subjection vis-à-vis the social power structures of capitalism 'with its few identity positions' born of 'the tendency to constitute "the" economy as a singular capitalist system or space rather than as a zone of cohabitation and contestation among multiple economic forms', the latter envisages 'the subject as both powerfully constituted and constrained by dominant discourses, yet also available to other possibilities of becoming' that 'allow new subject-worlds to arise' (Gibson-Graham, 2006a, pp. xxiii-xxxvi). While an orthodox Marxist lens works to address the aspects of surfing subjectivities relevant to the economic structures and conditions of late-capitalist postmodernity, an anti-essentialist diverse economies lens addresses 'the arts of revolutionary self-cultivation not only to those aspects of self that could be seen as accommodating and embodying capitalism, but to our oppositional and anti-capitalist selves' (Gibson-Graham 2006a, xxxv). Engaging with the tensions among these approaches is useful for highlighting the ways in which existing scholarship analyzes surfers' differential subjection to (post)modernity as constitutive spaces for foregrounding a postcapitalist 'politics of becoming' (Connolly, 1999, p. 57, as cited in Gibson-Graham, 2006a).

Gibson-Graham (2006) write of the difficulties associated with transforming identities, of becoming anew, given the ways in which dominant cultural constructs 'push back', creating a population of 'reluctant subjects' whose discomfort with the way things are has not yet found embodied outlets for truly radical modes of being in the world, different from reluctant subjection to modernity (Gibson-Graham, 2006). In this powerful 'push-back' against attempts to 'buck the system' in contemporary surfing culture, critical scholarship contends with surfers' reluctant subjectivity as conditioned moderns, offering relevant insights for navigating a political economic understanding of the ways surfers act and why (Gibson-Graham, 2006). For instance, this concept of reluctant (post)modern subjectivity helps to explain experiences of competitive surfers turned industry-sponsored freesurfers, like Dane Reynolds and Dave Rastovich, for example, who have escaped the pressures of formal competition but continue to 'sell' their surfing and postmodern lifestyles as commodified representatives of modern industry brands (Evers, 2018; Liberman, 2018).

Finally, the non-essentialist read of critical research on (post)modern surfer subjectivity explores soul, competitive and free surfers' potential to embody an economic politics of 'becoming', comprising 'sites where ethical decisions can be made, power can be negotiated, and transformations forged' (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. 77). Identifying 'performative practices for other worlds' (Gibson-Graham, 2008) in this way might point to important spaces for recognizing the ways in which surfers are cultivating alternative (or 'beyond-postmodern') subjectivities. This exploration contends with critical scholars' treatment of 'new becomings' in surfer subjectivities that dis-identify with capitalocentric subject positions and identify instead with 'alternative and politically enabling positions', in which we can further contemplate the radical possibilities of an emerging (r)evolutionary counterhegemonic politics in surfing culture (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 77). I return to this discussion on the postcapitalist politics of surfing beyond postmodernity in the concluding

section. First, however, I discuss existing research that both delineates and complicates the historical development of soul and competitive surfer subjectivities common to twentieth century surf culture discourse, and the more recent category of free surfers that has emerged in its wake.

Evolutionary Surfers as Postmodern Subjects

Although the image of the soul surfer existed before competition, scholars identify how the rise of competitive surfing in the 1960s perpetuated the view of the soul surfer as rebellious, transferring the perception of the surfer collective in general as 'being in opposition to the attitudes and values of wider society' to the image of the soul surfer specifically, while at the same time surfing's professionalization as competitive sport solidified as its own subculture and surfing aesthetic (Lanagan, 2002, p. 285). While soul surfers were denounced as 'impairing surfing and society' as social drop-outs and 'slackers' (Lawler, 2017), the professional competitive surfer came to be seen in contrast to the 'image of the surfer as outlaw' (Booth, 1995, pp. 197, 285). Similarly, Leary's description of surfing as a non-productive means of merging the human body with nature came to represent a divergence from the competitive view of surfing as requiring a sense of purpose and becoming a source of work commercialized and commodified by the surfing industry (Pezman, 1977; Booth, 2017). Surf media and the wider surf industry perpetuated a soul-vs.-competition narrative by capitalizing on the constructed cultural opposition between the two and the commodification of their dueling yet mutually reinforcing lifestyle imagery. This tension aligned competitive surfing with a modern, capitalist-conforming subjectivity, and soul-surfing with a postmodern or capitalist-rebellious subjectivity in twentieth century surf culture.

While media and the surf industry sought to establish and perpetuate an oppositional binary distinction between competitive and soul surfing categories, critical surf scholarship has complicated this distinction by engaging with surfers' subjection to the material conditions of (post)modernity across the soul-competition binary, as well as the paradoxes inherent in (post)modern surfers' overlapping and multiple soul, competitive and free-surfing subjectivities. Shedding light on the material and affective similarities between soul surfing and competitive surfing subjectivities vis-à-vis (post)modernity, this body of critical surf scholarship breaks down the constructed soul-vs.-competition imaginaries as 'conventional discourses' that 'tend toward abstraction, reification, and homogenization', however powerful they might be in producing 'concrete developments on the ground' (Strauss, 2006, 2012; Schelhas et al., 2018). This critique 'highlights moments of contradiction and undecidability in what appears to be a neatly conceived structure' (Ruccio, 2000, as cited in Gibson-Graham, 2000, p. 99), illuminating the blurring lines of paradox among soul, competition and freesurfing subjectivities with important implications regarding the potential for surfers, in their subjection to (post)capitalist modernity, to represent an evolutionary vanguard in (post)modern life. The following section synthesizes literature related to surfers' hybridized, as opposed to essentialized, relationship to the values and

conditions of modernity, situating soul, competitive and freesurfing subjectivities as multiple sides of what it looks and feels like to be surfing postmodernity.

The Paradox of Surfing (Post)Modernity

One strand of research on surfing and postmodern subjectivity contends that the competitive drive in surfing culture embraces the physical and material aspects of surfing while often negating or obscuring its spiritual and lifestyle underpinnings, positioning surfing as indicative of (rather than departing from) the values and social constructs of modernity, namely those associated with progress, discipline, personal achievement, consumer capitalism and productivity (Fletcher 2014a; Harvey, 1989; Stranger, 2011). Fletcher's (2014) treatment of 'productive leisure' as a convergence of work and leisure pursuits once defined in opposition to one another helps explain surfing's transference of the values of modernity from the realm of work to that of productive leisure space in which these values are not lost, but simply reinvented in different arenas of modern life. In competitive surfing, for example, modern values are seen to be overtly cultivated in the productive leisure pursuits of making surfing into something serious for personal and/or professional gain. For soul-surfers, however, the relationship is less obvious, as the goal is rather to attain a sense of fluid transcendence through surfing as an escape from the negative aspects of modernity. The soul-surfing lifestyle is depicted as one where work is altogether minimal, since the majority of time is spent in the non-productive leisure pursuit of chasing waves. This relationship to work is similarly captured by Lawler's (2017) treatment of the 'surf-slacker' or 'food-stamp surfer' refusing the work ethos as indicative of soul surfing's postwork subjectivity (Comer, 2017). The lifestyle-based and often self-promotional work of free surfers further complicates the reinversion of this productive leisure dynamic, in which 'both work and leisure become both leisure and work' (Fletcher 2014a, p. 77; Evers, 2018).

Another body of scholarship focuses on the overlap spaces of similarity among competitive and soul surfing subjectivities in their paradoxical subjection to late-capitalist postmodernity. Where relevant, examples are provided of free surfers whose subject positions embody the complexity inherent in the changing identity politics of an increasingly heterogeneous surfing culture. This line of research highlights the ways in which surfing subjectivities, in their multiple manifestations, represent a diverse plurality (as opposed to a binary framing), with postcapitalist subjectivities discussed as reproducing or destabilizing the material conditions and values of (post)modernity, understood as the cultural logic of late capitalism (Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991). This literature highlights three elements of surfing culture relevant to the discussion on (post)modern surfing subjectivity: 1) adventure as an escape to modernity; 2) consumerism in soul surfing and the commodification of dissent; and 3) the phenomenon of professional free-surfers perceived as 'poster boys for bucking the system' (Slater, n.d.).

Adventure: (Post)Moderns Escape to Modernity

Soul surfers have been historically perceived in popular discourse as doing things outside the ordinary, escaping modernity and pushing the boundaries into new ways of living and interacting with the world (Pezman, 1978; Stranger, 2011). This characterization fits with Harvey's (1989, p. 115) assertion on postmodernism's self-perception as a 'willful and rather chaotic movement to overcome all the supposed ills of modernism'. However, adapting Fletcher's (2014b) analysis of the 'adventure society' to the surfing lifestyle suggests a reframing of soul surfers as restless moderns believing themselves to be countercultural or rebellious while unwittingly fulfilling the very values of modernity they seek to escape. In this reading, we find a characteristically ambivalent approach to adventure as 'alternately... .frivolous and irresponsible, heroic and essential, decadent and depraved, revitalizing and redemptive... invert[ed] periodically over time as faith in the modern project waxes and wanes' (Fletcher 2014a, p. 174). This analysis on modern subjects' characteristic ambivalence to adventure describes how, in attempting to escape *from* modernity into the adventure of surfing, soul surfers are effectively escaping back *to* modernity by fulfilling a defining ethic of (post)modern subjectivity. In this way, modern surf culture's pursuit of a fleeting transcendence turned soul-surfing lifestyle is critiqued as yet another instance of modernity reflecting subjects' confusing, dualistic 'conjoining of the ephemeral and the fleeting with the eternal and the immutable' (Baudelaire, 1863, as cited in Harvey, 1989, p. 10); helping to explain soul surfers' oscillating engagement with, and persistent subjection to, an omnipresent modernity in its many, often paradoxical expressions.

Cultural Consumers and the Commodification of Dissent

Surf scholars describe how the power of 'lifestyle branding' to commodify the imagery of surfers as alternative, authentic, rebellious or representing opposition to dominant culture transformed surfing's claims to counterculture into something 'no longer any different from the official culture it's supposed to be subverting' (Frank & Weiland, 1997, p. 44). The commodification of both styles of surfing, as well as their constructed opposition to one another, proved lucrative in the selling of products and images, with a multibillion-dollar global surf industry consumed by surfers across the soul-competition spectrum as well as by non-surfing consumers. This line of scholarship describes how commodification effectively stripped the surfing subculture of its anti-modern ethos by transforming it into products to be bought and sold through the capitalist means of exchange that have come to monopolize modern forms of economic interaction that 're-create in new ways the very hierarchy of values and significations that changing fashions otherwise undermined' (Harvey, 1989, p. 6), commodifying dissent (Frank & Weiland, 1997) and strengthening the values and material signifiers of modernity in the process.

While surfers' consumer habits and commodified lifestyle may strengthen the subculture, as Stranger (2011) argues, critical surf scholars contend that they do little to transcend that subculture's position within modern capitalism (Comer, 2010; Lawler, 2011). Instead, this body of research describes how, through commodification, soul surfers' claims to countercultural significance grow increasingly weak as they are incorporated into global consumer capitalism, even if in ways beyond their control. The death of surfing-as-counterculture through the commodification of soul surfing finds resonance in analyses of

postmodernism generally as inspiring the emergence of a class of 'cultural consumers' 'condemned to conquer, through the influence of fashion, that very popularity [they] once disdained' by spending 'much more energy struggling with each other and against their own traditions in order to sell their products than they did engaging in real political action' (Harvey, 1989, p. 22). In this way, Harvey concludes, 'postmodernism then signals nothing more than a logical extension of the power of the market over the whole range of cultural production' (1989, p. 62). This critique calls into question the potential for soul surfing to serve as a counterhegemonic subjectivity vis-a-vis modernity in much the same way that the postmodern avant-garde succumbs to the 'popularity it once disdained', marking the 'beginning of its end' and thus its inability to be anything 'other' than modern.

However, an anti-capitalocentric reading of soul surfer and free surfer subjectivity de-centers the emphasis on commodification by also reminding us that soul surfers engage in postcapitalist economic activity in addition to the ways their images have been marketed and sold through industry branding. Through this type of anti-essentialist reading, we can engage differently, for example, with research on soul surfers' post-work, 'surf-slacker' and 'food stamp surfer' ethics of nonproductive leisure, which represent alternative capitalist and non-capitalist modes of economy aligned with the framing of diverse economies (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013; Fletcher, 2014a; Lawler, 2017). Similarly, soul surfers and free surfers engage with postcapitalist and diverse economic modes of production, consumption and community interaction within and outside the capitalist surf industry, including the type of solidarity-based and in-kind 'subcultural labor' practiced by many women surfers 'as a site of female possibility and flourishing' (Comer, 2010, p. 30). This reading also allows us to differently examine the labor of self-employed craft surfboard shapers whose work making surfboards is described as both 'soulful and precarious', as well as representing a 'cultural economy' that positions them 'beyond narrow identity categories such as wage laborer' (Warren and Gibson, 2017, p. 343). While surf studies literature describes commodification as foundational to (post)modern surfer subjectivity in the ways it limits possible dissent to capitalism in the 'state of modern surfing', examining the literature on soul surfer subjectivities with a postcapitalist lens relative to labor, enterprise and economic interactions opens space for seeing soul surfers as also simultaneously enacting non-capitalist and alternative capitalist subject positions with the potential to construct alternative futures 'in the here and now' (Gibson-Graham and Roelvink, 2010).

Free Surfers: Bucking the System?

Scholars discuss the (post)modern paradox of free surfer subjectivity, relative to soul and competitive surfing, as representing a beyond-hybrid category of its own that emulates the performative aesthetic and countercultural non-competitive ethos of the soul surfer while participating in the 'surf-industrial-complex' through industry branding and commodification via professional paid sponsorship and social media marketing (Evers, 2018; Schumacher, 2019). Lifestyle surfing brand Vissla sponsors free surfers exclusively and refers to them as 'Creators and Innovators'. Other brands sponsor primarily competitive surfers active in the tour events of the World Surf League, and list them as Surf Athletes (Billabong) and Elite Surf[ers] (Quiksilver) on their websites, while also including a smaller

sub-section of team riders designated as “‘Surf[ers]’ (Billabong) and ‘Watermen’ (Quiksilver), for example.

The growing phenomenon of free surfers as professionally sponsored, non-competing soul surfers is thus discussed as embodying a beyond-hybrid surfing subjectivity encompassing expressions of both capitalist subjection and postcapitalist economic diversity (Booth, 2017; Comer, 2017; Evers, 2018). For example, Dave Rastovich (as cited in Liberman, 2018, n.p.) is a professional free surfer who ‘stepped away from’ competitive surfing’s ‘limiting and stifling’ ethos that ‘[puts] a weird fence around this wild, free, amazing experience’ in effort to ‘quantify it, package it, sell it, make money off it’. Rastovich is known for his off-grid lifestyle, rugged environmentalism, love of ocean life and spiritual connection to the sea, and for leaving formal competition, becoming sponsored as a free surfer and leveraging the social influence of his well-marketed image to both promote industry sales and raise awareness for his environmentalist interests, including nonprofit Surfers for Cetaceans. Other examples include Rob Machado, among the first sponsored free surfers who now runs a namesake foundation for which he ‘appear[s] at schools and volunteer events... to support environmental programs for youth’ (Rob Machado Foundation Website); and Vissla-sponsored ‘creator and innovator’ Dr. Cliff Kapono, a Hawaiian free surfer and scientist known for his climate activism with Surfrider Foundation and participation in indigenous Hawaiian resistance against encroaching development projects on the islands (Thiermann, 2017).

Perhaps most definitive of surfing’s postmodern vanguard, free surfers reproduce capitalist and commodified modes of cultural production through participating in the surf tourism industrial complex via frequent overseas travel and benefiting from modern surf brand industry sales, while simultaneously leveraging their influence to engage in alternative and non-capitalist practices that address the social and environmental ills of capitalist modernity. While most free surfers may not truly ‘buck the system’ by eschewing participation in the capitalist surf industry altogether, a postcapitalist inquiry into recent scholarship on their diverse economic practices illuminates complex, often multiple subjectivities that might point to an important politics of ‘becoming’ in counterhegemonic, beyond-postmodern and therefore potentially (r)evolutionary ways.

While Evers (2018) contends that free surfers, as industry commodities, are not free to ‘to challenge the status quo of surfing culture(s) more generally, which is brimming with sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, colonization and violence’, an anti-essentialist exploration into the literature on free surfer subjectivities illuminates that certain free surfers are, in fact, doing just that. Paralleling the contemporary surfeminist movement for gender equality, equity, diversity and freedom in surfing culture (Heywood, 2008; Comer, 2010, 2017; Schumacher, 2017), critical research highlights the proliferation of BIPOC-run anti-racism surfing organizations like Black Girls Surf, Brown Girls Surf, Color the Water, Black Surfers Collective, and many more, as well as critical race scholarship, as challenging the hegemonic narratives and associated identity politics of modern surfing (Woods, 2011; Comer, 2016; Dawson, 2017a, 2017b; Thompson, 2017; Wheaton, 2017). This body of scholarship contends that a number of free surfers are indeed leveraging their influence in affront to the ‘status quo of [modern] surfing culture’ (Evers, 2018). Examples include: a) Billabong-sponsored Afro-Latina longboard and stand-up paddle surfer Dominique ‘Nique’

Miller who once held a Go Fund Me crowdfunding campaign to support her competitive career and now uses her social media platform to embody diversity in women's surfing and 'represent and inspire people of colour', and also participates in Juneteenth surfing celebrations to advocate for Black Lives Matter, racial justice and solidarity in surfing culture (Mawdsley, 2021); b) Vans-sponsored South African style icon Mikey February, who became the first Black African to surf on the competitive world surf tour in 2018 and later 'stepped away from full-time competition to inspire a new generation' and 'give surfers of colour someone they can identify with' as a freesurfer whose social media platform often pays homage to freedom from South Africa's apartheid history, which prevented his own father from being able to surf his local break (Pyzel, 2021, n.p.); and c) Lauren Hill, a brand ambassador for Billabong and team rider for Bing Surfboards, whose public image, social media, blog, film appearances, academic publications, podcast, articles in popular surf media and recently published book explore and support issues of marine conservation and gender in contemporary surf culture (Long, 2020). Together, these examples from surf culture discourse and academic discussions foretell of what scholars might begin to contemplate as (r)evolutionary subjectivities surfing beyond post-modernity in the here and now.

Concluding Thoughts: (R)evolutionary Subjectivities Beyond Surfing Postmodernity?

This review of current critical research concerning surfer subjectivity provided a means of identifying the ways surfers are multiply subjected to late-capitalist modernity, while simultaneously embodying postcapitalist subjectivities that work to transgress existing power dynamics within the state of modern surfing. Existing scholarship alternately describing surfing as rebellion and conformity to capitalist (post)modernity has centered the distinctions between 'soul surfers' and competitive surfers, within a historical-materialist framing on surfers' subjection to the capitalist state of modern surfing. While this historical-materialist approach has been subsequently challenged for locking surfing subjectivities into a capitalocentric critique lacking 'truly radical creativity' toward envisioning a means of 'surfing beyond capitalism' (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b), critical scholarship has complicated this orthodox framing through tripartite discussions related to: a) soul surfers escaping to modernity; b) soul surfers' dissent to capitalist modernity commodified through the surf industry, as well as postwork 'surf-slacker' ethics of nonproductive leisure; and c) free surfers performing multiple beyond-hybrid postcapitalist subjectivities. These discussions highlight the paradoxical nature of (post)modern surfers perpetuating cycles of (post)modern capitalist accumulation while simultaneously also enacting postcapitalist subject positions. While historical-materialist analyses understand these dynamics as signaling surfing postmodernity's essential paralysis, in which surfers paradoxically attempt to resist the conditions of modernity while reproducing them at the same time, the anti-essentialist review of current scholarship on (post)modern surfing subjectivity offered here works to highlight expressions of diverse surfing subjectivities enacting other possible worlds in the here and now.

These discussions interpret certain non-conforming aspects of surfing culture through the lens of postcapitalist subjectivities (Gibson-Graham, 2000, 2006) as representing potentially (r)evolutionary subject positions indicative of an emerging politics beyond the capitalist

state of modern surfing, in which beyond-hybrid subjectivities 'disrupt the daily performance of power relations' (Woodward et al., 2009) rather than continuing to 'reproduce the world as seen by those who rule it' (Escobar, 1995). This lens highlights relevant examples from the literature of surfers' subjection to postwork imaginaries (Comer, 2017), surf-'slackers' refusal of work in contemporary surf culture (Lawler, 2017), surfers resisting industry overdevelopment (Walker, 2011; Hough-Snee & Eastman 2017b; Kapon, 2017, as cited in Thiermann, 2017), and free surfers leveraging their income, influence and reputation for non-profit endeavors in social justice and environmental activism. This body of literature identifies instances of postcapitalist surfer subjectivity de-centering capitalocentric logics and practices (Gibson-Graham, 2006) by viewing surfers as rejecting 'the totalizing effects of competitive capitalism' through engaging with 'postwork notions of social purpose and community' (Comer, 2017, p. 259). These representations of postcapitalist subjectivity are complemented by the identification of some surfers' refusal of work as 'slackers' challenging 'the ethos of productivity' with the potential to 'radically transform the power relations between labor and capital' (Lawler, 2017, pp. 314-315). In this way, the non-essentialist review of current critical scholarship on (post)modern surfer subjectivity allows for deeper engagement with the multiple and overlapping subjectivities among soul, competitive and free surfers along a spectrum of reproducing and challenging the 'state of modern surfing' in ways that capitalocentric perspectives might obscure.

