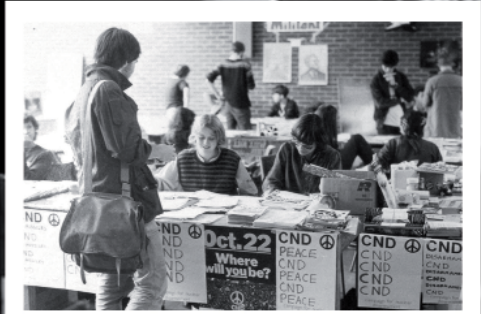


# Activism and Academia

## Objectivity, Reflexivity and Engagement



**Friday 10 May 2013**  
**11:00am to 5:00pm**  
**University of Sussex, Arts A Room A108**

*Sponsored by*  
**Centre for World Environment History**

# Activism and Academia – Objectivity, Reflexivity and Engagement

**10 May 2013, 11:00-17:00**

**University of Sussex Arts A Room A108**

***Sponsored by Centre for World Environment History***

Academia deals in 'knowledge', often presented as politically 'neutral', with frequent emphasis on 'not bringing in one's feelings'. Yet when one learns about injustice, and threats to survival of particular communities and species – including prospects for long-term survival of our own species in the face of global warming, nuclear dangers, pollution or ecocide – is our knowledge really enhanced by disconnecting thinking from feeling?

This meeting aims to question the common experience of boundaries demarcating the worlds of academia and activism. At times, there is a blurring of roles: many academics are engaged and contribute to activism in a range of ways; some activists are to be found in academic circles.

Yet activists often feel excluded by academic institutions, which tend to rely on corporate funds that often ensure strong, if usually hidden, bias into what is construed as 'knowledge'. Academics tend to side step issues of power relations and conflicts of interest arising from funding constraints, thereby reproducing power structures in universities that involve subordination to state and corporate agendas. New trends of critical research and reflexivity are welcome, but rarely go very far in challenging prevailing abuses of power and exclusionary politics in our globalised world.

How can academic research contribute more effectively to political or environmental activism? How can activists weather the storm of war-on-terror type surveillance, and attempts by NGOs and corporate powers to appropriate their efforts? How can activists help academics, students, researchers and teaching staff become more aware of vital issues and contribute to shaping their fundamental research questions? How can academics and activists join in bringing to birth more holistic forms of knowledge, geared towards right-thinking action?

This is planned as a day of sharing with a view to understanding activist-academic links, limits and possibilities for closer co-ordination, working together inside as well as outside formal academic environs. Our agenda is to create a network of informed activism, with opportunities to engage in public debate rooted in community involvement.

**Speakers include:** Felix Padel (IIHMJaipur), Kalpana Wilson, (LSE) Samarendra Das (Foil Vedanta), Atillah Springer, Maya Unnithan (Sussex) Lyla Mehta (IDS), Andrew Chitty (Sussex), Ben Burbridge (Sussex), Lucy Robinson (Sussex)

The logo of the University of Sussex, consisting of the letters 'US' in a large, bold, serif font.

University of Sussex

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