

Activists and Academia Forum – CWEH
Newsletter for University of Sussex – July 2016
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The Centre for World Environmental History (CWEH) in the University of Sussex formed the Activists and Academia Forum – CWEH in May 2013. The forum is working on contested resource extraction, effects on indigenous people and in defence of the Rights of Nature. We discussed neo-liberalism in academia in the UK and environmental art activism. The work was supported by the British Academy, the Centre for World Environmental History, the Holly Hill Trust and Foil Vedanta.

Case studies include:

- 1) Iron ore mining in the Saranda Forest, Jhrkhand, India
- 2) Copper mining in Zambia, Bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri Hills in Odisha, India
- 3) Yasuni Park Initiative and oil extraction in Ecuador
- 4) Intag region copper mining in Ecuador

1) Iron ore mining in the Saranda Forest, Jhrkhand, India

A team from CWEH network was commissioned in October 2013 to prepare a report for the Gandhi Foundation about Tata Steel's history of operations in tribal India, with special attention of current Saranda Forest. This report was presented in 2014 to Tata Steel in the House of Lords in London, by the Gandhi Foundation with participation of a CWEH representative.

In September 2014 the CWEH hosted Jharkhand Adivasi rights activist Gladson Dungdung in *Academia and Activism* – a two-day international CWEH forum gathering.

Contested Realities - Adivasis in the Anthropocene - A meeting on Adivasi and mining, with a special session on the Saranda forest and a launch of Gladson's book *Mission Saranda* at University of Sussex and SOAS, took place in November 2015.

Adivasi Samelan - or: Adivasi Conference - a public meeting of over 3000 people, was held just outside Manoharpur town, to one side of Saranda Forest in Jharkhand, India on the 10th March 2016. The gathering, aiming at consolidating the movement to save the unique Saranda, the last Sal forest in south-east Asia, was organised by Adivasi Samanvay Samity (Adivasi Coordination Committee), which is leading the Save Saranda campaign. Felix Padel and Gladson Dungdung were keynote speakers.

In May 2016 Gladson Dungdung was offloaded by Air India from Delhi-London Flight on his way to speak in the CWEH forum, University of Sussex. Gladson sent this message when he was forced to leave the plane (9 May 2016):

"This morning, I was offloaded by the AirIndia from Delhi-London Flight AI 115, I was going to attend the Workshop on Environmental History and Politics of South Asia to be held in the University of Sussex, UK on May 10th. The reason told to me is that my passport had been impounded in 2013, therefore, they will send it back to RTO, Ranchi for verification. The fact is that my passport was impounded in 2013 and returned to me after proper verification in 2014. Thereafter, I had attended couple of international conferences in Denmark and London in 2014 and 2015 subsequently but there was no issue at all. Therefore, I am sure that this is a clear impact of my book "Mission Saranda: A War for Natural Resources in India". Defaulters of millions of INR like Mr. Vijay Malaya cant be offloaded but activists like me are bound to be offloaded. However, my

fight for the Adivasis' ownership rights over the Natural resources, Adivasi identity, Human Rights, Ecology and against unjust development processes will continue till they take away my right to life forever. Jai Adivasi!"

The incident became a major headline in Indian media and was raised in parliament there by Jairam Ramesh former environment and forest minister. The CWEH is planning to host Gladson next year.

The next research international event on the Saranda this year will be a presentation in KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm Sweden, in October 2016.

2) Copper mining in Zambia, Bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri Hills in Odisha, India

Members of the network raised national debate in Zambia about Vedanta's KCM copper operation there, by a UK-based company.

Foil Vedanta launched their report at the CWEH forum in March 2014 -

<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=copper-colonialism-in-zambia.pdf&site=253> (accessed 07/07/2016).