Examples from the literature and surf culture discourse discussed in this review represent moments of aperture useful for identifying specific enactments of postcapitalist subjectivity, whereby we might 'see changing selves as contributing to changing worlds' beyond reluctant subjection to capitalism in the state of modern surfing (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 162). Critical surf research and scholar-activism could draw from these discussions to support a counter-hegemonic politics beyond surfing postmodernity, which could entail endeavors to simultaneously: 1) continue acknowledging the ways that political economic behavior and lifestyle practices perpetuate late-capitalist modernity in surf culture; and 2) nurture instances of postcapitalist surfing subjectivities resisting and reconstituting power as (r)evolutionary modes of 'making [and surfing] a world' (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2010). Future studies might explore additional avenues for the anti-essentialist diverse economies lens to illuminate instances of subversive subjectivities challenging surf culture's (neo)colonial and heteropatriarchal imaginaries also foundational to the state of modern surfing.

Chapter III

Critical Localisms in Occupied Surfscapes: Commons Governance, Entitlement and Resistance in Global Surf Tourism

Introduction

The other day I was surfing at the point and this local kid dropped in on me. So, I told him he needed to respect my waves, the waves I have been surfing here for longer than he's been alive. I've owned my house here for more than 15 years, before there were any local surfers. And that kid said: 'This is my country. These are my waves.' I couldn't believe it. So I said, 'Yeah? Well, this is my sport.' It's the truth.

The initial inspiration for this article emerged from first author's October 2015 conversation with a white, cis-hetero male, California-born surfer and beachfront property owner in a particular surfscape on Costa Rica's Pacific Coast. His words offer an entry point into the complex dynamics of surf localism, a contentious topic in global surf culture and international surfing tourism. Localism in surfing refers to acts of aggression and assertions of dominance, exclusivity, and belonging related to claims to ownership or entitlement to waves by surfers who consider themselves 'local' to a particular surfing location. These acts and assertions of localism can include violent and/or verbal intimidation tactics and retribution by locals against non-locals in the water and on land, "locals only" signage at certain surf spots, local surfers taking priority on the waves of their choice, and defining wave access and use conditions in both overt and subtle ways (Scott, 2003; Evers, 2004, 2008; Nazer, 2004; Waitt 2008; Kaffine, 2009; Anderson, 2014; Mixon, 2014, 2018; Usher & Kerstetter, 2014, 2015; Carroll, 2015; Usher & Gomez, 2016; Mixon & Caudill, 2018). While the satirical popular description of a 'local' as "anyone who's been there a day longer than you" (Scott, 2003) might hold some sway in the surf, we understand surf localism from a critical perspective as a ubiquitous phenomenon mired in relations of power in which experiences of place and belonging are negotiated through surfers' differentiated positioning relative to the cultural imaginaries and geographical territories we describe as "surfsapes" (Anderson, 2014; Olive, 2015).

Building on Karen Amimoto Ingersoll's (2016, pp. 5-6) Hawai'i-focused treatment of "seascapes" as places of knowing through a "visual, spiritual, intellectual and embodied literacy of the 'aina (land) and kai (sea)", *surfsapes* as a site of study link the physical materiality of land and sea places with the imaginaries and representational politics of producing surf breaks and their attendant zones of occupation. The concept of surfsapes recognizes that experiences and interconnections among surfing bodies in the water are not separate from the dynamics of tourism development that occur in the liminal geophysical zones adjacent to those surf breaks. Nor are they separate from the discursive constructs,

sociohistorical narratives, power differentials and cultural imaginaries that co-create the places where surfing happens. As such, surfscapes represent loci for observing dynamics of power and politics intrinsic to the development of surfing destinations, providing valuable sites of study for analyzing broader instances of localism in surf tourism development.

We qualify *occupied surfscapes* as those built on historical legacies of structural violence and genocidal erasure reproducing settler colonialism in iconic surfing locations and foundational cultural narratives. Here, occupation connotes legacies of colonial and military occupation, as well as the ongoing occupation of native lands through settler colonialism relevant to contemporary processes of surfscape tourism and development (Westwick & Neushul, 2013; Laderman, 2014; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; 2019). In surfing's cultural narratives, imaginaries of occupation are an important point of departure for seeing into the multi-sited and ongoing violence of dispossession elided in both the development of surfscapes and the phenomena of diverse localisms in surfing tourism destinations (Strauss, 2006, 2012; Salazar & Graburn, 2014). Imaginaries of occupation carry with them important concrete implications for global surfscapes, namely the (neo)colonial dispossession of people from their native lands, unsustainable pressure on their resources, and often, the decimation of their cultures by foreign-owned tourism endeavors and real estate development (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017c; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Jefferson, 2020). As "conventional discourses" that "tend toward abstraction, reification, and homogenization" while producing "concrete developments on the ground" surfing's foundational narratives align with Schelhas et al.'s (2018) treatment of imaginaries, derived from Strauss (2006, 2012), as well as Salazar and Graburn's (2014) "tourism imaginaries" linking objectifying, seductive and restrictive narratives of people and place to the production of sociocultural realities in tourism destinations. This conception of imaginaries is exemplified in the occupied surfscapes analyzed here.

Occupied surfscapes represent critical sites for surf localism to reproduce and perpetuate, or resist and subvert, what scholars have identified as the colonial-patriarchal and neoliberal foundations of modern surf culture and global surf tourism (Walker, 2011; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017, 2019; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020). This scholarship aligns with a decolonial feminist definition of patriarchy as a tool of colonization intrinsic to modernization, within which decolonial and feminist struggles exist in resistance to both capitalist accumulation by dispossession and processes of gendered, racialized and class-based exploitation foundational to capitalist modernity (Mohanty, 1988; Lugones, 2003; Icaza & Vazquez, 2017). Similarly, this line of scholarship understands coloniality-patriarchy in occupied surfscapes as functioning in tandem with neoliberalism, defined for our purposes as a capitalist political-economic governance structure and associated ideology founded on economic liberalization, privatization of land, public enterprise and/or commonly shared resources, and deregulation of investment, finance and ownership (Castree, 2010). Most notably, critical surf scholarship highlights modern surfing's appropriated and heteropatriarchal imaginaries as informing gendered and colonizing practices of occupying access to the surfscape, including what they refer to as the "surf tourism industrial complex," implicating surfers in processes of dispossession and neoliberal tourism/real estate development (Westwick & Neushul, 2013; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017, 2019; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2020).

Understood in the context of occupied surfscapes, then, the politics of surf localism represents a complex milieu worthy of critical analysis in surf tourism studies. Existing literature has explored localism in different surf tourism contexts as a territorial response to common pool resource (CPR) dilemmas provoked by the overcrowding of wave resources (Usher & Kerstetter, 2014; Usher & Gomez, 2016; Mach & Ponting, 2018, 2017; Mixon 2018). In this framework, localism is seen as a means of responding to a tragedy of the surfing commons (waves), in which self-designated locals assert ownership, entitlement and rights to the surf when they perceive their waves to be threatened by too many resource users (surfers). This perspective, however, does not adequately account for the power dynamics produced through Global North/Global South relationships in the surfscape commons, which may obscure expressions of localism from being recognized as acts of entitlement or resistance in surfscape occupation. Moreover, while scholarly discussions on the ocean commons engage with experiences of localized sustainability solutions as alternatives to the increasing neoliberalization of marine ecosystems and ocean governance regimes (Symes & Crean, 1995; Mansfield, 2004; Olson, 2010), the surfscape commons as a conceptual construct has yet to be treated in sustainable surf tourism discourse beyond the framing of CPR management. Accounting for this gap, we situate our analysis within what we offer as a multiple-perspective framework on the surfscape commons in order to recognize diverse expressions of surf localism as perpetuating and/or subverting surfscape occupation. This framework engages with: a) ‘commoning’ as a relational post-capitalist process of reclaiming otherwise enclosed or occupied space (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, 2016); b) notions of defending a non-commodified commons linked to indigenous and decolonial struggles for survival (Esteva, 2018; Esteva & Escobar, 2019); and c) coalition-building across fugitive subjectivities escaping surfscape occupation as experiences of “being with and for the undercommons” (Harney & Moten, 2013). This framework opens space for acknowledging diverse expressions of localism and community struggles against surfscape occupation as both discursive constructs and structural realities potentiating alternatives to the “ontological occupation of people’s territories and lives” (Esteva & Escobar, 2019, pp. 23-27). We borrow from Gibson-Graham’s (2002) non-binary reframing of local/global as a process of “resubjectivation” of surfers recognizing themselves as part of greater community dynamics grappling with relations of occupation, both situated in places and/or connected to non-place-based movements. We draw from multi-sited research to situate our analysis within a broader understanding of the culturally and historically contingent relationships that exist in particular surfing territories, as well as in relation to surfing’s pervasive cultural imaginaries. Building on existing discussions of specific surf localisms linked to a *translocal* network of surfing communities and political struggles (Walker, 2011; Olive, 2019; Comer, 2020), our critical surfscape ethnographies in California, Mexico, and Costa Rica examine instances of surfscape ‘commoning’ and *translocalism* to suggest that certain enactments of critical surf localism may represent modes of governing the surfscape commons through an already-existing emancipatory politics in occupied surfscapes (Gibson-Graham, 2002; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, 2016).

We begin by offering a review of existing literature relevant to surf localism in occupied surfscapes. From there, we explain the multiple-perspective conceptual frame on the surfscape commons we find useful for analyzing surf localisms in their propensity to

reproduce or subvert surfscapes occupation. Next, we offer a brief discussion on critical surfscapes ethnography as the multi-sited methodology we employed for our research, before presenting our categorical analysis on the instances of localism we studied in California, Costa Rica, and Oaxaca, Mexico. We conclude by identifying certain enactments of surf localism as both modes of surf tourism governance and apertures for coalition-building among critical localisms of resistance in otherwise occupied surfscapes.

Occupied Surfscapes, Critical Surf Localisms

The field of critical surf studies highlights two general and interrelated imaginaries foundational to our understanding of occupied surfscapes: 1) the state of modern surfing; and 2) the surf tourism industrial complex (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017, 2019; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b). First, Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017b, pp. 86-87) define “modern surfing” as “the practice of riding waves on any form of surfcraft after Western appropriation [from native Hawai’ian culture] and exploitation of surfing.” They qualify the “state of modern surfing” as “‘a semi-autonomous modern world of its own’ under which the right to surf... is governed by pressures exerted by those seeking to institutionalize and profit from modern surfing..., defining what surfing is, what surfing ‘should’ look like, and who can surf in different contexts” (2017b, pp. 86-87). Scholars identify the gendered and racialized aspects of dominant surf culture constructs, while also drawing attention to how these constructs became entrenched through the global capitalist surf industry. Evers (2004) and Thompson (2017) establish the dominant identity politics of modern surfing as embodying ethics of heteronormative masculinity while objectifying and marginalizing women in surf culture, the global surf industry and politics of professional surfing. Comer (2010) and Olive (2019) tease out the representational discrepancies and everyday political implications for women surfers participating in the male-dominated modern sport and lifestyle of colonial-patriarchal surfing culture. Kusz (2004) describes how high-profit surf brands and an increasingly homogenized surfing media solidified the subculture’s hegemonic sociocultural ethics, representing “specifically white American values, including ‘individualism, self-reliance, risk-taking, and progress’” (cited in Wheaton, 2007, pp. 179). Moreover, Thompson (2017) reveals the gendered whitewashing of modern surfing via the “tanned whiteness and exemplar masculinity” of “California dreaming” which obscures and marginalizes non-conforming surfers from a seemingly monolithic cultural narrative. Wheaton similarly argues that the state of modern surfing established itself as “gendered and racialized space” in an “‘imagined community’ of whiteness” (Wheaton, 2007, pp. 179) linked to capitalist industry and tied into the colonizing processes of neoliberalism. While the state of modern surfing thus established itself as a dominant cultural construct favoring white heteromale participants and capitalist values, critical surf scholars emphasize the ways in which women, queer and BIPOC communities have historically contested, and continue to contest the hegemony of these norms as critical modes of existence and survival, resistance and emancipatory politics (Walker, 2011; Comer, 2016; Dawson, 2017a; Comley, 2018; lisahunter, 2018).

Second, critique of modern surfing’s “tourism industrial complex” defines it as having originated in early twentieth-century Hawai’i and persisting today in the industry-

constructed travel-to-surf narrative that links “modern surfing and international exploration”, implicating surf travel and associated development in the cultural appropriation of surfing and “remaking of indigenous space into settler space” (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017, p. 228; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b, p. 98; Ponting, 2008). Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017c, p. 4) thus describe colonizers’ attempted annihilation of Hawaiian surfing culture, traditionally a “ritual practice and mechanism of political and social organization in pre-occupation Hawai’i”, and its subsequent re-introduction as a leisure activity to promote tourism in coastal landscapes, first in Hawai’i and then around the world. In this way, researchers explain, surfing was exoticized by rich travelogue accounts as authentic cultural tradition to propel Hawai’i’s insertion into the tourism industrial complex and simultaneously heroized in a whitewashed history of surfing’s revival by *haole* ‘saviors’ as a central narrative component in both the Americanization of surfing and its constructed global imaginary (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017). Gilio-Whitaker (2019, 2017) and Jefferson (2020) draw particular attention to how the histories of surfing and real estate development in California are built on indigenous erasure and racialized dispossession inherent in the structural and overt genocidal violence of settler colonialism in native, Mexican and African American land- and seascares.

Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017a) detail how surfing became increasingly conflated with histories of war and occupation, connecting surfing to histories of WWII and post-WWII violence, in which coastal tourism and development grew in tandem with the aftermath of genocidal erasure characteristic of dictatorial post-colonial regimes, however absent from mainstream surf media at the time. Laderman (2017, pp. 58) writes: “Not a single travelogue in *Surfer* (or, across the Pacific, in *Tracks*) of the dreamscape discovered by surfers in Indonesia in the 1970s mentioned the invasion and genocidal occupation of East Timor by the US-backed Suharto regime.” Similarly, Ponting’s (2008) coverage of “consuming nirvana” links the surf travel ethic in the modern surfing imaginary to neoliberal capitalist interest by which the ‘dream of Nirvana’ travel-to-surf narrative is socially constructed as an essential ethic of cultural belonging, wherein surf travel to idyllic destinations became a new “frontier to be explored, conquered and commoditized” by the global surf travel industry (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b). From this perspective, the growing trend of international surf tourism is understood as part and parcel of the neoliberal travel-to-surf imaginary, contributing in myriad ways to the ongoing colonization of global surfscapes (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017).

This body of literature on surfing’s cultural imaginaries is useful in demonstrating how “through renewable marketing iconographies, surfing.... enables Westerners both to purportedly ‘go native’ and to recolonize the postcolonial world with blissful ignorance, surfboards under arm” (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017c, p. 6). Similarly, this literature describes how these imaginaries rest fundamentally on obscuring histories and surfing bodies that do not conform to the cultural narrative (Comer, 2010, 2016; Walker, 2011; Dawson, 2017a, 2017b; Wheaton, 2017; Comley, 2018; Olive, 2019). Building on this background discussion of the implications of surfing’s modern imaginaries in occupied surfscapes, we turn now to a review of existing literature on surf localisms as potential spaces of contestation and resistance in the state of modern surfing and its surf tourism industrial complex.

A key thread in existing literature on surf localism centers around the negotiated dynamics of access and rights to wave use within a narrative of increasing resource scarcity resulting from overuse, referred to as ‘crowding’ of surf breaks (Usher & Gomez, 2016; Mach & Ponting, 2018, 2017; Mixon 2018). In this general narrative, localism is described as enacted in different ways by a range of resource users (surfers), including: a) native locals in the Global South defending their waves as an expression of territoriality by asserting ownership, defining boundaries, exerting priority on waves and regulating behavior in the lineup (Usher & Kerstetter, 2014; Usher & Gomez, 2016); and b) wealthy landowners and groups of coastal residents in Global North surf spots employing violence and intimidation tactics to keep adjacent breaks exclusive to themselves (Nazer, 2004; Kaffine, 2009; Mixon, 2014, 2018; Carroll, 2015). In this framework, localism is seen as a means of responding to a tragedy of the wave commons in which (often self-designated) locals assert ownership, entitlement and rights to the surf break, defining boundaries as ‘locals only’ (Usher & Kerstetter, 2014; Usher & Gomez, 2016), strengthening property rights (Mixon & Caudill, 2018), commodifying and governing access to wave resources (Scott, 2003; Nazer, 2004; Anderson, 2014; Mixon, 2014, 2018), adopting a masculinized, racialized, localist, or trans-localist identity (Evers, 2004, 2008; Waitt, 2008; Comer, 2010), and forming into small surf gangs (Mixon, 2014, 2018) as a means of regulating the surfscape (Scheibel, 1995; Kaffine, 2009; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Mach & Ponting, 2017; 2018).

Many of these discussions attribute localism to increasing scarcity of waves due to crowding in the lineup,¹ seen as a failure of governance related to common pool resource management, highlighting the detrimental consequences of the depletion of the surf ‘resource’ by too many resource users, and the associated environmental degradation of adjacent landscapes (Ponting & O’Brien, 2013; Mixon, 2014, 2018; Mach & Ponting, 2017; 2018). Situating surf localism within the perspective of CPR management (Ostrom, 1991; Agrawal, 2003), crowding at the site of the surf break is perceived as a crisis of common resources (waves) shared poorly among resource users, reflecting a conventional capitalocentric understanding on the tragedy of the commons, whereby localism is enacted in the self-interest of securing access to increasingly scarce surf resources (waves). However, localism seen as a rights-to-access response to the overcrowding/scarcity of finite waves through the perspective of a CPR dilemma does not necessarily recognize power dynamics or inequalities produced through neocolonial-patriarchal and neoliberal relationships in the state of modern surfing and surf tourism industrial complex (Huron, 2018; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b). This limitation may obscure expressions of localism from being seen as acts of entitlement or resistance in occupied surfscape imaginaries and territories. Beyond these capitalocentric discussions of localism related to tourism governance within CPR management perspectives, there is a dearth of critical scholarship on the surfscape commons as such, reflecting an important gap in existing research which our analysis seeks to fill.

A different strand of literature on surf localism introduces the concept of “critical localisms” (Dirlik, 1996, cited in Comer, 2010) to describe how the global subculture of “surfers-as-community” is linked to a network of place-based surfing communities, whose “translocal”

¹ Lineup refers to the ocean zone where surfers wait for incoming waves.

identities are connected to “specific political struggles” (Comer, 2010, p. 26). Through such “critical localisms,” researchers assert that surf culture is implicated in the politics of non-surfing issues related to social and gender justice and environmentalism, while making possible a new global/local surfing politics (Comer, 2010). As an example of critical localism, *surfeminist* research draws particular attention to the ways “girl localism” represents a politics of resistance enacting counterfemininities against coloniality-patriarchy in modern surfing through local/global exchanges that constitute a “global contemporary social movement” exercised through “real-time actions that globalize from below” (Comer, 2010, pp. 17-18, 2017). These exchanges are intended to strengthen solidarity among women surfers, and can include in-person surf meetups at particular surf spots, women-run surf-and-social justice organizations promoting surfing for women and girls, scholarly activist networks such as the Institute for Women Surfers, and online engagements with women’s surfing groups on social media (Comer, 2017). As such, surfeminist identities are forged through the translocal politics of girl localism, finding resonance with Gibson-Graham’s (2002) non-binary reframing of local/global through women surfers’ place- and beyond-place-based “resubjection” as surfing subjects connected to broader community struggles and movements grappling with colonial-patriarchal relations of surfscape occupation.

Contributing to a growing body of literature on women surfers and localism, surfeminist scholars have built on Krista Comer’s (2010, p. 30) discussion of girl localism as:

a constellation of critical femininities that evolve in tandem with critical sensibilities related to specific materialities – like surf breaks.... a body politics of strength and courage, an ecopolitics blending stewardship with social justice issues of public health, and a vision of subcultural labor as a site of female possibility and flourishing.

Among others, these surfeminist contributions include Comley’s (2016, 2018) depiction of women surfers establishing ‘territory’ as gendered spaces in the surfscape; Rebecca Olive’s (2019) intervention on ‘girl localism’ as a means of differentially navigating the multiple violences of settler coloniality and patriarchy in surfing spaces; as well as Cori Schumacher’s (2017, 2019) characterization of the female surfer as both asexual mermaid and revolutionary subject challenging the constructed narratives of heteronormative sexuality and, drawing on Leslie Heywood’s (2008) third wave surfer feminism, representing a subversive subjectivity at the levels of both politics and surf culture imaginaries. Together, these discussions highlight the ways women surfers, acting on their own or in translocal communities, navigate a sense of belonging in the sea and on land through “girl localism” in the occupied surfscapes of modern surfing, in which they are otherwise regularly marginalized, underrepresented and objectified (Comer, 2010, 2017; Olive, 2019).

