



Universiteit
Utrecht

WEAPONIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

CONFERENCE 2023

FRIDAY MAY 26TH – KANUNNIKENZAAL, ACADEMIEGEBOUW UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION BOOKLET



THIS CONFERENCE IS SUPPORTED BY:



Critical Pathways: Pathways to Sustainability

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OUR TEAM

WELCOME

WELCOME TO OUR CONFERENCE
ON THE WEAPONIZATION OF THE
ENVIRONMENT.



It is our pleasure to gather experts from various disciplines to engage in discussions on the complex relationship between the environment and conflict, as well as shed light on the inequalities and power relations that contribute to and result from the weaponization of the environment.

The urgency of the issues at hand has brought us together to explore the various ways in which the environment can be weaponized. Scholars have pointed out that the relationship between the environment and conflict is much more complex than the common notion of climate change as a 'threat multiplier'. This conference seeks to delve deeper into the field of Green Conflict Studies and move beyond simplistic causal associations to explore the multifold and often mutually reinforcing links between the environment and conflict.

We are thrilled to have brought together an interesting mix of speakers who bring empirically and conceptually informed contributions and experiences that advance a Green Conflict Studies agenda.

Throughout the conference, we will explore two broad themes: environmental security and environmental governance. We will also bring these themes together by presenting different approaches and frames for understanding the weaponization of the environment that specifically focus on the inclusion of local cultures, bottom-up approaches, and social structures.

Our aim is to foster an open and collaborative space for the sharing of new ideas, approaches, and solutions.

We hope that this conference will be a fruitful opportunity for productive discussions and insights, leading to meaningful collaborations that can help address the challenges facing our world today.

On behalf of the WOTE team, we thank you for joining us, and we wish you all a stimulating and engaging conference experience.

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

9.00 - 9.45 **Walk-in**, welcome with coffee & tea

9.45 - 10.00 **Introduction by WOTE team**

10.00 - 10.45 **Keynote speech**

Jeroen Warner: *The Weaponisation of Water: From Hydroterrorism to Violent Infrastructure*

10.45 - 11:00 **Break**

11.00 - 12.30 **Panel 1**

Jeroen Warner: *The Weaponisation of Water: From Hydroterrorism to Violent Infrastructure*

Irina Patrahau: *Water, Peace, and Security in Iraq*

Wim Zwijnenburg: *How Open-Source Data is Strengthening Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts*

Marie Schellens: *Environment and Armed Conflict: from Environmental Impacts to Nature-Based Solutions*

12.30 - 14.00 **Lunch break**

14.00 - 15:30 **Panel 2**

Tim Stork: *Militarized Conservation in Post-Treaty Colombia*

Aditi Saraf: *Hifazat – Law, Land, and Resistance in Kashmir*

Tobias von Lossow: *Preventing the Weaponisation of the Environment and Limits of Environmental Governance*

15.30 - 15.45 **Break**

15.45 - 17.00 **Panel 3**

Raki Ap: *Should we arm and train Indigenous Peoples to protect our Vital Ecosystems?*

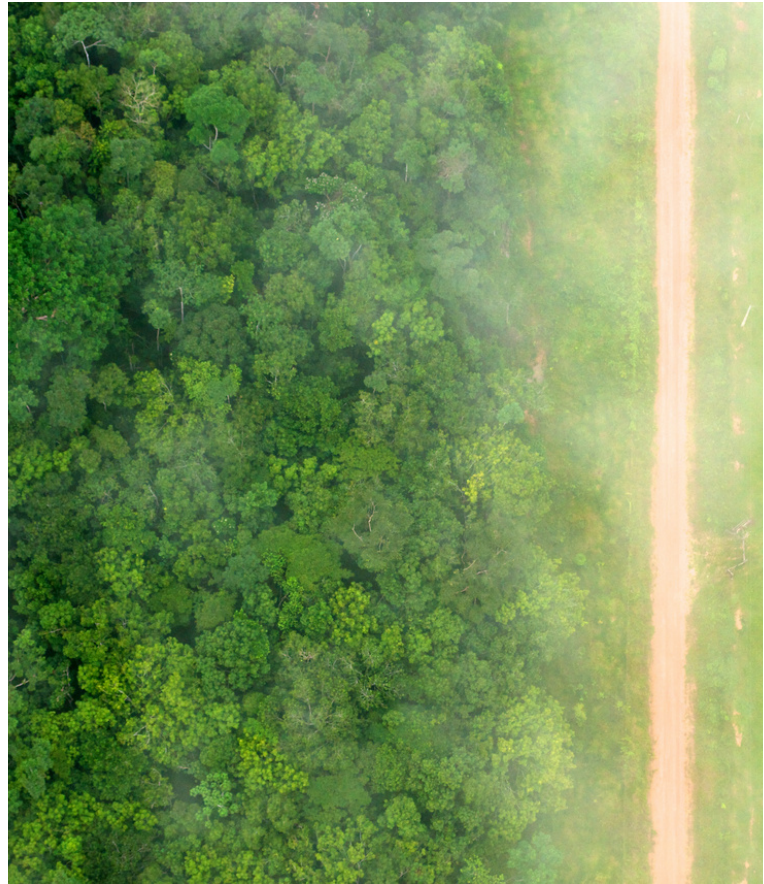
Tim Boekhout van Solinge: *Indigenous Forest Crime Prevention in the Brazilian Amazon*

