

Where are the Edges of a Protected Area? Political Dispossession in Machu Picchu, Peru

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Abstract

This report draws on fieldwork done in Machu Picchu, Peru in order to critique the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study on population growth around protected areas. I disagree with the study's emphasis on reducing people's motives to economic drives alone. The study separates the political from the economic by attempting to fix motives as economic calculations. I argue that a homogenous social process does not drive the population of the protected area. The approach used by Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) risks constructing a dichotomy that frames inhabitants of protected areas as either 'needy' or 'greedy', and fails to recognise that protected areas can form different kinds of political spaces for locals. In Machu Picchu the failure to recognise political space leads to many misunderstandings between locals and conservationists. The paper is a reminder that even for locals, protected areas involve discursive and political relations and the construction of a public sphere that has its own drive and momentum.

Keywords: polis, public sphere, political dispossession, Machu Picchu

These activists have big mouths, now they've screwed us
—anonymous resident, Machu Picchu (field notes)

INTRODUCTION

In this article, I will draw on fieldwork done in the district of Machu Picchu where I have been collecting ethnographic data since 2001 (Luciano 2005). The purpose of the discussion is to assess the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study on population growth at the edges of protected areas (PAs), using the nature sanctuary of Machu Picchu as an example. The case of Machu Picchu raises questions about some of the background assumptions made by Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) which I believe should be considered more directly when attempting to understand the relationship between people and PAs. Specifically, I wish to question the assumptions implicit in the terminologies they

use and on their focus of human activity on the 'edges' of PAs, and to show the need to understand PAs historically and ethnographically. I argue that Machu Picchu makes clear the need to consider the 'polis', or the decision-making process of locals, of a PA as more central to an analysis of human activity. Finding ways to incorporate local decision-making styles into larger discussions and decisions made in PAs is crucial for sound environmental policies, but the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study reflects an attempt to avoid its significance. An account of population growth, tourism developments, and a description of communicative acts between conservation officials and locals in Machu Picchu help to illustrate that the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) article supports a politics of exclusion.

Quantitative data provided by the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study showing population growth around PAs as driven by economic incentives rightly calls attention to the role of human stresses on biodiversity. The conclusions drawn by their study assign locals and their activities as motivated primarily by economic incentives created by the tourism economies often generated by PAs, as well as the development initiatives that PAs draw. The statistical model employed by the study has subsequently attracted critique from researchers using qualitatively refined ethnographic approaches. Ethnographic methods have the strength of placing quantitative data in social and historical perspective so as to modify broad explanations

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made from such data, and help prevent the implementation of policies that often blame locals for environmental problems in PAs. Historically the Machu Picchu population has not recently arrived drawn by immediate economic needs, but rather by a combination of factors based on changing agrarian relations and modernisation projects leading to a plural population that gives the area no singular settlement pattern. The local municipality comes to play an important role in legitimising land use through the granting of legal residence status to people, because use cannot be based on property rights or land titles as they are prohibited.

HISTORIES OF BELONGING

In 1981, the Peruvian government established Machu Picchu as a national trust. At that time the state claimed most of the land comprising the district of Machu Picchu as a public good—as an ‘intangible’ national resource; an area of 32,592 ha. was thus made a historical and natural sanctuary. The rationale for the state’s expropriation of the land was the protection and conservation of natural and cultural resources such as the Inca Trail, the Inca Citadel of Machu Picchu, and the native flora and fauna. Thus, people of the district of Machu Picchu now live in a state-managed PA. In 1983, the geographical area was inscribed onto the United Nations World Heritage List as both a cultural and natural monument in recognition of ‘the Inca Civilization’ and ‘the beauty of the landscape’. Machu Picchu is listed on both of two possible criteria for acceptance as world heritage: nature and culture. To UNESCO’s World Heritage Committee, this Inca landscape represents the ideal relationship of man to nature, symbolising a past when man was in ‘harmony’ with nature (Luciano 2005).