Other critical scholars emphasize the subject positionality and agency aspects of localism in their potential to confront power dynamics in surfing culture and subvert processes of neocolonialism and neoliberal encroachment common to the surf tourism industrial complex. These interventions include Isaiah Walker’s (2011; 2017) discussions of contemporary Hawai’ian identities and uniquely Hawai’ian surf institutions as presenting a meaningful challenge to the hegemonic state of modern surfing. Mihi Nemani (2015, cited in

Wheaton, 2017, p. 180) explores how indigenous Maori and Pacific Island bodyboarders “navigate space in a place that is predominantly white” through a “unique form of cultural capital” grounded in ethics of “respect, courtesy, and fairness.” Ernst (2014) chronicles the phenomenon of Balinese surfers “blocking”² for paying surf tourists as a “mutation of surf-guiding” and expression of place-based localism both resisting crowding by foreigners and supporting local surfer livelihoods, recognizing that “blocking presents an imperfect solution to wave-hoarding”³ by tourists and overcrowding.... merely one outgrowth of the larger issue of unchecked development on the island”. And Dina Gilio-Whitaker (2017, 2019) offers multiple decolonial feminist interventions on unforgetting the native Hawai’ian histories foundational to modern surfing narratives, recognizing indigeneity and its appropriation in California surf culture, and calling for a broader historical remembering of colonized California surfscapes. Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017b, p. 101) describe the Salina Cruz surfing association in Oaxaca, Mexico as “a grassroots civil organization aiming to protect local autonomy and to disrupt the hegemonic model of North-South surf tourism”; a potentially “emancipatory response to [socioeconomic] exploitation” however limited by “the bounds of creativity within the structures of international surf tourism.” They contrast the Salina Cruz example with neighboring Barra de la Cruz, which they describe as a “neoliberal town centered around the surf tourism industry” (Hough-Snee & Eastman 2017b, p. 99), a sentiment echoed by Mach and Ponting (2018, p. 10) who define the community-organized governance practices in Barra as an “appropriation of neoliberal governmentality to control surf-break access.”

Critical literature on localism situates ‘locals’ as enacting a politics of resistance in the power dynamics that determine entitlement, access, and belonging within surfscape territories and cultural imaginaries. In this milieu, surf feminism (Comer, 2017, Schumacher, 2017), queering surfing (Isahunter, 2017), “de-sexing surfing” (Isahunter, 2017; Schumacher, 2017), indigenous surfing histories (Walker, 2011; Ingersoll, 2016; Dawson, 2017a, 2017b; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017) and decolonizing interventions in local and global surfing dynamics (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017c; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019) represent diverse modes and movements of critical imaginaries of difference re-occupying occupied surfscapes, similar to how “indigenous Hawaiians successfully resisted and challenged colonial hierarchies and categories in surfing spaces” through surf localism and community-based organizing (Walker, 2011, as cited in Wheaton, 2017, p. 178-9). While these expressions of critical localism have been discussed individually in existing scholarship, they have yet to be considered together as representing a potential politics of emancipation contesting coloniality-patriarchy and neoliberalism in otherwise occupied surfscapes. As counter-hegemonic scholar-activist praxis in the field of critical surf studies, our analysis builds on current critical localism scholarship by examining surf localisms in California, Costa Rica and Oaxaca, Mexico in their propensity to perpetuate or contest the foundational imaginaries of modern surf culture and their occupation of surfing territories.

² Blocking refers to the practice of surfers using their priority position in the lineup to ‘give’ others access to waves.

³ Wave-hoarding refers to the practice of surfers unfairly maximizing the number of waves they catch without regard for other surfers in the water.

In the following section we explain the multiple-perspective framework on the surfscape commons we find useful for analyzing surf localism as reproducing and/or resisting surfscape occupation.

Multiple Approaches to the Surfscape Commons

In order to broaden discussions of the surfscape commons beyond the CPR framework, we identify three distinct yet overlapping perspectives that can be applied to critically analyze surf localism in surfscape commons. These perspectives are: 1) postcapitalist practices of ‘commoning’ as reclaiming otherwise enclosed or occupied space (Gibson-Graham, 2016); 2) defense of non-commodified commons as indigenous and decolonial resistance linked to “communalitarian” alternatives to surfscape occupation (Esteva, 2018; Esteva & Escobar, 2019); and 3) the “undercommons” imaginary of fugitive, non-conforming surfing subjectivities escaping occupation (Harney & Moten, 2013). Together, these perspectives might begin to approximate a summative definition of the surfscape commons as places, practices, relational processes and even translocal communities related to surfing subjectivities and cultural constructs, as well as surfscape territories and imaginaries.

First, we understand ‘commoning’ as a relational process of reclaiming otherwise enclosed or occupied space – functioning at the physical site of the surfscape and at the level of collective imaginaries (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, 2016). Engaging a relational perspective, this approach acknowledges systemic power relations – those among humans and between humans and the world around (Linebaugh, 2008) – understanding commoning in the context of the surfscape as a process through which people mitigate against larger power structures such as capitalism, neoliberalization, coloniality and patriarchy. Here, the focus is on what Eizenberg (2011, cited in Huron, 2018) calls “the actually existing commons”, or the ways people are constituting communities by ‘commoning’ the surfscape as a renegotiation of enclosed and unmanaged resources, “establishing rules or protocols for access and use, taking care of and accepting responsibility for a resource, and distributing the benefits in ways that take into account the wellbeing of others” (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 195). This perspective aligns with Bollier’s (2014, pp. 2-5) description of the commons as integrating “economic production, social cooperation, [and] personal participation” into “working, evolving models of self-provisioning and stewardship” of “things that no one owns and are shared by everyone.”

This approach attends to a “diversity of practices for commoning different types of property” (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 198), focusing on “the suppressed praxis of the commons in its manifold particularities” (Linebaugh, 2008, p. 19) as a “different way of seeing and being” (Bollier, 2014), and expanding “the political options that might be open to us to imagine and enact other possible worlds in the here and now” (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016, p. 198). Borrowing from Bollier and Helfrich (2019, pp. 15-17), this perspective defines the commons as both “living social systems through which people address their shared problems in self-organized ways” and insurgent space for “freedom-in-connectedness... in which we can rediscover and remake ourselves as whole human beings.” Through this perspective, enactments of surf localism might be seen as a process of renegotiating relational dynamics in occupied surfscapes, in awareness of structural relationships of

power and privilege, where decisions and attitudes toward sharing a surfing commons move beyond a capitalocentric understanding of entitlement in the CPR sense (land titles, property rights, resource ownership, etc.), toward a communal practice of commoning otherwise enclosed spaces. Global South locals opening up access to privatized surf breaks, regulating surfscapes through enacting modes of hierarchy or local rules, women surfers blocking for each other to help one another catch more waves, as well as certain community-based surf tourism area management projects like those in Papua New Guinea (O'Brien & Ponting, 2013) and Oaxaca, Mexico (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b), might be seen through this perspective to be doing something markedly different than if they were seen through the lens of common pool resource management.

The second perspective we identify can be described as 'defending a commons', representing a markedly anticapitalist ethic of defending or protecting places that have not yet been enclosed or dispossessed from native-to-place local people. Here, epistemic considerations are invaluable, and often incommensurable regarding the ways that land- and seascapes are involved in the daily work of life, cultural heritage, communal relationships and survival (Ingersoll, 2016). For many Hawai'ian surfers, for example, the process of enacting localism in the water to 'defend a commons' may parallel other experiences on land of living at the intersections created among native Hawaiian seascape culture and tourism development (Ingersoll, 2016), reflecting perhaps both Hawai'ian surfer Dr. Cliff Kapono's (2020, n.p.) sentiment that "surfing became this way to hold onto something" and what Low (2013, p. 58) refers to as "a curious existence, this treading between an ancient heritage and an artificial romance created by chambers of commerce".

Localism as seen through the framing of defending a non-commodified commons, then, might reflect important parallels with other indigenous movements in which "indigenous lands become 'territory' when threatened" (Esteve, 2018, n.p.). The always impending tragedy to be prevented or mitigated against is one of sociocultural and material survival, where localism as defending a commons relies not on re-inscribing capitalocentric understandings of commoning shared resources, which may open them to other means of capitalist extraction, but rather on building ethics of resistance, interdependence, communality and solidarity for collective survival in common with surrounding lands and seascapes, defending heritage and territory from the powerful structures and imaginaries that will otherwise have them erased. As such, defending a surfscape commons situates local surfers in the liminal spaces interpellated between cultural heritage and colonization as an ongoing struggle for survival. Walker's (2011, 2017) account of surf localism in Hawaii as historical and ongoing resistance to colonization reflect this sentiment on defending a commons, as does localism analyzed in the case of Oaxaca, Mexico discussed in a later section.

Finally, we draw from Harney and Moten (2013) to propose a third perspective for understanding diverse localisms as potential expressions of resistance and subversion; that is, the lens of the "undercommons." Here we envisage a surfscape undercommons, perhaps aligned with critical surfing imaginaries and seascape epistemologies, defined as a "being together in homelessness" founded on the "essential fugitivity" of surfing subjects, subversive by nature, who cannot be and do not want to be managed, governed or subject to

rules imposed upon them (Harney & Moten, 2013). In the surfscape undercommons, localism embodies a subjectivity of “being things which are not”, an ethics of “refusal of things refused”, and an embodied stance of “inhabiting the crazy” by both challenging the questions and categories as given and behaving in ways and through means of existence that naturally destabilize, emancipate, and transform (Harney & Moten, 2013). Here, the tragedy to be remedied is that of continued oppression/dispossession by participating in one’s own subjugation, with survival sought through a constant struggle for self-determined emancipation. Through the perspective of the surfscape undercommons, then, we might see certain instances of localism as representing a beyond-politics of emancipation in the state of modern surfing and its occupied imaginaries of coloniality-patriarchy and neoliberalism; surfing instead “toward a wild place that continuously produces its own unregulated wildness” (Harney & Moten, 2018) - not at all unlike the sea itself, a fitting home for surfscape subversives. Expressions of girl localism, “black surfing” (Comer, 2016), and networks forged among BIPOC surfing communities are relevant examples of the surfscape undercommons discussed in greater detail in our analysis.

Importantly, this multiple-perspective reframing represents a conceptual break from Ostrom’s institutionalist approach to common pool resource management employed by some scholars of (sustainable) surf tourism (Mixon, 2014; Mach & Ponting, 2017, 2018). Instead, this framework allows us to situate critical surf localisms in conceptualizations of the surfscape commons as *socioecological processes* and *political praxis* rather than *resources* to be “sustainably exploited and managed” (Ostrom, 1999, as cited in Huron, 2018). By engaging with multiple conceptualizations of the surfscape commons in this way, our analysis connects critical surf *translocalisms* to what we might conceive of as a multi-sited already-existing counterhegemonic politics in resistance to surfscape occupation, “in which the inevitable positivity of our collective ethical negotiations is made explicit and becomes a site of connection, exclusion, struggle, and active transformation” (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Miller, 2013). This approach offers a means of differently engaging with the relationship between localism and the surfscape commons beyond CPR-centric analyses, with important implications for critical research into commoning as a mode of surf tourism governance, as well as imagining a horizon for intersectional coalitions of resistance to occupation in local/global surfscapes.

The following sections describe the methods we employed for our study and engage with the multiple-perspective framework on the surfscape commons to analyze instances of commoning, defending a commons and the undercommons as critical localisms of resistance in occupied surfscapes.

Critical Surfscape Ethnography

In awareness of our surfer-researcher positionality as insider-outsiders among the dynamics of localism in different surfscapes, we propose *critical surfscape ethnography* as a multi-method ‘bricolage’ (Lévi-Strauss, 1962; Derrida, 1978; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) centering empirical methods of self-reflective and critical ethnography (Canniford, 2005; Stranger, 2011; Koot, 2016), along with a critical review of secondary texts rooted in modern surfing

discourse. Reminiscent of Stranger's (2011, p. 11) "unorthodox ethnography" in our 'participant-as-observer' role in researching everyday "adaptations, resistance and critique" related to the interplay among agency, identity and theory, we draw from our long-time surfing backgrounds to "take account of the relationship between the observer and the observed, but also the relationship between the... worlds they belong to." As such, our methods vary from site to site, given our personal experiences related to each, as well as the availability of existing secondary sources as additional empirical reference.

Sites are selected based on three factors: 1) relevance to modern surfing culture and history; 2) relevance as surf tourism destinations known for their localism; and 3) locations where we have the most experience as surfers and researchers, and/or where empirical research on localism has already been conducted. We each come at this research from different yet overlapping subject positions, namely second author's 50 years' experience as a cis-male surfer in California and Hawai'i and surfer-researcher in Bali, Fiji and Costa Rica; and first author's 15 years' experience as a foreign expat cis-female surfer living in Costa Rica, and surfer-researcher in Costa Rica and Oaxaca, Mexico, and member of international academic-activist network, the Institute for Women Surfers. In our treatment of localism in Costa Rica, methods include semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, participant-observation at surf breaks and on land, and retrospective autoethnography patched together over the course of first author's 15 years participation as an expat surfer living in Costa Rica. We draw specific empirical research from interviews with local and foreign surfer-residents, including local Costa Rican surfers and surf instructor, US-born surfers and resident landowners, professional surfers, and numerous others.⁴ We analyze the community-run surf tourism management framework of Barra de la Cruz in Oaxaca, Mexico through text analysis of existing studies including Hough-Snee & Eastman (2017b) and Mach and Ponting (2018), along with first author's August 2019 participant observation and semi-structured interviews with local surf guides and community leaders. Finally, our treatment of surf localism in California engages with studies on settler colonialism and racialized dispossession by Gilio-Whitaker (2017) and Jefferson (2020); research by Nazer (2004); Kaffine (2009); Mixon (2014, 2018); and Carroll (2015) specific to 'surf gangs' at the Lunada Bay surf spot in Palos Verdes, Los Angeles, California; as well as second researcher's reflective autoethnography as a 1960s 'local' to the Law Street surf spot in San Diego.

Critical Localisms and Surfscapes Commons/Commoning

California

Localism at California surf spots links histories of settler colonialism and racialized segregation to Global North surfers' rights to ignorance of their involvement in these place-based histories (Evers, 2004, 2008; Woods, 2011; Wheaton, 2017). Research by Jefferson (2020) details the racialized legacies of segregation of coastal access structured into

⁴ Many interviews were recorded in the course of both authors teaching in the University of Georgia's Surfing & Sustainability study abroad program, which we have led for 10 years.

Californian urban planning and its requisite dispossession of African American-owned coastal lands, implicating California's occupied surfscapes in the histories of violence foundational to the whitewashed "California Dream." Gilio-Whitaker describes how "surfing aided the settler colonial project to replace indigenous and Mexican settler populations with white settlers on the heels of the genocide of California Indians.... as a condition of possibility for surf culture to take root in California" (2019, n.p.). Much has been written on the violent aggressions of the surf gang at Lunada Bay, one of the area's most affluent communities where access is limited through coded entry between multi-million-dollar mansions and policed by the resident surfers who consider themselves local to the spot (Nazer, 2004; Kaffine, 2009; Mixon, 2014, 2018; Carroll, 2015).

Similarly, second author recounts the days of his own Law Street surf gang in the 1960s, where lineups were patrolled, masculinities tested and hierarchies maintained by area surfers who lived near the coast, west of Interstate-5, versus the "inland kooks" who lived east of I-5. Understood in the context of eliding violent histories of segregation and colonization built into coastal property ownership and adjacent surfscape access, white resident surfers enacting place-based localism at these and other spots in California can be seen as representative of Global North entitlement founded on a selective ignorance of those histories that allows these surfers to benefit from, reproduce and perpetuate settler colonial white privilege in occupied surfscapes. While these California "locals" might be seen through the lens of CPR management as responding to a perceived crisis of wave resource crowding, we can also understand these instances of localism through the lens of commoning as the means by which the surfscape commons are enclosed and occupied by Global North resident surfers who represent and uphold the exclusionary neocolonial norms of the state of modern surfing.

Yet, interestingly, these whitewashed California localisms are being contested by emergent expressions of surfscape resistance, particularly with the June 2020 succession of paddle-out protests organized by BIPOC women-run organizations such as Black Girls Surf aligned with the Black Lives Matter movement at Bruce's Beach (Manhattan Beach) and the Bay Street "Inkwell" Beach (Santa Monica), two historic leisure sites in California's African American history. In the process, these sites were remembered out of obscurity in surfing's neocolonial and gentrifying modern history, while important networks were forged among intersectional environmentalist and social justice activist organizations. These paddle-outs can be seen as representing modes of surfscape commoning through Global South localism in particular surfing territories and broader cultural imaginaries by re-occupying racialized, gendered and colonized spaces otherwise enclosed by the state of modern surfing, while also linking specific localities with translocal movements for social justice. The 'undercommons' analytic might also help us see these paddle outs as moments of coalition-building across fugitive surfing subjectivities whereby BIPOC and women surfers "being things which are not" - in other words, not conforming to modern surfing's dominant imaginaries - represent subversive means of challenging coloniality-patriarchy in occupied surfscapes (Harney & Moten, 2013).

Importantly, these recent expressions of Global South localism, while centered in California, had resounding international support, with affiliated paddle outs recorded at more than 60

surfing beaches around the world in June 2020 alone. Moreover, paddle-outs as protest-in-solidarity have become a way for the surfing community to show support for racialized violence against BIPOC communities, including multiple paddle-outs organized in response to incidences of hate speech against surfers of color. Resisting the rights to ignorance and historical erasure perpetuated through Global North localism in California's occupied surfscapes, these expressions of Global South localism connect "diverse publics to more complex culturally inclusive stories of ... collective national history, social action, beach access issues, ocean life, and watershed stewardship intersecting with beach recreation" (Jefferson, 2020). Linked to a translocal "decolonizing praxis in intersectional collaborative work" (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019: n.p.), we might understand these critical localisms as enacting modes of surfscape 'commoning', and coalition-building across sectors of surfing's cultural 'undercommons' inhabiting "things which are not" regularly represented or included in surfing's occupied territories and imaginaries (Harney & Moten, 2013).

Costa Rica

For our analysis on Costa Rica, we recall the October 2015 conversation cited in the introduction to this article, between first author and a California-born male surfer and property owner, which describes two different expressions of surfscape localism: one an instance of place-based Global South localism, perhaps 'defending a commons' ("this is my country"); and the other an assertion of Global North entitlement ("this is my sport"). We offer a two-part analysis to examine the types of localism described here and their potential impacts in occupied surfscapes. The first is the California-born surfer's right to ignorance related to neocolonial entitlement justifying claims to ownership of waves and associated surfscapes by means of self-proclaimed proprietorship over the 'sport' of surfing. His assertion of 'truth' speaks to the normalization/invisibility of a) the white-and-Western settler colonial cultural appropriation of surfing characteristic of occupied surfscape imaginaries, and b) the socioeconomic power dynamics and colonizing consequences of land entitlement through neoliberal surf tourism-related development characteristic of surfscape occupation in Costa Rica and elsewhere (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020). Second, the local surfer's response of "this is my country, these are my waves," describes a common instance of Global South localism renegotiating power dynamics in ways that might resist neocolonial privilege and reclaim colonized space. In this way, we might interpret these instances of Global South localism as both defending a place-based commons under threat of occupation, and 'commoning' the surfscape through a localist reclaiming of ocean space. Through these perspectives on the surfscape commons, we can see Global South localism as negotiating socioeconomic difference and rights to access and ownership, relative to both the neocolonial privilege of visiting surfing tourists from the Global North, as well as histories of colonization and the ongoing marginalization of local people in Costa Rica.

This sentiment on localism as defending or protecting a place-based commons was also intimated by a local Costa Rican surfer/surf instructor interviewed in the same location in August 2019:

I believe this place has made me who I am. It has shaped me. I'm one of the oldest locals here, so I have the responsibility... to protect my area... To defend and take care

of it.... [but if people are going to keep disrespecting our place] we are going to have to respond more rigidly. More localism.

This local surfer qualified “disrespecting our place” in terms of campers littering the beach and visiting surfers being rude in the water or taking waves out of turn. He also shared that he intervenes in situations where surfers are being disrespectful or dangerous, by telling them where they should surf depending on skill level and surf craft to prevent injuries in the water. While these instances of localism speak to forms of “defending a commons” by caring for the surfscape and regulating the lineup, he also mentioned that localism in the area was more violent in the past, including an instance where he witnessed another local surfer slash the nose off a tourist’s board as a result of an altercation in the water.

A US-born foreign resident woman surfer interviewed expressed a similar sentiment, though she specified that foreign resident surfers, as opposed to local Costa Rican surfers, were more notorious for employing aggressive localist tactics to prevent others from accessing the waves:

The localism when I first came here was much more gnarly than it is now.... Guys that are about 20 years older than me, they were gnarly. They slashed tires, cut anyone’s tents on the beach, stuffing all the crabs into the tent. [This place] was known as one of the gnarliest places to come. There weren’t a lot of surfers here, but they were yelling at people in the water. You could barely get a wave.... Now they’re all 65 to 70, and they’re old dudes who are kinda fat and don’t surf anymore, so that phase of the localism kind of died away. Some of them sold out completely, made their millions [selling their homes and properties].

She also described the different dynamics of localism she had experienced as a long-term resident known to the local surfers; and, perhaps as an individual expression of girl localism, explained how she responds to problems in the water:

I’ve known all the other [Costa Rican] surfers... since they were kids... I don’t have much of a problem with them. The worst... are guys from SoCal [Southern California].... the dudes who aren’t from here. Sometimes I’ll just wait, and then when a set passes, I just paddle right to the peak and just wait there, and then when they try to paddle past me, I’ll just make it be known that isn’t happening. I’ll paddle with them shoulder to shoulder. Use the body.... You have to assert yourself as a woman. In general [this spot] doesn’t have that many women who surf it, so it’s usually a lot of testosterone. The locals respect me, not the tourists but the locals for sure.