17.00 - 18.00 **Drinks**

GREEN CONFLICT STUDIES

Conflict analysis allows us to understand the causes, dynamics, contexts, and aftermaths of violent conflicts by state and non-state actors throughout the conflict lifecycle. As such, conflict can be examined through various lenses. One such approach is embedded in the intersection of environmental circumstances and violent conflict.

Currently, a vast body of both scholarly and non-academic literature exists that engages with the various aspects of this environment-conflict nexus. This literature seeks to examine the short- and long-term intensification of environmental and conflict relations via climate change or highlight the ways in which armed conflicts, directly and indirectly, impact the environment through environmental destruction or degradation and impacts to the use of specific natural resources. Similar to what is proposed in Political Ecology, conflict research can thus benefit greatly from the included consideration of the interaction between conflicts and their tangible and intangible, as well as human and natural, environments.



Green Conflict Studies, therefore, seeks to conceptualize the ambiguity of this integration and brings together a body of scholarship that centres around the question of how environmental issues and challenges impact or are impacted by violent conflict and inequalities, specifically encompassing work that contextualizes environmental conflicts within their various milieus (socio-political, historical, cultural, etc.) in order to understand the various triggers and their varying effects on differently positioned individuals in communities.



WEAPONIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

This conference specifically holds the title of 'Weaponization of the Environment'. Green Conflict Studies seeks to converge ideas of conflict and climate change together and amidst this nexus is the instrumentalization, utilization, or exploitation of the environment for the sake of sociopolitical interests. It entails both the use of the environment as a weapon and the use of weapons against the environment. A 'weapon' is a means of gaining advantage or defending oneself in a conflict or contest of interests. As such, climate change is often a catalyst in the processes of weaponization, as resource scarcity or disruption makes tensions within and between communities rise.

We define weaponization of the environment as the targeted co-optation of the environment for furthering dissent or the intention of harming a person or group physically, mentally, identity-related, or culturally. We advocate a broad definition encompassing also the indirect tolerated suffering of a person or group elicited through the deliberate or indeliberate interference or tampering of ecological matters as a tool for political, security or military purposes. Actors within the weaponization of the environment may find themselves in various placements within structures of accumulative and imbalanced modes of power when enacting in weaponization. Moving beyond a singular perspective on human actors, we also understand the environment as being interdependently nested within these systems.

The different manifestations of weaponization are numerous, some of which will be explored in various panels during this conference. A form of weaponization is present in the access to resources such as water in times of drought. Actors can weaponize natural resources such as for instance withholding water from others by use of force. Other possible forms are the framing of climate change as a direct cause of conflict. In academia, there is widespread consensus that climate change is above all a catalytic factor, and the direct link with violent conflict remains contested. The neglect of other factors may be beneficial for actors' to bring forth their own agenda. Moreover, there are examples of how the environment is used in the sustainability transition as a protection shield to justify unlawful or unethical actions.

This conference will thus explore Green Conflict Studies by examining the weaponization of the environment in various forms, embedded in Environmental Security and Environmental Governance, as well as regarded from critical, local and bottom-up perspectives.

