

# HISTORY RESEARCH SEMINAR

**Dr Alessandro Antonello**  
(*Flinders University*)

**'Antarctica and Gondwanaland:  
Human Histories and Cultures of  
Ancient and Modern Southern  
Continents'**

Friday, 23 August 2024, 11.15 am – 12.30 pm ACST

Social Sciences South 112 (SSS 112), Bedford Park  
and online via Microsoft Teams [join by entering  
meeting ID: 454 475 867 806 and passcode:  
FZW8b5]

## Abstract

This paper explores how ideas about the ancient megacontinent Gondwanaland shaped ideas and practices towards the modern continent of Antarctica. From the late nineteenth century into the twenty-first century, the figure of Gondwanaland has played a role in geo-political and geo-cultural structures, contests, and gestures around Antarctica. The ancient megacontinent was first theorised in the late nineteenth century by Austrian geologist Eduard Suess, further developed as part of Alfred Wegener's theory of continental drift after the 1910s, and finally confirmed and modelled within the theory of plate tectonics after the 1960s. Antarctica was a crucial part of that geological theorising. This paper will explore the impulses and meanings behind the modern combination of geology and geopolitics through three moments in Antarctica's history: first, coal and Gondwana during the 'Heroic Age' of the early twentieth century; secondly, Gondwana and Antarctic resource imaginaries of the 1960s and 1970s; and thirdly, Gondwana and environmental protection in the 1980s. In the deep past of the Earth was a tool for shaping the future.



**Dr Alessandro Antonello** is Senior Lecturer in History at Flinders University. His research investigates the environmental and international histories of Antarctica, the cryosphere, and the world's oceans in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He is also beginning to wade into histories of seagrass and other nearshore, intertidal, and subtidal environments. His current major project, which was supported by an ARC DECRA, is titled 'An international environmental history of the "World Ocean", 1950s–2000s'. His first book, *The Greening of Antarctica: Assembling an International Environment* (2019), was published by Oxford University Press, and his scholarly articles have appeared in journals such as *Isis*, *Environmental History*, the *Journal of Historical Geography*, and *Environmental Humanities* (to name just a few).

## Next week (Friday, 30 August):

Dr Matthew Firth (Flinders University): 'The Role of Royal Women in England's Tenth-Century Succession Disputes'

**Please note that the seminar series will be on hiatus in September.**