

# SILENT SPRINGS

## Global Histories of Pesticides and our Toxic World(s)

Conference to Mark the Anniversary  
of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*

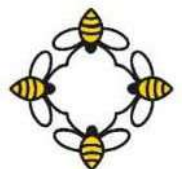


*Conveners: Marin Coudreau, Christof Mauch & Céline Pessis  
With: Eve Bureau-Point, Malcom Ferdinand & Simone Müller*

**16.10.2022 – 19.10.2022**  
Akademie Schloss Tutzing, Germany

Rachel  
Carson  
Center

ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY



Le RUCHE  
Réseau Universitaire de Chercheurs  
en Histoire Environnementale

How many “silent springs” have there been since Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring* in 1962? Chemists have invented more and more formulas, generations of pesticides have compounded into the earth’s lands and waters, and their use has grown exponentially. Synthetic molecules have continued to accumulate in the fabric of life – from soils and earthworms to the bodies of farmers and consumers—to the point that researchers now consider pesticides potential “agents of global change” in a similar way that CO<sub>2</sub> is an agent of global warming. The environmental and health catastrophe associated with the chemical intensification of agriculture has steadily increased since Carson’s best-selling book was published, as toxicants have followed the trajectories of international trade and power asymmetries. Sixty years after the publication of *Silent Spring*, this conference will explore its resonance and impact, both acute and muted, but will also address issue that the book overlooked. Like Carson herself, we aim to tether small observations to broader concerns by tracing the micro to the macro across industries, species, and landscapes. This conference intends to pay attention to intertwined processes at different scales, from the transformation of regional economies to the proliferation of pests or invasive species.

*Silent Spring* has often been considered the starting point of the environmental movement in the US and beyond. But has Rachel Carson’s classic really changed the world we live in? It has long been argued that the book’s western worldview obscured environmental justice issues in the Global South. How has the debate about chemical poisons unfolded internationally since the 1960s? Critics such as French psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon, American eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin, Soviet physicist and dissident Andrei Sakharov, and Indian environmental activist Vandana Shiva are only a few examples that suggest a multiplicity of registers of indignation, narratives, and revolts confronting the social and environmental damages of pesticides.

How can scholars in environmental history and the environmental humanities tell the stories of post-Carson forms of “toxic colonialism” as they happened both in the Global South and behind the Iron Curtain? How have new generations of pesticides and new actors in the global trade and governance of toxicants, such as China, contributed novel challenges and solutions to human health and the environment? What role have agrochemical companies played in the dilution of regulations? What mechanisms in the production of knowledge have helped to spread doubt about the long-term impacts of their products on human bodies and the global web of life? To what extent has this renewed geographical, social, gender, racial, and generational asymmetries in the “contamination of the Earth”?



**SUNDAY**

**16:00 Arrivals**

**16:30 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION (Location: Auditorium)**

**Marin Coudreau, Christof Mauch, and Céline Pessis**

**17:00 Panel 1: HAZARDS AND POSSIBILITIES OF STORYTELLING (Chair: Christof Mauch)**

**Kerri Arsenault, Bathsheba Demuth, and Rob Newton: "The Art of Fact"**

**18:30 Dinner**

## MONDAY

**08:00 Breakfast**

**09:00 Panel 2: POISONOUS LABOR, SUFFERING BODIES (Chair: Renaud Bécot)**

**Anu Krishna**, "Tales behind a Spice: Toxified Terrains and Tortured Bodies in the Making of Small Indian Cardamom"

**María Soledad Castro Vargas**, "Food Regimes as Chemical Regimes: Pesticides and Agrarian Transformations in Costa Rica"

**Birgit Müller**, "Labor and Pesticides: The Promise of Redemption from Toil"

**11:00 Panel 3: TOXIC WORLD(S), GLOBAL ENQUIRIES (Chair: Bathsheba Demuth)**

**Laura Jane Martin**, "The Residue of the War against Weeds"

**Marin Coudreau**, "Soviet Plans, Capitalist Chemistry: *Khimizatsiya* and the Western Pesticide Companies in the Soviet Age"

**Grettel Navas**, "Pesticide-Related Social Conflicts: A Global Overview"

**12:30 Lunch**

**14:00 Panel 4: CONTESTATIONS, REGULATIONS, ALTERNATIVES (Chair: Fiona Kinniburgh)**

**María Valeria Berros**, "Stop Experimenting on Us! Judicial Histories of Pesticide Resistance in Argentina"

**Julia Lima Gorges Brandao**, "Salt, Olive Oil and Poison: What's Wrong on the Brazilian Table?' Debates on the Indiscriminate Use of Pesticides and the Alternative Agriculture Movement in Brazil (1970-1989)"

**Bleuen Merrer, Céline Pessis, and François Dedieu**, "The Reception of Silent Spring in France and the Slow Emergence of European Pesticide Regulations, 1962-1972"

