Workshop: Commodity Frontiers in Latin America
Workshop organizers: Prof. Dr. Deborah Delgado (PUCP, Peru) and Dr. Hanne Cottyn (UGent, Belgium)

Workshop chair: Dr. Hanne Cottyn - postdoctoral researcher at the Department of History, Ghent University, Belgium hanne.cottyn@ugent.be

Workshop participants:

- Prof. Dr. Joan Martinez-Alier - Professor of Economics and Economic History, Institut de Ciència i Tecnologia Ambientals, Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona, Spain joanmartinezalier@gmail.com
- Prof. Dr. Jean Stubbs - Associate fellow at the School of Advanced Study, University of London, and the Institute of the Americas, University College London, and former co-director of the Commodities of Empire British Academy Research Project, UK jean.stubbs@sas.ac.uk
- Prof. Dr. Reinaldo Funes Monzote - Professor of History, Universidad de La Havana, and coordinator of the funese Geo-Historical Research Program at Antonio Nuñez Jiménez Foundation for Nature and Humanity, Cuba reinaldo.funesmonzote@yale.edu
- Prof. Dr. Kristina Dietz - Professor of Political Sciences at the Lateinamerika-Institut and project leader “GLOCON”, Freie Universität Berlin kristina.dietz@fu-berlin.de
- Prof. Dr. Mattias Borg Rasmussen - Assistant professor at the Department of Food and Resource Economics (IFRO), University of Copenhagen, Denmark mbr@ifro.ku.dk
- Prof. Dr. Deborah Delgado - Professor of Sociology, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima deborah.delgado@pucp.pe

Workshop abstract:

This workshop brings together scholars from different disciplines and with diverse regional expertise on the social, economic and political dynamics of commodity production in Latin America.

Over the centuries, the trajectories of old and new commodity frontiers have transformed Latin America’s societies and deepened the region’s relation to the global economy, giving shape to critical challenges for their national economies and for social and environmental justice. On the other hand, the expansion of commodity frontiers at a global level cannot be understood without bringing Latin America and the Caribbean to the fore. However, in the analysis of global transformations the role of Latin America still tends to be reduced to that of a passive periphery.

This workshop seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive integration of Latin American dynamics in the study of globalizing commodity production without ‘flattening’ the region’s internal inequalities. The workshop provides in an inter- and transdisciplinary platform to explore ‘Commodity Frontiers’ as a conceptual tool for examining and explaining the inherent ecological contradictions of expanded commodity production in the Latin American context. Coined by geographer Jason W. Moore (2000, 2011), the notion of ‘Commodity Frontiers’ refers to historical and current processes of incorporation of nature, land and labour as new reserves for capitalist expansion. This implies methodological reflections on the potential and limits of this concept as an analytical instrument in theoretical and empirical research.

Guiding questions are: to which processes and geographies do we refer when we speak about ‘Commodity Frontiers’? How can this concept contribute to the study of Latin America? Which methods and analytical tools are relevant to the study of Latin-American commodity frontiers?

References: