

MOUNT GARIWANG: AN OLYMPIC CASUALTY

STUDY GUIDE

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USING THIS GUIDE & VIDEO

The following guide is designed to accompany the screening of the 25 minute documentary film *'Mount Gariwang: An Olympic Casualty'* and to support discussions around it.

The documentary and trailer are available in English and in Korean and can be found at: <http://css.ubc.ca/2019/08/08/mount-gariwang-an-olympic-casualty-documentary-now-available/>. Both come with the option of closed-captions as well (click on the 'cc' button on the bottom right of the video panel).

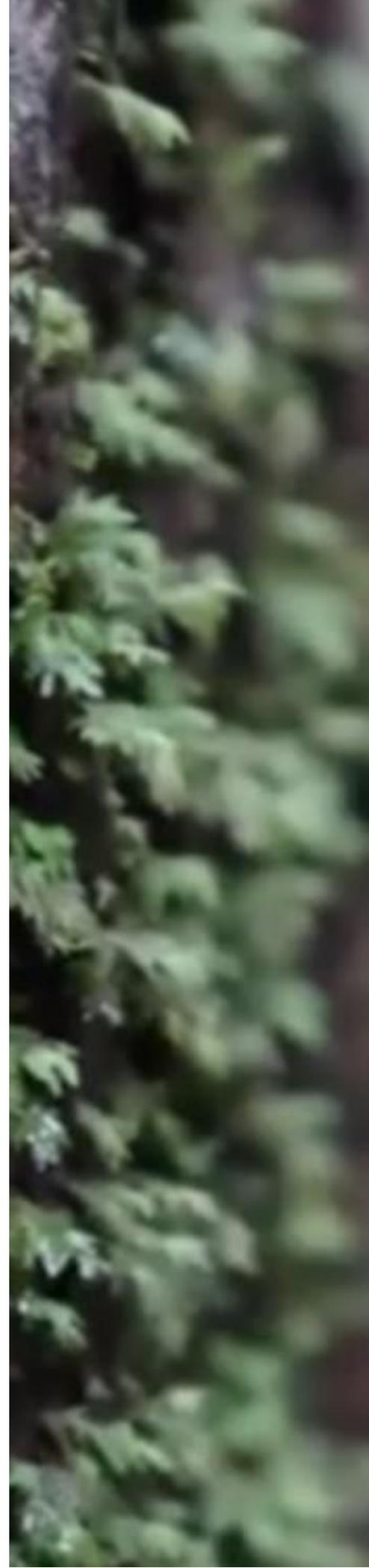
This guide consists of a synopsis of the film as well as discussions of key themes and concepts presented in the film. For each theme, we provide a brief commentary, as well as questions for further discussion.