Understood in the gendered context of modern surfing’s colonial-patriarchal norms that marginalize women from the surfing experience, these comments speak to the ways girl localism, through individual acts linked to translocal surfeminist politics, represents an instance of ‘commoning’ the surfscape by reoccupying ocean space, as well as enacting a subjectivity of undercommons fugitivity and refusal by eluding ongoing occupation through the courageous act of surfing in male-dominated, masculinized surfscapes and refusing to be ignored. The experiences of the woman interviewed regarding the respect she receives from the locals echo first author’s experience surfing at this same spot, where the local male surfers share waves with women surfers through friendly expressions of camaraderie,

perhaps as an expression of Global South and girl localism solidarity, while foreign male tourists from the Global North vie for position and attempt to take waves out of turn.

Through the multiple-perspective approach to the surfscape commons, we can understand these distinct localisms at a single surfscape in Costa Rica as telling examples of Global North, Global South and girl localisms enacted across a spectrum of entitlement and resistance, with Global South and girl localisms representing instances of commoning, “defending a commons” and the undercommons imaginary in overlapping ways. What the California-born male surfer perceived as a lack of respect in the water, is perhaps representative of a much more complex dynamic where local surfers are “defending a commons” by asserting a sense of localist territoriality, renegotiating neocolonial relationships at their home surf breaks/occupied surfscapes. Moreover, where neoliberal dynamics in surf tourism leave little room for local dissent since growth-based economies rely on tourist income from the same visiting surfers, the ocean represents one such space where locals may be enacting place-based localisms of Global-South resistance.⁵ Finally, we might see expressions of camaraderie among women surfers and local surfers as a meaningful enactment of undercommons solidarity-in-coalition with the potential to subvert hegemonic dynamics of coloniality-patriarchy and neoliberalism in surf tourism destinations (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; 2020).

Oaxaca, Mexico:

Our critical surfscape ethnography of Barra de la Cruz in Oaxaca, Mexico adds empirical nuance to the existing research discussed previously by Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017b) and Mach and Ponting (2018). The following description summarizes information gleaned from participant observation and semi-formal interviews with Barra de la Cruz autonomous indigenous government leadership and local surf guides. Barra de la Cruz functions as a surf tourism destination within a community-run governance model unique in the world of surfing, but common to indigenous communities in Oaxaca. The local surfers who display dominance through aggressive forms of regulation in the water are connected to the community’s citizen assembly established in 2017, comprised of around 600 voting members, including nearly fifty percent women. The assembly includes an annually rotating leadership and labor model aligned with protocols formally dictated by the “Uses and Customs” of the indigenous communities of Oaxaca, and functions autonomously from the Mexican federal government, unless the community requests formal support from federal security forces (see IEEPCO, 2003). The two main enterprise mechanisms of the community assembly are both cooperatives – the community-run restaurant on the beach frequented by surfers and the guarded entrance gate to the beach access road, where visiting surfers pay approximately \$1.30 USD per visit. Funds from these cooperative enterprises are invested in local community celebrations, services and organizations including a health center, preschool, kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, freshwater committee, and community police.

⁵ See Dawson 2018 for an historical overview of ocean space as a zone of refuge/resistance for African diasporic communities.

Community assembly members are obligated to contribute monetarily to community celebrations and participate in organized *tekios*, unpaid community work projects, such as road or building construction. Benefits include community-run social services and health insurance for the sick and elderly. Failure to comply results in punishment including imprisonment and fines. Assembly membership is open to all community locals 18 years of age and older. Land rights to property and business ownership are limited to native community residents (determined by birthright), and foreigners are explicitly prohibited from owning land or businesses. Construction is prohibited on the beach, which has been designated as a turtle conservation area since 1984, when community residents who lived on the beach were relocated to the town center and surrounding areas. Private businesses run by local community members include restaurants, small supermarkets, pharmacy, internet café, mechanic and cabina-style guest accommodations along the road to the beach. Surf tourism is the third cooperatively run and community managed framework in Barra de la Cruz, following the turtle conservation initiative and the lagoon where the community works together to harvest tilapia and mojarra for consumption and sale.

While Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017b, p. 99) describe Barra de la Cruz as a “neoliberal town centered around the surf industry” and Mach and Ponting (2018) identify the governance practices of Barra as “co-opting” neoliberal governmentality, the surfscape commons framework offers a different set of conclusions relevant to recognizing Global South localisms of resistance as modes of commons governance in surfing tourism. Seen through the lenses of “commoning” and “defending a commons”, we might understand the Barra de la Cruz efforts as an example of commoning the surfscape, whereby terms of access, care and responsibility are decided communally, with taxation benefits accruing to the community cooperative and the townspeople, and surfers regulating the surfbreak through localism as a territorial extension of defending their surfscape commons against threats of occupation. As such, we propose that through localism in the surf and on land, the Barra de la Cruz community is establishing commons governance to prevent the types of neocolonial and foreign neoliberal encroachment we see in other Global South surf tourism destinations the world over.

Conclusion: Critical Localisms as Commons Governance and Translocal Politics

Engaging with critical surfscape ethnographies in California, Costa Rica and Oaxaca, Mexico through a multiple-perspective framework on the surfscape commons, we analyzed diverse enactments of surf localism in their propensity to reproduce and/or subvert norms of coloniality-patriarchy and neoliberalism foundational to modern surfing’s occupied territories and imaginaries. Reframing the surfscape commons discussion beyond common pool resource management, we examined instances of Global North, Global South and girl localisms as expressions of “commoning”, “defending a commons” and the surfscape “undercommons”. Through this analysis, we identified where entrenched settler colonial localisms reproduce neocolonial surfscapes of entitlement/occupation. We also recognized potential spaces of resistance and subversion in coloniality-patriarchy and neoliberalism in instances of native-to-place Global South localism and certain expressions of girl localism(s)

where hegemonic norms practiced across occupied surfscapes are being challenged, evaded, or otherwise transgressed. This approach to the surfscape commons can be useful for critical researchers examining localisms of resistance as postcapitalist expressions of commoning in surf tourism governance, as well as imagining a horizon for a coalition-based politics of emancipation in contemporary surf culture.

Conclusions drawn from this analysis find the greatest potential for localism to serve as an act of subversion in instances of camaraderie formed across subject positions of non-conforming surfing subjectivities often subjugated or obscured in occupied surfscapes. We refer explicitly here to intersectional coalitions that may be formed among Global South localisms of resistance defending surfscape commons, reclaiming occupied territories and imaginaries by commoning the surfscape against neocolonial-patriarchal and neoliberal encroachment, and/or engaging communally in surf tourism governance; as well as individual or collective expressions of girl localism linked to a surfeminist politics of emancipation negotiating space in the water toward greater gender equality, equity and freedom. Future studies might engage with these conclusions to explore localisms in the surfscape commons as spaces for subjectivities-in-transformation aligned with human-wildlife coexistence and greater interdependency among human and more-than-human communities (Nieto-Romero et al., 2019; Fletcher & Toncheva, 2021); and/or instances where critical surf localisms enacted by racialized communities are commoning the surfscape through diverse economic alternatives to the racialized capitalist state of modern surfing (Bledsoe et al., 2019; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b).

Chapter IV

Alternatives to Development in Surfing tourism: A Diverse Economies Approach

Introduction: Toward a Decolonizing Approach to Sustainable Surf Tourism

The mobility of surf tourists from the Global North has transformed the environments, cultures and economies of Global South coastal communities in myriad ways.⁶ Scholars have identified the detrimental issues associated with conventional surf tourism to include environmental degradation, cultural marginalization, settler colonialism and land dispossession, depletion of coastal aquifers, sex trafficking, hyperdevelopment, and mafioso-style organized crime (Barilotti, 2002; Buckley, 2002a, 2002b, 2006; Tantamjarik, 2004; Ponting, McDonald, & Wearing, 2005; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ingersoll, 2016; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017). In response, the field of sustainable surf tourism (SST) has emerged as a network of scholarly and environmental activist interventions intended to promote surf tourism as a sustainable development strategy, particularly in Global South surfing destinations (Ponting & O'Brien, 2013; Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Borne, 2015; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Towner, 2015; Martin & Ritchie, 2018; O'Brien & Ponting, 2018; Towner & Davies, 2019). While SST scholars have advanced research into community-based surf tourism management frameworks that seek to regulate common pool surf resources and leverage surf tourism revenue for local economic development, the field of SST has yet to engage conceptually with a decolonial postdevelopment critique of its sustainable development paradigm, or employ decolonizing methods in empirical research. Such conceptual and empirical engagement might offer greater insight into the colonizing power dynamics that exist in (sustainable) surf tourism development and facilitate novel approaches to community-based surf tourism studies. Absent this critique, however, SST-for-sustainable development interventions run the risk of reproducing the very neocolonial impacts of conventional surf tourism their efforts seek to remedy, representing a significant gap in both conceptual and empirical SST scholarship, which this study endeavors to address.

This article examines the field of SST's current approach to sustainability and explores alternatives to development as a basis for reconsidering the surf-tourism-for-sustainable-development model. The "postdevelopment" critique of economic development draws from both Foucauldian poststructuralist and Marxian perspectives on power and exploitation related to the discourse of international development and its economic growth-based model

⁶ The terms Global North/Global South are used instead of "more/less developed" or "developed/developing" to denote the dialectic legacies of colonial histories and imperial global capitalism of the North as responsible for creating the exploitative material and social conditions of the South as a relational rather than strictly geographical construct, wherein Global South dynamics can also exist in Global North countries and vice-versa. These terms are also used to transgress the deprecating constructs of developmentalism and its colonizing narratives of modernization common to conventional development discourse, as critiqued by the field of postdevelopment (Kothari et al., 2019). Similarly, the term "mobility" is used here to denote the power asymmetries associated with Global North tourists travelling to Global South surfing destinations, described by the "mobilities paradigm" as a function of relative privilege, access, agency and possibility in which tourism mobilities affect host communities in complex ways (Sheller and Urry, 2006).

as linked to the hegemony of global capitalism and Western modernization (Escobar, 1995; Santos, 2004; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Harvey, 2005; Esteva, 2009; Sachs, 2009). The diverse economies approach to development alternatives (Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Gibson-Graham, 2005), however, offers a lens for examining the capitalocentric logics of SST and exploring decolonial alternatives to development in surfing tourism different from the international sustainable development agenda (Escobar, 1995; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Kothari et al., 2019). Engaging with participatory action research in the surf tourism community of Playa Hermosa de Cobano, Costa Rica, research findings and conclusions drawn from this study offer conceptual insight into diverse economies as a postdevelopment approach to community-based SST interventions, as well as empirical support for decolonial participatory methods to foster alternatives to development in surf tourism research.

The article begins with a review of current SST literature and situates its analysis within the conceptual frame of diverse economies as postdevelopment practice in surfing tourism. Justification is then offered for the selection of the research site, followed by an explanation of the poststructuralist participatory action research (PAR) methodology. The subsequent discussion presents research findings related to alternatives to development in surfing tourism, followed by empirical and conceptual conclusions relevant to SST research and diverse economies in tourism studies more broadly (see Cave & Dredge, 2018, 2020).

Surf Tourism for Sustainable Development

Surf scholars have argued that the global expansion of surfing tourism represents a process of (neo)colonialism in the Global South through settler colonialism, as well as imported modes of modern amenity and real estate development catering to visiting surfers largely from the Global North (Barilotti, 2002; Ponting et al., 2005; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017a; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; 2019; 2020). This body of research describes how surf tourism destinations become similarly dominated by foreign investment and tourism development, transformed into modern surf towns by and for foreign surfers, where local people are often subjected to a “relation of structural domination” characteristic of colonialism (Mohanty, 1988). This literature identifies settler colonialism as marked by processes of indigenous displacement, exploitation, dispossession and assimilation by a foreign settler population facilitating, as a condition of possibility, the rise of surf tourism markets and associated real estate development as surfscape occupation (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019). Ruttenberg and Brosius (2017, 2020) propose that the challenges exacerbated by surfing tourism parallel the conservation dilemmas produced by other forms of both ecotourism and mass tourism, representative of the wider problematics associated with growth-based neoliberal tourism-for-development strategies aligned with the United Nations’ sustainable development agenda. Researchers also note that mass tourism in coastal locations often follows in the wake of earlier surf tourism exploration and development as a precursor to both with an “inordinate number of major coastal cities expanding outwards in concentric waves from a quality surf break” (Barilotti, 2002, p. 92). Scholars highlight that this common tourism trajectory is particularly worrying given the explosive growth in the number of surfers worldwide, estimated at 17 to 35 million and growing as fast as 15 percent per year, with the demand for tourism amenities consequently

set to increase exponentially in a global surf tourism industry grossing an estimated \$31.5 to \$64.9 billion USD per annum (Lazarow, 2007; Lazarow et al., 2008; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020; Mach & Ponting, 2021). In relation to this trend, critical surf scholarship identifies a “surf tourism industrial complex” as implicating surfers in processes of settler colonialism and dispossession of lands via neoliberal tourism/real estate development (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019).

Responding to these challenges, the field of sustainable surf tourism (SST), comprised of surfing academics, philanthropists and environmentalist organizations, has sought to promote surf tourism as a sustainable development strategy (Borne, 2015; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Porter et al., 2015; Towner, 2015;). Together, the emerging forms of SST seek to harness the ‘potential’ of surf tourism as a source of both environmental conservation and socio-economic development, the realization of which, it is argued, would contribute to greater sustainability in surf tourism spaces (see Buckley, 2002a, 2002b; Ponting & O’Brien 2014; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Ramos et al., 2019). As such, leading scholars in the field of SST (Ponting et al., 2005; O’Brien & Ponting, 2013) offer a five-part framework for SST: (i) ‘empowering’ locals to participate as owners in their local surf tourism industries; (ii) ‘formal, long-term coordinated planning’ in the form of surf tourism management frameworks; (iii) ‘systematic attempts to foster cross-cultural understanding’ by way of educating locals on their wave resources and encouraging more ‘sustainable’ income-generating pursuits like surf tourism; (iv) local sport development; and (v) SST as a poverty alleviation strategy. Recent surf tourism research has centered community-based approaches to researching surf tourism development, including Towner (2015) and Towner and Milne’s (2017) multiple stakeholder approach to researching links between surf tourism and sustainable community development and Towner and Davies’ (2019) sustainable livelihoods model evaluating local perspectives on the negative and positive impacts of surf tourism, all in Indonesia’s Mentawai islands; Ramos et al.’s (2019) study into surfers’ willingness to pay for ecosystem services as a driver for sustainable coastal preservation in Portugal; Ponting and O’Brien’s (2014) analysis of stakeholder perceptions on common pool resource regulation for the sustainability of Fiji’s surf tourism industry; O’Brien and Ponting’s (2013) study of the community-based management approach to SST in Papua New Guinea; and Porter et al.’s (2015) research into the potential for surfing tourism to serve as a development strategy for fishing villages in the Philippines.

As these and other studies elucidate, much of the current SST scholarship makes the explicit case for surf tourism to serve as a driver for the sustainable development of Global South surfing destinations, in much the same way that the sustainable tourism community offers ecotourism as a solution to mass tourism’s impact on destinations around the world (Honey, 2008). Critical surf scholars, however, argue that this ideal produces an innocence common to sustainability discourse whereby broader problematics of climate change, capitalist neocolonial exploitation and concerns for social justice are seemingly eschewed by promoting more ‘sustainable’ forms of tourism (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; 2019). This critique builds on existing work by decolonial surf scholars, including Gilio-Whitaker’s (2017, p. 228) research on the culturally appropriative nature of surf culture and its modern surf tourism industrial complex as the “continual remaking of indigenous space into settler space”; Walker’s (2011) historiography of native Hawai’ians resisting and renegotiating the

neocolonial encroachment of surf tourism industry development; Ingersoll's (2016) reflections on surf tourism's impact on local cultures and environments within a native Hawai'iian epistemology linking people and seascape places to self-determined ways of knowing and being in the world; and Ruttenberg and Brosius' (2019) exploration of surf localism connected to surf tourism governance frameworks 'commoning' the surfscape through indigenous community autonomy resisting neocolonial occupation in surf tourism destinations. Highlighting alternative possibilities for engaging with decoloniality in surf tourism research, the field of SST is thus critiqued by decolonial surf scholarship for aligning itself with the persistently dominant discourse of sustainable development that continues to inform the neoliberal international development agenda (Wanner, 2015; Fletcher & Rammelt, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019), in which SST runs the risk of reproducing the same colonial-capitalist logics and practices it seeks to remedy in Global South surfing destinations.

Postdevelopment and Diverse Economies

Beyond critical surf studies, the sustainable development agenda has been fundamentally questioned by a large body of 'postdevelopment' scholarship critiquing international development as a discourse perpetuating a Western-modern materialist world view (Escobar, 1995; Santos, 2004; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Esteva, 2009; Sachs, 2009). Drawing on Foucauldian poststructuralism, postdevelopment theory emphasizes the power dynamics at play in the process of establishing a singular hegemonic vision maintaining that economic development and social wellbeing are only achievable through capitalist production and modernization (Escobar, 1995; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Sachs, 2009). Postdevelopment scholars contend that this dominant meta-narrative operates at the levels of culture, knowledge and practice, founded on the hegemony of scientific, linear-rational logic characteristic of Enlightenment thought whereby anything 'other' is denied as credible to the point that it becomes functionally non-existent (Santos, 2004; Gibson-Graham, 2005). This critique is complemented by Marxian perspectives on the conventional economic-growth-for-development paradigm, whereby international development schemes are perceived as reliant on insertion into the global economy through the promotion of neoliberal strategies of export-led growth and income-oriented approaches to poverty alleviation (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Harvey, 2005).

A key focus of the postdevelopment critique concerns sustainable development's common grounding within the paradigm of neoliberalism. Here, neoliberalism is defined as a global capitalist political-economic system, policy program and governance ideology founded on economic liberalization and marketization that prioritizes extractive industry and export-led economic growth; privatization of public enterprise, social services and commonly shared resources; state deregulation of investment, finance and ownership (Castree, 2010). Sustainable development's continuity with the neoliberal paradigm has been critiqued as fundamentally problematic given that upward "redistributive effects and increasing social inequality have in fact been such a persistent feature of neoliberalization as to be regarded as structural to the whole project" (Harvey, 2005, p. 16). Deeply ingrained in the modern paradigm, however, scholars contend that the hegemony of neoliberalism as foundational to

development discourse allows it to be perceived as a default normal to the point that it has become nearly invisible, such that development is generally seen as both desirable and inevitable; and 'sustainable' development is believed to be indeed possible, and therefore rarely challenged in either discourse or praxis (Escobar, 1995).

The postdevelopment perspective thus rejects market-based 'solutions' characteristic of the status quo economic growth-for-development paradigm, as well as reformist strategies championing technical fixes that promote 'sustainable, equitable capitalism' (Hopwood et al., 2005). By contrast, postdevelopment advocates transformational approaches to sustainable development, arguing for deep socio-structural change to address environmental crises and social injustice (Pepper, 1993). In alignment with decolonial scholarship linking struggles for justice to the colonial project of modernity, decolonizing development praxis seeks to visibilize marginalized knowledges and support self-determined futures as both resistance to dispossession and viable alternatives to predatory global capitalism (Icaza & Vazquez, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019). The challenge for decolonizing sustainable surfing tourism, then, is to transcend the monocultural logics of a colonial-capitalist modernity (Escobar, 1995; Icaza & Vazquez, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019) by divesting them of their power and hegemony through imagining and enacting alternatives to development as counter-hegemonic spaces that recognize diversity in knowledge, culture, and economic interaction (Gibson-Graham, 2005; Ingersoll 2016; Ruttenberg & Brosius 2017).

One such trend in the alternatives to development literature employs the postcapitalist perspective of diverse economies to de-center capitalist logics and social relations of production from singularly defining fixed notions of the economy (Gibson-Graham, 2005). J.K. Gibson-Graham's (2005) framework for mapping community assets and diverse economies as postdevelopment practice provides the conceptual basis for the research and analysis offered here. This framing draws on a diverse economies approach to mapping: a) capitalist, alternative capitalist, and non-capitalist modes of interaction across the economic practices of enterprise, exchange, labor, transactions, and property (see Fig. 1) (Gibson-Graham et al., 2013); and b) assets-based alternatives to development (building on existing skills, infrastructure and institutions) as expressions of post-capitalist possibility (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; 2005; Gibson-Graham, 2005; 2006; Gibson-Graham et al., 2013). Shifting away from needs-based approaches common to development discourse, the assets-based community development (ABCD) approach for this study is inspired in earlier work by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993), emphasizing the importance of starting with an inventory of the skills, talents and capacities of the community, and then recognizing and mobilizing these assets so that local people are full and active contributors to their own community-building processes, rather than passive recipients of Western development aid

interventions.

THE DIVERSE ECONOMY				
LABOR	ENTERPRISE	TRANSACTIONS	PROPERTY	FINANCE
Wage	Capitalist	Market	Private	Mainstream Market
Alternative Paid	Alternative Capitalist	Alternative Market	Alternative Private	Alternative Market
Unpaid	Noncapitalist	Nonmarket	Open Access	Nonmarket

Figure 1. The Diverse Economy. Source: Gibson-Graham et al., 2013, p. 13.

