

Climate Security

Toward a critical
conceptualization

29–30 September 2022
University of Hamburg

International Workshop
University of Hamburg

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CfP Climate Security. Toward a critical conceptualization

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Cluster of Excellence “Climate, Climatic Change, and Society” (CLICCS)

What is security in an age of ecological devastation? How do our understandings of security need to change along with the escalating effects of rapid climate change for the planet we live on? Our workshop investigates a bundle of emerging questions on the materialities, temporalities and scales of climate security as a new paradigm of research.

Climate change has long been linked to questions of (in)security. Yet, current investigations have largely stayed within clearly demarcated empirical research fields and (sub-)disciplinary boundaries. On the one hand, empirical research has focused on the question of whether climate change would trigger conflict or other forms of political violence – often with a focus on potential climate hotspots in the global South. Given the context-specific character and narrow focus of such studies, they have little to say about how these conflicts interact with broader dynamics and practices of security. On the other hand, authors have traced how climate change has been discursively turned into a security threat and discussed the political implications of this securitization trend. These works represent important first steps towards what could be called a critical theory of climate security. However, discourse-centric works struggle to grasp the changing logics and materialities of security in times of dramatic planetary change.

To better conceptualize the implications of climate change for the (in)securities of our time and our future, we seek to bring more diverse research perspectives into conversation with each other. With this workshop we want to contribute to a better understanding of how matters of climate security are problematized, negotiated, and interwoven on different scales ranging from the very local to the planetary. How do effects of global warming, and related problems of deforestation, resource extractivism, or biodiversity loss, become (security) "matters of concern" (Latour), e.g. in parliaments and institutions, on the streets, or in wars?

Taking ecological devastation seriously in critical security studies needs to lead to a reinvestigation of core tenets of the research field: How, if at all, can security be provided in a climate-changed world, for and by whom? What is left of security, and what comes instead: mere survival, resilience, navigating through disasters? Might it be that security becomes both narrowed in scope and ambition, all while being widened, i.e. towards integrating social and racial insecurity when it comes to vulnerability to ecological disasters and slow violence?

Our workshop foregrounds a number of perspectives and questions that have been less vocal in current debates. Contributions to the workshop seek to theorize climate security beyond the current focus on violent conflict, discourse and framing.

- New theoretical linkages: The paradigm of climate security invites reflection on new theoretical linkages on so far heterogeneous conceptual debates and fields. One possible interest is to further theorize emerging practices of climate security in different arenas, thus contributing a conceptual perspective to a small number of empirical studies that approach climate security not so much as a discourse but as an emerging community of practice, actor-network, or assemblage. We welcome post- and decolonial works that theorize the colonial underpinnings of this evolving climate-security nexus.
- Materialities: The current methodological focus in critical security studies on discourse and framings makes it hard to account for the complex materialities of the global climate crisis including its underlying political economy. Of interest are critical works on the political economy of climate change and security – including the carbon costs of militarism and war as well as infrastructural perspectives and feminist approaches on the importance of entanglement and “response-ability” (Haraway).
- Scales: Papers that address the complex spatialities of climate change and security from the local to the planetary. How do discourses and frames of climate security translate into a diversity of sometimes conflicting practices on different scales? How do specific sites emerge as laboratories for the deployment of anticipatory governmentality for sustaining life in uninhabitable conditions? How are experiences from different locales interwoven and transported elsewhere? Also, in a world of parallel and multiple crises and catastrophes, how are issues of climate security linked to other pressing crises, like the current war in Europe?
- Temporalities: Contributions on temporalities of climate-security as well as practices of future-making. How are the near and the far future being negotiated and played out against each other? How is the future of climate security a pressing public concern in which affective temporalities such as “urgency”, “last chance for our survival”, “threshold”, or “tipping point” are employed? And how is the concern “for the future of our children” clashing with that of the catastrophic present that many communities hit most severely by the effects of climate change already face?

To discuss these and related questions, we aim to bring together critical security scholars working in the field of climate security with scholars e.g. from Science and Technology Studies, International Political Economy, Political Theory, International Political Sociology, Cultural Geography, Anthropology, or the Environmental Humanities.

Please submit your 250w abstract to rothe@ifsh.de until May 6th 2022.

Support for travel funding as well as accommodation will be covered for all successful applicants; hybrid participation will also be possible (please indicate in your proposal). We plan to publish selected papers as a special issue in 2023 and are currently in contact with the editors of potential outlets to explore the options of a publication.

Please contact rothe@ifsh.de if you have any further questions.