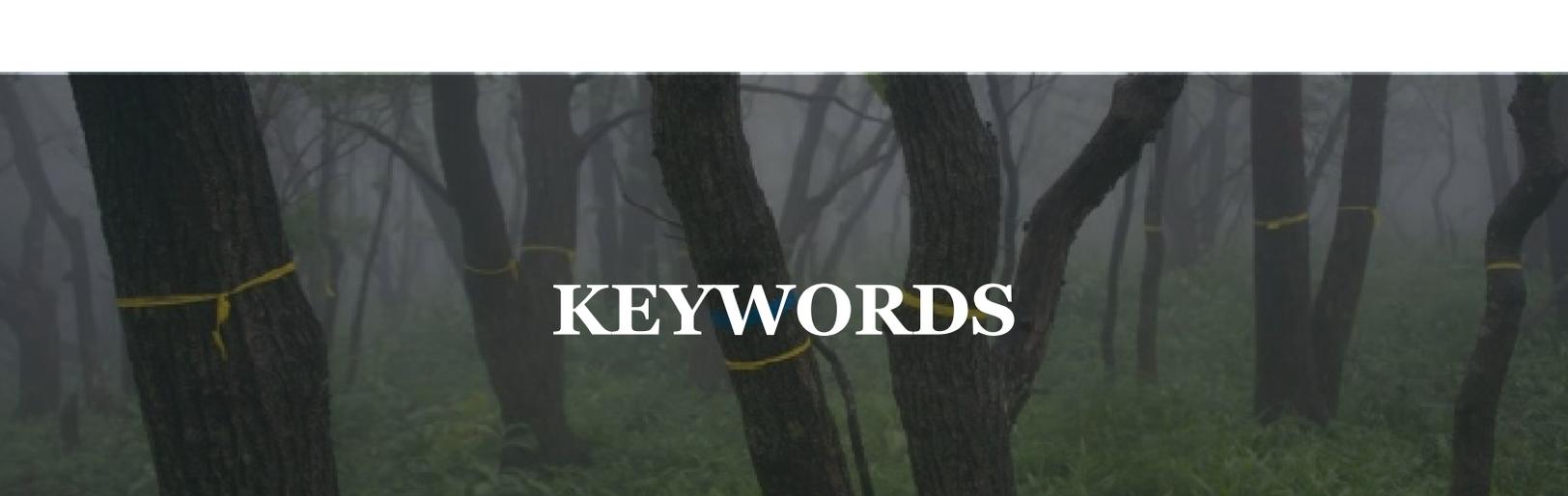
SYNOPSIS

When PyeongChang, South Korea won the bid to host the 2018 Winter Olympic & Paralympic Games, the fate of Mount Gariwang – a mountain located in South Korea – changed. Formerly a protected area, a 500+ year old ancient forest on Mount Gariwang was razed for a two-week event.

'Mount Gariwang: An Olympic Casualty' is a documentary that grapples with questions about the environmental and social issues surrounding this alteration of the mountain. These questions that are both about, and transcend, the topic of sport mega-events and their impacts, include: what inequalities are associated with environmental problems?; how are environment-related decisions made and whose voices are featured or marginalized in the process?; what assumptions underlie dominant approaches to dealing with sustainability-related issues and how might they influence our ability to imagine alternative and preferred ecological and socio-political futures?

The documentary follows one of the directors, Liv Yoon, who interviews stakeholders in locations around Mount Gariwang to capture different perspectives on environmental issues, politics, sport mega-events, inequality, globalization, and development. On-camera interviews with the following stakeholders appear in the film: local community members – some who were 'for' the development, and some who were against it (including those who were dispossessed and displaced due to the development); activists who opposed the development; government and Games' representatives; journalists who cover environmental and social issues in South Korea; and commentators who study environmental issues and sport. The film also includes an overarching narrative offered by Liv about the key issues, and interspersed commentary from (in the form of an interview) another of the film's directors and writers, Brian Wilson.





KEYWORDS

Term	Definition
Depoliticization	Issues are 'depoliticized' when assumptions and ideologies that underlie particular understandings of issues are deemphasized or not mentioned, and/or where options for responding to particular issues are selectively presented so as to make potentially contentious issues appear uncontroversial, or not worthy of debate.
Ecological Modernization (EM)	<p>A theoretical approach to understanding the relationship between humans and environmental issues that highlights ways that humans can continue to progress or modernize in ways that will lead to a more environmentally sustainable future. The key assumption that underlies the perspective is that industries, through the ongoing development of environmentally-friendly technologies (i.e., modernization processes), can and will switch from environmentally harmful practices to ones that are more sustainable.¹</p> <p>Along with the concept of 'sustainability,' EM is based on the assumption that economic and environmental progress go hand-in-hand.² In this way, an EM approach to environmental management is around a "restructuring of the capitalist political economy along more environmentally sound lines, but not in a way that requires an altogether different kind of political-economic system."³</p> <p>There are different strands to EM that emphasize different ways of attaining the desired pro-environmental gains.⁴</p> <p>On one hand, there is a 'strong' ('dark green') version of EM that is based on the assumption that government and non-industry based regulators/overseers of industry are needed to ensure appropriate pro-environment activity. The need for public consultation and for ongoing reflections on the intended and unintended consequences of the new/greener technologies is also assumed.⁵</p> <p>A 'weaker version' ('light green') of EM relies on the market (i.e. consumer demand) and internal, voluntary regulations to drive environmental change. For this reason, the weaker version is favoured by for-profit industries.⁶</p>