KEYNOTE BY

DR. JEROEN WARNER

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Jeroen Warner teaches, trains and publishes on Crisis and Disaster Studies at Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR), where he completed his PhD degree in Disaster Studies and is now a senior Associate Professor and a member of the WUR Sociology of Development and Change group as a researcher and teaching staff.

A founding member of the London Water Research Group, Dr. Jeroen works on domestic and transboundary water conflict and cooperation, multi-stakeholder participation, resource management, and water governance. He published seven books and well over 100 academic and professional articles. He won a CAPES scholarship as Special Visiting Professor at the University of Sao Paulo.

His main research interests in the crisis and disaster management domain are the politics of disaster risk reduction, social resilience and participation in urban disaster response. On that last theme, he coordinated the European Horizon 2020 Coordination and Support Action, EDUCEN, on cities, cultures and catastrophes. He was Wageningen coordinator in two Integrated Projects funded by the Dutch Science Foundation: Dynamic Deltas and Hydrosocial Deltas.



Jeroen is Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Water Governance*, an interdisciplinary journal focused on water governance and other water-related issues such as, inter alia, water supply, drought, water quality and flood protection as well as governance capacity in environmental protection, stakeholder engagement, risk assessment, water allocation, participatory planning, information management, technology assessment, water ethics and policy development. Dr Jeroen is also an editor of *Regions and Cohesion* and *Ambiente e Sociedade*.

KEYNOTE SPEECH

'Water wars' keep popping up in academic, media, NGO and UN publications. While wars over water are extremely rare, water bodies and water infrastructure are often a (potential) target or instrument of violence in territorial conflicts or (alleged or actual) terrorism. Underexposed in this context is resistance against water infrastructure, perhaps itself experienced as violent but especially as symbolic of broader conflicts.

PANEL 1: ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

MONITORING APPROACHES TO THE SECURITIZED ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Security as an academic concept has come to mean different things over time, whether it is understood as its original conflict-triggering conceptualization or the more recent understanding of environmental protection as part of human security. Accordingly, environmental security concerns the threats to the environment caused by individuals, groups, or nations and uncovers the ways in which conflict and conflict actors both affect and exploit the environment. The theme of environmental security focuses on the everyday realities of direct conflict, warfare, violence and post-conflict reconstruction. The focus will be on the roots, outcomes and dynamics of specific conflict situations and the positive utilities of environmental and resource management for conflict mitigation.

As part of the field of Green Conflict Studies, Environmental Security in the context of this panel will be centred around environmental aspects within an armed conflict lifecycle. To further conceptualize Green Conflict Studies as a research field, this panel will focus on monitoring and analyzing practices on environmental destruction in relation to violent conflict. How do different research agencies monitor the environment within the frame of conflict? How can the effects of climate change, conflict and the associated environmental harm be analyzed and monitored? Through our panel discussion with our panellists, we will explore the different possible methods for Green Conflict Analysis. In this panel the question of how different organizations research environmental security in an age of climate change is central. The speakers within this panel are originating from think tanks, NGOs and academia thus providing us with differing perspectives on the issues of environmental security while simultaneously all having experience in Conflict Studies. Combining all these different research perspectives, we hope to contribute to further the discussion on Green Conflict Studies.

PANEL 1: ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY

MONITORING APPROACHES TO THE SECURITIZED ENVIRONMENT

JEROEN WARNER

The Weaponisation of Water: From Hydroterrorism to Violent Infrastructure

IRINA PATRAHAU

Water, Peace, and Security in Iraq

Irina Patrahou is a Strategic Analyst at the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies specialized in climate security as well as the geopolitics and geo-economics of energy and raw materials. With a study background in Political Science (BSc) and Political Economy (MSc), she has co-authored several reports on issues of water security in Iraq, climate security, and geo-economics of energy. As such, her contribution to the panel on environmental security will provide a deeper insight into the interplays of climate, security, and weaponization of the environment.

WIM ZWIJNENBURG

How Open-Source Data is Strengthening Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflicts

Wim Zwijnenburg is a Project Leader Humanitarian Disarmament and PAX and a contributor to the Bellingcat investigative journalism collective. He has been working over the last 12 years on the environmental dimensions of armed conflicts, and developed an open-source methodology for identification and monitoring of conflict-linked environmental damages. He authored various reports on conflict-linked environmental impacts in Syria, Iraq, Ukraine, Libya, Yemen and South Sudan, while also doing advocacy work to promote protection of the environment in relation to armed conflict in the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council and the UN Environment Assembly and building networks among civil society groups. For his work on environmental emergencies, he received the UNOCHA/UNEP Green Star Award in 2017. Wim holds a Master International Development Studies from the Radboud University.

