

Day 3

Panel V. Botanical Relations

Keynote Speaker: Andrés León Araya

<https://perc.ac.nz/wordpress/extraction-labour-ecologies/>



Andrés León Araya has a PhD. in Anthropology from the City University of New York (CUNY). He is currently the Director of the Center for Political Research (CIEP) and teaches in the Political Science and Anthropology departments, at the University of Costa Rica. His research focuses on the relationship between agrarian conflict and state formation in Central America, and the intersection between political ecology and labor. Andrés is currently starting a new research project on the transnational technologies of coup d'etat in Latin America.

Doctor en antropología por la Universidad de la Ciudad de Nueva York (Cuny). Actualmente soy el director del Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Políticos (Ciep) y doy clases en las escuelas de antropología y ciencias políticas, todos estos de la Universidad de Costa Rica. Mis intereses de investigación se centran en la relación entre conflicto agrario y formación de estado en Centroamérica, la intersección entre ecología política y trabajo y actualmente estoy iniciando un nuevo proyecto de investigación sobre las tecnologías de los golpes de estado en América Latina.

Children of the palms: Sago-human convivialities in West Papua
Sophie Chao, University of Sydney, Australia

This paper explores the material, affective, spiritual, and ethical dimensions of sago-human convivialities in Merauke, West Papua. Drawing from long-term ethnographic fieldwork in the region, I examine how Indigenous Marind establish and sustain intimate, ancestral, and reciprocal relations of care with sago palms through sensory immersion in, and phenomenological attunement to, the lively world of sago groves and their more-than-human dwellers. In this multispecies environment, Marind scrutinize the skin of palms to discover their past relations and growths, and how these intersect with those of humans and other organisms. I examine how tactile engagements with the palm's pith connect companion plants and people across time and space through their shared bodily skin and wetness. I further explore the sago grove as a gender-inflected realm, where women celebrate their bodily capacities, physical labor and social roles as mothers based on affinities between their life-giving form and fluids, and those of the sago palm. Finally, I describe how forest sounds and songs further enhance the phenomenological textures of human-sago encounters and companionships. The paper argues that the material, sensory, and affective dimensions of being-in-the-grove are what endow sago pith with its distinctive 'social taste'. The paper further foregrounds how processing, preparing, and eating constitute politically imbued acts of self-determination. By forging and sustaining interspecies convivialities with sago and its biodiverse ecosystems, Marind affirm their collective identity as "children of the sago", in opposition to the foreign foodways of non-Papuan "rice" peoples and the colonial-capitalist regimes that they incarnate.

Dr. Sophie Chao (she/her) is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of History, University of Sydney. Her anthropological and interdisciplinary research explores the intersections of ecology, Indigeneity, capitalism, health, and justice in the Pacific. Dr. Chao's first book, *In the Shadow of the Palms: More-Than-Human Becomings in West Papua*, was awarded the Inaugural Duke University Press Scholars of Color First Book Award in June 2021 and is forthcoming with Duke University Press in June 2022. Sophie previously worked for the international human rights organization Forest Peoples Programme in the United Kingdom and Indonesia and has undertaken consultancies for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil. For more information, please visit www.morethanhumanworlds.com.



New tropicalities, oil palm in the post plantationocene
Michelle Lai, Independent Researcher; Office of Lost Plants (Collective)

How might we articulate convivial multi-species dialogues in the post-plantationocene? *New Tropicalities* is an auditory response to the trajectories of oil palm, acknowledging the colonial origins of how oil palm plantations have since come to characterise landscapes in the tropics. Employing the medium of sound recordings and the metaphors of assemblages to surface the violence upon the land and communities, sound is also used to also propose the post - plantationocene in the context of the Riau, Indonesia for convivial living - and of listening - amidst ecotoxicity.



Michelle / Min uses site based installations utilising participatory action, plants and food, to investigate and provoke thought about sustainability, food, and the environment. She is based between Berlin, Germany and Eindhoven, NL.

Crop wild relative conservation, re-staging domestication narratives, and the promise of convivial futures

Anna-Katharina Laboissière, Curtin University, Australia

Crop wild relatives, a term which encompasses any “wild plant taxon that has an indirect use derived from its relatively close genetic relationship to a crop”, have proliferated at the physical and institutional edges of agriculture for a long time, where they have repeatedly been used to breed new resistances into food crops. Their use to securitise a variety of other crops against biotic and abiotic threats during the last two centuries is intimately linked to the intertwined trajectories of extractive colonialism, the geographical displacement of many nonhuman species in addition to human populations, and the spread of what Anna Tsing calls “simplified ecologies.” While these seeds have been banked for several decades in agricultural gene banks, botanic gardens have recently come under scrutiny as potential allies for agricultural concerns; this process has culminated in the recent implementation of the Crop Wild Relatives Project, the most concerted effort to date to collect and use these plants. In this paper, I will explore this example of crop wild relative conservation and pre-breeding efforts as a unique example of overlapping agricultural and conservationist mandates. I will dwell on two consequences of this in particular: the way in which this hybrid form of conservation attempts to mediate specific convivialities between related plants, and the restaging or recapitulation of rhetorically utilised domestication narratives in collecting and prebreeding practices. Both these processes must be questioned and complicated in order to understand how the choreographing of new interspecies relations in experimental settings sometimes makes hunters out of scientists and breeders, forcing them into new modes of attention and relation; and to excavate the subversive potential of this transformation and of the cosmological reordering of conservation practices it implies.

Anna-Katharina Laboissière recently obtained her PhD from the École Normale Supérieure and Curtin University, and is currently a postdoctoral research associate at the Faculty of Humanities of Curtin University. Her research explores the speculative, cosmopolitical and neoliberal aspects of conservationist interventions, and the transformation and recuperation of death and fallowness in contemporary scientific practices. Her current and upcoming work can be found at *Cultural Studies Review*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *NebulX* and Ohio University Press.