¹ Wilson, 2012a: 176; Hajer, 1995

² Wilson, 2012a: 163; Hajer, 1995

³ Hajer, 1995: 25; see also Dryzek, 2013

⁴ Wilson, 2012a: 163; Spaargaren & Mol, 1992; Hannigan, 2006

⁵ Wilson, 2012a: 176

⁶ Wilson, 2012a: 176 – following Gramsci, 1971

Greenwashing	<p>When claims of ‘pro-environment’ work and attitudes are not accompanied by genuinely eco-friendly practices.</p> <p>Also refers to situations where the eco-friendliness of pro-environment work is overstated, such that ‘appearing green’ is prioritized over ‘being green’⁷ – because “being perceived as being on the same side as environmentalists makes sense and cents.”⁸</p>
Hegemony	<p>A process whereby dominant groups maintain their power by generating consent for their authority amongst less powerful groups.⁹ When carried out effectively, hegemony renders particular values, norms and approaches as ‘natural,’ making it easier for people to take them up without second-guessing, or feeling coerced.</p>
Ingenuity Gap	<p>Refers to the idea that as societal problems increase in complexity, often due to increasingly complex human-driven technological advances, it becomes increasingly difficult for humans to come up with solutions to such problems in a timely manner. Moreover, when solutions are reached, new problems may have already emerged that make ‘old’ solutions less useful. The term is also associated with what some see as an unjustified faith in human ingenuity to address and manage the consequences of highly complex and ever-changing environmental challenges, such as cleaning up oil spills.¹⁰ The term is featured in a book of same title by Canadian scholar Thomas Homer-Dixon.</p>
IOC	<p>International Olympic Committee – non-governmental international sports organization responsible for granting ‘hosting rights’ to countries (i.e. ‘National Olympic Committees [NOC]’) to organize the Summer and Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. The IOC oversees the process of host selection and Games’ development, while the local organizing committees make logistical decisions on the ground that pertain to running the Games</p>
Inter-generational inequity	<p>Ways that future generations may be negatively impacted by the environment-related activities of current generations.¹¹</p>
Inter-species inequity	<p>Refers to a situation where the welfare of humans is prioritized over the welfare of non-human life forms (e.g. animals, plants).¹² The term is often invoked when the wellbeing of non-humans is seemingly disregarded in discussions about environmental issues and their consequences – consequences that are discussed only in terms of human-related consequences and how to negate these.</p>

⁷ Wilson, 2012a: 176-7

⁸ Miller, 2012a: 24; Lubbers, 2002

⁹ Wilson, 2012a: 28

¹⁰ Homer-Dixon, 2000

¹¹ Wilson, 2012a: 159; Maguire et al., 2002: 84-85

¹² Persson, 2017: 226-227

POCOG

PyeongChang Organizing Committee for the 2018 Olympic & Paralympic Winter Games – a temporary organization that oversaw the planning and development of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic & Paralympic Games.

Politicization

Process for revealing competing sets of assumptions, values, interests, and power relations that underlie issues.¹³

When issues are politicized, they are raised as matters of public concern open to discussions, debates and evaluations among ordinary citizens through a variety of arenas.¹⁴

Post-politics

A situation in which “the dominant discourse has been successfully articulated not only to legitimize itself but also to convince and persuade the public that there is *only one* reasonable and logical way to resolve political and social tussles.”¹⁵

Depoliticization plays a parallel role to post-politics, as political issues and contradictions are reduced to policy problems to be managed by a few experts.

Sustainability /
Sustainable
Development

An integrated strategy for addressing economic, social, and environmental issues – what is commonly known as the ‘triple bottom line.’ The classic definition of ‘sustainability,’ offered in the 1986 report *Our Common Future* (produced for the World Commission on Environment and Development), refers to our society’s capacity to “[meet the needs] of the present without compromising ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”¹⁶

The paradigm of ‘Sustainable Development’ is premised on the idea that economic, social and environmental progress can go hand-in-hand.

¹³ Harriss, 2007: 487

¹⁴ Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014: 2

¹⁵ Neo, 2010: 272-3

¹⁶ Brundtland, 1987



KEY THEMES & QUESTIONS

The documentary was produced with the broad goal of detailing, contextualizing and offering commentary on the Mount Gariwang ski hill controversy, as well as a range of sport mega-event-related issues concerning power, politics, and social and environmental justice. Below, we identify key themes presented in the documentary and provide further details for each.

