“Grappling with the ‘success’ of development: Modern food and the emergence of counter-movements in Ecuador”

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Thursday, September 19, 2013, 12 - 1 p.m.
Anthropology 206

Light lunch provided

Talk abstract: Drawing on nearly two decades of action-research as an academic and food activist in Ecuador, Dr. Sherwood explores how two public health concerns – pesticide poisoning and obesity – can be viewed as the product of the ‘success’ of food modernization policies. Focusing on food policy, he examines historical developments and heterogeneity in peoples' practices to derive lessons that can inform practical and effective public policy responses. He finds that through their role as consumers people resolve conflicting demands between ‘maximizing utility’ and ‘advancing the public good’, if problematically. He finds that the ‘consumer-citizen’ in social-movements represents a paradoxical, but promising dynamic capable of reconstituting economies, culture, and society. He argues that people’s daily practices are a largely neglected resource for tackling pressing food and public health policy concerns.

Young boys spraying pesticides on potatoes.

Photo: Stephen Sherwood

Stephen Sherwood is Assistant Professor in the Knowledge, Innovation and Technology Group, Wageningen University, the Netherlands, one of the most prominent agricultural universities in Europe. Dr. Sherwood also worked with World Neighbors (Andean region), the International Potato Center (CIP), and Cornell University. He serves as an advisor to several foundations and has founded grassroots organizations such as EkoRural, Groundswell International, and Peaks over Poverty. He and his wife Myriam Paredes own a family-run organic farm in Ecuador, where they are activists in national and regional rural peoples’ movements.