Climate Change, Social Stress and Violent Conflict
State of the Art and Research Needs

International Conference
KlimaCampus, IFSH, ZNF of Hamburg University
19/20 November 2009

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Are we all in the same boat facing climate change?

Dangerous climate change?

Trend

Control

Adaptation

Uncertainty

- Collapse Amazon forest
- Tropical Monsoon suppression
- Shutdown of thermohaline circulation
- Floods
- Droughts
- Water scarcity
- Change in hydrological cycle
- Loss of polar ice
- Sea-level rise
- Species loss
- Loss of coral reefs
- Storms
- Diseases
- Harvest loss
- Glacier retreat
Is climate change a security threat?

“Without resolute counteraction, climate change will overstretch many societies’ adaptive capacities within the coming decades, which could result in destabilization and violence, jeopardizing national and international security to a new degree.” (WBGU 2007/2008)

“Climate change is best viewed as a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability. The core challenge is that climate change threatens to overburden states and regions which are already fragile and conflict prone.” (European Commission 2008)
Who is facing which climate security risks?

Source: WBGU 2007
Which data do we need on climate change and conflict?

Temperature change (in 0.01 degree)

Number of armed conflicts
Can scientific methods help to understand human behavior in conflicts?
Can the climate-society interaction be safely managed despite its complexity?

- Protecting and Preserving the Natural Resource Base
- Sustainable Development of Welfare and Adaptive Capacity
- Reducing and Managing Risks, Instabilities and Conflicts
- Cooperation, Coalition Formation and Global Governance
- Reduce Emissions and Improve Resource Efficiency
- Stakeholder Participation and Alternative Dispute Resolution
- Fair Distribution and Climate Justice
Will the world move towards more conflict or to more cooperation?

Instability and War ↔ Environmental Destruction

Conflict → Emission increase
Cooperation ← Emission reduction

Peace and Security ↔ Sustainable Development
Who are the actors making a difference?
Will Copenhagen be a success or a failure?