This postcapitalist approach promotes a non-capitalocentric reframing of economic interaction that highlights diverse practices of economy (as discussed above and detailed in Fig. 1) as already-existing alternatives to hegemonic notions of development (Gibson-Graham, 2000, 2005, 2006). Gibson-Graham (2000, p. 13) describe capitalocentrism as a way of thinking about and/or representing economic life as centered on capitalist modes of exchange and practice, even in critiques of development and neoliberalism, which “confine the proliferative potential of economic difference”. Applied to the field of postdevelopment, this approach entails adopting a different stance towards the world as a means of first recognizing existing local efforts to improve well-being and then moving to support and strengthen those existing efforts as localized, pluralistic grassroots movements and alternative development initiatives (Gibson-Graham, 2005; COMPAS, 2007). As such, engaging with a diverse economies approach to postdevelopment in practice represents an emerging experiment in decolonizing SST research by centering the local and the endogenous in moves toward self-determined alternatives to development, while rejecting what postdevelopment and decolonial surf scholarship might describe as the colonizing, capitalocentric logics of the surf tourism for sustainable development paradigm (Gibson-Graham 2000; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Kothari et al., 2019).

Diverse Economies in Tourism Studies

A limited body of recent work extends the diverse economies perspective into tourism studies specifically. This literature includes Mosedale’s (2017) discussion of structure and agency as mitigating factors in diverse economic practices related to alternative capitalist and non-capitalist forms of organization, transactions, and labor relations in a range of tourism scenarios. This discussion draws in turn on Henderson’s (2007) study of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in post-tsunami Thailand as an example of alternative capitalist organization, as well as Ying and Zhou’s (2007) research on communal tourism development in the Chinese village of Xidi as a non-capitalist organizational example (both as cited in Mosedale, 2017). Ringhman, Simmonds and Johnston (2016, as cited in Healy, 2020) draw

from Maori scholarship to link the Maori concept of the moral economy with the collective benefits of communal ownership of tourism enterprise to conceive of a diverse economy of tourism as integral to the continuity of Maori values in bi-cultural New Zealand. Similarly, Palomino-Schalscha (2010) offers the example of a native community in Chile's Queuco Valley employing communal tourism ownership as a means of "indigenizing development". And Everingham et al. (2021) provide a case for diverse economies in voluntourism as a means of promoting peace and justice beyond the commodification and colonization of the volunteer tourism industry.

Synthesizing other scholars' research, Mosedale (2017) identifies home exchanges (Arente & Kiiski, 2006), voluntary entrance fees for national parks and museums (White & Lovett, 1999), theft/embezzlement (Botterill & Jones, 2010), gift-giving (Lew & Wong, 2002; Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003; Guo et al., 2009), charity (Bowie, 1998; Bloch, 1989; Turner et al., 2001; Kosansky, 2002) and state funding for tourism development (Hall, 2008) as examples of alternative market and non-market exchanges in tourism. Instances of alternative paid and unpaid labor in tourism are identified in the literature to include self-employment in tourism businesses, cooperative, in-kind and reciprocal labor arrangements such as work-trade, voluntourism, work in family-owned enterprises and, regrettably, slave labor in the sex tourism trade (Shaw & Williams, 1990; McGehee & Santos, 2004; Jhappan, 2005; Campbell & Smith, 2006; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Mosedale, 2010, all as cited in Mosedale, 2017).

Cave and Dredge (2018, p. 474) provide another compilation of diverse economies in tourism scholarship, comprising research on practices and initiatives that "rethink the status quo" of "extractivist and exploitative forms of tourism" by "valuing diverse economic spaces, modes of exchange, and diverse forms of value creation." This body of literature focuses on modes of value creation and labor practices that exemplify a non-binary hybridity among alternative and traditional capitalist modes of economy in tourism, including novel forms of value creation in the commons collaborative economy (Cannas, 2018); variegations among formal/informal economy rather than distinct classifications between them (Pecot et al., 2018); relational links between indigenous values and Western enterprise (Amoamo et al., 2018); tourism cooperatives linking communitarianism with micro-entrepreneurship (Meged & Gyimóthy, 2018); diverse forms of market exchange including multiple currencies in hybrid economies (Balslev et al., 2018) and non-monetized valuation in tourism experiences (Cater et al., 2018); and flexibility toward grassroots project funding that may benefit from some traditional financial support (Meged & Gyimóthy, 2018) and corporate social responsibility (Hughes & Scheyvens, 2018; Tham & Evers-Swindell, 2018) (all as cited in Cave & Dredge, 2018).

By identifying these multiple economic forms, modes and practices, this literature critiques the "hegemonic capitalist discourse of a single pervasive capitalist economy" and instead offers "a different view of our economies as open, plural and consisting of a variety of economic practices" (Mosedale, 2017, n.p.). Cave and Dredge (2020), writing in regards to regenerative tourism practices in the post-COVID era specifically, engage with the diverse economies framework as a post-capitalist means of promoting tourism practices grounded in decoloniality, communal resource governance and social enterprise as alternatives to the dominant "Tourism Operating System". They and other scholars envision a "diverse

economy of tourism” that embraces regenerative principles of degrowth and practices of mutual aid, economic re-localization, food security, and state support as “interventions that might establish a trajectory... for a global, collective and concerted response to climate change” (Cave & Dredge, 2020; Fletcher et al., 2020; Latour, 2020, all as cited in Healy, 2020, n.p.).

Finally, surf tourism-specific literature has touched on the potential role for diverse economies in decolonizing SST (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; 2020), but has yet to explore this approach in the field. Similarly, while SST scholars have advanced research into community-based surf tourism for coastal conservation and local economic development as discussed above, the field of SST has yet to engage conceptually with the decolonial postdevelopment critique of its sustainable development paradigm, or employ decolonizing participatory methods in empirical SST research. Seeking to address this research gap, while also contributing a case study in surf tourism research to the growing body of scholarship on diverse economies in tourism studies more broadly, the empirical research and conceptual analysis presented here explore the potential for a diverse economies approach to foster alternatives to development in surfing tourism beyond current practice in the field.

Research Site and Methodology

Field research was conducted over the period of September 2019 to September 2020 in Playa Hermosa de Cobano, a modest surf town on the southwestern tip of Costa Rica’s northwestern Nicoya Peninsula. Costa Rica, located in southern Central America with a population of 5.1 million, is a popular surf tourism destination with surfing waves on both the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. Surf tourism in Costa Rica represents nearly a quarter of the country’s \$1.92 billion annual tourism industry (Krause, 2012; Blanco, 2013). A small body of existing scholarship has addressed surf tourism in Costa Rica as related to a number of socio-ecological issues, including: localism due to overcrowding, territoriality and “transnational” surfer identities (Krause, 2012; Usher & Gomez, 2016; Usher, 2017); threats to the sustainability of surf-related resources given tourism overdevelopment and near-shore fishing industry encroachment (Tantamjarik, 2004; Evans, 2015); as well as the impacts of surf tourism experiences on pro-environmental behavior change (Hunt and Harbor, 2019).



Figure 3. Map of Costa Rica. Source: Nicoya Peninsula Waterkeeper



Figure 4. Map of the Nicoya Peninsula. Source: Nicoya Peninsula Waterkeeper

As it contends with its own surf tourism-related challenges, the field research community of Playa Hermosa is increasingly popular with international tourists for its accessible learning waves, expansive coastline and bohemian beach culture. The local community is comprised of fewer than a dozen Costa Rican families who settled in the area in the 1970s. Beginning in the late 1980s, much of this land has since been sold to foreign ex-pats, who have built family homes and vacation rentals and started small businesses catering to mostly foreign tourists, including a few restaurants and cafes, hotels, surf camps and a surf shop. Surfers from elsewhere in Costa Rica and South America have also moved to the area as small tourism business owners, employees and surf instructors. While the interconnectivities among foreign settler residents, local families and visiting tourists reflect the “contingent materiality” of coexistence described by Sheller and Urry (2006), socioeconomic, cultural, and language differences make for an incompletely integrated, however cordial, broader community experience, with power dynamics negotiated among the North/South relationships characteristic of surf tourism settler colonialism described above.

As foreign investment and development growth in Playa Hermosa accelerate in tandem with surfing tourism, a range of social and environmental challenges have emerged. With tax incentives pushing local landholders to sell their traditional holdings to foreign investors, the neocolonial nature of tourism development has provoked grave impacts related to river sanitation, watershed viability, theft targeting tourists and drug-related crime, social inequality, waste management, and dispossession of local lands via speculative real estate land grab (Tenorio, pers. comm. 2019; Grew, pers. comm. 2019; Nicoya Peninsula Waterkeeper, 2021). While many local surfers benefit from the steady livelihood opportunities of working as surf instructors for surf camps and visiting tourists, they also recognize overcrowding in the surf as a challenge to be reckoned with. The local surfing association of Playa Hermosa formed as a grassroots entity to regulate surf instruction, including restrictions on who is allowed to offer lessons, the creation of a price floor for lesson rates, and limiting the number of surf students per instructor in the water to ensure safety.



Figure 5. Playa Hermosa.

Despite the observed challenges described above, Playa Hermosa is in the early stage of the rapid development trajectory observed in other Global South communities with high-quality surfing waves. Other surf tourism studies have described the development of surf towns as aligned with Butler's (1980) Tourism Area Life Cycle Model tracing tourism destination trajectories under neoliberal governance along a continuum of linear phases: (1) exploration, (2) involvement, (3) development, (4) consolidation, and (5) stagnation, at which point the destination will either rejuvenate and maintain its appeal or self-destruct due to mass tourism oversaturation (Krause, 2012; Mach, 2014; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020). Currently undergoing the development phase of this trajectory, the community and sea-adjacent landscape of Hermosa thus sit at an important moment for exploring alternatives to development, while providing a window into the challenges associated with Costa Rica's characteristic conservation-and-development agenda situated within a growth-based model promoting a heavy-volume approach to tourism (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2020).

As such, field research methods were selected in effort to support community-driven solutions to some of the challenges described above.

Field research for this study draws from grounded theory's role for non-local researchers, like myself, working with communities in performative, "situated activity" toward the creation of counter-narratives and alternate possibilities, within an ethics of solidarity for post-capitalist alternatives (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Denzin, 2007; Denzin et al., 2008). Decolonizing methodologies warn against the historical misrepresentations common to outside researchers fomenting colonial oppression and socio-cultural exploitation in the process of serving Western discourses on the Other (Said, 1978; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Acknowledging my researcher positionality as a long-term foreign resident and surfer of Playa Hermosa as an "outsider-within" (Collins, as cited in Smith, 1999), ethnographic methods of participant observation in tourism practice and poststructuralist participatory action research were selected in effort to transgress colonial patterns of representing 'local' people by instead highlighting alternative development possibilities and self-determined representations of culture and community, such that this study and analysis might be "respectful, ethical, sympathetic and useful" within a decolonizing approach to research (Smith, 1999, p. 10).

Participatory action research (PAR) grounded in PRA/PLA methods (Participatory Reflection and Action / Participatory Learning and Action) offer an approach to circumventing traditional top-down research processes that favor outsider intervention and reproduce dominant external narratives on and in local communities (Chambers, 2007; Kumar, 2008). By contrast, participatory approaches treat locals as subjects rather than objects, moving from extractive, elicitive research to creative, useful and practical community development interventions founded on internal perspectives and local capabilities. The research process in this study involved two interrelated PAR methods: Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) Assets-Based Community Development approach (ABCD), and Gibson-Graham's Diverse Economy Assessment (2005) for envisioning postcapitalist possibilities and enacting alternatives to development in the field research community. Borrowing from similar work done by Cameron (2003), Cameron and Gibson (2005) and J.K. Gibson-Graham (2005), the intention behind these complementary methods was that, as modes of "researching back", they might prove useful to the communities themselves in imagining and implementing alternative development frameworks, while also advancing empirical research toward gauging the potential for these methods to support decolonial participatory research in SST.

Aligned with Cameron and Gibson's (2005) poststructuralist PAR methodology, a self-selected core research team comprised of seven Playa Hermosa residents convened around a shared interest in cultivating alternatives to development in the community. This team designed and conducted a series of community engagement activities over the period from September 2019 to December 2019, loosely following the related methodology adapted to the SST context by Ruttenberg and Brosius (2017, p. 124-125):

- 5) Documenting and acknowledging existing community representations... related to the current state of affairs in surf tourism and sustainability;

- 6) Contextualizing and deconstructing the current situation vis-à-vis Western constructs of development, while simultaneously creating space for new representations to emerge by tapping into existing skills, capacities, and assets of community members that may have been marginalized or denied by existing perceptions and self-understandings within status quo social structures;
- 7) Community inquiry and assets-mapping to strengthen new community representations;
- 8) Workshops and brainstorming sessions, as opportunities... to create and implement strategies for action on sustainability in surf tourism governance, aligned with any new representations of community... and self that may have emerged in the previous stages of the process.

These community engagement activities included semi-structured group conversations among research team members, as well as focus-group workshops and food-sharing events with community members, through which we ultimately mapped the local assets and diverse economy of Playa Hermosa and facilitated dialogue toward envisioning community surf tourism governance and conservation priorities among local actors. It is important to note that research team members and community participants included surf tourism stakeholders like surf camp owners and surf school instructors, as well as local and ex-pat residents who comprise the community in a broader sense. This engagement with the local community was central to the decolonial participatory approach in both intent and implementation, centering local people and ways of knowing in determining project outcomes and surf tourism futures (COMPAS, 2007; Ingersoll, 2016). Finally, participant observation and reflexivity were also employed as methods for interpreting the PAR experiences and diverse economies data gathered throughout the field research process, and in follow-up to the three-month PAR phase of the study. The following section describes the methods used and research outcomes in greater detail as a basis for evaluating post-structuralist PAR and the diverse economies framework as a postdevelopment approach to sustainable surfing tourism.

Post-Structuralist PAR Process and Research Outcomes

The research process began with an initial two-week community engagement phase to gauge and inspire interest in the action research project, as well as to recruit self-selecting members of the core research team. This involved meetings with local NGO leaders, conversations with surf tourism providers and local residents, and social media posts explaining the nature of the study, with a specific call for those interested in joining the research team to attend an introductory meeting. At this first meeting, the self-selected research team comprised seven members, including: a) local Costa Rican surfer and surf instructor in his mid-twenties, leader of the Playa Hermosa surf instructors' association; b) a local Costa Rican bodyboarder and surf photographer in his early twenties; c) a Venezuelan national and Costa Rican foreign resident of Playa Hermosa for 10 years, surf instructor and surf school co-owner in this mid-30's; d) a local Costa Rican community resident landowner, farmer in his 60s; e) Swiss long-term foreign resident of Playa Hermosa, surfer; f) a German

research intern in her mid-20s; and g) myself, a doctoral researcher and US-born foreign resident female surfer in my mid-30s with 15 years living in Costa Rica, including four years in Playa Hermosa at the time of research. Intended as an introductory idea-sharing session focused on how to engage with the PAR methodology in the community, the first meeting also became an opportunity to identify priorities for local sustainability related to conservation and surf tourism management. Four project areas were identified: 1) leveraging national environmental conservation area support for Playa Hermosa via the Natural Heritage designation granted by the Costa Rican National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC); 2) generating funds for the community through initiatives including a parking lot and nominal commission/tax from all surf lessons; 3) sea turtle conservation; 4) formalizing the Integral Development Association (ADI) for Playa Hermosa and surrounding areas, toward which three of the six research team members had already been working for a number of months.

From there, in keeping with the PAR process, research team members engaged in a photo essay project as a means of “documenting and acknowledging existing community representations... related to the current state of affairs in surf tourism and sustainability” (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, p.124, adapted from Cameron & Gibson, 2005). Individually, team members took photos intended to represent our subjective day-to-day lived experiences as area residents and compiled a short slideshow of the images, which we first presented to one another and then shared at a larger community gathering, along with a short video documenting scenes from around the beach, town, and coastal access roads. Conversations emerged, in particular, in response to the scenes and images of active construction projects, and residents expressed their disdain and concern regarding the current boom of large vacation homes and apartments being built in town.

This was a community food-sharing event and focus group opportunity for area residents beyond the core research team to share their reflections on the photo essays and video, engage with the sustainability priorities presented by the research team, as well as participate in a ‘portrait of gifts’ activity as an initial mapping exercise for what would later comprise the ‘people and practices’ component of the Playa Hermosa assets map. It was also an opportunity to engage with the second PAR step of “contextualizing and deconstructing the current situation... while creating space for new representations to emerge” (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, p.124, adapted from Cameron & Gibson, 2005). As a reflective moment for local people to evaluate the current reality of surf tourism development in their community and begin contemplating new representations, this step in the PAR process was fundamental to the decolonial participatory approach employed, as it sought to transgress what the field of postdevelopment flags as the capitalocentric hegemony of Western visions on quality of life, wellbeing and values otherwise common to conventional development approaches. The new representations that emerged in the process provided the basis for local practices and ways of knowing to be centered among the community’s existing assets. Following some initial hesitation, people soon participated in a joyful experience of listing their talents for themselves and each other, contributing to a tangible sense of camaraderie and kinship among the group. Skills such as fishing, farming, artisanry, cooking, surf coaching, and photography emerged as shared talents. Participants expressed feelings of slight embarrassment, or ‘*pena*,’ personal satisfaction at acknowledging their skills in this way, and

surprise at the many talents and practices they were not aware of among their long-time neighbors.

Following this gathering, we hosted a larger community-wide fundraising event with live music performed by a DJ and rock band composed of area residents, locally made food and craft spirits for sale, and a raffle featuring prizes of goods and services offered exclusively by community residents and their businesses, both local and foreign. The fundraising component of this event included receiving donations from guests at the door, raffle tickets, and a percentage of sales from the food and beverage vendors. This event was intended to both showcase local assets and invite wider participation in the third component of the PAR process, our own creative spin on the “community inquiry and assets-mapping” phase with the objective “to strengthen new community representations... among social actors” (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, p.124, adapted from Cameron & Gibson, 2005). We created a blank, wall-sized version of Gibson-Graham’s assets map (see Fig. 7) and invited people to write in their different contributions toward naming the Playa Hermosa community’s assets, categorized into: a) people and practices, b) institutions and organizations; and c) businesses and physical/natural infrastructure.

As people participated in the assets-mapping activity to varying degrees and milled about the event, there was a festive air of idea-sharing and discussion on the different components of the map. Interestingly, someone took the initiative to add onto the assets map a separate section they titled ‘challenges’ and listed a number of issues related to sustainability and development in the area, including road infrastructure, waste management, fresh water resources, reef health, overfishing and overdevelopment. Similarly, there was a section added for ‘ideas’ which included security for the beach parking lot, a community food garden, the creation of a biological corridor, regulation and zoning for construction projects, reforestation, geographical maps of the area, and the creation of a timebank for the non-monetized exchange of local services. While unplanned, these challenges and ideas identified through the assets-mapping activity complemented the second and third phases of the research and signified the start of the fourth phase of the PAR process as a “brainstorming session... and forum for communities to create and implement strategies... aligned with any new representations of community” (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, p.125, adapted from Cameron & Gibson, 2005).

Following this event, the work of the research team shifted toward organizing community members interested in continuing to brainstorm and implement the sustainability priorities determined initially by the research team, and later with the additional input of the “ideas” map garnered from the event. Teachers and leaders from the local private school joined the project efforts, and we endeavored to host a series of organizing events wherein community members could self-assign to participate in any of the project areas, which were expanded at this point to also include: an environmental solidarity group to contest willful instances of environmental degradation; the community food garden; and the regulation of building construction. Some members of the research team engaged in ad hoc actions related to wildlife conservation, including: the installment of a natural barricade at the north end of Playa Hermosa to block vehicles from driving on the beach as a strategy to prevent the disruption of sea turtle nests; and communication via the WhatsApp community group chat to alert residents of unlawful development-related deforestation on public and privately

owned land as a means of engendering solidarity and support to both protest the deforestation as it was happening, and demand legal repercussions from the municipal government authorities. Research team members also advanced steps to establish the local Integral Development Association (ADI), including convening a town hall meeting and embarking on a signature-collection phase to satisfy government agency requirements for ADI designation, still pending at the time of writing.

We completed the diverse economy assessment and comprehensive assets map, building on the collaborative process begun with the research team and through the community events, included as Figures 6 and 7, respectively. The diverse economy assessment (Fig. 6) identified a number of alternative capitalist and non-capitalist practices that exist simultaneously and/or in parallel with more traditionally capitalist forms of labor, enterprise, market transactions, property and finance, reflecting a richness of economic interaction and diversity of economic practices within the community. As a mechanism for making economic diversity and development alternatives more visible in the Playa Hermosa community beyond capitalocentric approaches to (sustainable) surf tourism development, the diverse economy assessment redefined the actually-existing local economy as a rich milieu of activity, practices and processes; a meaningful starting place for acknowledging community resilience and building local ownership, interaction, and the social fabric of the community economy as a means of practicing alternatives to development in a surf tourism context.

The Playa Hermosa assets map (Fig. 7) compiled a list of the businesses, institutions, infrastructure (natural and built) and residents' skills/practices that comprise the community's social and natural assets. Centering local ways of knowing and doing at the heart of the assets map proved a meaningful approach to representing endogenous livelihoods and lifestyle practices as key community assets in decolonial surf tourism research. Similarly, mapping elements of the natural environment alongside local institutions, surf tourism businesses and people's everyday practices provided a means for honoring and valuing the more-than-human surf tourism community as a decolonizing basis for visibilizing and strengthening alternatives to development in surf tourism governance. Together, these figures present a comprehensive overview of Playa Hermosa's community assets and diverse economic practices as a non-capitalocentric basis for acknowledging existing alternatives to development and envisaging others. As decolonial praxis in surf tourism research, the processes of determining the community maps and the utility of the maps generated through those processes comprise invaluable local knowledge on the community's already-existing assets and economic diversity underlying its relationship to surf tourism, embedded within the social fabric of the community itself. This decentering of capitalocentric logics in surf tourism research by visibilizing economic and assets-based diversity allows for a decolonial approach that redetermines the relationships and alternative possibilities among surf tourism stakeholders, local people and the sea-adjacent landscape, different from regulating and leveraging surf tourism resources for the pre-determined goals of a sustainable development agenda.

