

Climate Change and Africa: Impacts and Responses

Wednesday, April 10, 2019 ▪ University at Buffalo

PROGRAM

9:00 Registration and Welcoming Remarks

9:30 **Human Impacts of Climate Change**

Moderator: Ndubueze Mbah, Assistant Professor of History, University at Buffalo

“Insecurity and Climate Change in Dryland West Africa: Disentangling the Dynamics in the Countryside”

Leif V. Brottem, Assistant Professor of Global Development Studies, Grinnell College

Protected forest areas have played an important yet overlooked role in the insurgencies that have destabilized large parts of West Africa over the past ten years. Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and especially Nigeria have experienced violence perpetuated by groups that use forests as places to hide and organize. At the same time, growing resource scarcity is causing pastoralists—groups who raise livestock for a living—to rely on the same forests to provide water and pasture for their animals. In this way, protected forests are “zones of attraction” for diverse and sometimes overlapping groups that are increasingly in the spotlight because they seem to represent two much-feared phenomena: 1) Islamist terrorism, and 2) climate change-induced conflict. This presentation will work towards disentangling this relationship with particular attention to how climate change is impacting pastoralists in dryland West Africa in the context of weak but often oppressive state institutions.

“Niger Delta, Climate Change, and Trauma of the Future”

Cajetan Iheka, Assistant Professor of English, University of Alabama

Mineral extraction in Africa has exacerbated social conflict and ecological degradation across the continent. My presentation focuses specifically on the Niger Delta scene of oil exploration as presented in Michael Watts and Ed Kashi’s multimedia project, *Curse of the Black Gold*. Analyzing the photographs showing the infringement on human and nonhuman bodies due to fossil fuel extraction, I read the Delta, inscribed in Watts and Kashi’s image-text, as an ecology of suffering and as a site of trauma. Considering the ongoing devastation of the region, I argue that these photographs provide inklings of trauma of the future and glimpses of those for whom the climate—social and ecological—has already changed. I conclude with a discussion of the ethics of these photographs, which on the one hand are useful for creating awareness of ecological degradation and generating affect, but which on the other hand, exploit the vulnerability of the depicted.

Human Impacts of Climate Change *continued ...*

“Xenophobia under a Changing Sky: Emigration from the Sahel to Europe”

Jesse Ribot, Professor of Environmental Politics, School of International Service, American University

Senegalese farmers are crossing the Sahara. They travel through Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Algeria and Libya, and across the Mediterranean to Italy. Along the way many are taken captive and robbed by bandits, rebels or the Libyan Army. They are sold as slave labor, held for ransom, beaten and spit on. Many die in the desert or drown at sea. Yet, knowing the dangers, they choose to go. The media is depicting them as ‘climate refugees’. Yet these young men and their families rarely mention the weather as a cause of their plight at home or their decisions to leave. They are fleeing abusive policies, exposure to markets, debt peonage, failures of social services and a sense of hopelessness in a world where they never expect to have a dignified role in their families or communities. Casting them as climate refugees, unfortunately, occludes the multiple forces that move them. While bringing attention to climate change appears responsible and progressive, it feeds off xenophobia in Europe while denying the colonial and post-colonial histories of cause, deepening the crisis.

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Poverty and Politics: Energy and Food Resources

Moderator: Amit Goyal, Director, RENEW Institute, University at Buffalo

“Regreening: Recent Progress in Africa and Opportunities to Improve Crop Production and Restore Resilience to Climate Change”

Robert Winterbottom, Fellow, Global EverGreening Alliance

Climate change is global, but some people are more severely impacted and less able to adapt than others. Changes in rainfall, temperature, droughts and floods are a significant threat to communities in Africa, especially in the drylands. However, smallholder farmers are taking steps to “regreen” by protecting and managing the regeneration of trees and shrubs on cropland. Proven regreening practices are being scaled up to have significant positive impacts on crop production, water supplies, and poverty reduction, and in helping rural communities in Africa to become more resilient in the face of climate change.

“Cultural Politics of Energy and Unity in Post-Genocide Rwanda: Methane Extraction on Lake Kivu”

Kristin Doughty, Associate Professor of Anthropology, and Director of the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies, University of Rochester

Across much of the African continent, water is at the center of concerns about changing climates, whether through renewed risks of droughts, floods, access to clean water, or declining fishing stocks. Lake Kivu on the Rwanda–Democratic Republic of Congo border is not yet showing impacts of climate change faced by many of the continent’s waterways, but according to government officials and international scientists, it holds another hidden danger: dissolved methane in its deepest layers that, if disturbed, could explode and devastate the two million people living in the lake’s basin. This presentation, based on ethnographic research between 2016 and 2018, shifts the story of post-genocide Rwanda’s rebuilding from the capital of Kigali to the waters of Lake Kivu, where newly installed methane extraction plants fuel electrification while purportedly reducing the lakes danger,

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Poverty and Politics: Energy and Food Resources *continued*

Kristin Doughty *continued*

amidst a struggling small-scale fishing industry, and alongside an island where marginalized Rwandan youth are forcibly held for resocialization. I thus suggest we use Lake Kivu to ask questions more broadly about the relationships between international scientific and corporate efforts to promote sustainable energy and reduce risk in the face of climate change, and broader human rights concerns.

