UNRISD – People For Earth
International Conference

Development, Environment And Peace Nexus (DEEPEN):
Peace Making In Borderlands

3–5 December 2020
Cheorwon, The Republic Of Korea

CONCEPT NOTE

UNRISD

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

UNRISD was established in 1963 as an autonomous space within the UN system
for the conduct of policy-relevant, cutting-edge research on social development
that is pertinent to the work of the United Nations Secretariat; regional commissions and specialized
agencies; and national institutions.

Our mission is to undertake multidisciplinary research and policy analysis
on the social dimensions of contemporary development issues. Through our work
we aim to ensure that social equity, inclusion and justice are central to development thinking, policy
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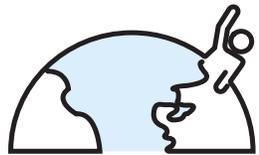
People for Earth

People for Earth is an intellectual community established
for the purposes of academic pursuit and education.
It aims to contribute to establishing an ecozoic cosmology and governance,
and sharing a new culture of life.

Our vision is to bring about the Ecozoic Era, in which humans live
in a mutually enhancing relationship with Earth and the Earth community.
As a part of these efforts we have been hosting annual conferences
since 2015 and continue to work on this mission.

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Development, Environment and Peace Nexus (DEEPEN)

PEACE MAKING IN BORDERLANDS

Cheorwon, Republic of Korea, 3-5 December 2020

● cheorwonforum.org

Background

The challenges we face today, such as climate change, energy supply, growing inequalities, global poverty, migration, food crisis, water stress, resource scarcity and conflicts, are interlinked. Understanding the relationships between them, and the links between policies implemented in these different yet connected areas, is an essential first step towards a holistic approach to realizing the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals: transforming our world for the better.

The holistic policy approach to transformation is not just adding a policy concern as a distinct problem to a list of existing concerns and then assigning it to a specific policy agency. And it cannot address only the symptoms of these problems as they manifest on the surface. It means identifying and diagnosing the major issues of our time, new, renewed or intensified, and then establishing a strategy to deal with their structural causes.

What are the major issues of our time and their structural causes? At this conference, we address the linked crises in peace, harmony with nature, and development, with a focus on borderlands.

Borders and borderlands as a microcosm of the linked crises

Although the world is becoming increasingly interconnected due to technologies and rising volumes of travel and trade, national borders are still a crucial factor shaping our life and work. Increased numbers of international migrants and refugees and the recent Covid-19 pandemic clearly show that national borders are high enough to obstruct cooperation among countries. Around 90 percent of the world population was locked into their countries as governments closed their borders to visitors—and sometimes their own citizens—in response to the novel coronavirus outbreak, creating an unprecedented impact on all aspects of our life.

Across the world, 145 countries have land-based international borders. Boundaries or borderlands delimit authority and ownership, establish defensive lines and the difference between "us" and "them" (Goodhand 2008, Migdal 2004). They function as entities in their own right and their socio-economic and physical conditions are often different from those of the sovereign states sharing those boundaries or borderlands. In many cases, borderlands significantly shape the nature of the rest of the country, in particular the centre (Scott 1976, Goodhand 2008).

There are three types of borders: open borders, regulated or controlled borders, and fortified borders. They can also be classified into soft and hard borders. The former includes open and monitored and controlled frontiers. Hard borders refer to fortified borders such as wire fenced, walled, and/or militarized borders. Although increasing globalization may indeed have "opened" many borders, it is also true that "those which remain are sharp edges, more closely policed, more violent" (Gready, 2004, p.352).

Borderlands are often the main site of inter-country conflicts. Since the Second World War, there have been at least 46 border conflicts. Thirty-two of them occurred in the twenty-first century, and three of them are still ongoing. Ten out of these 32 border conflicts have resulted in more than 100 battle deaths. They have significantly disrupted the lives, social fabric, and economic and natural environments of those living in and beyond borderlands.

Stark inequalities within and between countries, often the source of conflicts and violence, tend to make borders more visible and harder to pass, as borders and borderlands become a place of illegal migration from developing countries to more wealthy ones, and of smuggling and trafficking in illegal goods. Where borders separate wealth and poverty, both rich and developing countries tend to regard each other with suspicion or open hostility. In such contexts, the core problem is typically not drug trafficking or illegal migration but underlying inequalities. Thus, a security or self-protection centred approach to borders, which pays less attention to underlying structural causes of illegal migration and drug trafficking, is often futile (More 2011).

