

Activism and Academia Forum for Objectivity, Reflexivity and Moral Engagement

A Monthly Seminar Series at the Centre for World Environmental History, Sussex University

Seminar 1: Stories of Two Communities' Environmental Struggles Against Land Grab

The No Fracking campaign in Balcombe, West Sussex speaker Vanessa Vine

International Solidarity in Strengthening Grassroots Community Resistance for Environmental Justice in West Afrika

speaker Kofi Mawuli Klu

Friday 27 September 2013 12:00 – 14:00 Fulton Building - Rm FUL-202

Speakers from two local communities that are struggling to fight land grab by profit-seeking extraction corporations, present their stories: One in West Africa and the other in Sussex, UK. In this first meeting we examine the arguments, the scientific and economic facts, assess local impact, and the involvement of NGO, political players and governments.

Academia deals in 'knowledge', often presented as politically 'neutral', with frequent emphasis on rationality over and against 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? These questions were discussed back in May 2013 in a day that formed the basis for this current series of meetings of activists and academics.

Academics tend to side step issues of power relations and conflicts of interest arising from funding constraints, and subordination to state and corporate agendas. Should this be accepted as the new status quo, the Real Politic of academic survival in the era of cuts?



rooted in community involvement.

How can academic research support political or environmental activism? How can activists help students, researchers and teaching staff become more aware of vital issues? How can academics and activists bring to birth more holistic forms of knowledge?

This first seminar is an opportunity to open up the conversation about the limits and possibilities for closer activist-academic co-ordination, working together inside as well as outside formal academic environs to create a network of informed activism, and engage in public debate