NOT ANOTHER NEXUS?

CRITICAL THINKING ON THE 'NEW SECURITY CONVERGENCE' IN ENERGY, FOOD, CLIMATE AND WATER

COLLOQUIUM ORGANISED BY SOAS AND IDS/ STEPS CENTRE

26 OCTOBER 2012
NUNN HALL, INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, SOAS
10AM-5PM, FOLLOWED BY A DRINKS RECEPTION STARTING AT 6PM

Is security the new vocabulary of the post-2015 MDG world? If so, what does this tell us about the institutional and political character of the development industry today? What does it mean to securitise water, food, energy and the climate? Is this securitisation enhancing local people's wellbeing and rights or is it allowing new actors to increase processes of enclosure and commodification of existing limited natural resources? Is securitisation ultimately reducing or increasing the insecurities of poor and marginalised people?

These issues will be addressed at a colloquium organised by SOAS and IDS/STEPS Centre on 26 October 2012. The meeting will focus on critical perspectives on the securitisation of water, land, food, energy and climate change debates. We will have key presentations followed by debate on different aspects of the security/securitisation conundrum.

Speakers include:
- **Larry Swatuk** (Waterloo University, Canada) *A Nexus for Whom? Water resources, social justice and environmental insecurity*
- **Itay Fishhendler** (The Hebrew University, Israel) *Who is securitizing the environmental discourse, why and what are its potential implications?*
- **Richard A Matthew** (Schools of Social Ecology and Social Science at the University of California at Irvine, USA) *Climate change, security and development*

The notion of 'security' is now institutionalised in development research and teaching, and in development policy approaches to natural resources, food and agriculture. While 'security' was originally, pre-1990, primarily associated with the political and military dimensions of national security in the context of international relations, the post-Cold War period has produced a large number of 'non-traditional security challenges'. The 1994 UNDP report on 'human security' marked a qualitative change in the understanding of 'security' by vastly expanding the scope of the concept, and moving away from state-centric orthodoxy, to the extent that – according to some – there is no longer any clear difference between the notions of (human) security and (human) development. Human security is again high on the agenda as we approach 2015 and the post-Millennium Development Goals era. The environmental security agenda that made links between resource scarcity, climate change and conflict emerged at the turn of the century alongside a resurgence of conventional security agendas linked to the so-called global war on terror. To this existing conceptual minefield now comes the so-called nexus between food, energy and water security. Due to this 'nexus', new players such as global corporations are now taking an interest in addressing water, climate change and energy risks and a recent initiative by the German government seeks to address global trends such as population growth, economic growth and the rising demands for resources in an interconnected manner.

All these 'securitisation' trends have led to the proliferation of high-level workshops, seminars and conferences, Master's courses as well as new policies and perspective papers from the Global Water Partnership, World Economic Forum and the German Government (to name a few) that make security out to be the new 'development imperative'.

Critiques of this discursive evolution and policy discourse reframing have pointed out that labelling the environment as a security allows exceptional measures to be taken, breaking otherwise binding rules, and governance by decrees rather than democratic decision-making. Security is a powerful political concept, often associated with alarmist rhetoric, which helps to attract the attention of NGOs and international players but may ultimately have depoliticising effects. It is therefore important to develop critiques and alternative perspectives on (in)security which would put the redressing of social injustice and inequality, as well as issues of human rights, freedom and dignity, centre-stage, and include in the policy framework redistributive mechanisms, reduced consumption and debt repayment (to name just a few examples), to transform the configurations of power and authority that cause insecurities.

We also need to ask what these debates tell us about the character of the development 'industry' and the political, ideological and institutional logics operating within it. Some consider the 'nexus' discourse(s) as little more than a relabelling exercise adding little, if anything to our capacity to analyse or act, generated by the need for a post-MDG new vocabulary. The 'nexus' (policy) discourse is also seen as reflecting the neoliberal *Zeitgeist* – a welcome development for some, a severe threat according to others. Who is/are driving the 'nexus' rethinking, how and why, and what intended and unintended purposes does it serve?

Colloquium format:
Presentations will be followed by a 'fishbowl' discussion with several panellists from academia, policy and practice, which will encourage audience participation. The proceedings of the colloquium will be used to write a think-piece Working Paper, in the writing process of which, led by the organisers, all participants will be invited to provide inputs.

Registration:
Participation is free. However due to restricted numbers we request you to register by October 16. To register, please email water@soas.ac.uk including your name affiliation, and your focus interest/question regarding the 'nexus' thematic. Registrations will be confirmed not later than 19 October. Lunch and drinks will be provided.

Location:
The Institute of Education and SOAS are located right next to each other.
Nunn Hall is located on Level 4 of the IOE: see http://www.ioe.ac.uk/sitehelp/1072.html
The drinks reception will be held in the Staff Common Room, on the first floor of College Buildings – Old Building: see http://www.soas.ac.uk/visitors/location/maps/#RussellSquareCampusMap

Organisers:
This event is organised by Peter Mollinga, Laura Hammond and Anna Lindley (SOAS) and Lyla Mehta, Jeremy Allouche and Alan Nicol (IDS / STEPS Centre)
STEPS Centre: www.steps-centre.org
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