



ALGAE MATTERS.

SARGASSUM AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CARIBBEAN

Laura Otto

Professor for the Anthropology of the Rural at Würzburg University

For just over a decade, unusually large quantities of Sargassum brown algae have been landing on the beaches of the Caribbean. The algae are changing ecosystems, threatening the tourism sector and raising questions about the coexistence of different species. While Sargassum is understood as a problem and addressed accordingly, the algae are also able to bind carbon dioxide and are considered a promising companion species to meet the global challenges of climate change. Last but not least, Sargassum was named 'alga of the year 2024' by the German Botanical Society. Based on ethnographic field research in the Caribbean, the lecture focuses on different perspectives on and ways of dealing with Sargassum as well as diverse human-algae relationships. The talk will focus on the question of the (overlooked) powers of algae in different economic contexts and futures in the Anthropocene.

25 ottobre 16.30

Edificio U3, Aula U3-05

Piazza della Scienza 3 20126 Milano



Laura Otto is Assistant Professor for the Anthropology of the Rural at Würzburg University at the Chair of European Ethnology/Cultural Analysis. She works at the intersection of cultural anthropology, environmental humanities and science and technology studies (STS). Her ethnographic research is concerned with harmful algal bloom in the Caribbean and questions of multi-species coastal transformations in the Anthropocene.



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