



UCD School of Geography Seminar Series

Oil Palm on peasant land - Local productive alternative or socio-ecological dead end? An case study from South Mexico

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Oil palm (*Elais guineensis* Jacq.), renowned for its high yield of oil-seeds, stands as one of the most utilised vegetable oils globally. However, this contentious agro-industrial crop is accompanied by a multitude of socio-environmental impacts. The Mexican oil palm sector, whilst emerging, exhibits remarkable dynamism, propelled by Mexican agricultural policies and the influence of transnational corporations. Notably, oil palm has been designated as strategically significant for the humid tropical regions of the country, areas predominantly inhabited by indigenous communities facing constraints in land access and political representation.

In the southern states of Tabasco, Campeche, and Chiapas, the progression of the agricultural frontier into primary forests has been driven by the cultivation of various cash crops, cattle ranching, and commercial agroforestry, and, since the late 1990s oil palm Peasant communities have been encouraged to incorporate this crop, which has become a critical source of income and labour, but contributes to displace the production of food staples.

To challenge the prevailing narrative portraying oil palm as a symbol of progress, Mexican academics and activists bring together their knowledge and practices to investigate and denounce the impacts of this monoculture. This presentation blends critical GIS mapping with community-based emotional and political mapping to contextualise the crop's advancement and investigate its local socio-ecological implications.



References

de la Vega-Leinert, A.C., Sandoval-Vázquez, S.D. and del Valle, I.D.V. (2023) Mapping the Expansion Of Oil Palm (*Elais Guineensis* Jacq.) in Mexico—Methodology and Developments. *Agrociencia*.

Biography

Dr. Anne Cristina de la Vega-Leinert is a physical geographer by training. She has more than 30 years research experience in fields ranging from Quaternary, Climate Change, Land Use / Land Change studies to sustainability science and political ecology. One of her research questions is how to reconcile conservation and land use in rural regions of Latin America and coastal areas in Europe.