

Cambridge Judge Business School

Critical Perspectives on Social Innovation 2025:1

CLIMATE PEACESHAPING

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Introduction

The Cambridge Peaceshaping & Climate Lab (CPCL) is an initiative of Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation. CPCL aims to stimulate innovation to spot climate related conflict before it occurs, stop it through socio-ecological action or, failing that, inform the provision of timely peace interventions.

In 'Peaceshaping' (Critical Perspectives 2024: 4), Professors Neil Stott and Paul Tracy and Dr Jarrod Pendlebury conceptualised peaceshaping as highly consequential institutional work which has profound effects on global challenges. In this essay Neil, Jarrod, Paul and Dean Muruven deploy these concepts to outline their thoughts on climate peaceshaping.

Climate peaceshaping

Will climate change destroy amity and inflame enmities? Our world is experiencing climate vulnerabilities created by overheating and extreme weather events. Climate change compounds problems such as catastrophic biodiversity loss, struggles over resources - water, land, food and minerals - and long standing social injustices. Climate events tend to amplify existing social, racial, religious and economic fault lines as well creating new loci for enmity. Will the intensification of such events increase enmity and lead to violence, conflict and war?

We do not know the answer. How climate change will compound existing problems and conflicts is not yet clear¹. And, the role of climate change in generating new conflict remains contested². But climate uncertainty has the potential to drive enmities and create enemies, real or imagined. As people, places and systems become fragile, fear becomes a driver for change and relationships become fraught³. It will be increasingly important to understand how climate change compounds existing enmities and generates new ones. It will be crucial to develop research, ideas and the practices of 'climate peaceshaping'.

In a previous *Critical Perspectives* essay, we outline two distinct but interrelated categories of institutional work with immense consequences for peace institutions : 'peaceshaping' and 'warshaping'. We define peaceshaping as 'the disruption of institutions which sustain enmity and the creation and preservation of institutions which constrain enmity and build amity'⁴. Conversely, we define warshaping as 'the disruption of institutions which sustain amity and the creation and preservation of institutions which constrains amity and builds enmity'⁵. We conceptualise peaceshaping and warshaping as highly consequential institutional work which has profound effects on global challenges⁶.

In this essay we explore climate peaceshaping. We outline debates on the climate-security nexus then present our thoughts on the key characteristics of 'climate peaceshaping work' which we define as *the disruption of institutions which sustain climate enmity and the creation and preservation of institutions which constrain climate enmity and build amity*.

In doing so we use the example of water because water quality, quantity and availability will have a major impact as the climate emergency intensifies. Water related hazards will increase: floods, droughts, sand and dust storms, fires and extreme temperatures. There will be too much, too little and/or too dirty water. All ecological and human systems will be affected. The securitization and weaponization of water is already happening⁷. Water, therefore, is a powerful lens by which to explore climate peaceshaping.

¹ Wong, C., Saeedi, N & Rizk, S. (2020). *The climate security nexus and the prevention of violent extremism: Working at the intersection of major development challenges*, UNDP Policy Brief, (New York: UNDP), <https://www.undp.org/publications/undp-climate-security-nexus-and-prevention-violent-extremism>

² Ide, T., Brzoska M., Donges, J.F. & Schleussner, C. (2020), 'Multi-method Evidence for when and how Climate-related Disasters Contribute to Armed Conflict Risk', *Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 62, 1-8.

³ Stott, N., & Longhurst, N. (2011), 'Big society and poor places', in M. Stott, (Ed), *The big society challenge*, Keystone Development Trust. (pp 100–110), p103.

⁴ Stott, N., Pendlebury, J. & Tracey, P. (2024), 'Peaceshaping', *Critical Perspectives on Social Innovation*. No. 4.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ King, M. & Hardy, E. (2023), 'Water Weaponization: Its Forms, Its Use in the Russia-Ukraine War, and What to Do About It', *Briefer*, No.49.

The intensification of climate change threatens how water, food, transport and energy systems are organised. We can already see threats turn into reality, such as the devastating floods in Pakistan in 2022, which submerged one third of the country, affecting 33 million people and forcing over 5 million people to rely solely on contaminated ponds as their primary source of drinking water⁸.

