

Asian Environments: Governing Nature, Negotiating Knowledge, Constructing Subjectivities

Rachel
Carson
Center

Call for Papers (by invitation only)

Date: 30 November - 2 December 2012

Location: Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society (RCC), Munich, Germany

Conveners: Ursula Münster (LMU Munich, RCC), Shiho Satsuka (University of Toronto, RCC Carson Fellow), and Gunnel Cederlöf (Uppsala University)

The recent economic rise of Asia is having far-reaching implications for the relationship between humans and nature. On the one hand, the integration of the larger region into the global market has considerably influenced the way people engage with their natural environment. Not least, Asia's emergence as an expanding center of global capitalism has increased pressure on natural resources and on the livelihood of people who reside where these resources are being extracted. Government policies often give priority to market mechanisms as solutions for generating economic growth at the cost of the environment, while conservation and other measures to mitigate environmental destruction are increasingly subjected to market logic. On the other hand, new forms of local and national environmental movements have emerged that challenge the commodification of nature and argue for alternative solutions which have less ruinous effects on people and landscape.

The present has a long history; this situation builds on long historical legacies. In most of Asia, the last two hundred years of global economic and political integration through colonial governments have shaped the institutions which mediate and manage human-nature relations. At each and every point in time, it was necessary to negotiate between complex interests and conflicts over nature in the face of an uncertain future. But what today may seem to be a new development that is changing political and economic global positions needs to be reanalyzed in connection to the past.

Reflecting on the dynamic changes in environmental governance in Asia and its importance in the global context, the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society will host a two-day interdisciplinary workshop. The workshop aims to address in a comparative fashion how people in Asia have experienced changing forms of environmental governance in various places and at different historical periods. It will inquire into how they have negotiated and articulated modes of environmental knowledge and how their struggle and engagement with changing forms of nature management and competing knowledge systems have informed the construction of their subjectivities.

The workshop will bring together researchers from different disciplines and diverse sub-regional expertise and foster an engaging discussion and exchange of ideas. Through inter-

disciplinary dialogue, it aims to address both the commonality and diversity of historical trajectories that inform current environmental issues in Asia. The discussions will situate the Asian experiences and histories in a global context and explore how changing global power relations influence environmental governance in the region and, in turn, the global implications of the study of Asia.

Guiding themes for discussion:

- Formation of governance structures for managing human-nature relations in specific locations and at national and transnational levels.
- Expected and unforeseen transformations of landscapes and livelihood due to governmental and transnational policies—industrial and agrarian in relation to environmental.
- Subject formation both as a consequence of and in opposition to transformations in nature and the deterioration of particular landscapes.
- The expression, assertion, and utilization of different, sometimes competing forms of knowledge about human-nature relations.
- The challenge of reconceptualizing human-nature relations in the present while acknowledging the past.

The Rachel Carson Center will cover travel expenses and accommodation for speakers. Abstracts for papers (400-600 words) and a short CV should be submitted by email no later than 1 May, 2012, to

Ursula Münster: ursula.muenster@carsoncenter.lmu.de

Discussions at the workshop will be based on pre-circulated papers (about 3000 words), which will be due on 30 July, 2012.

For further information on organizational issues please contact:
conferences@carsoncenter.lmu.de.

The Rachel Carson Center is a joint initiative of LMU Munich and the Deutsches Museum and is generously supported by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research.