MARIE SCHELLENS

Environment and Armed Conflict: from Environmental Impacts to Nature-Based Solutions

Marie Schellens is an environmental researcher at PAX for Peace, the largest Dutch civil society organisation working for peace, reconciliation and justice. Since March 2023, she supports their evidence-based advocacy on environment, peace and security through remote-sensing and geospatial analysis. Using earth observation, she identifies and monitors environmental damage impacting the lives and livelihoods of people in conflict zones and explores the wider linkage between environmental degradation, the climate crisis, and conflict.

Before joining PAX, she worked as an environmental security analyst at the UN Environment Programme. She coordinated the development of Strata, an easy-to-use web-based mapper that supports project managers, analysts, and policy makers to streamline climate security data in their daily work. From 2016 to 2020, she was a Marie Curie PhD fellow at Stockholm University and the University of Iceland, researching the role of natural resources in conflict risk. She holds a MSc in Geography jointly from KU Leuven and Free University Brussels (Belgium, 2015).

PANEL 2: ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

POWER, POLITICS AND PEACEBUILDING

Environmental Governance is a broad concept and practical field that encompasses complex governance elements to tackle issues of environmental concern through the involvement of multiple stakeholders and actors. The ability to enable adaptive management in socio-ecological systems, build collaboration among participants, and mitigate climate-conflict risks are some goals of environmental governance that can operate at a multitude of levels, whether that be global, regional, or local. Environmental governance is a topical issue in relation to conflict because climate change and environmental conditions can increase tension or be the source of conflict. The environment can also be a tool in peacebuilding efforts, and therefore understanding and having inclusive governance schemes is essential in the conflict lifecycle. Environmental Governance as an aspect of green conflict studies can attempt to manage the relationship between environmental concerns and conflict. By centring power relations in governance, this panel seeks to uncover the inequalities present in environmental governance and how they affect individuals and communities impacted by conflict.

This conference seeks to critically analyze Environmental Governance by looking at aspects of power, inclusion, and operation. We seek to ask who has decision-making power, who benefits from such decisions and why, who is included in governance schemes, and how environmental governance practically operates in different settings. In this regard, our panel will delve into a critical analysis of Environmental Governance by looking at the relationship between power and land rights to understand what assumptions and goals influence governance, as well as tracing the link between conflict, peacebuilding, and conservation, and how different actors influence or are influenced by violence.

PANEL 2: ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

POWER, POLITICS AND PEACEBUILDING

TIM STORK

Militarized Conservation in Post-Treaty Colombia

Tim Stork is a Lecturer at Tilburg University, where he teaches at the Public Law and Governance department. In the past eight years, he taught courses in political science, conflict studies, PPLE, public administration and qualitative research methods. In Fall 2023, he will start as a PhD Candidate at Tilburg University. His research project sets out to explore how environmental peacebuilding norms, actors and processes shape international and national conservation efforts in post-treaty Colombia.

ADITI SARAF

Hifazat – Law, Land, and Resistance in Kashmir

Aditi Saraf is Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Utrecht University. Her research investigates the relationship between commerce, sovereignty, and ecology in the Kashmir region. More broadly, she is interested in questions relating to economic and political anthropology, frontiers and mobility, militarization and place-making practices. Her writing has been published in *American Ethnologist*, *Economy and Society* and the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology* among others. For this conference, she will present her ongoing research on the history of land rights in Kashmir, a politically contested and densely militarized highland zone. While the conflict in Kashmir is generally viewed as an effect of national and religious conflict between India and Pakistan, she shows how land rights, and their recent revocation by the Indian government, are an important dimension of the dispute. She highlights how vernacular concepts of environmental stewardship that were developed during – and in opposition to – colonial rule are mobilized to oppose ideas of ‘development’ and ‘enrichment’ promised in opening land to capital investment, and to protect the fragile Himalayan ecology from degradation.