Climate change is not only manifesting in the Global South, Germany and Belgium have experienced severe thunderstorms and flooding in August 2024 after temperature reached 36.5 degrees celsius. Disruptions were experienced in both health and transport infrastructure. Both countries' August records for rainfall have been shattered⁹.

There is a scientific consensus that climate change is, and will continue to, endanger everyone to a lesser or greater degree¹⁰. Escalating climate change is likely to generate enmity and conflict. The people and places least able to protect themselves will continue to bear the brunt. Powerful actors - including western states, emerging powers and multinational corporations - are increasingly securitizing the climate.

Broadly, security is being free from danger and collective or personal threats - real or imagined. Securitization is the process of 'threat design' and 'threat management'¹¹. Issues which previously may not have been considered as security concerns are re-categorized. Climate change is increasingly perceived as a 'threat multiplier'¹² and the 'climate-security nexus' is debated within governments, militaries¹³ as well as academia. Key questions include how to become resilient to climate shocks, secure resources and manage socio-political disruptions.

Our key concern is that self-preservation and self-interest rather than the common good will continue to frame decision making. For instance, the acceleration of 'land and resource grabbing', which has been characterised as a 'final enclosure' of the global commons¹⁴ and 'climate colonialism'¹⁵.

⁸ UNICEF, (2023), 'Devastating Floods in Pakistan', <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/devastating-floods-pakistan-2022>

⁹ Euronews, (2024), 'Germany and Europe Experience Severe Thunderstorms and Flooding', <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/08/14/germany-and-belgium-experience-severe-thunderstorms-and-flooding>

¹⁰ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2023), 'Summary for Policymakers', in *Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, H. Lee and J. Romero (eds.)], IPCC, Geneva, Switzerland, pp. 1-34, DOI: 10.59327/IPCC/AR6-9789291691647.001

¹¹ Balzacq, T., Léonard, S., & Ruzicka, J. (2016), "'Securitization" revisited: Theory and cases', *International relations*, 30(4), 494-531.

¹² Sweijjs, T., De Haan, M., & Van Manen, H. (2022), *Unpacking the climate security nexus: Seven pathologies linking climate change to violent conflict*, (The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies).

¹³ Vogler, A. (2023), 'Tracking climate securitization: Framings of climate security by civil and defense ministries', *International Studies Review*, 25(2) pp 1-27.

¹⁴ Neef, A., Ngin, C., Moreda, T. & Mollett, S (2023), 'Global land and resource grabbing: An introduction', in Neef, A., Ngin, C., Moreda, T., & Mollett, S (Eds), *Routledge handbook of global land and resource grabbing*, (Abingdon: Routledge), pp 1-17.

¹⁵ Bhambra, G. K., & Newell, P. (2022), 'More than a metaphor: "climate colonialism" in perspective.' *Global Social Challenges Journal*, 1, pp 1-9.

The term climate-security nexus refers to the complex relationships between climate change and conflict, in particular the stressors of extreme weather, resource scarcity, systemic disruption and people on the move. That such stressors will cause conflict to a greater or lesser degree is implied, but empirical evidence of a close correlation is contested¹⁶. Debates on the climate-security nexus focus on risk: risk factors, climate as a risk multiplier, indicators of risk and vulnerability and risk mitigation¹⁷.

Alex Arnall argues that climate-security debates over the last twenty years tend to focus on either 'state security' or 'human security'. The former aims to safeguard sovereignty, sustainability, military capacity and international power in the face of climate risks. The latter covers environmental, economic and personal health and safety from the community to global level. Arnall suggests a third approach which emphasises human agency -as distinct from state or state agencies actions- and the scope for making a difference¹⁸.

However, in their research on UN member states, Judith Hardt & Alina Viehoff¹⁹ illustrate how climate vulnerabilities blur the state and humanity security distinctions which lead to ever greater securitization. The 'traditional security sector' - defence ministries and militaries - tend to address climate change issues and potential responses as 'hard'(militarised) security. From this perspective, climate change is interrelated with, and impacts on, terrorism, conflict, war and peace as well as military capacity, infrastructure and operations.

The 'extended security sector', comprising civil ministries, tend to focus on 'soft' security approaches, which may include reactive or preventive action which contribute to' the securitization and climatization of politics'²⁰. Of particular concern are social vulnerability, instability, livelihoods and migration.