1. Sport Mega-Events, Inequity, and the Environment

- Environmental destruction, related to sport mega-events and otherwise, is often associated with multiple forms of inequity.¹⁷ These inequities are experienced to differing degrees by variously positioned groups of people, as well as non-human inhabitants. Broadly, these inequities can be categorized into:
 - o Intra-generational inequity: meaning inequities that manifest across axes of class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, religion, countries and regions of the world, as well as between humans and non-humans
 - o Inter-generational inequity: acknowledging that future generations may be negatively impacted by the activities of the current generation
 - o Inter-species inequity: referring to the ways in which the welfare of humans is prioritized over the welfare of non-human life forms (e.g. animals, plants, ecosystems)
- Specifically, with respect to sport mega-events, people who live in areas designated for venue development are often asked or forced to move, to make way for the development, as was the case for PyeongChang 2018.
- Scholars have explored the negative impacts of these sport mega-events on marginalized populations, such as loss of housing through gentrification and displacement¹⁸, as well as the exacerbation of colonial violence through the use of unceded Indigenous land.¹⁹
- These negative impacts are alluded to in the documentary for their relationship to environmental issues, but are dealt with in more detail elsewhere.²⁰

¹⁷ Maguire et al., 2002: 84-85; Wilsona, 2012: 158-159

¹⁸ Kennelly, 2015; Kennelly & Watt, 2011, 2012, 2013

¹⁹ O'Bonsawin, 2010

²⁰ Elling et al., 2014; Horne, 2015

Sport Mega-Events and the Environment

- Environmental degradation has become an inevitable part of hosting sport mega-events – despite attempts in recent years to decrease this impact.²¹ This adverse impact is compounded by the existing inequities discussed above.
- In response to the growing concern around sport-related environmental issues, international, national and local sport governing bodies (e.g. the IOC, local organizing committees) have responded over time by carrying out a range of ‘pro-environment’ activities, such as:
 - o The IOC’s uptake of the environment as the third pillar of Olympism in 1994.
 - o Promoting the Games as ‘green’, ‘sustainable’, and ‘pro-environment’ (in PyeongChang’s case, the ‘O₂+ Games’) – beginning with the 2000 Sydney Summer Olympic & Paralympic Games’ promotion of itself as the ‘Green Games.’
- The IOC’s uptake of the environment, as the third pillar of Olympism, is aligned in many respects with the approach to sustainable development outlined in the ‘Our Common Future’²² Report by the Brundtland Commission (formerly known as the World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED]) in 1987, which established the triple-pillared ‘sustainable development’ paradigm as the dominant structure for environmental policy-making, officially adopted by the United Nations.

The Role and Allure of ‘Sustainable Development’ (SD)

- Sport governing bodies and industry leaders have also adopted ‘sustainable development’ as the dominant paradigm by which they create their environment-related practices.
- The concept of ‘sustainable development’ is premised on the idea that economic, social and environmental progress go hand-in-hand.
- This paradigm is appealing for its win-win approach. The idea is that the creation of an environmentally friendly product (e.g., a ‘green games’) to sell that benefits businesses (who can advertise their association with the games), and also ostensibly contributes to social progress (e.g., the partnership between initiatives such as (RED) with multinational corporations like the clothing company GAP, leading to marketing clothing consumption as a way to help HIV/AIDS programmes in sub-Saharan Africa).
- Similarly, applying the SD paradigm to sport mega-events means that sport-related businesses and organizing committees are motivated to promote and sell green products and initiatives that would help their bottom line as well as help the environment – as well as socially marginalized communities.
- However, the actual impacts of these responses are arguably insufficient and overly narrow.²³ The limitations of SD are ostensibly the same as those associated with the theory of ‘ecological modernization’ (EM). These limitations are outlined in the next section.

Ecological Modernization (EM) and Critiques of It

- EM, as the underlying theory for SD, is driven by a belief in the power of business-led innovation, technological fixes and moderate (and often voluntary) regulations to address environmental impacts.²⁴

²¹ Karamichas, 2013; Miller, 2017; Millington & Wilson, 2017; Wilson & Millington, 2015; Yoon, 2019

²² Brundtland Commission, 1987

²³ Hayes & Horne, 2011

²⁴ Mol, 2002; Spaargaren & Mol, 1992

- It highlights using innovation and technology so that production and consumption become cleaner and greener. EM-driven initiatives have led to remarkable innovations, including around more energy-efficient sport venues.
- EM is generally viewed as an optimistic and business-friendly response to sport-related environmental concerns.²⁵