2:30 Human Rights Implications

Moderator: Julia Hall, Expert on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, Amnesty International

“Kenya: Mega Infrastructure Projects, Environmental Concerns and Threats to Activists”

Otsieno Namwaya, Kenya Researcher, Human Rights Watch

In March 2012, then Kenyan president, Mwai Kibaki launched an ambitious, longstanding regional project known as LAPSET, the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport corridor project, in the coastal county of Lamu. The largest ever infrastructure project in East and Central Africa, it envisions a 32-berth seaport, three international airports, road and railway network, three resort cities and other associated projects such as the coal-fired power plant at an estimated at \$25.5 billion. The project has started with the construction of the Lamu Port at \$5 billion, and the Chinese company, China Communications Construction Co., won the tender to construct the first three berths of the port. But activists and community residents have become increasingly vocal about the potential adverse health and environmental impacts of the projects. They have campaigned vociferously against the planned coal-fired power plant, insisting that it would pollute the air and water, undermine the livelihoods of local fishing communities, and trigger some of the adverse effects of climate change. But the activists have faced obstacles. Kenyan security forces have broken up protests, restricted public meetings, and threatened, arrested and prosecuted activists on various charges.

“Climate Change and Security: Displacement, Scarcity and Increasing Competition for Natural Resources”

Marcos A. Orellana, Director, Environment and Human Rights Division, Human Rights Watch

This talk looks at how climate change acts as a "threat multiplier" of conflict. Climate change increases human displacement and reduces access to natural resources. It also exacerbates stresses on fragile geopolitical systems and disproportionately hurts vulnerable populations. Two case studies will examine these factors at play: the Horn of Africa and the Lake Chad Basin.

4:00 Wrap-Up General Discussion



Sponsors: Alison Des Forges Memorial Committee; University at Buffalo Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy; UB Department of Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering; UB Department of Comparative Literature; UB Department of History; UB Gender Institute; UB Humanities Institute; UB James Agee Chair in American Culture; UB RENEW Institute; UB Department of Political Science; UB Sustainability; UB Office of the Vice Provost for International Education.

This symposium honors the life and work of human rights activist Alison Des Forges (1942-2009).

For more information, please email Roger Des Forges at rvd@buffalo.edu,
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SPEAKERS (in order of presentation)



Leif V. Brottem, Assistant Professor of Global Development Studies, Grinnell College
Leif Brottem (brotteml@grinnell.edu) holds a PhD in Geography from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has been doing grassroots development work, consulting, and scholarly research in West and Central Africa for the past 19 years. His commentaries on rural Africa have been published in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, Reuters, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *Mother Jones*. Prior to completing his graduate work, Leif served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Benin and worked as a Program Officer at the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability in Berkeley, California. His most recent scholarly publications include *The Geography of the bottom billion: rural isolation and basic service access in the Republic of Mali* (2019), *Dig Your Own Well: a political ecology of rural institutions in western sub-Saharan Africa* (2018), *Crops and livestock under the sun: obstacles to rural livelihood adaptations to hotter 21st century temperatures in eastern Senegal* (2017), and *Environmental change and farmer-herder conflict in agro-pastoral West Africa* (2016).



Cajetan Iheka, Assistant Professor of English, University of Alabama
Cajetan Iheka's research and teaching focus is on African and postcolonial literature, world literature, ecocriticism, and media studies. He is the author of *Naturalizing Africa: Ecological Violence, Agency, and Postcolonial Resistance in African Literature* (Cambridge Univ. Press 2018), and co-editor of *African Migration Narratives* (Univ. of Rochester Press 2018). His articles have appeared in *Research in African Literatures*, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, and *Environmental Ethics*, among other peer-reviewed journals. He is writing a book tentatively titled *Ecomedia in Africa: Imperfect Media, Network Form, Planetary Politics*, and editing the MLA volume *Teaching Postcolonial Environmental Literature and Media*.



Jesse Ribot, Professor of Environmental Politics, School of International Service, American University
Jesse Ribot (jesse.ribot@gmail.com, www.jesseribot.com) has been a professor of environmental politics at American University in Washington D.C. since 2008. He was a professor of Geography and Anthropology at the University of Illinois, a Senior Associate at the World Resources Institute, visiting professor in the Urban Studies and Planning department at MIT, and a fellow at the Stanford Center for Advanced Studies in Behavioral Sciences, the Department of Politics of The New School for Social Research, the MacMillan Center Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University, the Center for the Critical Analysis of Contemporary Culture at Rutgers University, the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars and the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies. Ribot is an Africanist studying local democracy, resource access and social vulnerability. He is a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow based at the Wagner School at NYU and CUNY Graduate Center Anthropology Program.