Hardt & Viehoff's work demonstrates that climate is firmly on states' agendas. There is considerable talk of global collaboration, but progress on climate international agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)²¹ and the 2015 Paris Agreement is achingly slow.

Achieving global consensus on the SDGs was remarkable but clearly unsustainable. As with previous attempts at global institutionalisation, parochialism has rapidly re-emerged. State climate security priorities remain insular and self-motivated. Particularly in states with power and affluence. It is as if our collective hearts, or more accurately, wallets are not in it.

For Ulrich Beck, the dilemma states face is that risks 'consciously taken' - such as continuing to burn fossil fuels- must be answered for as they endanger all of us and 'stand in open contradiction to the state's

¹⁶ Ide, et al, 'Multi-method Evidence'; Ide, T. (2017), 'Research Methods for Exploring the Links between Climate Change and Conflict', *WIREs Climate Change*, 8:e456, DOI: 10.1002/wcc.456

¹⁷ Läderach, P., Schapendonk, F., Shirsath, P. B., Amarnath, G., Prager, S. D., Gummadi, S., Prager, S.D., Gummandi, S., Kramer, B., Govind A & Pacillo, G. (2023), 'The climate-security nexus: Securing resilient livelihoods through early warning systems and adaptive safety nets', in, (Eds), Campbell B., Thornton P., Loboguerrero AM., Dinesh D., Nowak A., *Transforming Food Systems Under Climate Change through Innovation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp 63-74.

¹⁸ Arnall A., (2023), 'Climate change and security research: Conflict, securitisation and human agency', *PLOS Climate*, 2(3): e0000072.

¹⁹ Hardt, J.N., & Viehoff, A. (2020), ' A Climate for Change in the UN Security Council? Member States' Approaches to the Climate-Security Nexus', *IFSH Research Report, 005*, (Hamburg: Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik an der Universität Hamburg (IFSH)), <https://doi.org/10.25592/ifsh-research-report-005>

²⁰ Ibid. p 17

²¹ Tracey, P & Stott, N. (2024) Social innovation and the UN Sustainable Development Goals: Five blockages to progress. *Critical Perspectives on Social Innovation*. No 4.

institutionalized pledges of safety and welfare'²². But the accumulation of interrelated hazards we face 'cannot be delimited spatially, temporally or socially' and 'present wholly new challenges to the institutions designed for their control'²³.

The awareness that climate threats challenge nation-centric ways of managing security and risk is starting to seep into states' thinking. Hardt & Viehoff detect the emergence of an 'existential security awareness' which, as the name suggests, considers the threat of climate change as qualitatively different from the normal concerns of international relations such as peace/war, development, poverty etc. Here the prime concerns are irrevocable damage to the planet, the fate of future generations and humanity as a whole.²⁴

However, the evidence for existential security awareness is primarily located in documents related to COP meetings rather than core policy. And, as Hardt & Viehoff stress, the glimmer of an existential understanding is not necessarily a precursor for non-parochial action;

'It is particularly striking that the responses articulated in relation to the existential security perspective also comply with the ones outlined in the other two sector approaches. The only exceptions are several statements (from, e.g. SVG²⁵, the Dominican Republic, South Africa and Niger) that highlight responsibilities of member states in the Global North and stress that the survival of more-vulnerable countries depends on multilateral action.'²⁶

The climate-security nexus remains fixated with parochial security threats and solutions. Even in the face of overwhelming evidence of catastrophes ahead, most states' emphasis on global security is still a mirage. To achieve anything close to the security of all requires a different mindset which draws on the traditions of internationalism, the intent of the UN founders, the myriad organisations who have strived for peace and for environmental/climate justice.

Climate peaceshaping

We define climate peaceshaping as the disruption of institutions which sustain climate enmity and the creation and preservation of institutions which constrain climate enmity and build amity. Climate peaceshaping is therefore focused on the institutional work of actors who purposefully attempt to prevent climate related conflict and prevent others from creating the conditions for, and enacting, conflict.

There is burgeoning climate change, sustainability and resilience related institutional work undertaken by actors across the public, private and social sectors. We are witnessing highly consequential institutional work in action from the COP meetings to struggles over polluted waterways.

