

Call for Papers - Cluster for *Tapuya*: Latin American, Science, Technology and Society

Toxic Goodness: Spatialities and Temporalities of Sustainable Biofuels

Deadline for Abstracts: September 1, 2021

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Description:

Biofuels have long been proposed as solutions to fossil fuel reliance, though they are contentious. For some, biofuels are alternatives to petroleum that sustainably leverage the reproductive capacity of photosynthetic lives, such as plants. Various actors have pursued strategies to promote this sustainable vision of biofuels: national and subnational governments, intergovernmental organizations, and related civil and private sector actors work to develop “best governance practices,” while scientists and engineers carry out advanced biotechnological research to improve the productivity and efficiency of biofuel production. On the other hand, critical social scientific research on biofuels has largely examined the destructive and unjust impacts of biofuels production on rural/agrarian communities and ecologies, with a focus on the complex relationships between the Global North and Global South, between state, capital and society, and between nature and society.

Insights from the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) have contributed to these critical studies of biofuels, for example through analytics such as sociotechnical systems and imaginaries (e.g. Carolon 2009, 2010, Levidow and Raman 2020), responsible research and innovation (e.g. Pandey, Valkenburg, Mamidipudi, and Bijker 2020), social justice (e.g. Labruto 2014), politics of knowledge (e.g., Hoop and Arora 2020), political materialities (e.g. Birch and Calvert 2015), and science-policy interactions (e.g. Eklöf 2011, Talamani and Dewes 2012, Hansen 2014). STS scholars have also offered critical examinations of techno-fixes (e.g., Levidow and Raman 2020), synthetic biology (e.g. Mackenzie 2013), sustainability standards (e.g., Winickoff and Mondou 2016), life cycle assessments (e.g. Freidberg 2015), and bioeconomies (e.g. Calvert, Birch, and Mabee 2017). With few exceptions, though, STS works on biofuels focus largely on technoscientific and policy developments in the Global North and/or center on analytics developed out of the realities of Euro-American contexts.

This special issue aims to contribute to STS biofuels scholarship, both topically and theoretically, by attuning to how biofuels are imagined as well as made through and across asymmetrical global relations. Such attention puts STS scholarship in conversation not only with the political economy and political ecology analyses of biofuels but also with areas such as postcolonial, critical race, and anti-colonial studies. Such an approach refocuses critique on how sustainability discourse renders invisible the toxic colonial and capitalist structures lurking underneath renewable energy production systems. With an attention to the spatialities and temporalities of biofuels, this special issue primarily asks: in making biofuels sustainable, what enduring asymmetrical sociotechnical relations are also *sustained* in the process?

We call for contributions that empirically analyze how biofuel materials and knowledges move across borders and regions, as well as persist and shift through historical contexts. Contributions may address, among others, the following questions:

- How do movements of biofuel materialities and knowledges across time and space build on, reproduce, and reconfigure toxic systems of extractivism, settler colonialism, and/or plantation capitalism?
- How do scientific invocations position plants and microorganisms as novel, sustainable mechanisms for growth despite enduring colonial legacies?
- How have biofuels been valued? What are the historical valences of biomass and waste and how do these shape contemporary biofuel production? Who decides what can be transformed into valuable energy?
- In what ways do biofuels and their production extend or prolong exploitative labour practices and resource extraction?
- What are the relationships between places and biofuels production? How do biofuel production processes reproduce various forms of global asymmetries?
- Where are feedstocks for biofuels grown or produced? How are these feedstocks transported? Where are these feedstocks processed into fuels? Where and how are they consumed?
- What kinds of technoscientific practices and knowledges get naturalized during biofuel production processes? Which truths about biofuels count and which are ignored/sidelined?
- How do biofuels rework understandings of sustainability as a ‘green’ practice?
- How do the geopolitics and technoscientific relations around biofuels sustain toxic environments? What sorts of toxic relations get sustained in the process?
- What constitutes the enduring appeal of biofuels despite the injustices embedded in biofuel worlds?

Submissions:

Abstracts (max. 500 words) should be submitted by September 1st, 2021 with a brief biographical note (max. 100 words). Please send proposed abstracts to enduringrelations@gmail.com.

Timeline:

1 September 2021	Abstract submission
15 September 2021	Manuscript invitation confirmation
15 December 2021	Full manuscript submission
15 March 2022	Peer review back
15 April 2022	Final manuscript submission