

## Day 3

### Panel IV. Extraction, Labour, Ecologies

Keynote Speaker: Andrés León Araya



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 intesección 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.

***Conviviality without environmentalism: An ethnography of illegal logging in Indonesian Borneo***  
**Paul Hasan Thung, Brunel University, London**

This paper describes illegal logging in Indonesian Borneo as an instance of conviviality without environmentalism. “Conviviality” and similar concepts invoke radical, community-centred, and environmentally friendly alternatives to capitalist alienation, extraction, and destruction. However, the celebration of specific values and lifeways may inadvertently exclude certain groups of people, such as those who wilfully engage in environmentally destructive practices.

Drawing on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Indonesian Borneo, including 8 months working and living with illegal loggers, the paper focuses on social life in remote forests where tropical hardwood species are felled, sawn, and hauled. Illegal logging is problematised by government actors, environmentalists, as well as indigenous activists. Amid overwhelming and possibly justified disapproval of their livelihood activities, illegal loggers are often unfairly depicted as acting from ignorance, desperation, or character flaws. Many illegal loggers have internalised these critiques, problematising their own selves.

But contrary to long-standing and powerful ideas that associate forest destruction with moral depravity, ethnographic observation reveals high levels of conviviality. Illegal logging turns out to be a site of lively exchange – of goods, services, thoughts, and feelings. Tracing the ethical practices and deliberations of loggers helps to pluralise the concept of conviviality. This is especially important for fairly and effectively addressing the challenges of nature conservation. Acknowledging forms of moral agency that are at odds with environmentalist principles enables conservation interactions based on respect rather than stigmatisation.



Paul Thung is a PhD student in Social Anthropology at Brunel University London. Paul has performed ethnographic fieldwork on the intersection of Dayak and conservation communities in Indonesian Borneo under the umbrella of POKOK, an anthropology-conservation collaboration that explores new ways of improving human-orangutan coexistence in rural Borneo, funded by The Arcus Foundation ([pokokborneo.wordpress.com](http://pokokborneo.wordpress.com)). His PhD thesis will reflect on the problematisation of mindsets and the production of invisibilities in conservation and development contexts.

***The actual and virtual socio-political ecologies of “camp life” on fruit orchards in the Okanagan***  
**Kathleen Hutton, University of Saskatchewan, Canada**

This paper draws on ethnographic research of agricultural “migrant” workers in the small farming communities of the Okanagan Valley in Canada’s province of British Columbia. Here, individuals from various intersecting cultural groups and diasporas seasonally live and work together, including French Canadians, Mexicans, international students and non-students and individuals with and without work visas. I am interested in the unique and vital entanglement of these life worlds in agriculture and explore their simultaneous entanglement with virtual worlds, connections and identities nurtured through social media.

Through interviews conducted over two seasons, I have collected stories that weave threads of commonality throughout this farming context. The following questions have guided the development of this research: How do farm workers experience life together? To what extent are virtual worlds (narratives, sociality and social media use) integrated in the plurality of agricultural ecologies? And what role, if any, do social media play in cultivating and/or hampering conviviality and belonging amongst farm workers?

Two foundational theories in my analysis are Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of a rhizomatic ontology—a blurring of boundaries between subject and object—and the anthropological concept of intersubjectivity, which also plays a critical role in perceiving interconnectedness across socially constructed roles, identity, space and time. This paper is a call for the inclusion of virtuality in ecological discussions to better explore the full scope of affect, embodied knowledges and inter-cultural life in the context of fruit orchards, farm labour and the multi-person “camp life” of workers in the 2020s.

Kat Hutton has an MA in Medical Anthropology from the University of Saskatchewan. Her graduate thesis, “Time for Autonomy: Subjectivity, Sociality and Time with Social Media and it’s Implications for Well-Being,” critically examines the intersections of social media, ‘well-being’ and consumer culture. Kat’s areas of interest include labour, ecologies and embodied knowledges.



### ***Bright spot ethnography: The analytical potential of things that work***

**Sarah Osterhoudt, Indiana University, U.S.A**

Much research in anthropology excels at systematically uncovering how larger economic, environmental, and cultural forces have perpetuated unjust relationships of power and environmental degradation. Often, such research is motivated by narratives of crisis, suffering, and alarm. Is there a way to bring this analytical attention to examine not only “what is going wrong” in a given situation, but also “what is going right?” As one such methodological approach I look towards emerging “bright spot ecology” models in the natural sciences, which identify and analyze places that are exceeding expectations for ecological health. Drawing from my on-going ethnographic field research with smallholder vanilla farmers in Madagascar, I consider an analogous methodology of “bright spot ethnography.” These agroforestry landscapes represent sites of conviviality, where a range of ecological, cultural, and economic relationships continue to thrive, even when faced with considerable challenges. While mobilizing a program of “bright spot ethnography” presents theoretical and methodological challenges, it may also help orientate the field toward imaginative engagements for sustainability and renewal. It encourages ethnographers both to emphasize with the suffering of others and to celebrate – and learn from – more positive examples of human and nonhuman relationships of belonging.



Sarah Osterhoudt is an environmental anthropologist who [studies agriculture and trade](#) in Madagascar. She is an associate professor of Anthropology at Indiana University, and is the author of the book [Vanilla Landscapes: Meaning, Memory, and the Cultivation of Place in Madagascar](#) along with articles published in *American Ethnologist*, the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, and *Development and Change*. She is currently working on a project, funded by the National Science Foundation, on the affective dimensions of violence and justice in Madagascar’s vanilla boom.