Diverse Economy of Playa Hermosa

LABOR	ENTERPRISE	TRANSACTIONS	PROPERTY	FINANCE
Wage	Capitalist	Market	Private	Mainstream Market
Salaried workers in restaurants and tourism-related businesses (including yoga teachers, surf instructors, receptionists, kitchen and wait staff, bartenders), surf shops, construction, carpentry, electricians, bus and taxi drivers, schoolteachers, landscaping, home caretakers and parking attendants, maintenance and housekeeping	Surf shops, tourism businesses, restaurants, construction and development companies, private school, transport companies, Spanish school, supermarket	Commercial retail, tourism businesses receiving payments from national and international tourists, restaurants and supermarket buying and selling locally produced food, educational, transport and construction enterprises utilizing domestic and imported materials.	Private property, commercial businesses, shops, homes, vehicles, personal belongings, animals, sports facilities, school, home gardens.	Conventional bank financing for housing, vehicles, businesses, foreign investment. Savings from salaries and market speculation.
Alternative Paid	Alternative Capitalist	Altern. Market	Alternative Paid	Alternative Market
Self-employment: housekeeping and maintenance, tour guides, surf / yoga / freediving / sports / Spanish instructors, childcare, therapists, independent farmers, formal and non-formal small business owners (food sales and fishing, for example), employment in social businesses and non-profit organizations; public employment	Non-profit organizations like Waterkeeper, Center for Research in Social & Natural Resources (CIENAS), micro-businesses, collective businesses, social businesses, state enterprise (AYA public water system), home-stay tourism	Direct sales of homemade and self-produced goods (food, etc.) community trade and barter, online sales (Airbnb, booking.com); community agriculture, reciprocal exchange, pensions, social security and state allocations, black market, scholarships	Streets, parks, service zone, natural heritage site, concession lands, semi-feudal work/living arrangements (ex. caretakers), sports facilities, natural resources like water (AYA public water system)	State Banks, microfinance, crypto-currency, barter agreements
Unpaid	Non-Capitalist	Non-market	Open Access	Non-Market
Housework and care economy, childcare, caring for family members, community work, volunteers, interns, animal care, care networks among Friends, home gardens and farms, research	Pro-Integral Development Association (ADI), Playa Hermosa Civil Association, National System of Conservation Areas (SINAC), SUSPIRO Sustainable Tourism Solutions, Couchsurfing	Donations, gift and solidarity economy, fishing, family economy, home gardens and farms, theft and poaching	Ocean, natural tide pools, beach atmosphere and environment, biological corridor, water, rivers, forest, plants, open-source internet spaces, sharing of goods, services and information, community farms, community land	Loans from Friends/family members, household Exchange, donations, barter, crowdfunding

Figure 6. Diverse Economy Assessment for Playa Hermosa

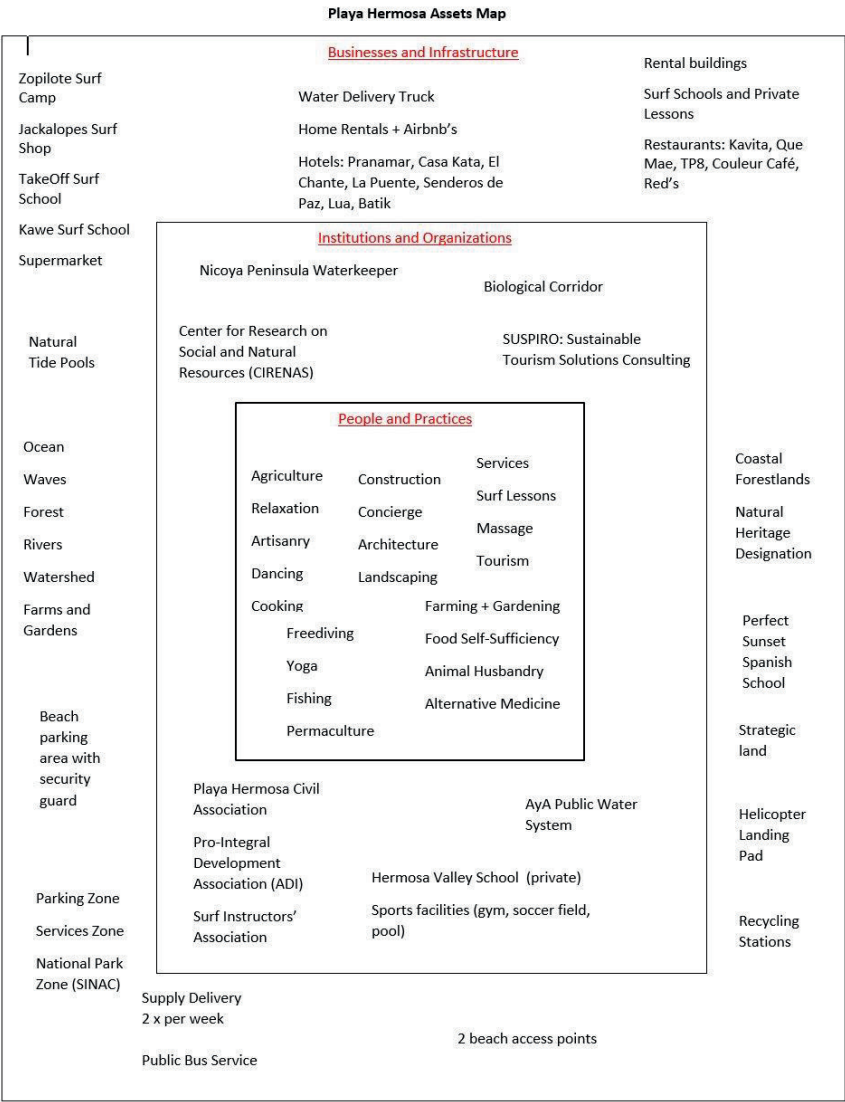


Figure 7. Playa Hermosa Assets Map

Following the participatory action interventions described above, in the period of January through September 2020⁷, research transitioned to include participant observation in

⁷ It is important to note that this period of research coincided with the onset of COVID-related travel restrictions and beach closures in Costa Rica beginning in late March 2020. These closures resulted in an extreme under-

meetings and conversations with the new area Chamber of Tourism promoting area conservation and regenerative tourism practices. These conversations emphasized strengthening regenerative and diverse economic practices in agriculture, enterprise and tourism via assets mapping and prioritizing re-localization as a community wellbeing priority. As these networks emerge and solidify their efforts, diverse economic alternatives to development are being centered in community conversations among the municipal government, tourism-based enterprises, area residents and grassroots social and environmental organizations active in the area. Similarly, the surfing association of Playa Hermosa is working with government conservation and tourism agencies to influence environmental priorities and formalize the regulatory framework for surf instruction in the area. As synergies form around regenerative tourism priorities, the decolonial participatory methods employed in this study might serve as a practical basis for broadening the diverse economies approach to development alternatives in surfing tourism on a regional scale.

Diverse Economies and Alternatives to Development in Surfing Tourism: Conclusions and Opportunities

In attempt to further empirical research in decolonial surf tourism studies and advance conceptual discussions on the diverse economies approach to postdevelopment in sustainable surf tourism (SST) research, this study explored the potential for decolonial participatory methods to support alternatives to development in SST. Engaging with poststructuralist PAR methods aligned with decolonizing methodologies, field research employed Kretzmann and McKnight's (1993) Assets-Based Community Development approach (ABCD), and Gibson-Graham's Diverse Economy Assessment (2005) to map the local assets and diverse economy in the surf tourism community of Playa Hermosa de Cobano, Costa Rica. Diverging from surf tourism-for-sustainable development approaches commonly employed in community-based SST research (Buckley, 2002a 2002b; Ponting et al., 2005; O'Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Borne, 2015; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Porter et al., 2015; Towner, 2015; Ramos et al. 2019; Towner & Davies, 2019) and critiqued from a postdevelopment perspective in critical surf tourism scholarship (Walker, 2011; Ingersoll, 2016; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2019), this study sought to examine how decolonial participatory methods could support assets-based and diverse economic alternatives to development in SST research beyond current practice in the field. Research outcomes and discussion highlighted the ways in which methods employed centered local ways of knowing, being and doing in common with the land and seascape as decolonial praxis (Ingersoll 2016), and visibilized economic diversity beyond capitalocentric frames as a foundation for envisioning and enacting alternatives to

tourism scenario virtually overnight, affecting local surf tourism-related livelihoods and the broader tourism-based economy in unprecedented ways. While the PAR phase of the research project finished prior to COVID closures, the later conversations on regenerative tourism I observed and participated in began to center objectives for lessening tourism dependence and mitigating associated socio-economic vulnerabilities exposed during the restricted travel phase. Similarly, community-based economic solidarity through donation and raffle campaigns created a temporary mechanism for income redistribution and gifting as alternative capitalist and non-capitalist means of supporting tourism-dependent local families in meeting their basic needs during this time. At the time of writing, however, tourism had recovered in Playa Hermosa, well exceeding pre-COVID numbers.

development in a surf tourism context. As conversations continue on how to engage with assets-based and diverse economic approaches to regional regenerative tourism initiatives in Playa Hermosa and across the surrounding Nicoya Peninsula, the assets map and diverse economy assessment generated through this study may serve as resources for strengthening alternative capitalist and non-capitalist economic practices in area surf tourism, while offering a decolonizing basis for connecting local knowledges, livelihoods and existing community assets with local conservation, agriculture and regenerative tourism networks as they come into being.

Findings from this study demonstrate important linkages among local knowledges, skills, community assets, diverse labor practices, enterprise arrangements, transaction styles, and modes of financing as potential starting places for strengthening community cooperation toward viable and already-existing alternatives to development in surfing tourism. The theoretical and practical implications of these findings suggest that the field of SST can draw from these experiences with diverse economies and decolonial participatory methods to reconsider growth-based and income-oriented approaches in exchange for non-capitalocentric alternatives to the sustainable development paradigm. Engaging with diverse economies as postdevelopment practice might therefore be seen as a mode of decolonizing SST research by renegotiating settler colonial dynamics in surf tourism communities, wherein decisions and attitudes toward sharing a surfing commons can center locally determined alternatives to development toward pluralistic expressions of community-based economic interaction (Gibson-Graham, 2000, 2005, 2006; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2019). Future research might explore issues related to researcher positionality and/or next steps in leveraging diverse economic and community assets toward non-capitalocentric surf tourism practices. While these future research avenues reflect the limitations of this study, the discussion and findings presented here offer a relevant framework for decolonizing approaches to (surf) tourism studies as alternatives to current praxis in the field. Finally, empirical outcomes and conceptual conclusions from this study offer a field example from SST research to extend diverse economic frames in sustainable and regenerative tourism research more broadly (Cave & Dredge, 2020).

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Chapter V

Gender, Race and Researcher Positionality in Decolonial Surf Tourism Research: Lessons from the Field

Introduction

As the field component of a doctoral research project examining alternatives to conventional forms of development in sustainable surfing tourism, I conducted ethnographic research in the surf town of Playa Hermosa de Cobano, Costa Rica for the year-long duration of September 2019 to September 2020. Centering poststructuralist participatory action research (PAR) aligned with a diverse economies approach to development alternatives (Gibson-Graham, 2005), I worked with a team of local and foreign-resident community members to explore the potential for these methods to decolonize current research practice in the field of sustainable surf tourism (see Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Ruttenberg, 2022). As the field study progressed, reflexivity provided a useful means to understand emergent experiences and complexities related to race, gender and positionality as a white-assumed⁸ (Bueno-Hansen & Montes, 2019) female-presenting researcher from the Global North engaging with decolonial and poststructuralist feminist methods in a Global South surf tourism community.

While the research itself generated particular conclusions relevant to diverse economies and poststructuralist PAR as decolonizing praxis in sustainable surf tourism (see author, forthcoming), lessons gleaned from the experiences and challenges encountered in the field offer a different set of conclusions relevant to decolonial and surfeminist research in critical surf studies and feminist geography in Global South sports tourism studies. In particular, this process suggests that white/white-assumed, female-presenting surf tourism researchers engaging with decolonial and poststructuralist feminist methods may grapple with a range of challenges in the field related to gender/racial politics and researcher positionality, which may ultimately affect research processes and redirect outcomes in unforeseen ways.

Critical surf scholars have engaged with decolonial and surfeminist frameworks to examine cultural dynamics related to coloniality-patriarchy in what Ruttenberg and Brosius (2019) refer to as occupied surfscape territories and imaginaries (Nemani, 2015; Icaza & Vazquez, 2017; Olive, 2019; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019). This body of scholarship includes discussions on surf localism(s) and diverse surfing subjectivities as resistance to white-male-dominated heteronormative modern surfing culture and associated neocolonial tourism development, as well as counter-narratives on non-modern surfing histories existing both prior and in parallel to Western colonization and appropriation (Walker, 2011; 2017; Comer, 2010; 2017; Laderman, 2014; Dawson, 2017a, 2017b; lisahunter, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2018c; Wheaton, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2019). Scholars have also engaged with

⁸ The term 'white-assumed' is used here, as opposed to 'white-passing', to connote the complexities of assumed racial identity in general, along with the social privileges/oppressions afforded by those assumptions, and my particular ethno-racial background as an Ashkenazi Jewish-American researcher (see Bueno-Hansen & Montes, 2019).

feminist and decolonial methods in critical surf studies research, including reflexivity and (auto)ethnographies related to gender, race, sexuality (and their intersectionality), socio-ecological sensibilities, coloniality-patriarchy and globalization in surfing culture (Comer, 2010; Nemani, 2015; Olive, 2015, 2020; Ingersoll, 2016; Comley, 2018; Olive et al., 2018; Mizuno, 2018); as well as participatory methods for decolonizing community-based surfing tourism research (Ingersoll, 2016; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Ruttenberg, 2022).

Together, these bodies of research have examined gendered, racialized and colonial-patriarchal dynamics in surf culture and tourism through feminist and decolonial frameworks and methods. They have not yet, however, offered a reflexive intersectional analysis of researcher positionality in participatory action research (PAR) in community-based surf tourism studies. Contributing to the existing literature, this article offers a reflexive inquiry into the field-based implications of researcher positionality in critical surf tourism studies across multiple axes of difference, power, and privilege, including race, gender, nationality, and class. This analysis draws from existing studies in feminist geography highlighting the multifaceted gendered and racialized power dynamics inherent in conducting ethnographic and participatory research (Rose, 1993; Gibson-Graham, 1994; 1997; Cahill et al., 2007; Sultana, 2007; Mollett & Faria, 2018; Schneider et al., 2020). Aligned with intersectional feminist research in critical surf studies (Nemani, 2015; Comley, 2018; Olive et al., 2018; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019), this line of scholarship honors calls for postcolonial intersectionality as a means of “messing with gender” by acknowledging the power implications of racialized colonial legacies across multiple axes of gendered privilege/oppression in development research interventions in the Global South (Sultana, 2007; Mollett & Faria, 2013; Faria & Mollett, 2016; Schneider et al., 2020). Self-reflexive conclusions from the field research experience connect these decolonial and feminist contributions on researcher positionality to critical surf tourism studies, with relevant lessons for feminist geographic sports tourism studies more broadly.

The article begins with a review of current literature on surf feminism and decolonial surf tourism studies and their related research methods, along with feminist geographic scholarship on gender/race dynamics in ethnographic and participatory research. Next, an explanation is offered for the poststructuralist PAR research methodology and methods of reflexivity employed in fieldwork, followed by a discussion of field research experiences related to gender/racial politics and researcher positionality. Finally, I offer a set of lessons from the field concerning the challenges and complexities associated with employing decolonial and poststructuralist feminist methods in critical surf tourism studies, particularly for white/white-assumed female-presenting researchers from the Global North working in the Global South.

Research and Methods in Surf feminism and Decolonial Surf Tourism Studies

Discussions on the multiple and entrenched power dynamics in global surfing culture are not new. Recognized as a culturally appropriated, whitewashed and male-dominated sport and industry, the “state of modern surfing” and its associated “surf tourism industrial complex” have been critiqued for the ways they perpetuate colonial-patriarchal and capitalist power dynamics in surfing spaces, both local and global (see Hough-Snee &

Eastman, 2017a). Surfscapes in the field study country of Costa Rica are no exception, where “patriocolonial” constructs (lisahunter, 2016) and neoliberal governance/governmentality in surf tourism destinations (Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2020) are differently experienced by surfers of varying genders, ethnicities, nationalities and social status. Given the ways women surfer-researchers subjectively negotiate these entrenched power dynamics across axes of gender, race and class, along with the implicated biases these common encounters might produce in our research, reflexivity provides a useful means of exploring subjectivity in surfing tourism research from the lenses of decoloniality and feminism, as other researchers have also contended (Olive, 2015, 2019, 2020; Ingersoll, 2016; Olive et al., 2018; Comer, 2019).

The emerging field of critical surf studies explores issues of gender, race and coloniality in global surf culture and tourism. Evers (2004) examined performative masculinity in surfing culture as perpetuating heteronormativity and male-dominated gender dynamics in modern surfing’s foundational narratives and cultural imaginaries. As a response, “surfeminist” research, linking theory and activism, has explored “girl localism” as representing a politics of resistance to male-dominated surfing culture; a “global contemporary social movement” (Comer, 2010, pp. 17-18); and a means for women surfers to differentially navigate the multiple violences of settler coloniality and patriarchy in surfing spaces (Olive, 2019). These discussions center “surfeminism” as:

a theory and action project working between publics of academia and global surfing.... a worldwide network connecting people, ideas, particular coastal geographies, online and real-time communities and microeconomies in surf industry, with activisms focused on protests of sexism in surf media, access to ocean spaces, environmental health, and women’s racial, economic, and reproductive justice (Comer, 2019, p.1).

Prominent surfeminist research includes Cori Schumacher’s (2017; 2019) characterization of the female surfer as a revolutionary subject challenging the constructed narratives on heteronormative sexuality and, drawing on Leslie Heywood’s (2008) third wave surfer feminism, representing a subversive subjectivity at the levels of both politics and surf culture imaginaries. Gilio-Whitaker (2019, n.p.) offers an indigenous feminist perspective locating settler colonialism among surfeminism to both imagine “a decolonizing praxis in surf culture” and highlight intersectional academic-activist networks in feminist surf spaces. Other surfeminist contributions include Comley’s (2016) depiction of Mexican-American women surfers establishing ‘territory’ as gendered spaces; and lisahunter’s (2017, 2018b, 2018c) interventions on queering and “de-sexing surfing”. Olive (2019) contends with women’s intersectional surfing subjectivities by focusing on surf localism in the context of “patriocolonialism” (see also: lisahunter, 2016) to analyze the gendered, racial and colonial dynamics of female surf culture.

Surfeminist scholars have also engaged with feminist and decolonial methods in critical surf research including participant observation, reflexivity and (auto)ethnographies related to gender, race, sexuality (and their intersectionality), socio-ecological sensibilities, coloniality-patriarchy and globalization in surfing culture (Comer, 2010; Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Nemani, 2015; Olive, 2015; Ingersoll, 2016; Comley, 2018; Mizuno, 2018; Olive et al.,

2018). This body of scholarship includes applications of feminist methods of reflexivity to analyze researcher subjectivity and embodied surfer experiences across multiple/intersectional axes in “patriocolonial” surfing spaces (Comer, 2010; Nemani, 2015; Olive, 2015, 2019, 2020; lisahunter, 2016; Comley, 2018; Mizuno, 2018). Comley’s (2018) intersectional analysis of Mexican-American surfing experiences in California drew from participant observation as a “cultural insider” connecting her own background as a Mexican-American surfer with the experiences of her research participants. Olive (2015, pp. 501-502) engaged with feminist methods of reflexivity to situate her researcher subjectivity among socio-ecological relationships of surfing community and place, as mediated across multi-sited constructs of “sex, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, class, and so on.” Olive’s (2020) discussion on reflexivity in surfeminist research examines how participatory surf researchers are critically situated in the research context, where reflexivity offers a means of grappling with the intersectional complexities of situated researcher identities/subjectivities and multiple positionalities. Nemani’s (2015) ethnographic experiences with female Maori bodyboarders in Aoteara/New Zealand centered a reflexive approach to her own Samoan/Maori “brown female bodyboarder” researcher subjectivity, navigating dynamics of “belonging and community related to settler-colonial politics” (as cited in Olive, 2019, p. 49). Mizuno’s (2018, p. 88) autoethnographic account of surfing in Japan emphasized cultural hierarchies across surfcraft and gender, in which she “found [her]self marginalized dually from the culture as a bodyboarder and a woman.” Finally, Olive, Roy and Wheaton (2018) engaged with intersectionality as a conceptual and methodological framework for critical surfeminist studies, from an intersectional lens across axes of gender, sexuality, ethnicity and local/non-local status.

