

Negotiating the Idea of Peace Parks: *From Conservation to Conflict Resolution*

Saleem H. Ali, Ph.D.

Associate Dean for Graduate Education

And Associate Professor

University of Vermont

Rubenstein School of Environment

and Natural Resources, USA

Email: saleem@alum.mit.edu

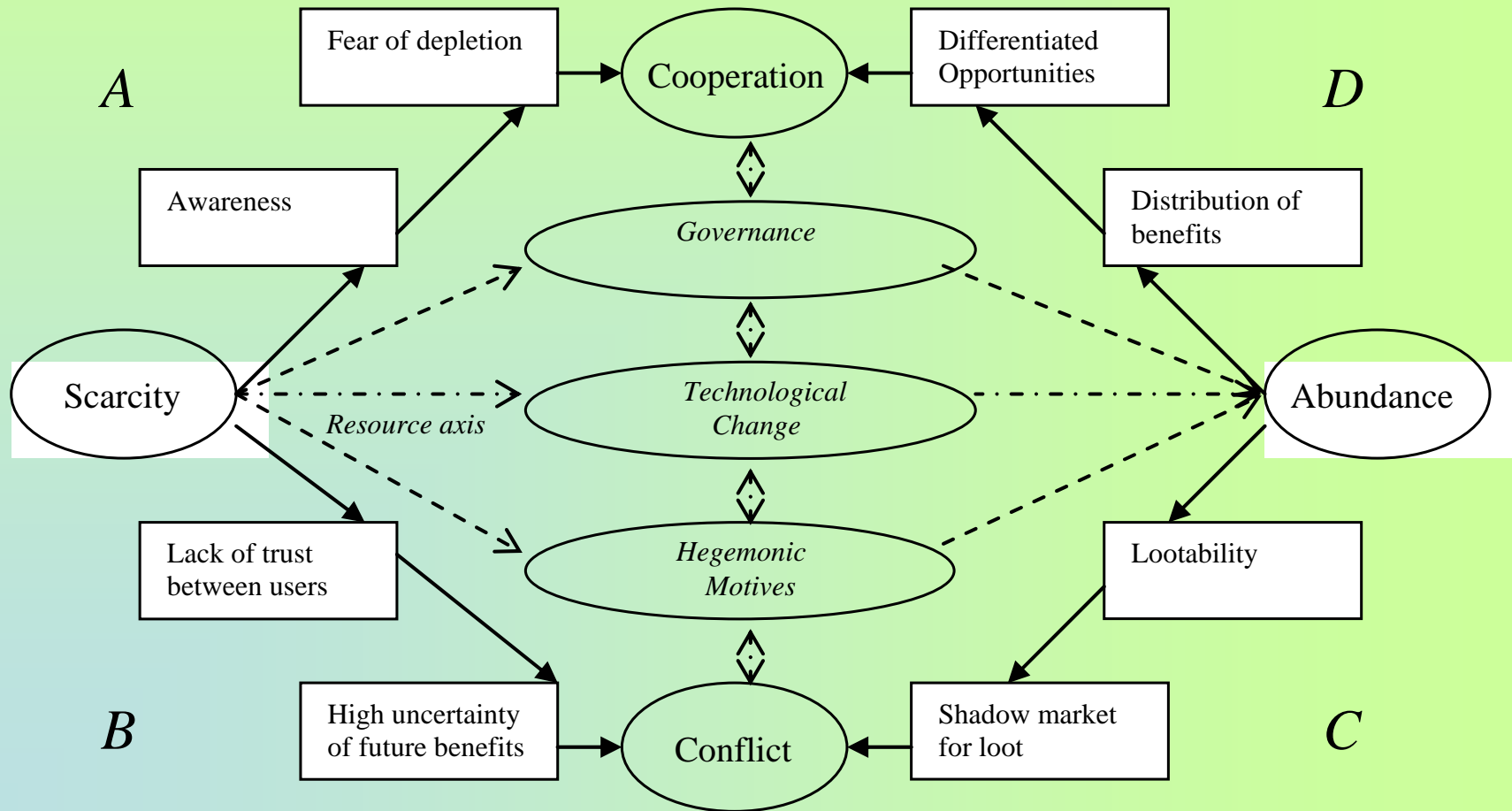
Book launch at Wilson Center, Washington DC: November 7, 2007

Irritated policymakers and journalists

- “but what does planting trees have to do with peace?”
 - *The Economist, on Wangari Maathai’s Nobel Peace Prize 2004*
- To abjure violence, it is necessary to have no experience of it
 - Bruce Bawer quoting Orwell in his article “The Peace Racket.” L A Times, 9/2007
- Peace parks sounds quite like a “pie in the sky” idea
 - BBC Interviewer 2007: regarding Siachen case
- Why should we call them “peace parks?” This may offend governments.

IUCN officials in Bangkok, 2006

Environmental Security Pathways



Pathways to eco-cooperation

- *Distributional cooperation over a necessary resource*
- *Cooperation over common aversion of diminished environmental quality*
- *Coordination in crisis as catalyst of lasting cooperation*

Current state of affairs

- 227 trans-boundary protected areas worldwide (list keeps growing):
 - <http://www.tbpa.net/>
- Yet most of these are not “peace parks” if we define them in terms of:
 - a) Instrumentally useful in resolving disputes even if the dispute is “non-environmental”
 - b) Sustaining peace between neighboring jurisdictions

Policy Challenges and Solutions

- Endogeneity: perception that conservation is a consequence rather than a constituent of peace-building
 - *Solution: Dialectical policy – consider conservation as a trust-building activity in a feed-back loop*
- Preexisting local conflicts undermine peace-building by labeling it as cooptation and dispossession
 - *Solution: Resolve micro-conflicts beforehand, acknowledge past grievances and make process transparent to local residents*
- Conservation agencies are external to security decision apparatus
 - *Solution: Make conservation a strategic asset in foreign policy matters with participation of scientists and environmental agency staff in deliberations*
- International NGOs that may work in these are are hesitant to interfere in border issues due to fear of denied access or political retribution – or some may follow a confrontation approach that leads to their marginalization
 - *Solution: NGOs should play an epistemic role – exchanging knowledge between parties and mediating for community members on all sides*

Some next steps

- Prospects for moving towards an international treaty on trans-boundary environmental management
- Cooperative monitoring systems that ensure security concerns need to be developed and made mainstream
- Empirical research on the psychological and strategic efficacy of conservation and conflict resolution