Critiques of EM

- While EM-driven strategies have brought notable environmental progress on some fronts, committing exclusively to them has limitations. For example:
 1. EM's focus on business-led technological innovation may decrease the role governments play in pro-environment work.
 - This is problematic because while governments are mandated to address environmental protection issues, businesses are mandated to pursue profit. With the shrinking role of government in environmental regulation, businesses that are pursuing their profit-driven interests may prioritize 'appearing' green over actually carrying out pro-environment practices (i.e. greenwashing) if it is in their best interest economically.²⁶
 2. According to some, an over-reliance on technology-driven solutions to environmental problems means an unjustified faith in human ingenuity to address highly complex and ever-changing environmental challenges.
 - This 'Ingenuity Gap'²⁷ refers to the gap between what humans think they can do, and what they have been shown to do, especially when it comes to addressing highly complex problems full of unknowns and changing variables – e.g. the shortfalls in the attempts to clean up the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Can you think of ways in which inequities are reduced through sport mega-events?
- 2) Can you think of ways in which inequities are exacerbated through sport mega-events?
- 3) What perspectives on the benefits of and problems with sport mega-events seem most prominent in the lead up to and during events? How might we explain why some perspectives are more prominent than others?
- 4) What are some examples of economic, environmental, and/or social policies that you are aware of that are informed by the sustainable development paradigm? What are their benefits and shortfalls?
- 5) How might the sustainable development approach be exploited? Why might we expect this in light of dominant economic incentive systems?
- 6) What are some examples of 'pro-environment' practices of the IOC and previous Games' hosts?
 - a. Keeping in mind critiques of EM, what are the (potential) shortfalls of such practices?

²⁵ Chernushenko, 1994

²⁶ Wilson, 2012a, 2012b

²⁷ Homer-Dixon, 2000

2. Post-Politics, Hegemony and the Environment

An argument was made in the documentary that decision-making around the Mount Gariwang ski venue was 'post-political' – meaning that input was sought on the ski venue only after the most controversial decision pertaining to the mountain was made (i.e., to create a ski venue on the mountain)

- The idea here, so the argument goes, was to create the illusion of process that is more consultative and democratic than it really was.²⁸ Key characteristics of post-politics most relevant in the context of pushing developments for sport mega-events include the narrowing down of options for more socially and environmentally-friendly developments (or the option of not developing at all) – and thus not leaving much room for alternatives to emerge.
- The emphasis on the '*post*' of post-politics – refers to the idea the most contentious part of a political decision, like the decision to host the Games, is made with limited consultation, while more input is sought on less important decisions that take place. The aim, so the argument goes, is that this form of selective consultation makes people *feel* like they had more input than they actually had. This is how consent is sometimes generated for controversial decisions. .
- Hegemony is the term commonly used to describe the process of *manufacturing consent* – and it would apply to this description of post-politics is very much contingent upon.
 - o Hegemony: a situation where a powerful group's opinions and views, by way of social structure, become the most popular, or the 'only' legitimate version of thought.²⁹
- Together, post-politics and hegemony are pertinent to the question, 'how is it that consent was obtained for this development?' According to the film:
 - o The development of Mount Gariwang was portrayed as a way to: 1) boost the local economy; and 2) do it in a way that would still be 'environmentally friendly.'
 - o While consultation meetings were held, they were not widely advertised, and marginalized voices were not represented in these meetings.
 - o Items left up for discussion were minor decisions, while the bigger decision of going ahead with the Games and building the venue were already made.
 - o As one of the activists notes in the documentary, the promotion of the Games in the first place was done with the strategic use of values like 'culture' and being 'pro-environment,' which are widely salient, making it difficult to not get on board with.

Discussion Questions

- 1) How can the concept of 'post-politics' explain why ideas of 'sustainability' and ecological modernization are so appealing?
- 2) What would an alternative decision-making process look like that would challenge post-political maneuvers?
- 3) What is the relationship between post-politics and democracy?

²⁸ Neo, 2010

²⁹ Gramsci, 1971

3. Sport Mega-Events and Media

- How issues are framed and portrayed in media plays a role in generating consent for particular decisions. In this sense, attending to how mass media operates is useful when considering how consent is generated, and how post-politics operates.
- There are two pertinent concepts to help think through media and post-politics:
 - o 'Politicization' refers to processes for revealing competing sets of assumptions, values, interests, and power relations that underlie issues.
 - o In contrast, an issue is 'depoliticized' when assumptions and ideologies that underlie particular understandings of issues are left 'invisible,' and/or where options for responding to particular issues are selectively presented so as to make potentially contentious issues appear uncontroversial, or not worthy of debate.
- News-media play a key role in these processes – as journalists, editors and others along the production chain make decisions that shape how particular opinions and approaches are presented³⁰ – and can therefore be key figures in the intentional or unintentional depoliticization of issues, just as they can politicize issues by challenging status quo positions.
- Through these lenses of politicization and depoliticization, it is possible to consider how, and the extent to which, media portrayals of environmental issues pertinent to Mount Gariwang address questions about the implications of the environmental issues at hand, what response to these issues is preferable and who is responsible for addressing these issues.
- Such analyses also require sensitivity to whether and how media coverage may privilege some voices over others, and position particular viewpoints as 'consensus' – and in doing so, limit potential thinking about novel solutions.

Discussion Questions

- 1) Here are some headlines about the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic & Paralympic Games. Comment on how you would interpret these headlines, and whether/how they reinforce or challenge the status quo:
 - a) Olympic organisers destroy 'sacred' South Korean forest to create ski run (September 17, 2015 – Justin McCurry and Emma Howard, *The Guardian*)
 - b) At the PyeongChang Olympics, there's a chasm between glitzy spectacle and grimy reality (February 9, 2018 – Dave Zirin & Jules Boykoff, *LA Times*)
 - c) When Winter Olympics arrived, an entire village had to move and 58,000 trees came down (February 19, 2018 – Amer Madhani, *USA Today*)
 - d) PyeongChang 2018 partners with Korea Environment Corporation to deliver an O2 Plus Winter Games (March 6, 2015 – POCOG Press Office)
 - e) Sustainability at the heart of the Olympic movement (February 8, 2018 – IOC)
 - f) The science behind sport: How DOW is helping make PyeongChang 2018 highly advanced and sustainable (February 23, 2018 – IOC)
 - g) PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games create legacy of environmental and social good (February 24, 2018 – IOC)
- 2) What are some ways in which journalists could challenge status quo narratives?

³⁰ Shoemaker & Reese, 1996

4. Communicating Sport and Environment-Related Stories

- In light of: a) the well-publicized and demonstrated negative impacts of many sport mega-events on the environment³¹; and b) how media coverage of environmental issues plays an important role in shaping public dialogue about social action related to these sorts of issues³², an argument has been made that there is a need for coverage of sport-related environmental issues that is more rigorous and responsible.³³
- In fact, this documentary represents our attempt at this endeavour, as we implemented what we saw as 'best practice' principles for covering sport-related environmental issues, that were based on criticisms and best practice principles we observed in literature on coverage of environmental issues more generally. We call this best practice coverage of sport-related environmental issues 'Environmental Sports Journalism' (ESJ).³⁴
- ESJ Principles we devised are as follows:
 - 1) Journalism that is highly contextually sensitive – concerned with the range and richness of contexts that problems emerge from, and take place within;
 - 2) Journalism that acknowledges the range of stakeholders in environmental issues, and values the lives and voices of local and marginalized people;
 - 3) Journalism that challenges norms of anthropocentrism – focusing on problems of non-humans as well as humans;
 - 4) Journalism that questions taken-for-granted assumptions, and encourages a questioning of value norms;
 - 5) Journalism that offers some form of hope and identifies alternatives to the status quo;
 - 6) Journalism that, in some ways, sometimes, 'takes a side' – meaning that social and environmental justice are considered priorities in our engagement with the issues, and that the questions we ask, and the research that takes place, is in the spirit of doing better in these areas.
- In a forthcoming chapter³⁵, we discuss the challenges we faced in trying to implement these principles in the production of the documentary

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are some ways in which this documentary could be less anthropocentric without undermining the hardships that human stakeholders faced?
- 2) Research in environmental communication and environmental journalism suggests that the 'information-deficit approach' (the presumption that people need more facts to change their mind or behaviour) is ineffective when it comes to telling environment-related stories. With this background, what do you see as ways to make a story more salient? (Or, in your experience, when have environment-related stories felt most impactful? How was it communicated?)