The Quechua term *Machu Picchu* basically translates into ‘Old Mountain’ or ‘Old Peak’. As a place name, the term initially referred to the name of a mountain located on the eastern slope of the southern Peruvian Andes about 70 km east of the city of Cusco. However, over time and through a multifaceted social process, a political district, a rural town, an archaeological site, and a nature reserve also came to be called Machu Picchu. The district was established in 1941, some 40 years prior to the state’s creation of the historical and natural sanctuary, 42 years before it was included in UNESCO’s World Heritage List. The district comprises a town (pueblo) which is the capital, and four major rural farming communities.¹ Like the district, the town capital is also called Machu Picchu or *el Pueblo de Machu Picchu*; many in Peru and even in the city of Cusco, not to mention foreigners, often refer to it as *Aguas Calientes* (Hot Springs). In addition, Machu Picchu refers to the famous Citadel. The Citadel of Machu Picchu rests on a ridge cradling the mountains Machu Picchu and Huayna Picchu (Luciano 2005).

The rural communities were formed out of different *haciendas* (landed estates), and the *campesinos* (farmers) within the district organised themselves according to these *hacienda* boundaries. The area now considered a sanctuary (*El Santuario Historico de Machu Picchu*), was formed by

the state out of four separate family-owned *haciendas*: San Antonio de Torontoy, Quente, Santa Rita de Q’ente and Mandorpampa. After the second Peruvian land reform in 1968, the redistribution of land took different paths according to the different *haciendas* in question (Maxwell 2004: 319). In Mandorpampa, land was never expropriated in accordance with the agrarian reform law, but rather remained in control of the *hacendado* family, and the *campesinos* lived as tenants (Maxwell 2004: 319). Tourism developers eventually purchased some of the land from this *hacienda* (Maxwell 2004: 319). One section of Mandorpampa, the community of Ccolpani, was incorporated into the district but left out of the PA designation. It is only in this area that conservation laws do not regulate farming activity and people have managed to obtain legal control of their land. In the mid-1970s, the *campesinos* in the former *hacienda* of San Antonio de Torontoy received land parcels from the state. By 1978, the beneficiaries repaid their agrarian loans for their land, but as of today neither have they not received property titles, nor are they officially recognised in the public registry (Maxwell 2004: 319). However, in Quente and Santa Rita de Quente there was a different process. As in Torontoy, the state also expropriated the land from these two *haciendas* and distributed them to the *campesinos*, with the old *hacendado* of Quente receiving 4 ha. of land (Maxwell 2004: 320). Nevertheless, once the area was established as a PA, rural residents were left with little land security and legal leverage despite the fact that they should have otherwise been recognised as beneficiaries of the agrarian reform. In general, for the *campesinos* of these former *haciendas*, with perhaps the exception of Ccolpani, the PA is seen and interpreted as an unfulfilled promise primarily through the history of the agrarian reform and the struggles over land. It is not uncommon for many *campesinos* to speak of conservation authorities as the ‘new *hacendado*’ and to associate conservation efforts with the power relationships with the *hacendado* during the *hacienda* era. The municipal government of the district is the primary mediator between conservation goals of the state authorities or non-profit environmental organisations and farming activities. As *campesinos* are legal residents of the district and hence voters, much political rhetoric is framed around how the municipality defends farming activities; similarly, *campesinos* judge their elected officials by how they are defended and/or whether anything is being done to help them obtain property titles to land.