Other critical surf scholars emphasize the decolonial subject positionality of surfers confronting power dynamics in surfing culture and their attempts to subvert processes of neocolonialism exacerbated by global surfing tourism. These interventions include Walker’s (2011; 2017) discussions of contemporary Hawai’ian identities and uniquely Hawai’ian surf institutions as presenting a meaningful challenge to hegemonic imaginaries in modern surf culture. Similarly, Gilio-Whitaker (2017; 2019) offers multiple decolonial feminist interventions on unforgetting the native Hawai’ian histories foundational to modern surfing narratives, recognizing indigeneity and its appropriation in California surf culture, and calling for a broader historical remembering of colonized California surfscapes. Dawson (2017a, p. 149) explores the indigenous surfing histories of Atlantic Africa and Oceania resisting colonial imperatives and persisting in “amphibious spaces Westerns sought to physically and intellectually colonize.” Hough-Snee and Eastman (2017, p. 101) describe the Salina Cruz surfing association in Oaxaca, Mexico as “a grassroots civil organization aiming to protect local autonomy and to disrupt the hegemonic model of North-South surf tourism”.

Many critical surf scholars thus agree that global surf tourism represents a process of (neo)colonialism through modern amenity and real estate development, whereby local people in Global South surfing destinations are often subjected to the structural violences of settler colonial power dynamics (Ponting et al., 2005; Comer, 2010; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017; Laderman, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017, 2019, 2020). This critique draws on postdevelopment discourse to propose decolonial alternatives to development in sustainable surfing tourism via assets-based and critical PAR

methodological approaches that recognize diverse economic practices of surfscapes “commoning” as decolonizing modes of counterhegemonic resistance to conventional development interventions (Ruttenberg and Brosius, 2017, 2019, 2020; Ruttenberg, 2022). This approach is proposed as an alternative to surf tourism-for-sustainable development frames common to other community-based sustainable surf tourism studies research (see O’Brien & Ponting, 2013; Ponting & O’Brien, 2014; Borne, 2015; Towner, 2015; Towner & Davies, 2019). The decolonizing approach thus echoes Ingersoll’s (2016, p. 3) self-reflexive ethnographic research in surf tourism, which calls for a “seascape epistemology” to pull away from “the binary opposition between the ‘colonizer’ and the ‘colonized’” toward “alternative ways of knowing and producing knowledge that allow for empowerment and self-determination” in surfing culture and tourism.

Gender, Race and Researcher Positionality in Feminist Geography

While the ethnographic and PAR methods described above have been employed in assets-based approaches to development alternatives, feminist geographers have identified a number of challenges and complexities for researchers related to gender and racial dynamics in conducting participatory field research. Schneider et al. (2020) offer a collection of narrative accounts on the feminist politics of fieldwork inspired by existing literature on researcher positionality forwarded by earlier feminist geographic studies (Rose, 1993, 1997; Cahill et al., 2007; Sultana, 2007; Mollett & Faria, 2018). Their study highlights how ethnographic research in contexts defined by patriarchal and market-based ethics shape North-South fieldwork relationships along gendered and racialized lines, offering researchers’ self-reflexive experiences as examples of how (mostly) women navigate gender/racial politics and power dynamics in the field. These accounts build on a body of literature in feminist geography that centers reflexivity as a useful method for avoiding “false claims of neutrality and universality” common to normative masculinist fieldworker tropes that “flatten positionality”, fail to recognize tensions and erasures that “shape the production of knowledge”, and “conceal how the social positions of researchers and research participants shape questions, methods, and findings (Rose, 1993; 1997; Sundberg, 2003; England, 1994; Mullings, 1994, as cited in Schneider et al., 2020, p. 521).

Offering insight into the ways gendered fieldwork encounters lead researchers toward adaptations that shift or shape their research projects, Schneider et al. (2020, p. 2) situate gender politics in field research as “part of patriarchal power relations—and their contestations—that connect us to women everywhere.” This discussion also contends with the relative privilege dynamics of both decolonial and critical feminist lenses on researcher positionality that might “simultaneously account for our systemic privilege at structural and ‘global’ levels [as the “powerful Western researcher” (Said, 1978; Chakrabarty, 2000)], and the recurring moments of powerlessness and vulnerability we experience in the field as female-presenting researchers” (Schneider et al., 2020, p. 3). Sato’s treatment of “multiplex subjectivity” offers a useful frame for conceiving of researcher positionality in decolonial feminist participatory fieldwork, negotiating intersectional power dynamics among research participants in the “mutual constitution of [our] positionalities”, both in the local context, as well as within the “multiple discourses in which one is differentially positioned as a subject

at any given time” in the complex processes of mutual, albeit unequal, knowledge production (Crenshaw, 1997; Narayan, 1997; Foucault, 1980, all as cited in Sato, 2004, p. 102). In her “feminist-informed self-reflexive analysis”, Sato (2004) situates multiplex subjectivity among Wolf’s (1996, as cited in Sato, 2004) three-dimensional framework of power dynamics in feminist field work, related to 1) power differences inherent in researcher and research participant positionalities (race, class, nationality, etc.); 2) power exerted during the field research process and relationships therein; and 3) power dynamics in postfieldwork writing and representing.

This body of literature is further nuanced by scholarship acknowledging the power implications of racialized colonial legacies across multiple axes of gendered privilege/oppression in development research interventions in the Global South, calling for a requisite centering of postcolonial intersectionality as a means of “messing with gender” in participatory feminist research (Sultana, 2007; Mollett & Faria, 2013). Postcolonial intersectionality is thus proposed for recognizing “power inequities between global north and global south, shaped by the legacies of colonial racisms, as well as (colonial) patriarchies” (Mollett & Faria, 2013, p. 118). This approach is also proposed for contending with the “paradoxical space” inhabited by female-presenting researchers at the center and on the margin simultaneously, as “historically and spatially constituted subjects woven in racialized and gendered relationships of power in relation to those we [research with and] write about” (Mollett & Faria, 2013, p. 123). Addressing “emotional geographies” within feminist postcolonial geography, Faria and Mollett (2016, p. 79) raise questions on researcher legitimacy and access relative to “emotive reactions to whiteness” among ‘subjects of color’ in the Global South, which they identify as unfixed from white bodies, but rather “historically produced and socioculturally and geographically contingent”, operating at the intersections among “messy, affective, and contingent racialized power” in the field.

Contributing to existing explorations on how gender, race, and colonial dynamics have determined the practice and development of surf tourism, this article examines how these same dynamics shape research experiences in, and empirical findings about, surf tourism, particularly in PAR interventions that attempt to understand and undo the harms of coloniality-patriarchy in surf tourism spaces. As such, this article offers self-reflexive lessons from my experience working with poststructuralist PAR methods for assets-based, decolonial alternatives to development in the surf tourism community of Playa Hermosa de Cobano, Costa Rica. My personal experiences in this milieu reflect the complex multiplicity of my surfer-researcher subject position(s) within these broader power dynamics, and have included sexualization, objectification, gender-based intimidation and misogynistic comments both in and out of the water; as well as relative benefits in terms of access to waves, sense of belonging and leisure time to pursue surfing and surf travel. Drawing on feminist geographic interventions related to postcolonial intersectionality as a novel contribution to the field of critical surf tourism studies, these lessons speak to the challenges and complexities associated with gender, race and researcher positionality, particularly for white/white-assumed female-presenting researchers from the Global North engaging with poststructuralist feminist and decolonial methods in Global South research contexts.

The following section describes the methodological framework and field research methods employed before turning to a reflexive analysis of the research process and lessons from the field that it generated.

Methodology

Ethnographic and poststructuralist participatory action research (PAR) concerning decolonial alternatives to surf tourism development were conducted in the field site over the period of September 2019 to September 2020. PAR offers an approach to circumventing traditional top-down research processes that favor outsider intervention and reproduce dominant external narratives on and in local communities (Chambers, 2007; Kumar, 2008). By contrast, participatory approaches treat locals as subjects rather than objects, moving from extractive, elicitive research to creative, useful and practical community development interventions founded on internal perspectives and local capabilities. Borrowing from similar work done by Cameron (2003), Cameron and Gibson (2005) and J.K. Gibson-Graham (2005), and adapted to the sustainable surf tourism context by Ruttenberg and Brosius (2017), the intention behind the poststructuralist PAR methods employed was that, as modes of “researching back”, they might prove useful to the community itself in imagining and implementing alternative development frameworks, while also advancing empirical research in decolonizing sustainable surf tourism (see author, forthcoming).

Throughout the PAR research process, I engaged in self-reflexive autoethnography to critically reflect on my researcher positionality as an “outsider-within” (Collins, as cited in Smith, 1999; Koot, 2016): a Western-educated white-assumed female surfer-researcher from the US and bilingual English/Spanish-speaking long-term foreign resident of Playa Hermosa, a surf tourism town mired in “patriocolonial” surfing culture and the local colonial-patriarchal norms of “machismo” (Isahunter, 2016; Olive, 2019). This process of reflexivity as “a strategy to situate geographic knowledges and the researcher’s social location and background” (Rose, 1997, as cited in Schneider et al., 2020, pp. 3-4) included regular note-taking and periodic journaling to reflect on both my positionality as a researcher and power dynamics experienced through the research process.

Drawing on the empirical scholarship in critical surf studies and feminist geography discussed above, reflexivity provided a relational means of “thinking through the researching self”, as implicated “in the messy interactions between spaces, places, cultures, bodies, discourses, and power (Ahmed, 1998; Probyn, 1993)” and “mediated through [my] researching subjectivity; [my] sex, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, dis/ability, age, class, skill level and more” (Olive, 2020, pp. 123-124). In this way, reflexivity offered a methodology for grappling with my context-contingent and socially constituted researcher positionality, the complexities and contradictions of my “multiplex subjectivity” in the local field context, the multiple discourses I represent, and axes of power/difference I inhabit at the intersections among coloniality-patriarchy and critical surfing tourism studies (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Sato, 2004; Olive, 2020). Seeking to “address the push and pull between multiple [researcher] commitments and responsibilities to activism, the academy, the community and ourselves” (Cahill et al., 2007, p. 311), reflexivity thus provided a means for

interrogating how decolonial and feminist researchers like myself can contend with gender/racial politics related to positionality in the field.

Notes from the Field: Gender, Race and Researcher Positionality

Drawing on existing relationships with community members and local organizations in Playa Hermosa, I convened and facilitated a seven-person core research team as the foundation for poststructuralist PAR research methods employed. As a research team, in keeping with the poststructuralist PAR methodology, we designed and conducted a series of community engagement activities including semi-structured group conversations, focus-group workshops and food-sharing events geared toward envisioning community surf tourism governance and conservation priorities, and leading to the mapping of the community's local assets and diverse economy. Research team members self-selected to participate and were motivated by an expressed shared interest in cultivating alternatives to development in the surf tourism community. The research team included A) local Costa Rican surfer and surf instructor in his mid-twenties, leader of the Playa Hermosa surf instructors' association; B) local Costa Rican bodyboarder and surf photographer in his early twenties; C) Venezuelan national and Costa Rican foreign resident of Playa Hermosa for 10 years, surf instructor and surf school co-owner in this mid-30's; D) local Costa Rican community resident landowner, farmer in his 60s; E) Swiss long-term foreign resident of Playa Hermosa, surfer; F) German research intern in her mid-20s; and G) myself, doctoral researcher and US-born foreign resident female surfer in my mid-30s with 15 years living in Costa Rica, including four years in Playa Hermosa at the time of research.

The demographic composition of the research team is described in Table 2 below according to age, gender, nationality, ethnicity, education, and livelihood to demonstrate the multiple axes of difference related to power and privilege useful for considering the gendered, racialized and (de)colonial politics associated with researcher positionality in the field context. It is important to note that all research team members, with the exception of the German research intern (F), were either local or long-term foreign residents of the Playa Hermosa community. All were cis-male, except for the research intern and myself, both cis-female-presenting and white/white-assumed, respectively. Of the six cis-male research team members, all were ethnic Latino, including one white-assumed Latino, with the exception of one white European team member. Two Costa Rican cis-female community members expressed interest in joining the research team at the start, but ultimately declined engagement citing prior commitments, including family, motherhood and work obligations.

	Age	Gender	Nationality	Ethnicity	Education	Livelihood
A	Mid-20s	Cis-Male	Costa Rican	Latino / White-passing	High School	Surf instructor, surf camp co-owner/manager, leader of local surf instructors' association
B	Early 20s	Cis-Male	Costa Rican /French	Latino	High School	Professional bodyboarder, surf photographer
C	Mid-30s	Cis-Male	Venezuelan	Latino	High School	Surf instructor, surf school co-owner
D	60s	Cis-Male	Costa Rican	Latino	Unknown	Landowner, farmer
E	40s	Cis-Male	Swiss	White European	University	Property owner/manager
F	Mid-20s	Cis-Female	German	White European	University	Research intern
G	Mid-30s	Cis-Female	North American (US)	Jewish / White-passing	M.A. Graduate / PhD Candidate	Graduate student

Table 2. Demographic Composition of Self-Selected Research Team Members

The self-selection of the research team was proposed in alignment with Cameron and Gibson's (2005) poststructuralist PAR methodology as a means of bridging academic and local knowledges, while seeking to build trust and collaborative ownership of the action-research process. While effort was made to "translate" academic approaches among the mostly non-academic research team, this objective is not without its limitations given the incommensurability of working across epistemological and ontological difference in academic/non-academic groups. However, these limitations also allowed for experiences and associated challenges of beyond-binary postcolonial knowledge production aligned with decolonizing methodologies in sustainable surf tourism research, and inform the reflexive analysis offered here (Ingersoll, 2016; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017).

Borrowing from Wolf's (1996, as cited in Sato, 2004) framework for examining power in researcher subjectivity, as nuanced by Sato's (2004) feminist self-reflexive analysis discussed conceptually above, reflexive considerations presented here contend firstly with power differences inherent in researcher and research participant positionalities; and second, with power dynamics and relationships experienced during the field research process. This intersectional analysis deals specifically with my PAR experiences related to gender, race and coloniality in the field context of Playa Hermosa de Cobano, Costa Rica.

Navigating Power Differences in Researcher and Research Participant Positionality

Contending with Schneider et al.'s (2020, p. 520) study into the challenges for female-presenting researchers of grappling with misogyny in participatory research contexts as "part of patriarchal power relations—and their contestations—that connect us to women everywhere", I came to understand my researcher positionality in gendered subjection to "patriocolonial" local/global surf culture and tourism contexts, as well as in broader sociocultural realities common to field research scenarios (Iisahunter, 2016; Olive, 2019; Schneider et al., 2020). As regards my researcher subjectivity related to racialized power dynamics in the field, it is important to note that the community of Playa Hermosa, as well as the ethnic/nationality representation of the research team, are racially mixed and diverse, including predominantly Latino (commonly of mixed indigenous and European ethnicity) and white-assumed Latino of Costa Rican nationality and other Latin American origin; as well as (primarily) white European and North-American foreign resident settlers and visiting tourists. From a postcolonial perspective, we can understand the ethnic and nationality composition of the Hermosa community and research team as mired in the complex racialized North-South power dynamics manifest in everyday community relationships and researcher-participant interactions, as both a function of Costa Rican settler colonial history and the more recent neocolonial dynamics of surf tourism development in the area. Perhaps approximating Ingersoll's (2016) binary-blurring conceptualization of decolonizing surf tourism, categories of colonized/colonizer in the field research community are thus complex, unfixed and difficult to define, further validating the postcolonial intersectional approach to contending with researcher positionality related to gender and racialized politics in the field (Sultana, 2007; Faria & Mollett, 2016; Mollett & Faria, 2013). Contending with my own (assumed) whiteness, non-local foreign resident status, and Western academic subjectivity within the broader racialized power dynamics of researcher-research participant relationships, I came to acknowledge the complexity of my position as an "outsider-within" through the lens of postcolonial intersectionality (Sato, 1994; Collins, as cited in Smith, 1999).

These gendered and racialized dynamics related to power differences among the demographic composition of the research team are illustrated in the following selections from a field journal entry written after our first meeting:

The first research team meeting was a lively exchange of ideas and brainstorming, though I felt frustrated and challenged throughout. I am concerned that the women community members who expressed interest in joining the research team did not attend [due to motherhood commitments and work engagements], which meant that the research intern and myself were the only women research team members present, where her role was to help organize documents and refreshments for the meeting, and I prepared and presented on the research approach and proposed project goals. It felt uncomfortable to share the PAR methodology with the group, as the academic language seemed misplaced and I probably didn't do a very good job at "translating" it for a non-academic audience.... Trying not to act like "the boss" or "the leader" was difficult while having to assume a leadership role by facilitating the meeting and communicating to the group.

Gender dynamics proved challenging and skewed. The five men who attended the meeting regularly interrupted me to express their grievances about the state of tourism-related development in the community and seemed generally uninterested in the research methods. Their input was very useful for determining project priorities straight away, but my presentation felt forced, and my role became one of listener and recorder rather than facilitator. The gendered dynamic was impossible to ignore, and I was regularly spoken over and frequently interrupted. Trying to facilitate an all-male team in a very machista culture is a challenge, to say the least.

Regarding power differences related to researcher and research participant positionality, I came to acknowledge the demographic composition of the research team and our particular roles therein as a reflection of broader gendered, racialized and colonial dynamics in both the place-based politics of the research community and the wider milieu of global surf tourism. While gender parity among members was an objective, the composition of the research team was skewed male-dominated when female participants opted-out, citing household, motherhood and work obligations as their reasons for withdrawal. Reflecting perhaps both cause and outcome of gendered labor realities, the ensuing male-dominated research team enacting a leadership role in the community-based research process served to reproduce gendered social norms characteristic of coloniality-patriarchy.

From an intersectional postcolonial perspective, power differences related to gender among the research team were also subject to the complexity of acknowledging racialized and class-based dynamics related to North-South constructs in research relationships mired in colonial power relationships (Said, 1978; Smith, 1999; Cahill et al., 2007; Schneider et al., 2020). As the only two female members of the research team, and as white/white-assumed European and North American women representing academic institutions in this work, the research intern and I - as the convening member and facilitator of the research team - functioned in “paradoxical space” related to gendered and colonial power dynamics (hooks, 1984; Rose, 1993; Collins, 1990, as cited in Mollett & Faria, 2013). Notably, this “paradoxical space” included a role of “hegemonic positioning” reflecting our whiteness, Western university affiliation in the production of knowledge, and socioeconomic privilege relative to the other team members (Nayak, 2005, pp. 147, as cited in Mollett & Faria, 2013, p. 118); while we were simultaneously subjected to gendered treatment in multiple instances during the research process (Mollett & Faria, 2013).

In my case, this resulted in what felt like an exhausting dance between seeking to transgress underlying colonial/racialized hierarchies by ceding and equalizing power among the team from a decolonial researcher position, while also subjecting myself to gender-related pressures on “appropriate” dress, behavior and modes of interaction with other community members, and the realities of confronting common misogynistic microaggressions. These instances included sexual jokes and innuendo in group settings, unwanted attention on my body, as well as comments on my physical appearance; and being spoken-over and ignored on occasion when in a leadership role at community events and team meetings. While uncomfortable to bear in any situation, I shouldered the burden of subjection to these gendered microaggressions as a means of “surviving” the research process, which often felt

like familiar recourse to my already well-practiced social survival responses to misogyny as part of simply being woman in the world, and being a woman surfer in a “patriocolonial” surf tourism research context (Iisahunter, 2016; Olive, 2019; Schneider et al., 2020). As a means of contending with the gendered and racialized power differences among the research team, and the North-South-related dynamics occasioned by my positionality during the research process, I often employed the strategy of delegating much of the PAR process to the Latino cis-male members of the research team, whose positionality afforded them a greater affinity with and legitimacy among local community members. This strategy “worked” as a means of engendering greater community participation and local representation in the action research process, while simultaneously functioning as a means of decolonial power-sharing in the research team experience across intersectional axes of researcher positionality related to race, nationality and class. From a feminist perspective, however, this strategy also served to reproduce gendered norms of patriarchy by centering cis-male leadership and validating patriarchal tropes of male researcher legitimacy in the field (Rose, 1993, 1997). As an example, the local male members of the research team had greater success in convening local community members to join the broader community engagement events, presumably given a sense of trust and affinity as neighbors with shared histories and community grievances, but also perhaps as a reflection of gendered social norms and skeptical feelings toward white non-local researchers and the discourses we represent (Faria & Mollett, 2016).

Contending with Postcolonial Intersectional Power Dynamics in the Research Process

The second consideration in Wolf’s (1996, as cited in Sato, 2004) framework regards the power dynamics experienced in the research process, addressed in this section. Particularly relevant to the integrity of the poststructuralist PAR methodology, a significant moment of disjuncture arose in the research process, offering meaningful lessons related to the potential limits of my researcher positionality from the lenses of intersectional gender/racial politics and decoloniality in the field. An edited excerpt from my ethnographic field notes illustrates this moment, as follows:

Today we had a meeting scheduled for community members to gather in follow-up to the third phase of the PAR process, where we were meant to brainstorm project priorities and create strategic working groups to action these projects. Unexpectedly, only three of the seven research team members were present at the meeting, including myself, the research intern, and [Researcher C]. When the meeting was supposed to take place, the other four research team members communicated via the research team group chat to set up a barricade at the parking lot at the North end access to the Playa Hermosa beach in effort to prevent vehicles from driving along the beach. They organized and carried out this action simultaneous to the scheduled meeting time without informing us that they would be absent.... I worry they are no longer interested in being a part of the research team or continuing with the PAR process.

This has made me question my positionality as an outsider-insider, and my gringa-ness vis-à-vis the more slow-paced, non-confrontational Costa Rican

culture. It feels like I'm forcing the methodology to satisfy my own research objectives and pushing things uphill that would never budge if it weren't for my forcefulness and do-it-at-all-costs researcher mentality.