TOBIAS VON LOSSOW

Preventing the Weaponisation of the Environment and Limits of Environmental Governance

Tobias von Lossow is a Research Fellow at the Clingendael Institute, Affiliate Researcher at IHE Delft and Lecturer at the Freie Universität Berlin. For almost fifteen years, Tobias von Lossow has been working on water and security: water conflicts, hydro-politics, water diplomacy and the weaponisation and complex role of water in armed conflicts and fragile settings with a focus on the Middle East and Africa. His research addresses natural resources management against the security, political and socio-economic backgrounds in national and regional contexts. He gives diplomatic training courses, seminars and lectures at universities, briefs government officials and agencies and publishes in academic as well as policy-relevant journals, books and papers. For the conference, he will refer to his extensive work on the weaponisation of water in the Middle East. Tobias von Lossow will discuss options to prevent the weaponisation of the environment in contexts of (civil) war, fragility as well as relatively stable settings. Against the background of different scenarios he will point out the limits of environmental governance.

PANEL 3:

CRITICAL, LOCAL, AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES

TO THE WEAPONIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

In order to present a useful and comprehensive discussion of the weaponization of the environment, this conference must endeavour to highlight the plethora of diverse voices and perspectives that exist within the field. The intricate and numerous angles from which one can approach the previous two panels on Environmental Security and Environmental Governance point both to the inherent complexity and the need to adequately consider this complexity in order to provide a complete picture. As such, it is vital to make space for critical, local, and bottom-up approaches to the weaponization of the environment.

With this panel, we aim to present a selection of voices and a set of ideas that present a small fraction of the vast number of discourses that make up what can be classified as critical, local, and bottom-up approaches. These frameworks for understanding the weaponization of the environment centre voices that are often marginalized and knowledge that is often side-lined, subsumed, or supplanted by knowledge produced by neo-colonial actors, institutions from the Global North, and other actors in positions that are sustained by structural and systemic power inequalities. The agency of these non-state local indigenous actors and resistance to forest crimes, colonial legacies, and extractivist practices such as resource dispossession are thus focal points of this discussion.

While avoiding the treatment of these discourses as monolithic, this panel endeavours to provide a platform in which to highlight and bring into conversation some of the unique and diverse perspectives and narratives that fall under the larger umbrella of critical, local, and bottom-up approaches to the weaponization of the environment.

PANEL 3:

CRITICAL, LOCAL, AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES

TO THE WEAPONIZATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

RAKI AP

Should We Arm and Train Indigenous Peoples to Protect Our Vital Ecosystems?

Raki Ap is the international spokesperson for the Free West Papua Campaign, a civil servant at the Ministry of the Interior and a well-known face within the Dutch climate and anti-racism movements. During guest lectures and presentations Raki Ap also takes his audience on a journey to his homeland, West Papua the world's largest tropical island. Raki lets people experience what it feels like to be West Papua and what climate change looks like from the point of view of (many) indigenous peoples. Raki therefore speaks from the natives perspective, which shakes up established (green) institutions.

TIM BOEKHOUT VAN SOLINGE

Indigenous Forest Crime Prevention in the Brazilian Amazon

Tim Boekhout van Solinge studied Human Geography in Amsterdam (UvA), Paris (Sorbonne Paris IV), Birzeit University (Palestinian Westbank) and Kingston, Jamaica. For his MA thesis (1994) he did five months of fieldwork in gang-controlled neighbourhoods in Kingston. From 1995–2000 he worked at the University of Amsterdam, and between 2001–2016 he lectured in Criminology at Utrecht University, where he obtained his PhD in 2004 (Dealing with Drugs in Europa). In Utrecht, he coordinated an NWO project on conflicts and natural resources in Brazil and Colombia (2010–2016). Tim's stays in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and later his fieldwork in Jamaican ghettos prepared his will for action research on the violent deforestation frontline in the Brazilian Amazon. Since 2016 he works as an independent scientist and consultant, specializing in illegal drug markets, environmental and especially forest crimes, and indigenous forest crime prevention. He also leads Forest Forces Foundation, is part of the Sinchi Foundation, and is affiliated (unpaid position) with Erasmus University (NL) and UFOPA (BR). Since 2020, Tim occasionally works as a film fixer for filming in the Amazon and is a contact person for indigenous forest guardians. This is based on the idea (or hypothesis under study) that media and especially film may be more effective in reducing deforestation crimes and green conflicts than scientific research and publications.

