

Trading Environments: Commercial Knowledge and Environmental Transformations

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This conference considers the historical relations between commodity markets and environments. We plan to explore the environmental and landscape consequences of trading networks and their associated practices and interdependencies. How have environments been engineered, standardized and transformed within past trading systems? What have been the successes and failures of economic knowledge in dealing with resource production in complex environments? The 'Trading Environments' conference will consider the environmental consequences of marketing and commodifying nature through study of such phenomena as the performance of commodity exchanges, trading networks, land markets, debt relations, quality assurance through standardization, insurance, consumer movements, and changes in governance regimes. We look for a diverse range of papers in terms of historical and regional contexts, but are principally interested in papers that deal with the period between 1750 and the present. Papers should innovatively consider the ways in which transnational commodity chains bound distant environments together. Above all, in this conference we will reflect on the history of competing economic knowledge systems and their environmental effects. We envision a conference designed to address this issue organised around five interrelated themes.

1. **Environmental effects of commodity market dynamics.** Markets have dynamics of their own that contribute to environmental transformations. Participants might analyse the environmental effects of speculative bubbles, economic cycles, bear and bull markets, or shifts from arbitrage to futures trading.
2. **Environmental implications of trade.** What are the effects of trade on energy exchanges, biodiversity, environmental services and natural processes, and what effect has trade had on landscape transformation? What happened when a new competitor production region disrupted the supply arrangements of an existing commodity chain, or when new standards rendered a production network uncompetitive? Alternatively, what were the environmental effects of new product certifications and labelling systems?
3. **The effects of the cultures of markets for commodities.** Various economic actors have legitimised landscape transformation using idealised environments portrayed in warehouses, bourses, fairs, advertisements and trade catalogues. What fictive landscapes were generated by trade, what was the landscape iconography of trading systems, and how were consumers or investors mobilized? Papers might focus on the effects of consumer co-operatives, or calls for consumer sovereignty on the markets for commodities.
4. **Land, Landscape and nature as commodities.** Throughout the "long 19th century," nature and natural resources were a major focus, as the emerging fields of natural sciences like botany, zoology, geography and geology, more and more interpreted nature as a warehouse of natural goods. Scientific expertise was used to exploit nature more effectively for economic purposes. The idea and ideology of frontier was linked to the search for natural resources, and harnessed to colonial land markets. Papers addressing this theme might show how new frontiers were established, and how "valueless" and "pristine" nature was investigated and separated into tradable pieces and goods.

Disconnections between first and second nature. The infrastructure of a commodity chain may be at odds with the processes of first nature. New ecologies of trade emerge when environments are first articulated with markets or trade networks. The very economic devices used to cope with natural diversity and variability produce a second nature whose distributions and rhythms are increasingly dictated by the needs of capital. Similarly, efforts to manage exploitation for capital may meet with resistance and opposition as contending moral economies collide. We look to analyses of how the restructuring of trading networks generated new material exchanges and environmental relations with winners and losers.

To answer this call for papers, send a proposal, including title, abstract, and an outline of how the proposed paper might contribute to the themes of the 'Trading Environments' conference, to the conference conveners by 25 November 2011. For further questions, please contact either of the event conveners:

Conveners' Contact Details

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