From a human security perspective, the work undertaken by the UN, NGOs and social movements has much more of a global flavour than state or human security work, and is infused with existential

²² Beck, U., (1995). *Ecological Politics in an Age of Risk*, (Cambridge: Polity Press), p 2.

²³ Ibid. p 1.

²⁴ Hardt, J.N., & Viehoff, A., 'A Climate for Change', p 10.

²⁵ Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

²⁶ Ibid. p 108.

awareness. The 'environmentalism from below' by global people's movements²⁷ - as well as the prefigurative work of the pioneers in the alternative technology, ecological design and self sustainability movements - clearly demonstrates Arnall's third approach of human agency and institutional work in action²⁸.

Work on approaches to climate-peace are emerging. For instance, Peter Läderach and colleagues provide a useful outline of climate-peace principles to achieve climate security risk reduction such as strengthening local conflict management capacities, increasing the opportunity cost of violence, reduction in natural resource competition and building social capital²⁹. Also, in a previous critical perspectives essay, we outlined our concept of social-regenerative work which we defined as the creation and maintenance of just social, economic and ecological practices, institutions, organizations and societies. We outlined the principles in which social-regenerative work is rooted: sacrifice for people and the planet, solidarity, ecological design, subsidiarity and prefigurative practice³⁰. We argue that a climate-peace mindset must be underpinned by social-regenerative work.

In the next section we outline our preliminary thoughts on the key dimensions of the institutional work of climate peaceshaping: disruptive, creative and preservation climate peaceshaping.

Climate peaceshaping work

We posit that climate peaceshaping work focuses on three dimensions: disruption, creativity and preservation³¹. Firstly, the focus of disruptive peaceshaping is on contesting and reframing climate/conflict narratives and dismantling institutions which sustain climate enmities and underpin climate conflicts. Secondly, creative climate peaceshaping is the institutional work of creating alternatives through performance, consensus building and prefiguration. Finally, preservation climate peaceshaping focuses on maintaining and guarding climate-peace gains, as well as the socialisation of actors in the norms, rules and practices of climate peaceshaping.

Disruptive climate peaceshaping

Contesting the norms, values and practices which underpin the social harms caused by the degradation of people and the planet in the pursuit of profit is at the root of climate peaceshaping. Social harms stem from human action - or inaction - and are therefore avoidable³². From an ecological perspective, social harm generated by human activity undermines the health and wellbeing of human, non-humans³³ as well as ecosystems.

The contestation of social harms created by environmental degradation is not new. From saving the 'wilderness' movements of the early twentieth century to the climate justice campaigners at COP meetings, activists have repeatedly contested harmful institutions and suggested alternatives. That

²⁷ Dawson, A. (2024), *Environmentalism from Below: How Global People's Movements Are Leading the Fight for Our Planet*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books).

²⁸ Arnall A., 'Climate change and security research'.

²⁹ Läderach, P. et al, 'The climate-security nexus', p 65.

³⁰ Stott, N., Darlington, M. & Tracey, P., (2024), 'Climate organizing: A social regeneration approach', *Critical Perspectives on Social Innovation*. No 3.

³¹ Stott, N., Pendlebury, J. & Tracey, P., 'Peaceshaping', p 8.

³² Canning, V., Hillyard, P. & Tombs, S., (2023), 'Social harm and zemiology', in, (Eds), Liebling, A., Maruna, S. & McAra, L., *The Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, (7th edn), (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

³³ White, R., (2013), *Environmental harm: An eco-justice perspective*, (Bristol: Policy Press).

climate appears high on the agenda of states, business and social purpose organisations is due to decades of contestation. But we remain in a precarious situation in which we are acutely aware of the risks, have targets and goals to make change yet constantly compound the situation by increasing global consumption of fossil fuels.

The protests by the Adi Tribal Community against India's largest hydropower dam is a good example of contestation. The Siang River has been regarded as sacred for centuries by local communities, with its waters providing the livelihoods for the farmers. However, a planned \$13.2bn hydroelectric dam project places their livelihoods at risk. Despite claims that the dam will ultimately protect the river from a planned upstream Chinese dam, community activists remain cautious and their livelihoods may be sacrificed as two global superpowers grapple for control over the Siang River.

