

Call for Papers

Comparing Apples, Oranges, and Cotton: Environmental Histories of the Plantation

Rachel
Carson
Center

Date: 28 – 30 July 2011

Location: Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, Munich

Conveners: Frank Uekoetter (RCC), Franziska Torma (RCC)

In the modern era, plantations have emerged as a cornerstone of the global food production network. Starting with the sugar cane fields of the Caribbean, they provide people all over the world with a broad range of commodities. The environmental implications are in many cases serious: plantations exhaust and erode soils; the presence of many identical plants in the same spot spawns pests, weeds, and fungi. Furthermore the transnational character of commodity markets connotes that a distant, unknown competitor may ruin the profitability of the enterprise at any moment. Given these multiple risks, it should come as no surprise that, from an environmental perspective, plantations are inherently unstable systems of agricultural production. Somewhat paradoxically, they are also one of the most persistent systems of agricultural production.

The conference approaches the topic broadly, defining the plantation as a large, profit-driven plant production complex that focuses primarily on one commodity and produces for a distant market. Such an understanding includes classic plantations like bananas, oranges, coffee, sugar cane, and cotton, but also pine and mangrove monocultures in forestry.

We invite paper proposals no longer than 500 words on topics including, but not limited to:

- Damage from pests, weeds, fungi, and plant diseases: paradigms and responses
- Soil depletion and erosion: identification and countermeasures
- Social, economic, and environmental roles of additional crops beyond a plantation's dominant cash crop
- Plantations as boundary spaces between nature and culture, local and global
- Plantations and the control and dissemination of agricultural knowledge
- Networks and transfers of seeds, implements, practices, and environmental knowledge
- Discursive practices of actors within and outside plantation agriculture

The deadline for submissions is November 10, 2010. We will inform successful applicants by early December.

The workshop is organized by the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich. Applications must be written in English. Abstracts should be submitted by email to one of the following addresses:

Frank Uekötter: frank.uekoetter@carsoncenter.lmu.de
and
Franziska Torma: franziska.torma@carsoncenter.lmu.de

Discussions at the workshop will be based on pre-circulated papers, which will be due May 31, 2011.