³¹ Karamichas, 2013; Miller, 2017; Millington & Wilson, 2017; Wilson & Millington, 2015; Yoon, 2019

³² Bourassa et al., 2013; Boyce & Lewis, 2009; Pezzullo & Cox, 2018; Yoon & Wilson, 2018

³³ Yoon & Wilson, 2018

³⁴ Yoon & Wilson, 2020 (forthcoming)

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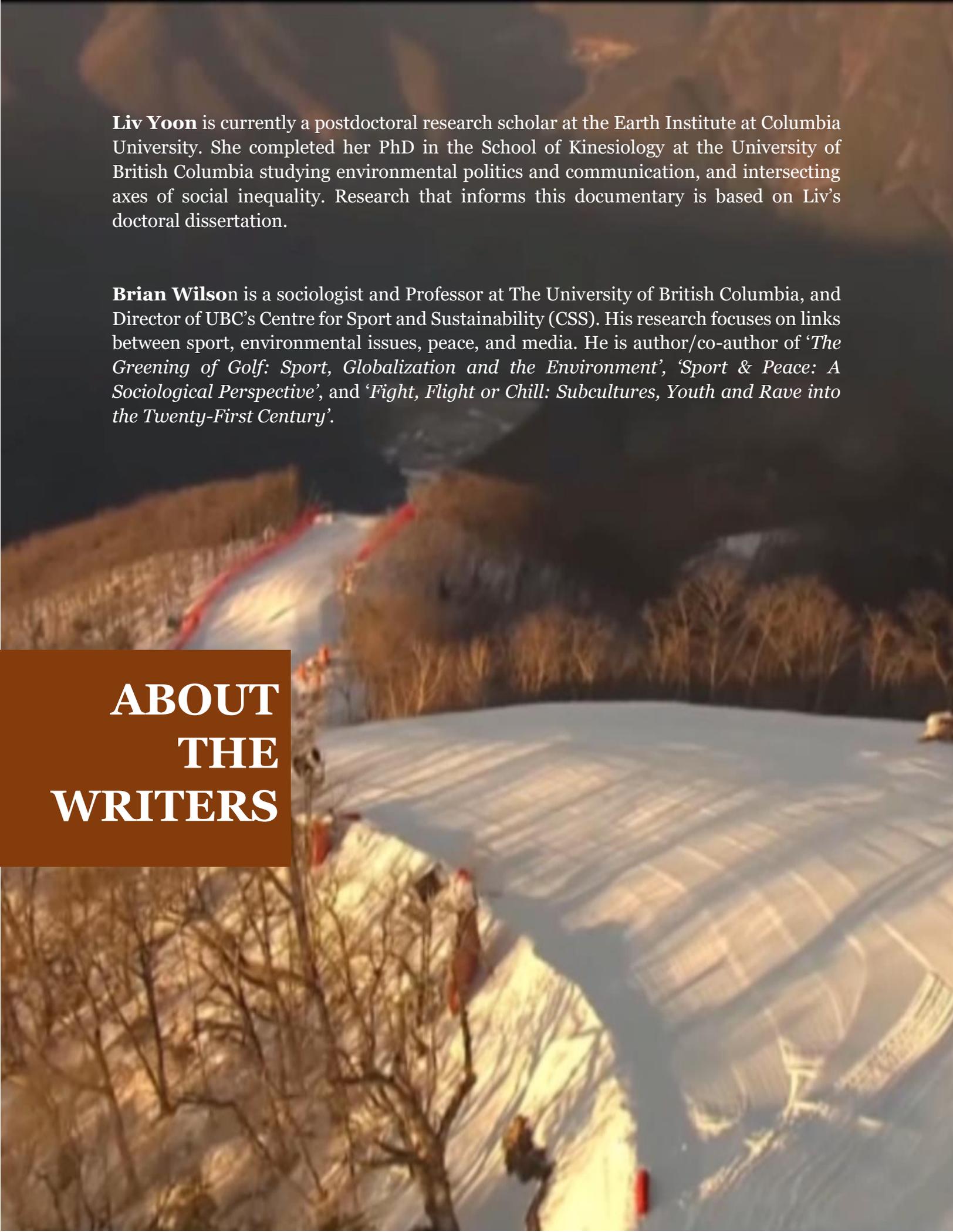
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