Climate peaceshaping through *reframing* work can be an effective method to focus organising. Reframing can occur through many lenses, but from a sociological perspective, modifying the relative value of economic, natural, human and cultural capital can have drastic effects on the efficacy of peaceshaping efforts. The challenge for climate peaceshapers is no different to that facing 'disruptors' in other fields: overcoming the normative elevation of economic capital as the primary driver of effort and change. Put more simply, the imperative for economic capital growth is valued over other forms of capital.

Reframing work in support of climate peaceshaping therefore needs to explore the boundaries of what constitutes 'valuable' capital, in an effort to expand social appetite for positive change. Pierre Bourdieu describes the ability to influence what constitutes valuable capital as wielding 'meta-capital'; '[t]his distinction between possession of capital and possession of a capital that gives power over this capital is operative in every domain'³⁴. Bourdieu and Wacquant offer the example of the state and its ability 'to wield a power over the different fields and over the various forms of capital that circulate in them' as an example of the operation of meta-capital³⁵. In other words, meta-capital enables its bearers to shape what constitutes valuable capital across a range of social environments.

Climate peaceshapers are therefore presented with two options; identify ways to influence the wielding of meta-capital (through lobbying the state, recognising the state as the possessor of meta-capital), or seek to expand the value of climate action to the extent it approaches the status of meta-capital.

The first avenue of influencing is familiar territory, and represents traditional, politically-informed institutional work. Each time peaceshapers seek to influence institutions, for instance political decision-making, they undertake reframing work in the hope those holding relevant meta-capital (often symbolic capital manifest through political power) will elevate their relative value in the social environment. We describe this work as *minor* reframing. More difficult – but also more effective – is *major* reframing work where a particular type of capital is *transformed* into meta-capital. In a climate sense, this would entail climate considerations being a fundamental driver of political decision making. The decision to relocate Indonesia's capital is one such example. Land subsidence and over abstraction of groundwater was the primary driver for the relocation and resulted in Jakarta becoming one of the fastest sinking cities in the world³⁶.

³⁴ Bourdieu, P., (2020), *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992*, (Cambridge: Polity Press), p 197.

³⁵ Bourdieu, P., Wacquant, L. (1992), *Introduction to Reflexive Sociology*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p 111.

³⁶ McEwan, S and Skinner, A., (2024), 'A capital is born: the impact of Indonesia moving its capital city', *Oxford Economics Blog*, 15 August 2024, <https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/resource/a-capital-is-born-the-impact-of-indonesia-moving-its-capital-city/Oxford Economics>

Dismantling climate peaceshaping work seeks the removal of institutions that perpetuate social and ecological harms with the aim of introducing new institutional frameworks. Dismantling institutions requires sustained disruption through contestation and reframing - as well building consensus (if possible) and prefigurative work (described in the next section) to delineate and demonstrate alternatives.

An increase in dismantling climate peaceshaping work is illustrated by an increase in the number of climate litigation cases. A 2023 UNEP report showed that the number of climate litigation cases rose to 2180 in 2022 from 884 in 2017³⁷. The type of cases has varied, with some plaintiffs challenging the lack of enforcement of climate-related laws. Other litigants are seeking to keep fossil fuels in the ground and hold corporations liable for damage to the environment.

Creative climate peaceshaping

Performative climate peaceshaping harnesses the power of repetitive speech and body acts in order to create. Similar to how many societies 'do' gender - through conscious and unconscious reinforcement of gender norms such as colour and fashion choices³⁸ - the language and actions deployed in public and private discourse play a role in shaping the possibility for action. This works by altering the relative importance of social capital associated with action on climate - in essence, recasting what matters - socially constructing new norms that unlock previously neglected avenues of climate action.

The stylised and repetitive use of phrases such as 'climate crisis' and 'global warming'³⁹ do more than simply descriptive work. These terms are 'performative utterances'⁴⁰ that move beyond descriptive fact to construct a new social environment in which action can take place.

Public figures have an outsized ability to enact performative climate peaceshaping given their increased reach, however the wide availability of digital communications technologies lowers the barrier to entry for public displays of performative climate peaceshaping. The political nature of performative utterances is perhaps evident in the way elected officials modify their language for tactical purposes. For example, US President Barack Obama's shift in language on climate - away from such terms as 'climate change' and 'global warming' toward 'clean energy' and 'energy independence' - came as the Democrats prepared their campaign for a second term.⁴¹

Consensus climate peaceshaping focuses on building solidarities to amplify organising. A powerful example is the role of meta-organisations as an ideal locus of consensus climate peaceshaping. Meta-

³⁷ United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), (2023), *Global Climate Litigation Report 2023: Status Review*, (Nairobi: UNEP), p 12.