Borderlands can vary ecologically, ranging from desert scrub to forest woodlands to wetland marshes, both freshwater and salt. Fortified or militarized borderlands significantly disrupt the ecosystems of the area in which they are located. By disrupting factors which affect a species' geographic range, or area in which it is found, they put natural habitats at risk, alter patterns of nature (such as natural water flows, seasonal migration of wildlife, wildfires) and exacerbate the risks of natural disasters impacting people and animals. Threats to the ecosystem in borderlands are increasing since, in many countries, defence-related laws authorize armies and policies to waive environmental laws in the name of national security. The number of people who are displaced by climate change and natural disasters and moving away from borderlands, sometimes across the border, is growing while the number of countries building walls and securing borders to prevent the movement of people is increasing.

Borderlands, however, are not only isolated peripheries at high risk of conflict, exclusion and disasters. As places located in the orbit of national and transnational networks of travel, trade, migration, knowledge exchange, and political alliances, as much evidence suggests (Aggarwal 2004), they are the site of both positive and negative dynamics. A variety of factors at various levels or scales (global, national and local), such as power relations and memories produced by wars, conflicts, tensions, cooperation or combinations thereof, influence the thinking and behaviour of peoples on both sides of boundaries. Boundaries and borderlands, therefore, can act simultaneously as a source of peace, inclusion and ecological living as well as antagonism, exclusion and disrupted nature.
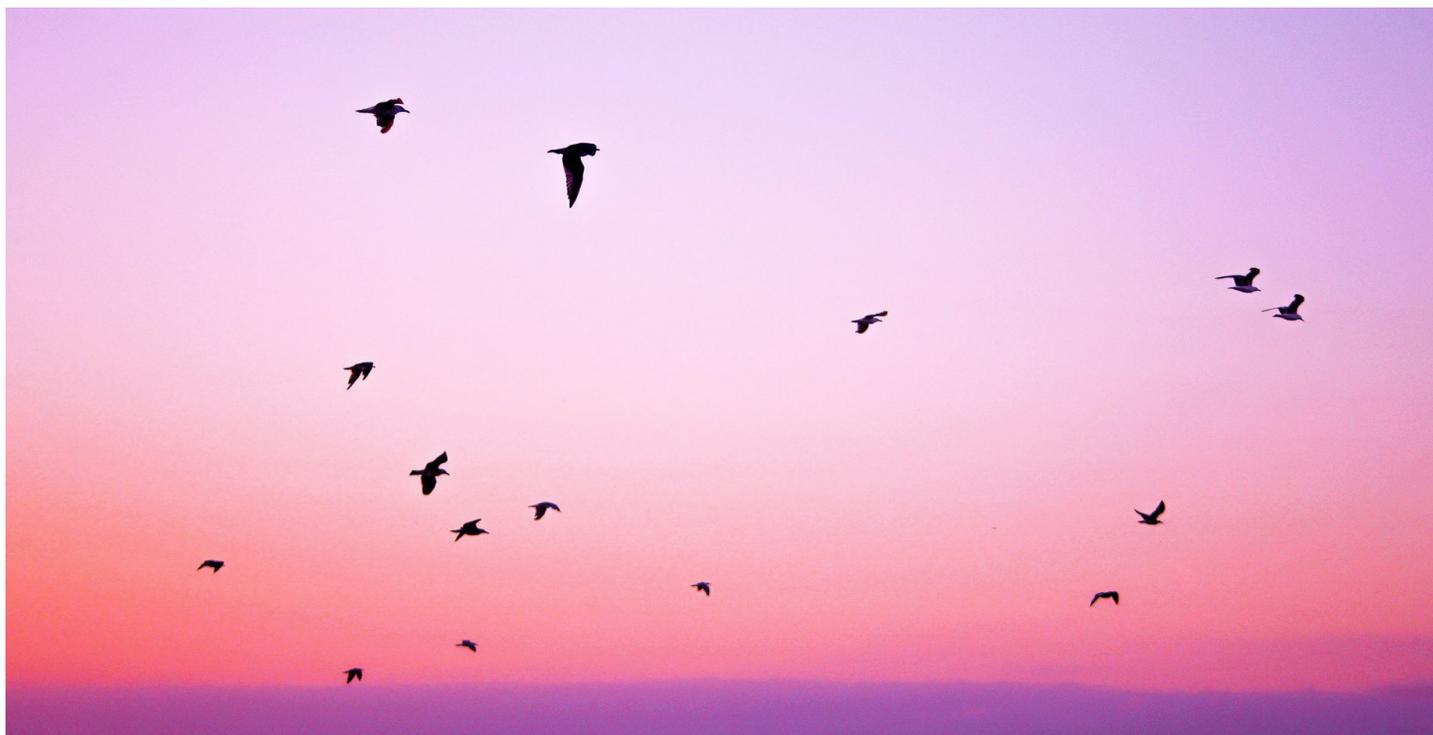
Ecology and peace in borderlands

