

## Keynote speakers

**Bonnie J. McCay**

*Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor  
Rutgers University, New Jersey (USA)*

**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> of July, 11.00 – 12.15 (Waalse Kerk)**

### **The Littoral and the Liminal: Or why it is hard and critical to answer the question ‘Who Owns the Coast?’**

#### ABSTRACT

Coasts—the littoral—have features that make them somewhat “liminal,” that is, neither one thing nor the other, transitory, and on the threshold. Such features of in-between-ness are often treated culturally as problematic, even taboo (following Edmund Leach, Mary Douglas, and others). In this talk I explore the liminality of coasts, including their dynamics and their boundaries, landward and seaward and side-by-side. I observe how this leads us into the value-laden and contentious domain of “property rights” analysis, including the familiar domain of privatized property, the still poorly charted territory of commonly held property, and the mythical terrain of no property or “open access,” the lands and seas where *res nullius* is the rule, and our imaginations run wild with visions of fabulous wealth, whether fish or gold, or of fabulous monsters, once depicted in explorers’ charts and now seen as IUU fishing vessels. I will conclude with a turn to the more familiar coastal waters and shores and the rough charts of the commons, with a view toward how anthropological analyses such as this can contribute to improved policy for ocean and coastal management.

#### BIOGRAPHY

Bonnie J. McCay (Ph.D. Columbia University 1976) is Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, where she teaches and does research in the Department of Human Ecology and the graduate programs of Anthropology, Geography, and Ecology & Evolution.

Her research focuses on the challenges of managing “common property” resources, particularly those of coasts and marine fisheries. Research sites are Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, Canada; Baja California, Mexico; Puerto Rico; and the northeast Atlantic coast of the United States, particularly New Jersey.

Books include “Oyster Wars and the Public Trust,” “The Question of the Commons,” and “Community, State, and Market on the North Atlantic Rim,” and “Enclosing the Commons.”