

Commodity Frontiers and Global Capitalist Expansion: Social, Ecological and Resource Policy Implications

International Workshop, 6-7 December 2017

Zayed University, Dubai

Building on prior workshops held in Cambridge (2014), Amsterdam (2015), and London (2016), the Dubai workshop aims to develop a global and comparative approach to understanding the dynamics both of commodity frontiers and the historical trajectories within their frontier zones, with particular interest in the differences/ similarities between commodity frontiers which in one way or another have had an impact on land and nature, and people's relationship to land and nature. These include frontiers with fossil fuels, minerals, agricultural commodities, natural resources, animals/ animal products or fisheries. A special panel will be devoted to examining oil frontiers in the region and beyond from a comparative perspective, with a view to reflecting on future trajectories of these commodity frontiers from an ecological, economic, policy and/or social perspective.

The workshop aims at identifying interdisciplinary linkages and synergies regarding commodity frontier dynamics. Relevant questions include:

- What are the drivers of commodity frontier expansion (markets, states, science, etc.)?
- Does a commodity frontier have an end?
- What are the key features of a commodity frontier and to what extent does this depend on the commodity at hand?
- How has commodity frontier expansion impacted local, regional and global ecologies, altered resource management/extraction/production processes and informed present-day conservation strategies and future policy development?
- How have labor relations or land tenure patterns been transformed by commodity frontier expansion?
- In turn, how have local populations resisted and/or informed the trajectory of commodity frontier development?
- What is the relationship between commodity frontier expansion and state power?

The workshop is joint effort between Zayed University, College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the *Commodity Frontiers Initiative* which includes the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam (represented by Dr. Ulbe Bosma), Ghent University (represented by Dr. Eric Vanhaute), and Harvard University (represented by Dr. Sven Beckert).

December 6th

9:00-10:00: Coffee/tea, light breakfast

10:00-10:30: Welcoming remarks

10:30-12:00: **Panel 1 Mining Frontiers**

Discussant: Dr. Ulbe Bosma (International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam)

- Dr. Robrecht Declercq (Ghent University, Belgium): 'Red Fever: Natural Resource Companies and the Conquest of the Global Copper Frontier 1900-1939'
- Dr. Gisselle Vila Benites (Pontifical Catholic University, Peru): 'Reconquering the Frontier: Indigenous Gold Miners in the Amazon'
- Dr. Hanne Cottyn (Ghent University, Belgium): 'Soroche: Commodity Frontier Expansion, Communal Autonomy, and the (Neo)liberal State on the Altiplano- 19th and 21st centuries'

12:00-1:00pm: Lunch

1:00-2:30pm: **Panel 2 Desert Frontiers**

Discussant: Dr. Sabrina Joseph (Zayed University, UAE)

- Dr. Brigitte Howarth (Zayed University, UAE) & Yilmaz Daduk (ELARD, Abu Dhabi): 'Ecosystems as Commodity Frontiers: Challenges Faced by Land Set Aside as Protected Areas in the Dubai Emirate'
- Dr. Gary Brown (Rostock University, Germany): 'Key Social Drivers and the Impact of Commodity Frontier Expansion on Terrestrial Ecosystems and Human Well-Being in the Arabian Gulf Region'
- Dr. Marion Dixon (American University, USA): 'The Desert Frontier and Modern World Economy'

2:30-3:00pm: Coffee break

3:00-4:30pm: **Panel 3 Oil Frontiers**

Discussant: Dr. Li-Chen Sim (Zayed University, UAE)

- Dr. Stefan Huebner (National University of Singapore, Singapore/ Visiting Scholar at Harvard University): 'Offshore Oil Drilling and the "Oceanic Colonizing Mission": Global Discourses on the Continental Shelf as a New "Commodity Frontier" since the mid-20th Century'
- Troy Vettese (New York University, USA): 'The New Economics and Ecologies of North American Pipelines'
- Dr. Deborah Delgado (Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru, Peru): 'Toxic Development: Inequality, Pollution and Change in the Amazonian Oil Frontiers'

7pm: Dinner (location to be announced)

December 7th

9:00-10:00am: Coffee/ tea, light breakfast

10:00-11:30am: **Panel 4 Commodification of Nature and Wildlife Frontiers**

Discussant: Dr. Brigitte Howarth (Zayed University, UAE)

- Dr. Niccolo Pianciola (Lingnan University, Hong Kong): 'The Aral Sea Fisheries as a Commodity Colonial Frontier, 1870s-1920s'
- Valentin Ngorisa Olyang'iri (Natural Resource and Development Consultancy, Tanzania): 'Conservation, Livelihoods, and Justice in 'New' Wildlife Frontiers: A case of Loliondo Game Controlled Area (GCA) in Tanzania'
- Dr. David Ross Olanya (Gulu University, Uganda): 'Commodity Frontier in Nature Development: Negotiating Nature Capital and Institutional Assemblage in Murchison Falls National Park, Northern Uganda'

11:30-11:45: Coffee Break

11:45-1:15pm: **Panel 5 Agricultural Frontiers**

Discussant: Dr. Eric Vanhaute (Ghent University, Belgium)

- Dr. Prakash Kumar (Pennsylvania State University, USA): "'Green Revolution" Zones as Political Landscapes: U.S. Technical Aid and India's Project of Agricultural Development'
- Dr. Adrian Zarrilli (National Council of Scientific and Technical Investigations- National University of Quilmes, Argentina): 'Commodities, Environmental Conflicts and Politicization of the Argentine Countryside: The Case of Farmers and Peasants Against the Gran Chaco Deforestation and Expansion of the Agricultural Frontier (1990-2017)'
- Dr. Sven Van Melkebeke (Ghent University, Belgium): 'Coffee Production in the Frontier Zone Around Lake Kivu: Different Ways of Mobilizing Land and Labor'
- Dr. Karen Miller (LaGuardia Community College, USA): 'Agricultural Commodities on the Philippine Frontier: State-Sponsored Resettlement and Ecological Distress in the 1930s'

1:15-2:15pm: Lunch

2:15-3:45pm: **Panel 6 Commodity Booms and the Political Economy of Frontier Zones**

Discussant: Dr. Habibul Khondker (Zayed University, UAE)

- Louise C. de Mello (Universidade Pablo de Olavide, Brazil): 'From Valuable Workforce to Invaluable Land Holders: Indigenous Peoples and the Construction of Borders in Southwest Amazonia during the Rubber Boom Period (1860-1910s)'
- Rachel Steely (Harvard University, USA): 'The Scramble for Asia: Imperial Trade Networks and the Birth of Soy as a Global Commodity'
- Richard Evan Wells (University of Wisconsin- Madison, USA): 'East Asia's Oilseed Frontier: Soybeans and Conflict in Manchuria, 1905-1931'

3:45-4:00pm: Coffee break

4:00-4:30pm: Closing remarks