

The Cene Scene

Centering Indigenous & Black Environmental Visions'

10/30/20 | Register Today:



Sara Smith, Associate Professor, Geography, UNC-Chapel Hill

For a decade, geography has been grappling with a proliferation of the Anthropocene, the Capitalocene, the Plantationocene. Through the theorization of each of these, human impact on global ecologies is defined in epochs, paying particular attention to industrialization, the expansion of global capitalism, or changes in agriculture and land use practices. Time is also segmented through knowledge and imperial infrastructures that intensify and naturalize disparities between colonizer and colonized. These cenes perpetuate a settler time, obscuring violence through the use of abstract epochs while denying Indigenous and Black ontologies and histories. Cene arguments are meant to generate a political orientation toward the world, reflected then in environmental policy. We contend that the politics around energy transition and a Green New Deal still centers whiteness, denying Indigenous and Black sovereignty and thus entrenches colonial capitalist practices on marginalized communities for yet another generation. To move beyond the cenes, we center Indigenous and Black Studies accounting of environments and history, letting these narratives ground our understanding of our histories and futures.