

**DOUBLE PANEL PROPOSAL: The political ecology of environmental peacebuilding –**

**Exploring its values and critiques in the context of the green economy**

Organizers: Teresa Lappe-Osthege (University of Sheffield) and Lisa Trogisch (University of Wageningen)

The aim of this panel is to explore the political ecology of environmental peacebuilding and critically assess its theoretical values and pitfalls in the context of the green economy. It critically reflects on the concept of environmental peacebuilding that the dominant peacebuilding paradigm promotes as a ‘greener’ solution to reductionist “resource war” approaches (Homer-Dixon, 1999). The peace potential of the environment has gained prominence in academic debates over the last two decades (Ali, 2007; Bernauer et al., 2012; Conca & Dabelko, 2002; Conca & Wallace, 2012; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Le Billon, 2008). These scholars emphasize the potential of the environment to contribute to post-conflict peacebuilding as part of the “Green Economy”, predominantly focussing on two central themes: post-conflict resource risk and environmental cooperation (Krampe, 2017a).

In this regard, a wide range of works investigated the distribution of revenues from high-value resource commodities in post-conflict settings (Lujala & Rustad, 2012); issues stemming from land control, territory and the management of land-based resources (Le Billon & Baird, 2012; Unruh & Williams, 2013); water resources, sanitation and related infrastructure systems (Weinthal et al., 2014; Jägerskog et al., 2015; Krampe, 2017b); and good governance of natural resources and local livelihoods (Young & Goldman, 2015; Le Billon, 2014; Bruch et al., 2016). Opposed to these promoted potentials, a growing body of critical literature challenges the environmental peacebuilding concept as a new ‘greening’ rhetoric for old liberal peacebuilding approaches based on economic growth and market liberalization (Cramer 2006) and its contribution to measures of ‘green’ violence and militarization (Duffy, 2015, Lunstrum, 2015, Büscher, 2015; Marijnen and Verweijen, 2017).

Although such a vast body of research has generated much-needed empirical data, a coherent theoretical conceptualisation of underlying dynamics for environmental peacebuilding remain largely absent from these debates. Recent works by Ide (2017), Le Billon (2017), and Krampe (2017a) indicate the pressing need to examine the interaction of the socio-economic, political and ecological spheres at a theoretical level, aiming for more cross-disciplinary research comprising (human) geography, peace and conflict studies, psychological anthropology or criminology. This panel aims to give different interdisciplinary insights on the interaction of these spheres to discuss critically the role of environmental peacebuilding as part of the “Green Economy”.

We aim to shed light on questions such as, what impact will the move towards a global green economy have on the concepts and practices of environmental peacebuilding, and vice versa? Does it provide an opportunity to foster and develop non-neoliberal forms of peacebuilding based on ‘alternative sustainabilities’? What are the theoretical (dis)advantages of more interdisciplinary approaches to environmental peacebuilding? What are the decisive features of the current, diverse concepts and definitions of environmental peacebuilding?

**Paper Abstracts**

## **PANEL Part I**

Chair: Lisa Trogisch (University of Wageningen)

Discussant: Prof Rosaleen Duffy (University of Sheffield)

### **Environmental peacebuilding and the immaterial environment – Understanding territorial conflicts through environmental sensemaking**

*Teresa Lappe-Osthege (University of Sheffield)*

In the context of the green economy, environmental peacebuilding is often framed as a sustainable solution to (environmentally induced) conflicts, promoting post-conflict state-building based on sustainable development. It is frequently argued that environmental peacebuilding equips the liberal peacebuilding paradigm with an environmental dimension that allows us to consider socio-economic and ecological conflict dynamics in synergy. At the core of these arguments lies the assumption that the environment provides a more neutral platform upon which structures of cooperation can be rebuilt and thereby foster post-conflict reconciliation. This paper critically assesses the theoretical merits of such claims, questioning the very notion of a 'neutral environment'. Using the remaining tensions on the status of Kosovo as a case study, this paper explores the (dis)advantages of environmental peacebuilding against the background of a conflict over clashing normative meanings assigned to a shared landscape. Combining insights from political ecology and 'environmental sensemaking' (crudely summarised as the manner in which we frame and understand our environment), it assesses the theoretical merits of environmental peacebuilding in the context of conflict over the immaterial dimensions of the natural environment. By identifying the different meanings projected upon the Kosovar territory by specific 'epistemic workers', this paper interrogates the ways in which conflict parties make sense of their environment to justify territorial claims. I argue that we need to consider alternative framings of environmental values that move beyond the notions of natural resources for economic growth if we want to understand the potentials of the environment to contribute to peace after conflict.

### **A local to global perspective on resource governance, conflict and environmental peacebuilding**

*Janpeter Schilling (University of Koblenz-Landau), Christina Saulich (Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin) & Nina Engwicht (Peace Academy Rhineland-Palatinate)*

The aim of this article is to advance our understanding of the linkages between natural resource governance, conflict and environmental peacebuilding by bringing together four different strands of literature, namely; (1) the resource curse, (2) environmental security, (3) large-scale acquisition of land and natural resources and (4) environmental peacebuilding. Based on a literature review, we develop a local to global analytical framework and apply it to a case study from Kenya. In the northern part of the country the largest wind park on the African continent has been completed recently. 365 turbines are expected to significantly increase Kenya's share of renewable energy production. We draw on field research conducted between 2016 and 2018 to explore the interplay between governance of wind resources, water and employment opportunities and its impacts on new and existing conflict dynamics. Further, we show how the "greening" of the Kenyan economy affects the political ecology in northern Kenya. Finally, we compare the findings from the Kenyan case study with other results presented in the special issue "A Local to Global Perspective on Resource Governance and Conflict" forthcoming in the journal *Conflict, Security and Development*.

