

Seminar series of the Center for Research and Practice in Cultural Continuity

“Decolonizing approaches to studying history and linguistic-cultural heritage. Methods, tools, results and challenges”



Elwira Dexter-Sobkowiak

Faculty of “Artes Liberales”
University of Warsaw

Indigenous languages and the defense against fracking in the Huasteca Potosina, Mexico

In this talk I explore the relationship between language and environment loss and the use of heritage languages in resistance related to the defense of natural resources. This link is shown by analyzing the case of Nahuatl and Tének communities which between 2013 and 2018 were involved in a range of collective actions against the threat of fracking, a highly damaging method of gas and oil extraction. One particularly interesting aspect of these activities was the spontaneous use of the Indigenous languages Nahuatl and Tének in various anti-fracking activities. Against the backdrop of several centuries of gradual reduction of the vitality of the two languages, this new domain of their use is a surprising but very welcome development for language revitalization. Using insights from participant observation and interviews, I demonstrate that the motivation to use Indigenous languages was not only to facilitate communication, but also to strengthen the Indigenous regional identity as a tool for solidarity building and Indigenous resistance against damaging extraction projects. I also show that fracking is perceived as not only a threat to the environment but also to the native cultures of the region.

DATE: APRIL 5, 16:45 (CET)

ZOOM LINK: <https://zoom.us/j/98037235262>