In contrast to the growth of the rural communities and the formation of the sanctuary boundaries, the town of Machu Picchu grew out of a different process; it was neither established out of the agricultural economy nor tourism. Although the town was formed out of pieces of the *haciendas* Mandorpampa and San Antonio de Torontoy, the development of the town is one of progressive growth based on state modernisation and industrialisation. In the late 1940s, the town began to grow as a result of the building of the railroad line along the Urubamba river, as a location for train workers and their families (Tamayo Herrera 1981). Eventually the rail began in the city of Cusco and extended all the way to the city of Quillabamba located

at the verge of the jungle, but in both directions far beyond the borders of the current PA. As some older members of the town recall, the train line had benefits. It allowed farmers to transport agricultural products to Cuzco markets cheaper and faster than by road. Men worked on the trains and rails, and women sold food and produce to people who came from Cuzco or Quillabamba. However, it was neither for farm produce nor tourism that the train was built, but to carry raw materials, mainly rubber, or timber and other products from the jungle for national export needs (Tamayo Herrera 1981). What we see in the history of the railroad is that the position of Peru in the world economy had a direct hand in determining the kinds of human activity and population presence in what was later to become a PA.

Another major and more recent contribution to population growth in the area has been due to natural disaster. The 1998 flood of the Aobamba river in the nearby town of Santa Teresa led to the resettlement of a sizable number of disaster victims within the district of Machu Picchu. Santa Teresa is located outside both the district and the PA of Machu Picchu. These resettlements have led to tensions over living space with the older and more established populations; it frames a local politics of belonging within the town and district. The disaster victims suffered exclusion and stigma from the older residents but organised collectively in effort to establish permanent homes, given the lack of space available under the requirements of conservation laws. In the most crucial ways, the politics of belonging in the district is framed around the legal status of being a resident since it gives them the right to vote in district elections. Residency means the power to vote in municipal elections and hence local politicians sought the constituency of the resettled victims with favours or promises of more adequate living space and jobs. In the municipal elections that followed the flood, the incumbent mayor, in exchange for loyalty, pushed the residency process for the victims and provided stalls for the newcomers in the local market.

Consistent with the observations of the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study, tourism has also led to population growth in Machu Picchu. Similarly to the study's conclusions, we find that in Machu Picchu growth was only possible through a series of concerted and planned infrastructural developments with the intended goal of building a tourism industry. In fact, research on PAs generally shows that conservation efforts are indistinguishable from broader development initiatives (Brockington & Igoe 2006: 451). An important consideration then is to explore the connections between development and conservation practices to ideological shifts in the state; development does not take place outside of the politics that guide policies. Though not within the scope of the study, the approach of the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) does not provide much insight into how development initiatives are tied to shifting economic ideologies and policies.

Ironically, in Machu Picchu many of the organisations that were once behind the development of a tourism economy now unfairly blame local populations for conservation problems in the sanctuary. The shift in helping locals build economic

opportunities to blaming locals for environmental destruction is a reflection of the changing economic ideologies and policies in Peru. For much of the latter part of the twentieth century, the Peruvian economy was based on the import substitution model geared to protecting and developing the domestic economy. With the formation of the *Corporación de Turismo del Perú* (COTURPERU) the government set up a chain of hotels to generate income for the state (Desforges 2000: 178).²

In 1965, there was the *Plan Turístico y Cultural de la Comisión Especial* (COPESCO plan), a cooperative effort between the state's COTURPERU and UNESCO, to restore the archaeological ruins, particularly the ruins of Machu Picchu, with tourism in mind (Desforges 2000: 182; Peña Berna 2001: 36). The state funded approximately 70% of the plan, which it used for the "construction of roads, airports, transport and energy links as well as the development of tourist sites" (Desforges 2000: 183). One such development was the construction of a road between the town of Machu Picchu and the Hiram Bingham Road, which encircles the steep mountain to the Citadel. These initiatives of the 1960s and 1970s may have been one of Peru's most successful state-led investments, as the income generated by tourism went up from 44 million USD in 1970 to 201.6 million USD in 1979 (Desforges 2000: 183). It also laid the infrastructural foundation for the burgeoning tourism economy of Cuzco and Machu Picchu in the 1990s.

By the 1990s, economic policies in Peru shifted to the liberal free market model that emphasises state deregulation of economy, privatisation, attracting foreign direct investment, and on integrating Peru into global markets. New national policies unevenly shaped the country's economy creating unemployment in many sectors even as tourism grew exponentially. While it may be partially correct to say that the sanctuary provided economic opportunities, as the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study say about PAs in general, it is more accurate to say that ideologies that foster inequality in Peru led to population growth in and around the sanctuary.

The Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study raises the question of how to historicise properly the ways in which PAs become such sources of economic opportunity. In Machu Picchu, the new liberal outlook meant attracting foreign capital investments in the sanctuary on part of the state. With greater competition at the local level, the increase in the tendency to blame locals for conservation problems became intimately wrapped in the efforts to create and guarantee more operating room for larger capital investors. Since the 1990s, hundreds of young men and women from all over Peru come annually to the town looking for jobs in restaurants and hotels. Tour guides working in the Cuzco tourism industry took groups of tourists on a 3–4 day hike through the Inca trail on a trip that ends in the town. Since the district brings many people who take up temporary occupancy throughout the year, it is difficult to discern the actual total population. In 2002, town officials estimated that the total population of the district was about 5000 inhabitants (not counting tourists), but according to some approximations only about 3000 are legal residents, 1200 in the town and

1800 in the rural communities. There are marked economic class distinctions among town residents. Since tourism is the mainstay of the town, economic activity mostly comprised family-owned enterprises such as restaurants, hostels and artisan/merchants who sell ceramics, textile products and memorabilia tailored for tourist consumption. A major source of revenue and employment for some resident families comes from the bus transportation service that brings tourists to and from the Inca Citadel.

While the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study singles out locals in search of economic opportunities as the source of ecological damage, it should be noted that one of the largest groups of people moving through the PAs are the tourists. During the high tourist season, Machu Picchu can see more than 1500 tourists per day. The lion's share of the tourism profits are made by tour agencies either in Cuzco or Lima, a significant distance from the PA. The single largest private entity operating in Machu Picchu is the London-based Orient Express Corporation which runs the *PeruRail* train that transports tourists through the sanctuary, in addition to owning luxury hotels there.

The various intersecting spaces called 'Machu Picchu' connotes the different ways in which the district residents came to live where they do and how they are implicated in conservation regulations, particularly in the way district and sanctuary space clash. Depending on which space is emphasised, it might be said that people reside in the district, but inhabit the sanctuary. Typically, many conservation officials refer to the farmers as '*grupos humanos*' or human groups, and explicitly avoid the term '*comunidad*' or community. The term 'human group' lacks or avoids the legitimacy of social and political life found in a community. While there are internal tensions and conflicts over living space between sectors depending on whether they are rural or urban, whether they are from different former *haciendas* or are newcomers, the most significant category from the district perspective is that of 'resident', and all claims of belonging begin with that status; all others, welcomed or not, are either visitors or outsiders.

As the following description shows, many conservation officials neither understand the local social history nor understand how political life works in the district, and some try to manipulate it to their advantage. However, locally, people keep track of the different histories that brought them to Machu Picchu, and the struggles that gave them legal status. In my experience living and working in the town of Machu Picchu, the surest way to infuriate residents was to be dismissive of their political space; this was especially so at the time since popular rhetoric and media discussions were filled with questions about the meaning of democracy in Peru (Luciano 2005).

THE POLIS OF A PROTECTED AREA

A major problem with the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study is that it presents a very skeletal portrait of the public life of people around various PAs, yet speaks so definitely about their motives. If anything, social life in their depiction is

reduced to money, and how can anyone go wrong with such an analysis; money, especially in a world capitalist economy mediates all relations? Certainly moneyed interests pervade Machu Picchu on all levels from local to global, but the economic reduction of life can be misleading. Machu Picchu offers a vastly different picture of life in a PA from the one offered by Wittemyer *et al.* (2008). In Machu Picchu there is a vibrant political culture. As it is a district, there are elections, candidates, campaigns and all the rhetoric of politics. As the number of conservation organisations and efforts has increased over the last ten years, mayoral candidates have actually increased the anti-conservationist rhetoric in their campaigns in order to win votes.

