



SANDEE-ICIMOD Karl-Göran Mäler Memorial Lecture (Winter 2023)

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ICIMOD Headquarters

War and commons grabbing



Jampel Dell'Angelo

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Abstract: In a globalised system, war, such as in the case of the Russian invasion

of Ukraine, fuels the resurgence of a new global rush for land, triggering transformations that have cascading and long-lasting structural effects on multiple dimensions of rural development. Since the turn of the century, a conservative estimate, limited to fully concluded deals, points to more than 45 million ha of land, approximately the size of Sweden or Morocco, having been acquired through transnational Large-Scale Land Acquisitions (LSLAs) for agricultural production. The expansion of transnational land investments raised concerns about a neo-colonial wave of land and water 'grabbing' in the Global South. This has stimulated a heated debate in scholarly and policy arenas on the diverging trajectories of the contemporary global agrarian transition. There are reasons to believe that the recent geopolitical turmoil will lead to more transnational land acquisitions raising new concerns. A primary concern is on the mounting evidence that LSLAs preferentially target the commons,

altering long-standing customary resource governance systems. While it has been shown that in many instances of commons grabbing associated with LSLAs, different types of social conflict emerge, it is less clear what forms of social mobilisation and organised collective re-actions are taking place to defend the commons and contest such processes of dispossession and enclosure. This lecture will present recent empirical insights on this global phenomenon and discuss them from the perspective of (critical) commons theory.

Jampel Dell'Angelo is Associate Professor of Water Governance and Politics in the Department of Environmental Policy Analysis at the Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM), Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands. He is an environmental social scientist working on the political economy and political ecology of natural resources, in particular water. His research is on the multilevel dimensions of cooperation, competition, and conflict, from local to global studies. His focus spans from socio-environmental dynamics of adaption in community irrigation schemes in rural Kenya to the food-energy-water-ecosystems nexus of global land and water grabbing. Dell'Angelo is also the Principal Investigator and Coordinator of the EU's Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (ITN) NEWAVE 'Next Water Governance'. Since 2021 he serves as Editor-in-Chief of World Development.

Solar irrigation in Nepal: Equity in energy access and implications for fossil fuel use



Soumya Balasubramanya

Senior Economist,
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Abstract: In Nepal, solar-powered groundwater irrigation in the agricultural plains (Terai) is being promoted by federal and

local governments that are subsidising standalone individual solar pumps. Using data from a survey of 656 farming households in the Terai, we find that solar pumps are more likely to be owned by households with higher social status and better social networks, rather than those who are poor or marginalised. Most solar-pump users continue to use their fossil fuel pumps and operate their fuel pumps for a marginally fewer hours than those who do not have solar pumps; few actually replace their fossil fuel pumps with solar pumps. Finally, solar-pump users have more land under rice cultivation and aquaculture than other farming households. These results indicate that solar pumps offer promise for expanding energy use in agriculture without expanding fossil fuel use, and that more equitable access to solar pumps can spread

the benefits wider. Monitoring fossil fuel use and how agricultural activities change over time in response to access to renewable energy may be helpful for managing expectations about whether 'clean' solar energy can replace 'dirty' energy.

Soumya Balasubramanya is currently a Senior Economist at the World Bank's Environment, Natural Resources and Blue Economy Global practice. She was previously with the CGIAR between 2011-2022. She conducts original field-based research on poverty, development and equity challenges in Asia and Africa, at the nexus of water, agriculture, environment, energy, and health, using large sample survey methods. She collaborates with universities, governments, and the private sector in low-, middle- and high-income countries to influence research, dialogue, funding, policy, and practice on inclusive development. She is an Associate Editor for the journals *Agricultural Economics*, and *Water Resources and Economics*. She also coordinates the Committee for Women in *Agricultural Economics of the International Association of Agricultural Economics*. Her work has been featured in media outlets such as BBC, Forbes, NPR, The Economist and The Guardian. Soumya received a PhD in Environment and Development Economics from Duke University in 2011.

Moderator



Heman Das Lohano

Professor of Economics,
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Heman Das Lohano is a
Professor of Economics
at the Department of
Economics, Institute of

Business Administration, Karachi, Pakistan. He previously worked as a Senior Economist with SANDEE at the ICIMOD from 2013 to 2016. Lohano is an environmental economist

with over twenty years of experience undertaking evidence-based and policy-oriented research. His recent work centers around the assessment of climate change impacts, climate change mitigation, and the valuation of natural resources. His core competencies encompass data analytics, econometric modeling, cost-benefit analysis, environmental valuation, and dynamic programming modeling. Lohano received his PhD in Applied Economics from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities in 2002.

This lecture series is part of the [46th Biannual research and training workshop](#) organised by SANDEE-ICIMOD.

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SANDEE is an initiative of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). SANDEE supports ICIMOD's programmatic work and strengthens the Centre's economic and policy analysis.

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