## **Environmental Peacebuilding, White Collar Crime, and the Protection of Environmental Defenders**

*Prof Philippe Le Billon (University of British Columbia)*

Environmental peacebuilding has increasingly sought to address various forms of environmental and white-collar crime in resource sectors – including toxic dumping, wildlife trafficking, illegal resource exploitation, corruption, tax evasion, and land dispossession. This presentation first investigates various forms of white-collar crime and associated human rights abuses, and points at biased processes of ‘criminalization’. Whereas white-collar crime is frequently legitimated under the guise of reconstruction and economic growth strategies, the victims of corruption and resource grabs often become ‘criminalised’. Such selective forms of criminalisation reflect a securitisation of resource sectors characterised by repressive forms of resource enclosures and increased socio-economic inequalities; putting resource-related white-collar crime at the core of negative peace economies. The second part engages with the risks faced by environmental and land defenders seeking to resist or bring accountability to these crimes.

### **Panel Part II**

Chair: Lisa Trogisch (University of Wageningen)

Discussant: Dr. Esther Marijnen (University of Sheffield)

## **Peacebuilding Process less Environmental Approach Equals More Conflict: The Nigeria’s Niger Delta Case**

*Oluwaremilekun Toyin Oluwaniyi (Redeemers University Nigeria)*

From 2005 till 2009, the Niger Delta region in Nigeria suffered violent militancy, which was inextricably tied to the environment. A major non-renewable resource, crude oil, was the major determinant in the conflict, although aggravated by other factors. From the discovery of crude oil at a commercial quantity, several transnational companies have explored as well as exploited the resource without consideration for the despoliation of the affected communities. The increasing despoliation in form of environmental pollution, affected the livelihoods of the region’s rural poor. This crisis resulted in violent conflict. Unfortunately, the peacebuilding mechanism implemented from 2009, failed to consider natural resource management in its strategies. Rather, focus was on collecting weapons from ex-militants and ‘bribing’ with monthly stipends in order for oil exploration to continue unhindered. The outcome of the failure to deliver green environment that would enable communities to survive off their land, has been the resurgence of militancy, though still on a small scale, however, but with the tendencies to grow into more violent ones. Mobilisation, remobilization, kidnapping increasing piracy, and illegal bunkering of crude oil are reported often. What are these green environment measures and how can they be incorporated in the region’s peacebuilding process? This study concludes that without the conscious efforts by the state and the TNCs to bring about the green economy, Nigeria is only sitting on a keg of gunpowder, which may sooner than later, blow up, especially since the resource in the region is the major determinant of the country’s external revenue.

## **In-conflict peacebuilding? Water sharing and management in Syria**

*Ahmed Haj Asaad (University of Lausanne), Myriam Saadé-Sbeih (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva) & Ronald Jaubert (Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva)*

Middle Eastern waters are in turn considered a potential source of conflicts; or resources capable of fostering peace at international and intra-state levels. Under the latter, the cooperation potential is mostly discussed in post-conflict situations. In the case of Syria, water has been regarded as a trigger of the conflict (Robins and Fergusson 2014; Gleick 2014), as well as a weapon used by belligerents. Even though largely publicized through the recent hydrodiplomacy brand (Strategic Foresight Group 2011; Global High-Level Panel on Water and Peace 2017), very few initiatives currently explore the effective, in-conflict, cooperation potential of water.

This paper assesses the local cooperation dynamics in a water project, the rehabilitation of Ar Ruj irrigation scheme, implemented in the course of the conflict. The project started in January 2017 despite difficulties to attract international funds. This contribution addresses peacebuilding in a continuum between in-conflict and post-conflict periods. Water is a powerful strategic vector linking political, social, economic and environmental issues during and after the conflict. Restricting understandings of peace building to post-conflict reconstruction participates to incapacitate local capacities and networks (Krampe 2007), particularly in the water sector.

## **A Political Ecology of Water and Peace**

*Prof Jan Selby (University of Sussex)*

This paper provides a political ecology account of the role of water resources and water management in peace-building. On the one hand, it critiques orthodox liberal discourse and practice on the peace- and cooperation-inducing potential of water, arguing both that there is little evidence of liberal functionalist 'spillover' from water to other more 'high political' dimensions of peacemaking; and that the valorisation and reification of 'cooperation' and 'peace' within water peace-building discourse is distinctly misleading. More positively, it demonstrates that water peace-building and cooperation are shaped and structured by high political dynamics and agendas (and that the 'spillover effect' thus actually operates in reverse); and, in consequence, that the quality and progressiveness of water cooperation is sometimes quite questionable, in extreme reproducing or even radicalising pre-peacemaking patterns of conflict, appropriation and inequality. In making these arguments, the paper will draw upon evidence from three 'divided environments' (as my colleague Clemens Hoffmann and I call them): Cyprus, Israel-Palestine and Sudan-South Sudan.