

Understanding Environmental Crisis

A series of 5 seminar talks by Felix Padel at CWEH, University of Sussex, January-April 2020, conceived as a collaborative effort, with participants encouraged to bring examples from their own work and experience.

Conceptualising Environmental Conflict through Multidisciplinary Lenses

Friday 31 January 2020 17:15-19:15 Fulton, room 203

Than Fridays 7 & 21 February, 13 March & 10 April (tbc)

As academics, as well as ordinary citizens and perhaps as activists too, how can we enter a deeper awareness of what's happening and what to do about it? What economists, like most governments and corporations, conceive as 'resources', indigenous peoples and environmentalists see as sources of life. It's significant that indigenous peoples find themselves in the frontline: the 'war on terror' and the war on nature meet in the militarisation of resource conflicts over indigenous lands. The argument here is that the military-industrial complex drives the escalating war on nature – ecocide alongside genocide, exemplified in the Kalinganagar police firing of 2nd January 2006 to facilitate a Tata Steel factory (among hundreds of similar conflicts in India) or the Amazon fires and overriding of hard-won indigenous rights in Bolsonaro's Brazil. We all know numerous examples, and participants in these seminar talks are encouraged to bring examples from their own experience.

The first session will set the scene with recent events and debates, including mass species loss in the fires in Australia, Brazil and elsewhere, introducing the centrality of indigenous politics, and a way of conceptualising what is happening through the elements of earth, water, fire and air.

2. Earth: Land, Lifeforms, Livelihoods

From forest fires to megadams, ecosystems are getting devastated. In India, conservationists are pitted against Adivasi land rights, a telling example to many of environmental racism, compounding the massacre of trees by Adani and other corporate entities. Private ownership undermines common patterns and promotes black money, while 'compensatory afforestation' threatens further displacement. In the soil itself, fecund humus constantly rene

regions, with water snatched from villagers and restricted to corporate works. Industrialisation repeatedly pollutes water sources and rivers, as in Vedanta's copper mine tailings poisoning the Kafue river that harmed thousands in Zambia, for which it was recently convicted by the UK's Supreme Court. We know that wat