

**Call for papers**  
**Plantations and their Afterlives: Materialities, Durabilities, Struggles**  
Symposium, 1-3 April 2020  
Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon

*The Colour of Labour: The Racialised Lives of Migrants*  
ERC AdG 2015 - 695573, PI Cristiana Bastos

Convenors: Marta Macedo, Irene Peano, Colette Le Petitcorps

Keynote address: Prof. Deborah Thomas, Department of Anthropology, University of  
Pennsylvania

Plantations have been crucial institutions for the expansion of imperial and post-imperial projects. They function as racialised and gendered systems of land appropriation and of labour recruitment, control, extraction and reproduction, aiming at the intensive cultivation of cash crops for export. Such operations have also had political, sovereign dimensions. Furthermore, plantations have been central to the emergence and reproduction of the capitalist world system, which in turn heavily transformed eco-systems and landscapes, leading some scholars to coin the concept of 'Plantationocene'. However, plantations are not homogeneous forms: in the past as much as in the present, they have relied on a range of technologies, relations and patterns of circulation, extraction, and design - they depend on specific knowledges and practices shaping both environments and labour relations. We welcome papers that examine the materialities of plantations across multiple times and places, their mutations, durabilities and spectral survivals, taking into account the conflictual dimension of these processes.

**Materialities**

How have the specific requirements of the crops being grown translated into different disciplinary and spatial technologies for managing 'nature' and people? How did plantation objects, ideas, and living beings circulate and adapt? How have the different regimes of exploitation (slavery, indenture, wage labour) coexisted, evolved and transitioned across specific historical and geographical contexts? How can the various techno-scientific practices at play in plantations illuminate the racialised, gendered and sexualized dimension of capitalism? Furthermore, treating plantations as institutions whose internal relations have pervaded whole societies, we aim to debate these issues beyond the sole case of agricultural/agro-industrial production, by including also the sites and types of labour and (re)production that have developed in the evolution and restructuring of plantation economies, such as those pertaining to tourism, heritage, domestic service, or construction work, but also to carceral institutions.

**Durabilities**

Considering plantation techniques and materialities, and their mutations and transpositions, also means to interrogate their afterlives, spectres and remnants. Are plantations "back"? Were they ever gone? And where, exactly, are they? The question concerns not only plantations' geographical location, but also the forms in which they might be seen to endure in the present. Several scholars have addressed these issues, especially in relation to the legacies, durabilities and afterlives of American slave plantations, in many ways the *locus classicus* for the study of plantations. The dismantlement of plantation units and households in old plantation societies has been shown to lead to a repurposing of their techniques of management and extraction to new domains. On the one hand, we aim to broaden the spatiotemporal scope of this debate. At the same time, we encourage reflections on how these techniques were transposed to contexts that cannot be easily identified as directly related to plantation societies (the most classic example being the European factory), and which explore the subjective and affective dimensions of plantation hauntings.

## **Struggles**

The role of conflicts and struggles in spurring change, and their subjective dimensions, is another key axis of interest. Transitions were not smoothly driven by capitalist rationality, or well oiled by the wholesale reproduction of the hierarchies created in the plantation. They were also the product of renewed conflictual relations between the working and landowning classes, which drew from the contradictions inherent in the process of (re)production of plantations. We especially look for grounded methodological proposals and empirical analyses that help grapple with the too often silenced forms of social conflict, protest and “petit marronnage”, built on a socialisation to resistance which may be specific to plantations and their afterlives.

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We welcome papers from across disciplinary perspectives, tackling one or more of these axes, as well as others. Abstracts (maximum 500 words) along with a paragraph with biographical information, should be sent by email to: **plantationsandtheirafterlives@gmail.com** by **October 1, 2019**. Applicants will be notified of the results of the selection process by **October 31, 2019**.

Some travel funds will be available for those who do not have access to institutional support. The publication of a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal is planned after the symposium.

### *About the keynote speaker:*

Deborah A. Thomas is the R. Jean Brownlee Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. She is also core faculty in Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies. She is the author of *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation: Entanglement, Witnessing, Repair* (forthcoming), *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica* (2011), and *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and The Politics of Culture in Jamaica* (2004). She is also co-director and co-producer of two films: *BAD FRIDAY: RASTAFARI AFTER CORAL GARDENS* and *FOUR DAYS IN MAY*.

### *About the ERC project **The Colour of Labour**:*

The project explores, through different tracks, different disciplinary perspectives and a broad spectrum of empirical cases, the co-production of labour and racializations. Research within its scope has explored the trajectories of labour into post-abolition plantations in the Caribbean and Hawaii, into the migrant mill towns of New England, the multiple displacements in and within the African West Coast, the entanglements of plantation work and domestic work in Mauritius, and the processes of segregation and differentiation of low-class migrants in contemporary Italy.