³⁸ Butler, J. (2007), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge), p 191.

³⁹ Guterres, A. (2024), *Secretary-General's special address on climate action: 'A moment of truth'*, 5 June 2024, <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2024-06-05/secretary-generals-special-address-climate-action-moment-of-truth-delivered>

⁴⁰ Austin, J.L. (1962), *How to do Things with Words*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), p 6.

⁴¹ Boykoff, M.T., (2012), 'A dangerous shift in Obama's "climate change" rhetoric', *Washington Post*, 27 January 2012.

organizations, the “organization of organizations”⁴² augment the interests of members who share common goals through collective action⁴³.

The UN system is the most visible example, particularly the United Nations Climate Change Conferences. These events bring together the Conference of the Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to discuss progress on global climate matters. The process of gaining consensus is a powerful mechanism that privileges consultation, engagement and dialogue. Ideally, consensus building norms would ensure that self interest is replaced by the interest of all.

Prefigurative climate peaceshaping expands the envelope of performativity to encompass collective action. In reflecting on the relationship between individual and collective actions, Judith Butler delineated types of ‘performativity that only operate through forms of collective action, whose condition and aim is the reconstitution of plural forms of agency and social practices of resistance’⁴⁴.

We define collective performativity as ‘prefigurative peaceshaping’, drawing on the work of Carl Boggs in emphasising the power of embodying ‘those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture and human experience that are the ultimate goal.’⁴⁵ Prefigurative work aims to ‘politicise social relations or contexts that were hitherto not perceived as legitimately political’⁴⁶. Crucially, the prefiguration work of building new ethics, values, institutions and relationships is about the ‘here and now’ rather than merely theorising them or waiting for others to transform society.

In the context of climate peaceshaping, Laura Centemeri and Viviana Asara’s concept of ‘ecological prefiguration’ which ‘seeks to build locally responsible and sustainable economies’ is a useful start⁴⁷. Ecological prefiguration seeks to marry social and ecological relations. Centemeri and Asara’s examples include local food and energy systems, alternative currencies and intentional ecological communities in which social, political and ecological values are put into practice⁴⁸.

Preservation climate peaceshaping

Preservation climate peaceshaping is about the protection of institutions which overcome the social harms caused by human action in driving climate change. In other words, protecting gains.

Maintenance work ensures that hard fought institutions remain relevant, fit for purpose and useful. This can include the review of policy and procedures as well as keeping the institution ‘front and centre’ in the public and decision makers eyes. For instance, in response to the killings of environmental and land defenders, campaigners ensured that an action plan was adopted as part of the Escazú Agreement to

⁴² Kretschmer, T., Leiponen, A., Schilling, M., & Vasudeva, G., (2022), ‘Platform ecosystems as meta-organizations: Implications for platform strategies’, *Strategic Management Journal*, 43(3), pp 405-424.

⁴³ Valente, M., & Oliver, C. (2018), ‘Meta-organization formation and sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa’, *Organization Science*, 29(4), pp 678-701.

⁴⁴ Butler, J., (2015), *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), p 18.

⁴⁵ Boggs, C. (1977), ‘Marxism, prefigurative Communism, and the problem of workers’ control’, *Radical America*, Vol 11-12, Nos. 1-2, pp 98-122.

⁴⁶ van de Sande, M. (2023), *Prefigurative democracy: Protest, social movements and the political institution of society*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press), p 156.

⁴⁷ Centemeri, L., & Asara, V., (2022), ‘Prefiguration and ecology: Understanding the ontological politics of ecotopian movements’, in, (Ed), Monticelli, L., *The Future is Now: An Introduction to Prefigurative Politics* (Bristol: Bristol University Press), pp 130-143.

⁴⁸ Ibid

keep the issue front and centre. The plan sets out priority areas and strategic measures for countries to enact article 9 of the Escazú Agreement, which urges states to recognise and protect the rights of environmental defenders and prevent and punish attacks against them⁴⁹.