MEET THE TEAM



RACHEL HIERHOLZER

Rachel is completing her master's degree in Conflict Studies and Human Rights at Utrecht University. Her master's thesis researches the representation of migrants and refugees entering Europe through the Mediterranean in European newspapers and how this relates to or reflects exclusionary migration policy in the European Union, most specifically the externalization and securitization of borders. The goal of this research is to analyze discourse for patterns of racism in the media and othering of racialized migrants to trace how exclusion is legitimized in European culture. She completed her bachelor's degree in Global Development Studies at Queens University, with her main research interests being centred around the politics of migration, securitization of borders, and temporary labour regimes.



JET GROENENDIJK

Jet is a master's student in the Conflict Studies & Human Rights programme at the UU centre for conflict studies. Before starting this master's, she obtained a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree (Cum Laude) in Postcolonial Studies (major) & Conflict Studies (minor). During her bachelor's, Jet interned at PAX for Peace in the Humanitarian Disarmament team working on Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict. Her master's thesis is a comparative discourse analysis of the US & Kenyan defense policy focusing on climate security.



ARIEL OZDEMIR

Ariel is currently writing her thesis as part of the Master's programme in Conflict Studies and Human Rights at Utrecht University focused on a discursive analysis of climate-induced migration from Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to Australia. She completed her Bachelor of Arts degree with distinction at the University of British Columbia with a major in Political Science and a minor in Spanish where she received the Special University of British Columbia Award (2020) and the Go Global International Learning Programs Award (2019). She also spent a year studying abroad at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona.



CHRISTOPH HAHN

Chris is a student in the Master's Conflict Studies and Human Rights at Utrecht University. His thesis focuses on green militarisation of biodiversity conservation areas during armed conflict, studying the case of the 'WAP-Complex' in the transborder region of Burkina Faso, Benin and Niger. Chris completed his bachelor's in Political Science with a minor in History from the University of Göttingen where he held a 'Deutschlandstipendium' scholarship from 2020 to 2021. During his Bachelor's, he interned at the NGO 'Society for Threatened Peoples' in the department 'Indigenous Peoples'.



YOËLLE PIERIK

Yoëlle is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Conflict Studies & Human Rights at Utrecht University, where she is working on her thesis. Her research focuses on understanding the connections between environmental governance, military power, and political dynamics in Brazil during the Bolsonaro administration. Prior to starting her Master's degree, Yoëlle received a Bachelor's degree (cum laude) in Latin American Studies (major) and conflict studies (minor). She also completed Leiden University's Honours Programme 'Tackling global challenges' and interned at the NGO Mensen met een Missie and the Dutch government's Center for the Promotion of Import from Developing Countries.



MARIT TAZELAAR

Marit is researching the narrative of 'green citizenship' and how green urbanism plays a role in the destruction of urban social fabric in Katendrecht, Rotterdam South. It explores the climate-conflict nexus through assessing the social tensions of urban redevelopment. The thesis is part of the Master Conflict Studies and Human Rights at Utrecht University. She has completed her Bachelor in Management of International Social Challenges at Erasmus University Rotterdam and specialized in Conflict Studies (University of Amsterdam) and Global Food Security (Wageningen University).



THIJS JEURSEN

Thijs is an assistant professor and researcher in Conflict Studies at Utrecht University in the Faculty of Humanities that draws upon ethnographic fieldwork and interdisciplinary research in order to intervene in theoretical and public debates on security and conflict. Thijs completed his PhD in Human Geography at the University of Amsterdam where he spent 11 months conducting fieldwork researching citizenship and security in Miami, the results of which have been recently published in his new book *The Vigilant Citizen: Everyday Policing and Insecurity in Miami*. Thijs also obtained both a Master in Criminology and a Master in Conflict Studies and Human Rights from Utrecht University.

In his most recent research project, he is examining the conflict-climate change nexus, specifically looking at how environmental concerns are being reconfigured according to parameters of security. Thijs is studying how civilians, markets, and state actors integrate ecological politics in military capacity and strategy. This research project aims to explain how climate change is understood by military actors, and what this might mean for their capacity, deployment, and use of violence in conflict.

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