Environment & Society Portal

Multimedia Library Collection: Periodicals

"(Un)Worlding the Plantationocene: Extraction, Extinction, Emergence"

Chao, Sophie

Chao, Sophie. "(Un)Worlding the Plantationocene: Extraction, Extinction, Emergence." *eTropic: Electronic Journal of Studies in the Tropics* 21, no. 1 (2022): 166–91.

This article explores how tropical plantation lifeworlds are made and unmade through more-than-human forms of extraction, extinction, and emergence. Taking the palm oil sector as my primary focus of inquiry, I trace the extractions of substance, land, and labour undergirding the historical transformation of oil palm from West African subsistence plant to pan-tropical cash crop and controversial global commodity. I then examine how the presents, futures, and relations of multispecies communities are pushed to the edge of extinction under the plantation logic of ecological simplification, reorganization, and instrumentalization. Finally, I explore oil palm landscapes as zones of ecological emergence, where diverse plants, animals, and fungi are learning to co-exist with oil palm in new forms of symbiosis. Thinking-with processes of more-than-human extraction, extinction, and emergence foregrounds the sequential and synchronous ways in which plantations are worlded, unworlded, and reworlded across time, space, and species. Such an approach points to the importance of reconciling theoretical conceptualizations of plantations as ideology with ethnographically grounded examinations of plantations as patches. It also invites difficult but important ethical, political, and methodological questions on how to story the lively facets of plantation lifeworlds without doing (further) violence to the human and other-than-human beings who experience plantations as lethal undoings and endings. (Abstract)

© 2022 Sophie Chao. This work is licensed under CC BY 4.0

Download:
PDF: https://www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key_docs/chao-unworlding-plantationoscene.pdf

Periodicals Collection, Multimedia Library, Environment & Society Portal
"(Un)Worlding the Plantationocene: Extraction, Extinction, Emergence"
Source URL: http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/9940
Print date: 04 November 2026 11:47:32