In July 2014 a House of Commons meeting in London on this subject had important impact on public debate - <http://www.foilvedanta.org/news/mps-hear-evidence-for-de-listing-vedanta-and-other-uk-listed-mining-companies/> (accessed 07/07/2016). John McDonnell MP, who hosted the talk, said: "We cannot stand by and allow London to be used as the financial base for companies that degrade our planet, exploit their workers and abuse the human rights of extremely vulnerable communities. We need to devise a comprehensive strategy to address this exploitation, on our doorstep. "

In May 2016 Mr. Justice Coulson published his judgment on the jurisdiction hearing between 1,826 Zambian villagers and Vedanta KCM, granting villagers' a hearing in the UK for their demand of compensation for personal injury and loss of livelihood due to gross pollution of the Kafue river in the Copper Belt by KCM in 2006. The information and public pressure of Foil Vedanta, supported by CWEH, has had part in this achievement.

3) Yasuni Park Initiative and oil extraction in Ecuador

Professor Carlos Larrea was behind the Yasuni ITT Initiative of the Ecuadorian government not to extract oil in the Yasuni Park in Amazonian Ecuador – 1 million hectares (or: 2.5 million acres) - between 2007-2013. Larrea presented the Yasuni case at the Activists and Academia Forum – CWEH on a number of occasions in the past 2 years, introduced to the forum by University of Sussex biologist Dr. Mika Peck.

Carlos Larrea attended the September 2014 international forum meeting in Sussex via Skype.

Larrea came later in June 2015 to participate in *Visuality, Materiality and Mining* - a symposium co-organised with the Traces of Nitrate Project at Brighton University <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/research/design-art-history/events/visuality,-materiality-and-mining> (accessed 07/07/2016). In a following workshop at Sussex, he presented the Yasuni concept and initiative. An Activists and Academia Forum – CWEH working group dedicated to help the case was formed out of the workshop attendees.

During COP21 talks, Paris on the 6 December 2015 the Activists and Academia Network, Centre for World Environmental History, University of Sussex called a workshop meeting for Coalition Climate 21- Paris: *Keep Oil in the Ground – The Yasuni ITT Park Initiative in Amazonian Ecuador*. The meeting brought together international scholar-activists and activists from the Yasunidos movement and Rights of Nature International Tribunal. Among

the speakers: Gloria Ushino, Yasuni indigenous activist, and Rights of Nature advocate Natalie Greene.

4) Intag region copper mining in Ecuador

Activist Carlos Zorrilla, co-founder and Director of DECOIN (Defensa y Conservación Ecológica de Intag), attended the September 2014 international Activists and Academia forum meeting in Sussex. DECOIN's works and lives in the cloud forests of northwest Ecuador, which form part of the most biodiverse of the world's 36 Biological Hotspots. DECOIN published several papers on development, large-scale mining and its impacts on communities and the environment.

Dr. Mika Peck - who visits Carlos in the course of his fieldwork, and introduced him to the forum - maintains social media link and update about events in the region via Tweeter. When a leader of a community in Junin, defending its land from a Canadian mining company and its armed paramilitaries, was just arrested without trial for nearly a year, the CWEH activists network, among others, contacted Amnesty International, who reported and acted on the case. See Amnesty 2015/16 Annual Report (p.144)

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/POL1025522016ENGLISH.PDF>

(accessed 07/07/2016).

And also:

<http://www.amnesty.de/urgent-action/ua-008-2015/umweltschuetzer-angeklagt?destination=node%2F5309> (accessed 07/07/2016).

and:

<https://www.facebook.com/AmnestyInternationalUKWorcesterGroup/posts/941611809207150:0> (accessed 07/07/2016).

Publications associated with the Activists and Academia Forum – CWEH include:

- REPORT ON TATA STEEL'S ACTIVITIES ON ADIVASI LANDS for The Trustees of The Gandhi Foundation (February 2013, updated October 2013. Unpublished)

- *Copper Colonialism in Zambia*, a report by Foil Vedanta launched in a CWEH forum meeting in Sussex (2014)

- *Mission Saranda* book by adivasi rights activist Gladson Dungdung (2015).

- *Academia and Activism, September 2014 - Final Report*, about the international forum in 2014, (Available on the CWEH website and submitted to the British Academy.) -

<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=final-report-on-academia-and-activism-12-13-sept-2015.pdf&site=253> (accessed 07/07/2016)

- <https://gandhifoundation.org/2016/03/29/adivasi-education-forced-assimilation-article-by-malvik-gupta-and-felix-padel/> (Joint paper presented in CWEH forum Sussex May 2016; accessed 07/07/2016)