However, the public sphere is much more than just election campaigns, as people gather for town meetings in the plaza, or in the town's cultural center and engage in discussions and debates. People listen to the town radio station for commentaries on local, national and global events. People have a multitude of motives and interests and of course positions vary. Hence, the district provides a legal platform, but equally important is the discursive space they have cultivated that allows for valuable conversation on many issues including conservation and environment. In an area saturated with NGOs as well as governmental and corporate interests, the space also provides a degree of representation that is not dependent on municipal authorities alone. It is the existence of this local space to speak or speak back, that often troubles conservationists and park authorities. There are a number of well-funded development initiatives in the district, but development money has a complicated role and effect on this space, as the description of the following event shows.

On one occasion in 2002, the residents of the town, mainly local activists and artisans, upset with the intrusions of large-scale capital, the proliferation of environmental NGOs, and the stringent rules of state conservation agencies, threatened a tourism stoppage (*paro*).³ At one point during this malaise, the Ambassador of Finland paid a visit to the town to unveil a project, the design of a new artisan market. Along with the Ambassador were representatives of various NGOs, as well as the director of the sanctuary's national park service. Activists and residents believed this was a good opportunity to communicate their concerns. The main priority was to confront an ambiguous entity called the *Programa Machu Picchu* (PMP) in the sanctuary for making conservation decisions that seemed to violate district jurisdiction. The PMP was the representative body of a debt-for-nature exchange programme with Finland. The organisation included governmental agencies from Peru and Finland, as well as NGOs contracted to carry out its conservation mission, which included various development projects such as the artisan market. What was supposed to be a celebration of 'welfare kindness' on the part of authorities turned sour when residents engaged the visitors on a more political tone. Directing their questions to the Ambassador, residents asked what right the conservation NGOs had to make decisions in their district. Not surprisingly, the Ambassador stated that he had no control over the matter. So the residents

addressed the NGO representatives who in turn pointed to their contract with the state. State conservation agencies told residents they could do nothing because of the debt-for-nature agreement with Finland.

Uncertainty about bureaucratic responsibility and the place for a local participatory voice over development projects are some of the main reasons why residents experience confusion and frustration. Conservation, as it is given experiential shape in Machu Picchu, is about the way accountability is diffused among many outside institutional actors so that local participation is reduced to a passive receiving of plans and intentions on the part of experts. The Ambassador wished only to discuss the current development project, but the protestors continued their line of interruptions. At the centre of the issues is a jurisdictional right residents need constantly to assert over their district. This is what Corina, shop owner and leader in the local artisan association, did when she stood up at the meeting, and politely welcomed everyone, “*buenas noches*”. Now in her 30s, Corina grew up in Machu Picchu, where she also raised her children, runs her business and is active in local politics. In her elegant and humble demeanour, she now faced the audience and said, “I’ve lived here all my life and this is the first time I see the head of *Programa Machu Picchu*. I don’t think he has been here before and certainly has never made an effort to get to know us”. Corina declared “You are threatening the pueblo; the voice of the pueblo is the voice of god”. (*Estas amenazando al pueblo, la voz del pueblo es la voz de dios.*)⁴ The ‘pueblo’ here does not simply mean the town, but rather a political entity glossed over as ‘the people’. She concluded with, “I ask only one thing—that the PMP gets out of here”, (*que se vaya*), and repeated with, “This is the voice of the people, which is the voice of god”. Other residents followed in this manner, stating the alleged abuse, and demanding that the PMP leave their district, via “the voice of the people as the voice of god”.

