

## IPSA WCPS Brisbane 2018

### **Panel Title: Political Ecology of Environmental Struggles at 'the Margins'**

[23-07-2018 | 17:30 - 19:15](#)

#### **Room**

[Mezzanine / M1](#)

#### **Session**

[AUS03 Environmental Politics](#)

**Co-Convenors:** Professor Rosaleen Duffy (University of Sheffield) and Dr Adam Simpson (University of South Australia)

#### **Description**

This panel applies a political ecology approach to the Congress theme of 'borders and margins'. Critical analyses of the dynamics of global environmental change are an ideal way of exploring these themes, precisely because environmental change crosses territorial borders, as well as moving between marine, terrestrial, riverine and atmospheric boundaries. Further, political ecology helps us interrogate the notion of margins, because it is in many ways a discipline that emerged from the margins (both intellectually and geographically). Struggles around environmental change are also often found at the global margins, centring on peoples excluded or dispossessed by initiatives, projects and interventions initiated by more powerful and dominant actors in the global system. These papers aim to open up the debate on the distinctive contribution of political ecology to understanding struggles over access to and distribution of environmental resources.

**Chair:** Professor Rosaleen Duffy (University of Sheffield)

#### **Paper 1**

##### **Reclaiming Autonomy and Making Territory Through a Green Economy Initiative in Aceh, Indonesia**

**Dr Abidah B. Setyowati**

**Postdoc Research Fellow, Department of International Relations, Corral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs, Australian National University**

Globally, a green economy has been promoted as an avenue to reduce the risks of conventional development through a variety of approaches such as low emission carbon technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable natural resources management, among others. The approach has catalysed renewed support for the sustainable development in the age of climate change. However, when the approach is implemented in a particular area, it is often subjected to multiple interpretations, vested interests and power struggles that are geographically and historically contingent. Drawing a study of a contested green economy initiative in Aceh, Indonesia, this paper describes a particular historical conjuncture that enables the emergence of green economy initiative in the post-tsunami and post-conflict affected area. This paper analyses how the green economy initiative becomes an important avenue to renegotiate political authority, territory and citizenship. It also examines the complex processes through which the authority to govern forest is claimed and legitimized and how citizenship is rearticulated through the renegotiation over rights to forest resources. This paper is based on a research carried out in 2010-2012 and a recent follow up visit in Aceh.

#### **Paper 2**

##### **Dancing the double movement: international safeguards meet land struggles in Cambodia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea**

**Sango Mahanty, Colin Filer, Lesley Potter, Australian National University**

Social and environmental safeguards are now embedded in the policies and procedures of most international lending and donor agencies. Civil society organisations played a crucial role

in developing these safeguards in the 1980s, by raising concerns over the social and environmental impacts of some of the biggest projects funded by the World Bank. The marriage of US-based advocates and vocal NGOs in recipient countries enabled direct pressure on Bank operations and funding, which forced the development of Operational Directives on issues such as indigenous rights and involuntary resettlement (Wade 1997). In a sense, this international groundswell that sought to empower marginalised groups was an instance of Polanyi's "double movement", whereby "those most immediately affected by the deleterious action of the market" act to conserve "man and nature" (Polanyi, 1944, p. 179).

Many years on, the intersection of international, national, and local actors and ideologies complicates both the implementation of safeguards and their positioning in relation to double movements over question of land access and land rights in "developing countries". Some suggest that safeguards may constrain rather than expand the political space of marginalized groups. For example, they may limit dialogue to procedural matters of design and compensation rather than fundamental development choices (Balaton-Chrimes and Haines 2015), or take on a "performative" character, that serves the agendas of state, private and international players. Yet they are still invoked in diverse ways by various actors struggling for the recognition of their land and political rights and, at times, even strategically escalated to broader national and sectoral domains.

By examining the intersection between international social and environmental safeguards and land struggles in selected cases from Cambodia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, this paper will explore the oscillating and dynamic character of Polanyi's double movement in a contemporary context.

### **Paper 3**

#### **Political Ecology of Security: the politics of transnational wildlife crime Professor Rosaleen Duffy (University of Sheffield)**

This paper focuses on one central question: What is a political ecology of security? This paper uses the example of the growing integration between biodiversity conservation and the logic of global security to sketch out a fresh way of examining inter-relationships between environment and security. Existing frameworks provided by security studies and by approaches rooted in more traditional thinking on environmental security do not adequately explain the ways that concerns about poaching and trafficking of some of the world's iconic species are now being linked in with attempts to tackle organised crime and terrorist financing. For example, there are high profile but poorly evidenced claims that ivory funds the operations of Boko Haram, Al Shabaab and Lords Resistance Army. Such claims have material outcomes on the ground, and are producing a more forceful and militarised approach to wildlife conservation. Wildlife conservationists (in state agencies, NGOs and the private sector) seem to be turning to the techniques, approaches and technologies more usually associated with warfare and counter insurgency operations (including the development of informant networks, use of surveillance technology, weapons transfers and military style training). However the flow is not all one way: militaries, including the armed forces of the UK are also trialling new techniques in conservation initiatives and using anti poaching operations to learn new skills, such as tracking. In this paper I contend that we need to develop the idea of a political ecology of security in order to understand these emerging dynamics more fully. I use the case of British Army training for anti poaching in Gabon and Malawi to develop the idea and to examine the ways that security and conservation are becoming integrated, and to reflect on who we can develop a political ecology of security.

### **Paper 4**

#### **Towards an analytical framework for civil society under illiberal regimes: Environmental movements and energy and climate transitions in Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam Dr Adam Simpson (University of South Australia) and Dr Mattijs Smits (Wageningen University)**

Environmental movements often materialise at the margins of society, particularly in the Global South where issues of justice and access to resources predominate. This marginalisation can be compounded under illiberal or authoritarian regimes, where the options for organising and voicing dissent are limited. Nevertheless, these regimes can also be fertile grounds for the promotion of environmental causes, such as transitions to sustainable and climate-friendly energy sources, if the aims of the movement align with associated regime goals. In this paper, we therefore examine the potential for both productive and conflictual outcomes in the dynamic and complex relationships between environment movements and illiberal regimes. We do so by exploring the influence of civil society on transitions to energy and climate security in three mainland Southeast Asian states: Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Energy and climate security are key environmental concerns in these countries, as they are all faced with increasing energy demand coupled with increasing pressures and consequences of climate change. All three countries are characterised by different types of illiberal regimes with different histories of engagement with civil society. In this paper, we develop a theoretical framework to explore these issues drawing on political ecology literature and more normative frameworks related to sustainability and transitions. Furthermore, we use empirical data from Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam to illustrate the complex role of civil society actors in energy and climate transitions, including case studies of network organisations working on renewable energy and climate justice. Ultimately, our aim is to provide both a research agenda on the role of environmental movements in environmental transformations under illiberal regimes and an agenda for action.