



LATIN AMERICAN & IBERIAN INSTITUTE

Call for Papers

UNM-LAII Greenleaf Interdisciplinary Symposium on Latin America

“Rural Transformation in Latin America’s Changing Climate”

November 14th – 16th

University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Latin American and Iberian Institute (LAII) at the University of New Mexico invites papers for a workshop on “Rural Transformation in Latin America’s Changing Climate”, scheduled for November 14-16, 2018. This conference will bring together leading researchers in the field alongside exceptional junior scholars to advance theoretical understandings of smallholder agriculture and rural landscapes within the context of ecological, political, and economic transformation in Latin America. Rural transformation is happening in Latin American societies in which inequality is extremely high, climate change is increasingly disruptive, economic liberalization is rapid and radical, and globalization is overwhelming local cultures. Despite these challenges, smallholder agriculture and rural people keep contributing to the rural economy and to society at large, because they assert agency and shape their emerging environments.

The conference is organized around three themes, each representing an aspect of changing rural landscapes in Latin America:

1. Agroecology
2. Water governance
3. Narco- and alcohol production

An additional fourth session has been added to the conference to focus on tensions among security measures taken by nation states, industry, and rural people as each works to meet their goals in a changing climate. In this synthesis session, we will take a critical, yet constructive perspective on securitization processes in agriculture in Latin America. Our goal is to understand the ways in which water, agroecology, and narco-production are constructed as threats or threatened by certain groups, and then to interrogate the tensions that emerge in these competing narratives. This synthesis session will be held during the morning of Friday, November 16th, 2018.

For each theme, we will host invited speakers and workshop papers to develop a theoretical framework for and document cases of changing rural landscapes in Latin America.

Background and Conference Goals

A “transformation” is a fundamental shift in system characteristics that results in a qualitatively different system identity (Cumming et al. 2005). Transformation can be intentional (Olsson et al., 2008; Biggs et al., 2010; Chapin et al., 2012), or it can emerge unexpectedly as a result of anthropogenic and natural forces (Batterbury et al., 1997; Scheffer et al., 2001). In this conference, we propose to explore the tensions, struggles, and interplay between intentional and unexpected transformation in Latin American smallholder agriculture, particularly as driven by climate change and socioeconomic globalization.

In recent decades, agricultural changes in Latin American has widely shared four features: increased rural-urban integration, diversification of rural economies, dominance of agrifood systems by transnational corporations and cartels, and expansion of road networks and communications technologies (Berdegué et al., 2014).

These factors have influenced each other, and are both causes and consequences of continued rural transformation in the twenty-first century. Long-standing rural, agrarian communities have been replaced by new types of communities, in which agriculture is still important but with different roles from the past. These differences do not always benefit rural people. Even as agriculture has grown as an economic sector, its increased integration with global economies has undermined the ability of rural populations to meet their goals, or even excluded them from the sectoral growth (IFAD, 2016). In other words, “the paradox in Latin America is that while agriculture has been doing relatively well ... with a sustained 2.5 per cent annual growth ... over the past 40 years, rural people have not fared well: rural poverty remains stuck at 58 million” (World Bank, 2007, p. 239).

Smallholders, peasants, and indigenous rural actors are under-represented in agricultural development policies in the region. These policies are typically developed through negotiations between the state and small groups of powerful private actors. Rural groups with less power, like smallholders, are almost always under-represented in those negotiations (PIADAL 2013, p. 87-89). This exclusion extends beyond purely economic aspects into attempts to manage the impacts of climate change on Latin American agriculture (Warner & Kuzdas, 2016).

Smallholder vulnerability to climate change results from geography, and adaptive capacities are constrained by various socioeconomic, demographic, and policy-based processes (Morton, 2007). Climate-driven impacts and adaptations have widely undermined the livelihoods of smallholder farmers across Latin America (Warner, 2016). However, continued socioeconomic marginalization and emerging climate-related impacts have spawned new movements that attempt to reshape transformation in more inclusive ways.

This workshop will focus on three aspects of change: agroecology, water use and governance, and narco-trafficking and drug production. The agroecological revolution has merged activism and agronomy, and underlies the vision of food sovereignty supported by *La Via Campesina*, one of the most important agrarian movements in Latin America (Altieri & Toledo, 2011; Martinez-Alier, 2011). Contestations over water, who can access it, and how it is distributed have shaped regional politics for decades (e.g. Assies, 2003; Perrault, 2005), with these struggles exacerbated by climate change. Negotiating water governance at multiple scales has become a key challenge (Perrault 2014a, 2014b). Finally, narco-trafficking and drug production is an important, if often hidden, factor influencing agricultural decision-making. Opportunities for smallholder agriculturalists can both determine and be determined by changes in the international drug trade (Dube et. al 2016). Understanding agricultural transitions in Latin America requires attention to national and international drug markets, alongside other political and ecological shifts.

This symposium will host plenary speakers from diverse academic fields, and foster cross-disciplinary collaborations via presentations of works-in-progress by invited presenters. One

potential outcome of the symposium is a special journal issue that brings together the contributions from the workshop in a way that speaks across disciplinary boundaries.

Conference Steering Committee

This symposium is coordinated by the Food, Environment, and Resilience Working Group within the Latin American and Iberian Institute (LAI) at UNM. Steering committee members include: Chris Duvall, Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences
Jami Nuñez, Department of Political Science
Marygold Walsh-Dille, Honors College & Department of Sociology
Benjamin P. Warner, Department of Geography and Environmental Sciences

Confirmed Speakers/Participants

Keynote presenters will come from multiple disciplines and institutions. Confirmed speakers include:

Karl Zimmerer, Department of Geography, Pennsylvania State University
Kendra McSweeney, Department of Geography, Ohio State University
Edward Fischer, Department of Anthropology, Vanderbilt University
Thomas Perrault, Department of Geography, Syracuse University
Miguel Altieri, Department of Environmental Science, Policy and Management, UC Berkeley
Clara Nicholls, Center for Latin American Studies, UC Berkeley
Securitization keynote speakers: TBD

Submission Process

We invite proposals for participation. Those wishing to participate in the workshop must submit a 400-word abstract to bpwarner@unm.edu no later than September 28. In addition to your abstract, please also indicate which theme your project best fits. A limited amount of financial support is available to graduate students and junior scholars; please indicate in your submission if you would like to be considered for a small grant to support travel to Albuquerque.

Participants will be notified by October 1. In advance of the workshop, accepted participants will submit a 3,000-word précis of the paper which will be circulated to all other workshop participants. During the workshop, participants will deliver 5-minute lightning talks, followed by a roundtable discussion of their work.

Please send any questions to Benjamin P. Warner at bpwarner@unm.edu.

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