



**– Institute's Colloquium –**

**Dr. Sabine Luning  
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**Rubbish at the Border: A Minefield of Conservation Politics  
at the Lawa River, Suriname/French Guiana. (Sabine  
Luning and Marjo de Theije)**

Aluku maroons consider the Lawa River and its banks as their territory (Aluku Liba). The discovery of gold in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century caused the Dutch and the French to fight over the delimitation of the national borders in this classic frontier area. Ever since 1891, the year the two colonial powers accepted the Lawa River as national border, a most interesting play of identity politics continues to unfold in this border region. This paper analyses how histories of making territories and identities are currently affected by a mining-conservation nexus, in which conservation is not the opposite of mining but strategically linked to (de)legitimizing specific forms of mining. Many see the instauration by the French of the Parc Amazonien as a direct strategy to ban and/or reorganize goldmining in the Southern part of the département. This idea is reinforced by the military campaigns against illegal gold mining the French are carrying out since 2003. Both initiatives strongly affect - and are affected by - the border situation and identity politics. For instance, Aluku, as French nationals, are subjected differently to policing compared co-goldminers from Brazil. Moreover, the militarization has caused a boom in cross-border trade and smuggle: in recent years a string of shops, mainly in the hands of Chinese shopkeepers, has been built on the Surinamese riverbank of the Lawa. The differences in state policies at both sides of the Lawa create new dynamics, which fuel hostilities first against Brazilians and more recently against Chinese. A case-study over the treatment of rubbish produced at the shops on the Surinamese side will serve to illustrate the painful effects: customary Aluku authorities try to strengthen their position by a cross-border initiative for waste disposal in the name of the environment, and the water quality of the Lawa river in particular. The conservation-mining nexus is an excellent lens to understand the overheating of a climate of change, characterized by suspicions against themétropole and shaming and blaming of categories of 'foreigners'.

**on Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup> 2015  
4-6 p.m.  
Institute of Ethnology  
Stuttstraße 21, Raum STU 105 (2.10)**

**Everybody is welcome!**