The risk of resource wars and scarcity-induced conflicts is growing across the world, in particular in borderlands. Violence and conflicts are inseparable from environmental degradation. The fact that they are so closely connected, however, also provides grounds for hope that we can reverse the vicious cycle of conflicts and resource scarcity or environmental degradation and move, through a holistic transformative approach (as defined above), toward a virtuous cycle of peace and ecological integrity, and ultimately prosperity for us and for future generations in a healthy biosphere.

Ecological literacy and peace studies can be central to formulating a holistic approach which can bridge divides between the two by identifying the ecological realms of peace and the peace-making potential of ecology. The holistic approach can help us to transit from the current scarcity-conflict paradigm to cooperative resource management and ultimately toward peaceful coexistence both among ourselves and in balance with nature (Amster 2016).

In general, we mean by peace either the absence/reduction of violence, or all kinds of non-violent and creative conflict transformation. The absence of violence refers to a static state of peace (peace in a negative sense). In contrast, the reduction of violence, or the non-violent and creative transformation of conflict, refers to a dynamic process to create conditions in which conflicts are creatively and non-violently unfolded (peace in a positive sense).

The causes and effects of peace (or violence) can be found within and between multiple dimensions such as environment, human well-being, social justice and equality, inter-country or regional disparity, culture and sustainability. At least three important caveats should be noted. First, these are not an exhaustive list of dimensions; second, each instance of violence or peace has a different set of dimensions with different weights. And lastly, the analysis of causes and effects of violence and peace requires examination of all the relevant dimensions.

To achieve peace, in either a negative or positive sense, historically, two approaches have competed with each other: the security approach, and the peace approach (or peace by peaceful means). The security approach is based on four key *perceived or real* components. They are:
- an "evil" party, with strong capability and "evil" intention;
- a clear and present danger of violence, actual or potential;
- strength, to defeat or deter the "evil" party; and
- security, which is the best approach to "peace".

It presupposes superior strength (of whatever kind, whether referencing Sun Tzu or Clausewitz), which implies inequality. The approach works when "evil"/strong parties are weakened through defeat or deterrence, and/or converted to become good.

The peace approach is also based on four components. They are:
- a conflict, which has not been resolved/transformed;
- the threat of violence to "settle the conflict";
- conflict transformation based on empathy, creativity and non-violence; and
- peace, which is the best approach to "security".

It presupposes a conflict outcome which is sustainable and acceptable to all parties, and therefore implies movement towards equal distribution of resources or a balance of power. The approach produces fair and sustainable results (Galtung, 1996).

Both approaches address the same concern about how to achieve peace but also oppose each other in many senses. In a nutshell, while the former pursues a clear end goal (that is, elimination of the counterpart in a violent way), the latter emphasizes the process of continuously managing conflicts through non-violent means, that is by discussing and creating consensus on acceptable and sustainable measures to eliminate elements of conflict and violence. Since the latter is based on non-violence as an inviolable or sacred value, it always pursues the aim of not hurting other living beings. This non-violence value can be extended to all forms of life, which leads us to an ecological perspective of peace, or a peace perspective of the environment (Johansen 2007).

Peace in the dimension of nature or environment can be interpreted in both negative and positive senses. Peace in nature in a negative sense is to eliminate or reduce violence against nature or the environment (humans, animals, plants, microorganism, and even viruses). In contrast, peace in nature in a positive sense is the cooperation between species or harmony with nature, not struggle. In particular, the latter position has a close affinity with the premises upon which various UN resolutions are based. They are:
- Humankind is a part of nature and life depends on the uninterrupted functioning of natural systems which ensure the supply of energy and nutrients.
- Living in harmony with nature gives humankind the best opportunities for the development of creativity and rest and recreation.
- Every form of life is unique, warranting respect regardless of its worth to man.
- Lasting benefits from nature depend upon the maintenance of essential ecological processes and life support systems, and upon the diversity of life forms, which are jeopardized through excessive exploitation and habitat destruction by man.
- Harmful practices against animals, plants, microorganisms and non-living environments negatively affect the coexistence of humankind in harmony with nature.
- Earth jurisprudence, based on the idea that humans are only one part of a wider community of beings and that the welfare of each member of that community is dependent on the welfare of the Earth as a whole, can provide a cohesive framework to create an effective, holistic governance approach for the integrated nature of the world where humankind lives and works.
- Competition for scarce resources creates conflicts, whereas the conservation of nature and natural resources contributes to justice and cannot be achieved until humankind learns to live in peace and to forsake war and armaments (Source: UN resolutions on International Mother Earth Day (A/RES/63/278), Harmony with Nature (A/64/420), and Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)).