The statement ‘voice of the people is the voice of god’ is synonymous with a claim to self-determination; the decisions made by the residents are what should count in the sanctuary. The emphasis by residents to reinforce the legitimacy of the jurisdiction is understandable, since without the legality of their municipality they would lose their civil status in the sanctuary. As long as conservation agencies conduct their activities in what they define as a sanctuary, rather than a district, they can bypass the demand for resident participation, fail to inform them of project intentions, skew conditions to favour the large capital enterprises the townsfolk feel have taken over their tourism economy. For that reason, the Machupicheños often frame protests around a rigid territorial polis—the right to belong in a strict jurisdictional sense.⁵

In retaliation to the town opposition over the way the PMP were conducting projects, the PMP during the night dropped leaflets throughout the town stating they were immediately halting current construction. The note was signed PMP, but it was not clear from which particular institution—the Peruvian government, the Finnish government, the NGOs, or all of them. The term PMP can diffuse accountability, illustrated by

the vicious circle previously noted, but can imply authority and intimidation.

The notice stated that their decision was due to the hostility from ‘certain local personalities’, namely the activists. The leaflet concluded with “these lamentable measures could be lifted in the next 60 days if the causes that motivated these decisions disappear”. The consequences were immediately felt. Abandoning the projects in progress meant leaving the town in complete disorder with holes and trenches dug in all major locations, and left many local hostels and restaurants without running water. Large scale hotels were unaffected. In the town plaza, conversations could be heard; “Everyday I’m without water, I heard the activists say that the PMP should leave”, said one local restaurant owner. “These [activists] stick their noses in everything and now we’re left without projects”, said another.

The notice succeeded in creating discord and exacerbating already existing class divisions. It contained the key message of blame in that the activists were blamed for the decision to abandon the projects. The notice was a directive that something should be done about the activists by the residents themselves. Different local interests and levels of inequalities were manipulated, as people were coaxed into policing themselves. Sanctuary authorities were able to use economic pressures momentarily to break resident organisation. From a larger perspective, the notice served to diminish the value of a public sphere for discussion, and active engagement with conservation concerns on everyone’s part. Conservation experts may recognise some of the economic needs of the people who live in Machu Picchu, but they are far more reluctant to acknowledge their public and political life, which can often be a stage for inducing a more sustainable cooperation towards conservation goals.

DISCUSSION

The Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) article calls much needed broad attention to the magnitude of human activity in and around PAs, but the case of Machu Picchu offers some ethnographic perspective on the assumptions made from the quantitative data of the study. Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) positions populations in PAs between a narrow politics of state and international experts, and a thin description of market drives that attract or deter individuals (Wittemyer *et al.* 2008: 123). Machu Picchu indicates the need to understand the histories and social processes that have led to the development of different communities in PAs. It also indicates the need to examine the political force locals can wield on the question of population growth. The Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study does not consider the possibility that individuals are organised within their own governing structures. On the other hand, unlike many PAs, one cannot avoid reference to a territorial polis in the sanctuary of Machu Picchu because there is a legally established jurisdiction within and on its edges. Machu Picchu is perhaps a robust example of a PA that has a public and political life within and beyond its boundaries as well as local jurisdictional authority.

However, all PAs are social spaces that must be understood by the histories producing them and the populations within.

The Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study largely refers to individual behaviour. In contrast to understand life in Machu Picchu we must include the 'polis' even more so than the passive 'community'. The term community could not capture or emphasise the public and juridical life of the people—in short what brings them together in a decision engaging process. Furthermore, the term 'community' has a kind of localising quality that places emphasis on a bounded indigenous identity. An emphasis on the polis does not mire us in the problem of defining who counts as an indigenous person, or how 'modern' one can be before they lose their rights to land. For instance, in Machu Picchu, the bounded identity desired by conservation authorities, and certainly the tourism economy of Cusco, is a commercialised Andean indigenous identity. By contrast, most residents in the district either resist or reject outright the label 'indigenous'. Residents want their claims to be understood either from the promises of the agrarian reform or as citizens in a political district in Peru. Moreover, regardless of how individuals might self-identify, the district of Machu Picchu is not designated legally as an indigenous community. Where does that leave peoples, such as the residents of Machu Picchu, who are seen as too modern, do not have a protected identity status, and do not attract the romantic sympathies of Westerners who want to 'save' indigenous cultures? Under pressures of liberal economic interests, such populations are left particularly open to a dispossession rationale.

