

The IU Department of Anthropology presents:

"I Am Not A Banana": Edible Others and the Residues of Protest in Asia's Banana Republic



Alyssa Paredes
Yale University
Monday, February 10
4:00 PM
SB 005

Aerial spraying over a banana plantation, 2015. Photo by Interfacing Development Interventions for Sustainability, Inc.

Description: On Philippine banana plantations geared towards the Japanese market, chemical drift from aerially sprayed fungicides consistently escapes the bounds of the food system. Invisible and untraceable by modern managerial schemas, they fly up into the air and into bodies, becoming nodes of externalized cost borne by locals with no formal connection to the industry. Paying ethnographic attention to multi-species dynamics in these peripheral spaces, this talk reflects on the tensions between consuming and consumed bodies in what has become known as “Asia’s Banana Republic.” It follows the successes and failures of the Davao City civil movement “Citizens Against Aerial Spray” (Mamamayan Ayaw sa Aerial Spray), and situates developments in the inter-Asian region within the global discourse on toxics. A major roadblock to the movement has been the fact that fungicides are applied not in singular form but in mixed “chemical cocktails,” making it impossible to draw links between a given active ingredient and any particular medical symptoms. This clashes with Western-derived paradigms that frame both the modern regulation of chemicals and the environmental movements against them on the basis of individual active ingredients. Working through four insights for the study of environmental harm and food justice, this research seeks to understand why activists chose to protest against an agricultural method rather than chemical content in their effort to reinsert themselves into the plantation imaginaries that have tried to efface them.

In collaboration with IU Emerging Areas of Research - Sustainable Food System Science (SFSS) project