Robert Winterbottom, Global EverGreening Alliance

Robert Winterbottom (rwinterbottom97@gmail.com) is a Fellow with Global Evergreening Alliance, and consultant on forest landscape restoration. He previously worked with the World Resources Institute (WRI) as a Senior Fellow, Manager of Restoration in Africa, Director of Ecosystem Services, and Director of Forests and Land Use. Bob was a Peace Corps reforestation volunteer in Burkina Faso and has worked on USAID-funded development assistance projects supporting natural resource management, forestry, community development, environmental stewardship and climate change adaptation in Bangladesh,

Vietnam, Haiti, Senegal, Niger, Burkina Faso, Madagascar and Rwanda. Bob is a co-author of *Integrated Landscape Approaches for Africa's Drylands* (World Bank, 2016); *Scaling up Regreening: Six Steps to Success. A Practical Approach to Forest and Landscape Restoration* (WRI, 2015); *Securing Rights, Combating Climate Change: How Strengthening Community Forest Rights Mitigates Climate Change* (WRI, 2014); *Improving Land and Water Management: Creating a Sustainable Food Future, Installment Four* (WRI, 2013); *Synergies of Nature, Wealth and Power: Lessons from USAID Natural Resources Management Investments in Senegal* (USAID, 2014).



Kristin Doughty, Associate Professor of Anthropology, and Director of the Susan B. Anthony Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies, University of Rochester

Kristin Doughty is a political/legal anthropologist with geographic focus in Africa, particularly in Rwanda. Doughty's current research project in Rwanda, *Threats to Power: Cultural Politics of Energy and Unity in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, examines the intersection of energy politics and post-genocide reconstruction through a focus on methane extraction in Lake Kivu funded by grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation and National Science Foundation. This work builds on her first book, *Remediation in Rwanda: Grassroots Legal Forums* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, Ethnography of Political Violence Series, 2016), which examined how the Rwandan government used law as a purported tool of

reconciliation in the aftermath of genocide. She is also involved in a collaborative ethnographic research project examining how the high concentration of prisons in upstate New York shapes everyday life in the region, as part of the multidisciplinary Rochester Decarceration Research Initiative. She has taught anthropology as part of the Rochester Prison Education Project, including at Five Points Correctional Facility and Albion Correctional Facility.



Otsieno Namwaya, Kenya Researcher, Human Rights Watch

Otsieno Namwaya has been the Kenya researcher at Human Rights Watch since 2012. He holds an undergraduate degree in chemistry, a postgraduate diploma in journalism and a master's degree in environmental science. In 2018, Namwaya published research on the obstacles facing activists who campaign around the environmental and health effects of government development projects at the Kenyan coast. Namwaya has, however, mostly focused on accountability for security forces in response to terrorist attacks. He has documented abuses, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, in Nairobi and at the coast. Soon after the 2013 general elections, he documented gang

violence in western Kenya and the failure of the Kenyan security to respond or protect villagers and also police failure to adequately investigate and prosecute the perpetrators. Gang violence and police failure to protect communities remain an issue of concern as the country heads to another election in 2017. He has continuously monitored legal and administrative restrictions on the media and civil society space for the last three years. Namwaya is currently looking at abuses by security forces in response to gun and grenade attacks in Kenya's north east as well as government clampdown on human rights in respect to counter terrorism. Prior to joining Human Rights Watch, Namwaya was a human rights activist as well as reporter and editor with the Kenya newspapers *The Standard* and *Nation*. He was also a senior researcher with South Consulting Africa Ltd., during which he monitored the implementation of the Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation agreement that ended the violence that followed the disputed presidential elections of December 2007.



Marcos A. Orellana, Director, Environment and Human Rights Division, Human Rights Watch

Marcos A. Orellana is director of the Environment and Human Rights Division at Human Rights Watch. He has worked most recently at the Washington D.C.-based Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL). At CIEL, Marcos collaborated with many environmental and human rights groups, and multilateral institutions around the world, participated in processes leading to environmental agreements, and conducted advocacy on environmental issues at regional and global human rights forums. Marcos is also

adjunct associate professor at the George Washington University School of Law. He was, at various times, a fellow at the University of Cambridge, the University of Melbourne, and the University of Pretoria. He was also a visiting scholar with the Environmental Law Institute in Washington D.C. and instructor professor of international law at the Universidad de Talca, Chile.

Marcos represented the eight-nation Independent Association of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC) in the negotiations of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. He has also acted as legal counsel to the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs on international environmental issues, such as the Rio+20 process leading to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. At one point, he was legal advisor to several international institutions, including the United Nations Environment Programme and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Marcos, a Chilean, holds an LL.M and an S.J.D.