Maintenance work is underpinned by *socialization* work whereby actors are inculcated with the values, norms and behaviours of peaceshaping⁵⁰. This may happen within or between organizations, in training and education and within the primary socialization of the family, school etc. We are increasingly being socialized into positive climate institutions such as not using plastic bags in the UK or turning the tap off while cleaning teeth.

While maintenance and socialization work shores up institutional gains, gains also need *guard* work. The idea and science of climate change remains contested. So do the various approaches to ameliorate or reverse it. Disruptive climate peaceshaping remains contentious and political action - protest in particular - is, to a lesser or greater degree, dangerous. For instance, in the UK climate protest has been increasingly criminalised. Also, creative peaceshaping is being undermined. Examples include the USA leaving the Paris Agreement for the second time and the consensus building of COP is being challenged by the attendance of large numbers of fossil fuel lobby⁵¹.

A good example of guard work done by more than 130 environmental groups led by WWF, who campaigned for two years to save the EU's strong water law, mobilising hundreds of thousands of citizens and scientists along the way. The Protect Water campaign was launched in 2018 to defend the law that protects all of the EU's water resources - the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The European Commission launched an independent evaluation of the WFD, a process each piece of EU legislation undergoes to evaluate whether it is still relevant and "fit for purpose". Some industry groups and Member States saw this as an opportunity to weaken the law's strong elements which resulted in the Protect Water campaign⁵².

Conclusion

There is growing evidence of the contribution of human-caused climate change to catastrophic weather events⁵³. Paradoxically, we are witness to growing scepticism and inaction on the part of global leaders to address the challenge, resulting in ever more resources being directed to treat the symptoms of the problem (that is, extreme weather events) rather than the root causes. As such, there is an urgent need to develop and implement innovative solutions that resonate across stakeholders and interest groups.

⁴⁹ Quiroz, Y., (2024), 'Latin America approves plan for protecting environmental defenders', *Carbon Brief*, 26 April 2024. <https://www.carbonbrief.org/latin-america-approves-plan-for-protecting-environmental-defenders/>

⁵⁰ Stott, Pendlebury, & Tracey, 'Peaceshaping'.

⁵¹ The White House, (2025), *Executive Order: Putting America first in international environmental agreements*, 20 January 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/putting-america-first-in-international-environmental-agreements/>; Amnesty International, (2024), 'Global: Record number of fossil fuel lobbyists at COP undermines critical climate talks', 5 December 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/12/global-record-number-of-fossil-fuel-lobbyists-at-cop-undermines-critical-climate-talks/>

⁵² World Wildlife Fund (WWF), (undated), 'Campaigning to save the EU water law', https://www.wwf.eu/campaigns/protect_water/

⁵³ McSweeney, R., & Tandon, A., (2024), 'Mapped: How climate change affects extreme weather around the world', *Carbon Brief*, 18 November 2024, <https://interactive.carbonbrief.org/attribution-studies/index.html>

In this essay, we have drawn on the concept of ‘peaceshaping’⁵⁴, demonstrating its utility in helping bring together the various strands of climate action that, to date, have proven insufficient in addressing this acute global crisis. In much the same way as the state uses ‘grand strategy’ to coordinate the various elements of national power, creative climate peaceshaping work must resonate and complement disruptive and preservation activity, to achieve maximum strategic effect. Crucially, the international community must raise its perspective above the narrow national interest to consider how to achieve *global* strategic effect. As many of the examples in this essay demonstrate, climate is a global, existential risk, and must be considered as such. Unfortunately, contemporary efforts to securitise climate action only serve to reinforce and incentivise competition and conflict over dwindling commodities such as water, arable land and forests.

The framework we present in this essay is a first step in laying out a pathway to coordinated action. Key to the success of any future work will be the integration of activity in support of disruptive, creative and preservation actions, drawing on the spirit of the Scandinavian UN member states who, in coining the term ‘peaceshaping’ in the early 1990s, issued a call for more coherent collective action from the multilateral community.

To cite this essay, please use the following:

Stott, N., Pendlebury, J., Muruven, D., & Tracey, P. (2025) Climate Peaceshaping. *Critical Perspectives on Social Innovation*. No 1 2025. Cambridge Centre for Social Innovation.

⁵⁴ Stott, Pendlebury, & Tracey, ‘Peaceshaping’.

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