Dispossession in Machu Picchu cannot be understood as eviction from the sanctuary. In fact, to my knowledge no one has ever been physically expelled from the Sanctuary although there have been threats of eviction directed at individual resident farmers. However, economic forms of dispossession in PAs has been recognised as a form of displacement even by institutions that fund development projects such as the World Bank (Cernea 2005). While economic rights, at least in terms of restriction to the resources that make up livelihoods, are increasingly recognised as forms of dispossession, political rights in PAs are less clear even though in practice they form an inseparable aspect of the lives of people; the World Bank recognises economic impact, but not political loss (Cernea 2005). It is important to note that in these cases of threatened eviction in Machu Picchu, municipal authorities provided representation and took on their cause and defence. In Machu Picchu, attacks on civil status lead to uncompensated restrictions on resources. The polis is then a means of defence as it is a target of attack. It is then a social force that should be assigned a variable in research on PAs; incorporating a notion of the polis may also help inform policy to be more sensitive to political rights.

Drawing from Arendt's work (1958), I argue that a more comprehensive notion of the polis is needed to describe people who live in PAs, and not to only refer to economic needs or identity.⁶ Arendt's concern in preserving a broad public life and people's political participation in a wider

social arena is reflected in her term *vita activa* or the active life. People don't just make a living around PAs, they make a life, and part of that life involves collective participation in decision-making. The polis is a missing variable in the Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) study. Without reference to the political life of a people who live on the so called edges, it is easy to use terms that describe them like a flock of migrating geese. Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) speak of 'settlements', not 'communities', 'populations', not 'jurisdictions' or terms that reflect local political life. The implication of their description is that PAs are spaces that are governed entirely without the people who live in them. The researchers assign only economic motives to the populations, note the 'negative impacts on biodiversity', but say nothing about the impact of tourists or visitors on the environment (Wittemyer *et al.* 2008: 125). Despite the emphasis on economic motives, the study does not properly contextual economic activity within the global shift towards market liberalisation that often threatens livelihoods. In Machu Picchu, economic opportunity also means unfair competition with large scale companies that can dominate the tourism economy and force locals to find make do spaces to carry out their activities.

In Machu Picchu, the residents know that the bottom line is to uphold the legal and political right to live where they do. Economic factors are important, but complicated. As Machu Picchu shows, foreign aid and conservation money may be an 'attractant', as Wittemyer *et al.* (2008) state, but it is also used to break down political unity (Wittemyer *et al.* 2008: 125). Deciding on where the 'edges' of the polis are, and assessing its conservation potential on a local level may be a more challenging problem, but it is one that I think any study on PAs should first and foremost examine.

Notes

1. The reader should note that the term 'pueblo' is generally translated into English as 'town' but throughout Latin America it also means 'the people'.
2. Through privatisation efforts on the part of the state, a number of these hotels, including Sanctuary Lodge, were eventually sold off to the corporation Orient Express.
3. Elsewhere I have argued that privatisation and market liberalisation efforts in the Sanctuary, coupled with the growth of tourism in Peru produces changes faster than local people in the district of Machu Picchu can respond to and adapt economically in a way that allows commercial activity to compete with large scale capital investments made by companies such as Orient Express.
4. The phrase 'the voice of the people is the voice of god' is a common political expression in Peru and elsewhere in Latin America, meant to give collective legitimacy to decisions. Here reference to god is largely thought of in Christian terms and is not directly reflective of indigenous religious beliefs.
5. This emphasis on jurisdictional belonging often results in a local politics of exclusion against those living in the district without the status of legal resident.
6. A full discussion of Arendt's ideas in respect to PAs is not within the scope of the article. I recognise the need for caution in the application of her notion of polis in Andean cultures, as she tends to idealise the Greek polis as her model of public life. See Benhabib (1996) for a critique of Arendt.

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