**15:30 Coffee Break**

**16:30 Panel 5: VISUALIZING CHEMICAL REGIMES (Chair: Kerri Arsenault)**

**Eun Sun Cho**, "Glyphosate Bonding" (slideshow)

**Thilo Mokros**, "Fel flora per se" (slideshow)

**Eve Bureau-Point**, "Of Pesticides and Men in Cambodia" (slideshow)

**18:00 Dinner**

**19:30 "LET US SEE IT"— INVESTIGATIONS ON CORPORATIONS (Discussant: Gregg Mitman)**

Roundtable with **Benjamin Brendel, Mark Davis, Crispin Dowler, Stéphane Foucart (tbc), Walter Haefeker, Fiona Kinniburgh, and Dorith Lehrack**

## TUESDAY

**08:00 Breakfast**

**09:00 Panel 6: FERAL ECOLOGIES, UNRULY TOXICITY (Chair: Timm Schönfelder)**

**Margot Lyautey**, "The 'invasion' of the Colorado potato beetle in Europe during the 20th Century. The case of France and Germany (1930s-1950s)"

**Chelsea Davis**, "Aphid Invasions: Phylloxera, Pesticides, and Colonial Responses in Cape Vineyards"

**Sabine Clarke**, "Forever Chemical? DDT, Path Dependency, and Malaria Control in the Global South"

**10:30 Promenade**

**12:30 Lunch**

**13:30 Panel 7: RESEARCHING THE PESTICIDE COMPLEX (Discussant: Simone Müller)**

**Christian Berndt**, "The Pesticide Complex and Social Science Research: An Agenda"

**14:15 Panel 8: CIRCLES OF POISONS (Chair: Tiphonie Robert)**

**Benjamin Brendel**, "Third World' Hunger, Global Thinking, and Toxic Export Policy. The West-German Pesticide Discourse from the Late 1960S to the 1980S"

**Amy H. Hay**, "Dumping in the Global Dixie. Circle of Poison and the Contamination of the Global South"

**Gabriela Argüello**, "Deadly Bouquets. Environmental (In)Justice and the Cut Flower Industry"

**15:45 Coffee Break**

**16:30 Panel 9: COLONIALITY AND MEMORY (Chair: Malcom Ferdinand)**

**Nathalie Jas**, "Coloniality at Work. How the Africa Stockpile Program Failed to Solve the Obsolete Pesticides Problem in the Continent—and Elsewhere"

**Charlotte Glinel**, "Planes Spraying Glyphosate over the Miramichi River: A Silent Spring That Lasts"

**Megan Johnson**, "Silent Spring's Artistic Genealogies: Toxic Colonialism in Contemporary Art and Performance"

**18:00 Dinner**

**19:30 SCREENING: THE MONTH OF OCTOBER (Chair: Marin Coudreau)**

"The Month of October" (50 min) by **Heshani Sothiraj Eddleston**

Followed by a discussion with **Heshani, Mark Davis, and Leah Utyasheva** from the Centre for Pesticide Suicide Prevention (University of Edinburgh)

WEDNESDAY

08:00 *Breakfast*

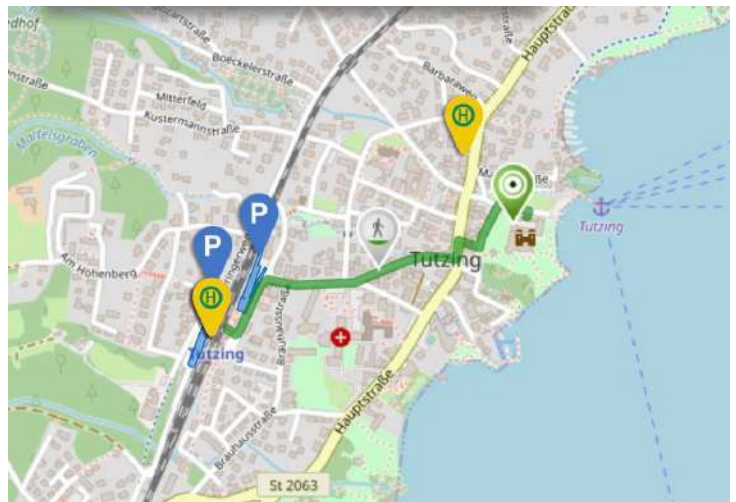
09:30 **CONCLUDING DISCUSSION (Location: Musiksaal)**

**Gregg Mitman, Nathalie Jas, Simone Müller, Mark Davis, Sabine Clark, Christian Berndt, María Valeria Berros, Jørgen Burchardt, and others.**

The town of Tutzing is located just under 40 km south of Munich on the western shore of Lake Starnberg. It is easy to reach by car or by public transport.

You can reach Tutzing by express trains on the Munich–Garmisch or Munich-Kochel line or by the S6 line, which terminates in Tutzing. You can walk to the Academy from the train station in about 10 minutes, taking the streets Bahnhofstraße, Hallberger Allee, Hauptstraße, and Schlossstraße.

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*Attendance is free following registration. To register or receive information about accommodation options in Tutzing, contact Sophia Hörl: [sophia.hoerl@rcc.lmu.de](mailto:sophia.hoerl@rcc.lmu.de).*

Rachel  
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ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY



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