Importantly, this disjuncture moment signaled the bifurcation of the research process into two separate project areas, at which point the core research team underwent a notable transition. As partially depicted in the excerpt above, four of the seven research team members chose to focus on preexisting community objectives outside the research team structure and PAR methodology, and instead engaged in ad hoc conservation actions without consulting or notifying all research team members, including myself, while also discontinuing their participation in ongoing research team meetings. This, in effect, resulted in a situation where there was no longer full research team consent to or participation in the final stage of the assets and diverse economies mapping process; the final phase of the PAR methodology was undertaken by three of seven research team members, none of whom were native local to the community; and the four members of the research team who discontinued their participation in the project went on to pursue their prior community objectives and new conservation actions in parallel to and exclusive of the ongoing work of the remaining research team members. At this stage, completing the assets map and diverse economies assessment transitioned into a personal project to satisfy my research objectives, and ran in tandem with, but separate from, the work of the research team.

Reflexive considerations on this moment of disjuncture and the ensuing bifurcation of the research process speak to the intersectional power dynamics experienced among multiple axes of gender, race, local/non-local status, and coloniality in both my researcher positionality and the discourses it represents. While I sought to foster equitable decision-making and local agency among the research team as an ethical foundation for decolonial research, power differences and dynamics throughout the process may have proven a greater obstacle than originally anticipated, particularly when considered across these multiple axes. I ultimately felt I was “pushing” the research agenda as the convening and facilitating team member without much buy-in from the group, particularly since the PAR methods were already crafted based on existing studies and adapted to the local community context, rather than generated organically by the research team. While research fatigue may have played a role in team members opting out of the process, I believe the ultimate disbanding of the research team is a reflection of this ethical methodological challenge regarding power dynamics in participatory research and my specific researcher positionality as a white-assumed, female-presenting foreign-resident researcher from the Global North and the power dynamics/discourses I represent vis-à-vis the local community members who initially joined and then left the research team. While we moved forward with the research objectives in tangible ways, I was left to wonder if, from an ethical perspective on participatory decolonial research, it was “right” for me to engage in this type of decolonial fieldwork as an “outsider-within” (Collins, as cited in Smith, 1999) whose “multiple [researcher] commitments and responsibilities to [decolonial feminist] activism, the academy, the community and [myself]” (Cahill et al., 2007, p. 311) may have been mutually exclusive in this particular field context.

Challenges, Considerations, and Conclusions

The field study discussed here began as an exploration into decolonial alternatives to development in sustainable surfing tourism, employing assets-based and diverse economies mapping methods via poststructuralist participatory action research (Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2017; Ruttenberg, 2022). Methods of reflexive autoethnography and intersectional feminist-based reflexivity offered a means for critically analyzing power differences related to researcher and research participant positionality, as well as contending with power dynamics in the research process across multiple axes of gender, race and coloniality in the field. Drawing from feminist geographic interventions “messing with gender” in colonial-patriarchal dynamics in Global South field contexts, reflexive considerations from this analysis speak to the relative privileges and vulnerabilities of “multiplex subjectivities” (Sato, 1994) experienced by white-assumed female-presenting researchers from the Global North contending with both decolonial and gender/racial politics in Global South fieldwork scenarios (Rose, 1997, as cited in Schneider et al., 2020).

Throughout the research process, reflexivity provided a meaningful mode of thinking through and about my role as action-researcher engaged in decolonial surf tourism research in a Global South field context. Reflexive considerations centered on the complexities and challenges of facilitating the research team through the PAR process as a white-assumed, non-local female-presenting researcher pursuing graduate research among a group of predominantly Latino cis-gendered men, with varying degrees of formal education and socioeconomic status. The power dynamics along multiple axes of gender, race, nationality and class were complex and challenging, leading me to perceive that I had confronted the limits of my positionality as a researcher seeking to engage in decolonizing community-based praxis in critical surf tourism studies. The intersectional gender dynamics of embodying a leadership role given power differences related to gender, race, class, local/non-local status, etc. were a challenge throughout. While I employed “successful” strategies of decolonial power-sharing in the research process by ceding white-Western researcher privilege to Latino cis-male research team members, those same strategies also served to reproduce gendered norms of male researcher legitimacy, much to my dismay as a feminist researcher seeking to transgress such gendered power dynamics in the field (Rose, 1993, 1997; Sato 2004). At the same time, I faced multiple gender-related microaggressions that may speak more broadly to the difficulties of inhabiting “paradoxical space” for white-assumed female-presenting researchers engaging in poststructuralist feminist fieldwork and/or decolonizing praxis in “patriocolonial” surfing spaces (Mollet & Faria, 2013; lisahunter, 2016; Olive, 2019; Schneider et al., 2020).

While it is difficult to know whether intersectional gender dynamics and/or relative social positionality among the research team contributed to the shifts and unanticipated changes in the research process, reflexivity throughout the experience was useful in contemplating power dynamics through the lens of researcher positionality and considering how best to proceed without compromising the integrity of the research project or my commitment to the decolonizing methodological framework. Finally, it is worth noting that while these challenges of researcher positionality and intersectional gender-related power dynamics proved difficult in terms of negotiating tradeoffs among decolonial and feminist research objectives, they were not ultimately insuperable, particularly regarding researcher

“commitments and responsibilities” to the academy (Cahill et al., 2007). In fact, teasing through these challenges in a reflexive way allowed for the completion of the diverse economies and poststructuralist PAR research process as a means of forwarding decolonial surf tourism studies research (author, forthcoming). Similarly, empirical lessons from this reflexive study may also serve the originally unintended objective of contributing to future feminist and decolonial research in Global South surfing tourism and feminist geographic interventions in sports tourism and development more broadly. Contributing to empirical discussions on researcher positionality in critical surf tourism scholarship, lessons from this study can support fieldwork considerations particularly for white/white-assumed female-presenting researchers from the Global North working in field contexts in the Global South.

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Conclusion: ‘Radical Creativity’ Beyond the State of Modern Surfing?

This dissertation has contended with the potential for and obstacles to decolonizing surf tourism studies both theoretically and empirically. Contributing to critical research into the ways surfscape imaginaries and territories are colonized by what scholars have identified as the white-washed, patriarchal, and imperial capitalist occupation of modern surf culture narratives and global surf tourism (Laderman, 2014; Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019, 2020; Wheaton, 2017), the chapters of this dissertation examined the colonizing impacts of Western-modern, capitalocentric approaches to surf tourism-for-sustainable development and neoliberal surf tourism governance. Engaging with postdevelopment and diverse economic conceptual frames thus sought to “decolonize” surf tourism studies through non-capitalocentric analyses on surfer subjectivities, surfscape commons governance, alternatives to development in community-based surf tourism, and researcher positionality in decolonial surf tourism studies. Engaging with critical ethnographic, participatory and self-reflexive methods within a decolonizing methodological framework, these analyses offered novel theoretical and empirical contributions to the field of critical surf studies, with broader implications for scholarship in political ecology, cultural geography and sustainable tourism.

Research Contributions to Critical Surf Studies

These specific contributions include considerations of certain postcapitalist surfer subjectivities and critical expressions of surfscape localism as potentially revolutionary modes of resistance to, and emancipation within, the occupied surfscapes of what scholars have identified as the neoliberal, colonial-patriarchal “state of modern surfing” and its attendant surf tourism industrial complex (Gilio-Whitaker, 2017; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019). Reminiscent of Gibson-Graham’s (2008, p. 659) concept of “place-based globalism” representing a “politics of place” founded on networks of freedom and self-determination in “the here and now”, postcapitalist *translocalisms* (Comer, 2010) were identified as already-existing modes of surf tourism governance and beyond-postmodern identity politics linked to decolonizing and surfeminist movements in surfing culture. Similarly, exploring critical modes of “commoning” the surfscape (Gibson-Graham et al., 2016) and field research into assets-based, diverse economic alternatives to development in a surf tourism community provide analytical and empirical foundations for conceiving of postcapitalist possibilities as decolonial praxis in critical surf tourism studies. Finally, reflexive intersectional inquiry into researcher positionality can support future researcher considerations for field work in decolonial surf tourism studies. Together, the findings and conclusions from this dissertation offer insight into the potential for diverse economic frames and critical research methods to decolonize surf tourism studies beyond capitalocentric surf tourism-for-sustainable development approaches and surfscape imaginaries otherwise occupied by the state of modern surfing.

Research objectives sought to critically analyze existing forms of sustainable surf tourism and explore possibilities for developing decolonial, assets-based alternatives to existing models of surf tourism development. These objectives centered a critique of neoliberal sustainable development approaches to surf tourism governance and engaged with existing

research in critical surf studies calling for “radical creativity” to advance scholarship and cultural practice beyond the colonial-patriarchal state of modern surfing (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b). Toward those ends, postdevelopment and postcapitalist approaches were complemented by decolonial theoretical frames that challenge Western-modern sociocultural constructs and their colonizing impacts on people and places (see Wynter, 2003; Curiel, 2016; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) and link discussions on power, knowledge and agency to non-Eurocentric, self-determined, anti-racist and intersectional narratives of history, gender, body politics, subjectivity, economy, development and wellbeing (Said, 1987; Escobar, 1995; Quijano, 2000; Wynter, 2003; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Harcourt, 2019). As such, research was undertaken in an effort to “make more real” the possibility for decolonizing surf studies to represent the type of radical creativity espoused by critical surf scholars, both in theory and practice. Theoretical explorations synthesized discussions of surfers’ subjection to postmodernity and neocolonial surf tourism dynamics, identifying potentially beyond-modern subjectivities and *translocal* surf tourism governance practices challenging, in decolonial ways, the state of modern surfing and globalized surf tourism industrial complex. Empirical research into current surf tourism practice within Costa Rica’s neoliberal approach to environmental governance and socioeconomic development, as discussed in Chapter I, provided a foundation for contemplating community-based alternatives to development in surfing tourism and inspired participatory action research in the field study community of Playa Hermosa de Santa Teresa de Cobano. Together, these theoretical and empirical explorations centered actually-existing possibilities of decolonizing surf tourism by making visible the ways in which surfers and surf tourism communities can enact, and already are enacting, decolonial alternatives in surf tourism governance and modern surfing culture. These alternatives were found to include, for example: critical Global South localisms subverting patriocolonial and neoliberal power dynamics in surf tourism governance; as well as postdevelopment praxis supporting emerging regenerative tourism networks that center assets-based development alternatives, non-capitalist and alternative capitalist modes of economic interaction in surf tourism communities.

Chapter II synthesized literature on the potential for (r)evolutionary postcapitalist surfer subjectivities to “surf beyond postmodernity” through postwork imaginaries (Comer, 2017), refusal of work (Lawler, 2017), resistance to industry overdevelopment (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b; Walker, 2011), and intersectional activism across axes/issues of gender, race, class, coloniality, and environmentalism in surfing culture (Comer, 2017, 2019). The anti-essentialist analysis of these surfer subjectivities posited that they may represent a counterhegemonic politics resisting and reconstituting power as modes of “making” (and surfing) “a world” (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2010) different from the “state of modern surfing”. Chapter III identified localisms of entitlement and resistance in occupied surfscape territories and imaginaries, in which native-to-place Global South localisms and expressions of girl localisms (as counterfemininities representing a local/global politics of resistance connected to broader movements grappling with patriocolonial relations of surfscape occupation (Comer, 2010)) were found to challenge the neoliberal and colonial-patriarchal norms of the state of modern surfing. Through its discussion of critical *translocalisms* ‘commoning’ the surfscape, conclusions from this chapter offered a potential horizon for an intersectional coalition-based politics of emancipation in contemporary surf culture.

Chapter IV offered conclusions on the potential for assets-based participatory research methods to support alternatives to development in sustainable surf tourism studies by centering local ways of knowing, being and doing in common with the land and seascape, and visibilizing economic diversity beyond capitalocentric notions of socioeconomic development. Chapter V centered the complexities of power dynamics across multiple axes of gender, race, nationality and class related to inhabiting “paradoxical space” as a white-passing female-presenting researcher engaging in feminist fieldwork and decolonizing praxis in “patriocolonial” surfing space (Mollet & Faria, 2013; Olive, 2019; Schneider et al., 2020).

Implications of Research

Confronting the surf tourism-industrial-complex, through the prospects for decolonization explored here, represents a practice of contending with beyond-binary contemplations of *colonizer-colonized* as spaces of critical possibility in occupied surfscape territories and imaginaries (Ingersoll, 2016; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019). This confrontation also opens further possibilities for non-capitalocentric ruminations on postcapitalist surfer subjectivities in relation to the proliferent state of modern surfing (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017; Gibson-Graham, 2006). A diverse economies lens on development alternatives in surf tourism (Chapter IV), surfscape commons governance (Chapter III) and (post)modern surfing subjects (Chapter II) connects postdevelopment scholarship and decolonizing methods to: a) the critique of conventional surf tourism-for-sustainable development models (Ponting & O'Brien, 2013; Ponting & O'Brien, 2014; Borne, 2015; Borne & Ponting, 2015; Towner, 2015; Martin & Ritchie, 2018; O'Brien & Ponting, 2018; Towner & Davies, 2019); b) creative approaches to ‘commoning’ the surfscape; as well as c) conceptual frames for considering researcher positionality in surf tourism studies (Chapter V) and nurturing revolutionary subjectivities toward emancipatory futures in global surfing culture. Together, the dissertation chapters presented here thus posit a response to Hough-Snee and Eastman’s (2017b) plea for critical surf scholarship to embrace “radical creativity” in thinking, being and doing beyond the confines of the state of modern surfing.

Within this milieu, connections can be drawn among the analyses, conclusions and research findings presented here, with useful implications for decolonizing surf studies and critical surf scholarship/activism more broadly. For example, the imaginary of the surfscape undercommons explored in Chapter III, connecting non-conforming surfing subjectivities across local/global alliances at the emancipatory, self-determined intersections of fugitivity and solidarity in surfing’s collective imaginaries and geographical territories, speaks to and across the analysis of beyond postmodern surfing subjectivities discussed in Chapter II. These connections offer a means of making more visible an “already-existing” counterhegemonic politics of resistance/emancipation rooted in critical surf *translocalisms* and postcapitalist *new becomings* operating both “within and against”, as well as in essential fugitivity from, the state of modern surfing’s otherwise occupied surfscapes (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Comer, 2010; Harney & Moten, 2013; Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017; Ruttenberg & Brosius, 2019). At the cultural intersections of postcapitalist surfing subjectivities and critical *translocalisms* finding camaraderie in a surfing undercommons, critical surf scholars and activists in the burgeoning intersectional surfeminist movement

might thus find fresh inspiration for decolonizing approaches to research, as well as expanding networks of solidarity and coalition-building toward greater social justice in surfing culture and beyond (Comer, 2010, 2017). Additionally, the theoretical and empirical contributions examining community-based alternatives in surfing tourism presented in Chapter IV can be considered alongside Chapter V's reflexive intersectional analysis on researcher positionality in decolonial surf tourism studies to support further participatory scholar-activist research interventions in diverse economic alternatives to development in other surf tourism communities. Together, these diverse economic approaches contribute to a growing body of decolonial surf tourism scholarship, within the broadening field of critical surf studies and related scholar-activist networks.

The connections drawn among the analyses and conclusions offered in the different chapters of this dissertation also point to additional avenues for consideration in future critical surf studies scholarship. As researchers continue to contend with coloniality-patriarchy and neoliberal governance/governmentality in surf tourism and cultural studies, theorizing beyond the state of modern surfing and related empirical research could draw from the methods, conceptual frames and conclusions offered here. In particular, critical surf scholars might build on the noncapitalocentric analytical frames of postcapitalist subjectivity and surfscape 'commoning' to revisit discussions on surfscape governance/governmentality within both cultural imaginaries and specific surfscape territories. Engaging with Fletcher's (2019) multidimensional reframing of diverse ecologies and diverse governmentalities might prove particularly useful in exploring diverse *translocalisms* as enactments of communality in surf tourism governance. Movements toward solidarity across the critical localisms of resistance discussed in Chapter III might also explore the potential for surfing's *undercommons* to offer an intersectional anti-racist, surfeminist, and decolonial politics of praxis through place-based globalism as a "new imaginary of revolution" (Gibson-Graham, 2008, p. 659). This line of inquiry could also borrow from the multiple perspective framework on the surfscape commons from Chapter III to offer a diverse economic approach to decolonizing "the blue economy" in sustainable surf tourism research beyond neoliberal and common pool resource (CPR) management frames. Sustainable surf tourism scholarship might also borrow from the poststructuralist PAR methods employed in the field research for Chapter IV as assets-based and diverse economic approaches to alternatives to development in surfing tourism, different from conventional community-based methods currently employed in sustainable surf tourism scholarship. Similarly, researchers might engage with Chapter V's reflexive intersectional analysis of researcher positionality contending with gender, race and other intersecting colonial power dynamics when considering potential challenges in doing related decolonial surf tourism research.

Limitations of Study

While conclusions from this work offer avenues for future research, there are a few limitations to the studies discussed which warrant mention here. As regards the postcapitalist surfer subjectivities discussed in literature review Chapter II, the three categories of surfer identity explored – competitive, soul and freesurfers – provide a limited scope of study given existing scholarship on the subject, beyond which further analysis might examine additional categories of surfer in their embodiment of postcapitalist subjectivity.

Second, in Chapter III's discussion of the multiple perspective framing of the surfscape commons used for analyzing diverse expressions of surf localism, critical localisms in connection to more-than-human surfscape communities are not included, reflecting an important limitation when considering the horizon for 'commoning' the surfscape beyond anthropocentric approaches. The primary limitation in Chapter IV is one of methodological design, whereby the poststructuralist PAR process was predetermined prior to formation of the core research team in the field study community, reflecting a central challenge to maintaining the integrity of decolonial field methods while seeking to honor the preestablished poststructuralist PAR approach. A second limitation from Chapter IV reflects the length of the research timeline, whereby a lengthier field study might have examined how the case study community moved from determining project priorities toward project implementation, and/or how COVID-related tourism closures affected action research outcomes in the months following the research period. Finally, the reflexive analysis offered in Chapter V is limited to the researcher's perspective on positionality, whereas considering input from other research team members might have offered a different, or more comprehensive, set of conclusions related to the complexity of intersectional racial/gender power dynamics in poststructuralist participatory action methods in decolonial surf tourism research.

Recommendations and Research Applications

These limitations notwithstanding, research outcomes and conclusions from this dissertation offer relevant applications for critical surf studies, surf feminism and decolonial surf tourism research, as discussed above. Similarly, there are a number of practical implications to be gleaned from this research that may serve as recommendations for practitioners in sustainable surf tourism. First, the non-capitalocentric approach of diverse economies can offer a starting point for acknowledging economic diversity in surf tourism communities beyond income-oriented and growth-based approaches to tourism development, which, in turn, allows for a broader understanding of socioeconomic wellbeing useful for working with communities toward envisioning and enacting alternatives to development in surf tourism governance. In the research outcomes discussed in Chapter IV, for example, the diverse economy assessment and community assets map garnered through poststructuralist PAR methods in the field research community can be applied to broader regenerative tourism networks currently in planning among the local Chamber of Tourism, social and environmentalist nonprofits in the area, and municipal government officials. Centering local assets and diverse economic experiences of community interaction and socioecological wellbeing can help guide tourism objectives toward supporting locally self-determined tourism futures as a starting point for strengthening regenerative tourism networks.

Practitioners can also draw from the research lessons presented here to support already existing modes of surf tourism governance aligned with critical *translocalisms* that subvert the neoliberal character of the modern surf tourism industrial complex and otherwise resist neocolonial encroachment in Global South surfing tourism. While researcher positionality proved a force to be reckoned with in the field research discussed here, decolonizing methods including poststructuralist and participatory community-based approaches proved

useful in bridging intersectional power dynamics related to race, gender and class toward the collective purpose of furthering decolonial surf tourism research and praxis. Finally, sustainable surf tourism practitioners interested in decolonizing approaches to community-based surf tourism governance will do well to also prioritize self-reflexivity related to researcher/practitioner positionality and the colonial imaginaries we represent as a precursor to working with local communities, and a preliminary means of “decolonizing the colonizer” before moving to engage with people in the field (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Together, these practitioner recommendations seek to support practical engagement with decolonizing surf tourism through community-based methods that support alternatives to development in surfing tourism and “commoning” approaches to surf tourism governance. As such, they seek to safeguard practitioners against reproducing colonizing tropes of outsider interventions promoting Western-modern ideals and practices of surf tourism-for-sustainable development common to the conventional approaches to sustainable surf tourism critiqued in this work.

Contributing to ongoing scholar-activism in decolonizing surf tourism, research findings from this dissertation have been applied in public-facing conversations beyond academic conferences and publishing, including in surf-related podcasts and guest lectures for university students. Throughout the dissertation research and writing period, discussions of decolonizing surf tourism, surf feminism and critical localisms in occupied surfscapes were featured on *Salted Spirit Podcast* in July 2019, *The Oceanriders Podcast* in October 2019, *Swell Season Radio* in November 2019, in a video series for *iSurfTribe* in April 2020, and on a two-part episode for *The Surfing Historian Podcast* in August 2021; as well as for a ‘Surfing and the Anthropological Lens’ honors seminar at San Diego State University in October 2021, and a political ecology course for KulturStudier’s Norwegian undergraduate exchange students in Costa Rica in January 2022. As conversations continue in critical surf scholarship and surf cultural discourse, decolonizing surf tourism and the related discussions offered in the dissertation presented here, provide meaningful avenues for engaging with “radical creativity” toward novel approaches to critical surf theory and practice beyond the “state of modern surfing” (Hough-Snee & Eastman, 2017b).

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