Monday 11 May 2015, 16:15 – 18:00
University of Zurich Irchel, Winterthurerstrasse 190, Y 15 G 19

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Land’s End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier

Drawing on two decades of ethnographic research in Sulawesi, Indonesia, Tania Murray Li offers an intimate account of the emergence of capitalist relations among indigenous highlanders who privatized their common land to plant a global market crop, cacao. Some prospered; others lost their land. The story has potent messages for social movement activists, who expect indigenous people to be guardians of community, tradition, and food production. It also interrupts transition narratives in which people who lose their land march off to find jobs. When jobs are scarce, land’s end is a dead end, from which a different politics must emerge.

Tania Murray Li teaches anthropology at the University of Toronto. Her publications include Land’s End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier (2014), Powers of Exclusion: Land Dilemmas in Southeast Asia (with Derek Hall and Philip Hirsch, 2011), and The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics (2007).