Cooperation based on harmony with nature is particularly relevant to peace making in the context of borderlands in which environmental and natural resource issues are often intertwined with conflicts and violence.

Sustainable and peaceful development in borderlands

In borderlands, people are at greater risk of being left behind, so require particular attention in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Borderlands are the most marginal frontier regions of sovereign states in many cases. They are either "spaces of avoidance" where much that goes on is less than fully legal, or "spaces of complete dependence on government supported programmes" (Goodhand 2008, p. 234). For instance, in southeast Asia, the agricultural practices of people living in mountainous frontier areas are often called "escape agriculture" which aims to "thwart state appropriation" (Scott 1976, Goodhand 2008, p.234). Pashtun tribes that live in the hills and deserts in Afghanistan continue to distinguish themselves from those Pashtuns who live under state control and pay taxes (Barfield 2004). Ethiopian agro-pastoralists are entirely dependent upon values and norms which are beyond their control and technologies which lay beyond their means of production (Turton 2005). For related reasons, those living in the borderlands are often hard-to-reach from the perspective of policy makers.

Not all borderlands, however, are economically marginal and administratively fringe. Borders are also a site for cross-border trade and exchange, although often associated with smuggling and other organized crime. In some cases, such as the Afghan-Pakistan borderlands in the 1990s, the entire region was dependent upon economic activities generated by the border. And no matter what the economic and administrative status, those living in the borderlands have their own economic and social systems composed of functions of production, redistribution, protection and reproduction. Borders also create opportunities for connecting economies, sharing cultures and the environment, and ultimately for peace.

Borderlands can have a variety of functions in peace and transition processes. They can be strategic zones, buffer zones, sites of regional and international power play or places of symbolic importance which are criss-crossed by conflicts, goods and services, weapons, people and/or ideologies. Borderland communities are not homogeneous either. Some groups benefit from tighter regulation of the border while others seek to promote freer movement of people and goods.

In the context of globalization, much political, economic and ecological activity takes place beyond the confines of the nation state. Whether it be increased numbers of refugees and undocumented migrants, uncontrolled exchange of goods and wealth, or cross-border or global environmental impacts, these globalized phenomena often exceed the capacity of the apparatus of state sovereignty. The conventional concept of the sovereign territory and the specific institutions and practices associated with it cannot fully explain the impact and implication of these diverse borderland processes and institutions on the work and lives of those living in the borderlands. New concepts and practices focusing on the voices and claims of those living and working in borderlands and their impacts on national and international institutions and structures are needed more than ever.

For peace making in borderlands

Borders have, in many cases, been established and re-drawn as a result of conflicts. And since the Second World War, the norm of fixed borders has grown stronger (Atzili 2007). Under the influence of these two factors, studies on borders and borderlands tend to focus on conflict, separation, partition and barriers rather than on peace, contact, unification and bridges (Newman and Passi, 1998). The volume of literature on the political economy of war is far larger than that of the political economy of peace emerging from the ashes of war, and we are left with many questions on diverse pathways to peace, in particular in the context of borderlands.

At this conference, we engage with a host of questions that:
- challenge the adequacy of concepts, premises and theories underpinning conventional territorial sovereignty-centred approaches to peace;
- introduce new and innovative concepts, theories and practices for sustainable and peaceful development, in particular in the context of borderlands; and
- suggest alternative pathways to peace.

Objectives of the conference

The conference aims to:

- contribute to the discourse and agenda setting on peace, development and environment issues in borderlands;
- share knowledge and experience of peace making in borderlands;
- draw lessons on the development, environment and peace nexus approach for the de-militarized zone (DMZ) on the Korean peninsula, in particular for Gangwon provinces such as Cheorwon;
- create networks for future research and activities.

The follow-up activities of the conference, which will take place among the network of scholars and practitioners who are interested in this topic, aim to:

- identify the scope of research and pilot testing for a future project;
- establish communication strategies for the project;
- establish fundraising strategies.

● See the full programme at cheorwonforum.org

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