

## Peace Mapping and Indigenous Peoples

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*“We don’t need more troubles.  
What we need is love.”*

–Bob Marley, from the song “War”

### Introduction

The prospect of stable peace seems so elusive today, eclipsed as it were by global mobilizations around other goals: economic growth and national security. Within the territories of many Indigenous Peoples, states typically manage these goals via colonizations, displacements, militarizations, genocides or, more recently, neoliberal recognition. One is hard pressed to locate a situation anywhere in the world where Indigenous Peoples and nation-states enjoy anything like a meaningful and lasting peace with each other, in the sense that will be discussed here; as “a set of dynamics that result in the emergence of robust patterns of constructive interactions between groups and a low incidence of destructive interactions.”<sup>2</sup> Such patterns of mutually positive

1. First presented on May 15, 2016 at the International Seminar *Indigenous Peoples’ Rights and Unreported Struggles: Conflict and Peace*, organized by the Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Program of the Institute for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University, New York City. Thanks to Peter Coleman, Douglas Fry, and the other members of the Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict and Complexity (AC4) team for inviting me into the dialogue on sustainable peace science, as well as their facilitation of the UN side event at the 15<sup>th</sup> session of the UNPFII. Thanks to Bong, Sam and Pao for their participation in the UN side event. Thanks to Elsa Stamatopoulou and the Institute for the Study of Human Rights for organizing the symposium at which the initial version of this article was presented. Columbia University, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the College at Brockport SUNY, and the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact all provided support for the UN side event, for which I am very grateful.
2. This is the working operational definition of sustainable peace developed by the AC4. Cf. Mazzaro et al., “Realizing Sustainable Peace: Expert Survey Report, October 2015” (New York: Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity, Earth Institute, Columbia University, 2015).

reciprocity are exceedingly rare and fleeting in the interactions between Indigenous Peoples and states. The historical pattern has instead been one of highly negative reciprocity between colonizers and the colonized, over and over again. Yet despite the deadening repetition of this massive social fact, the future is not entirely predetermined by the past, and a holistic perspective on human history shows that the primary source of patterned human behavior and thought—culture—is subject to rapid change. While some might object to the value of contemplating sustainable peace as hopeless idealism in a time when market driven *real politik* is in global ascendancy and power is driving culture, the position here is that, if we are to adapt and survive in the Anthropocene phase of earth history, it will require new revitalizations around the enduring core traits that make human social life possible to begin with: cooperation, altruism, respect and empathy with fellow human beings. Whenever a dominant culture proclaims “there is no alternative” to its world idea, it is a signal that now is the time to consider the options.<sup>3</sup>

Ours is a time of increasing conflicts, in which a global environmental crisis is triggered by a massive social reorganization of life around industrialized self-regulating market systems where private gain became the key principle, secular perhaps but nonetheless grounded in a sacred teleology. This reorganization is a previous culture change that began in England some two centuries ago, rapidly proliferated and is now globalized, naturalized and heavily armed. Following Karl Polanyi’s work, if left unchecked the self-regulating operations of the market system constitute a dangerous utopia that will destroy the world’s biological and cultural diversity, prior to its own self-collapse under the weight of growing inequality, depleted natural resources, and human

3. For examples of state/Indigenous relations, cf. John H. Bodley, *Victims of Progress, Fifth Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Altamira Press, 2008); Thomas D. Hall and James V. Fenelon, *Indigenous Peoples and Globalization: Resistance and Revitalization* (Boulder, Colorado: Paradigm Publishers, 2009); and Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002). The dynamical conceptualization of sustainable peace quoted above was developed in 2015 by the Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity (AC4), at Columbia University, cf. “Mapping the Science of Peace: Stakeholder Workshop, Phase 1,” Advanced Consortium on Conflict, Complexity, and Cooperation, Columbia University (2015).

caused climate change. Largely viewed by states as obstacles to market development, Indigenous nations and territories have experienced this destruction on every continent, save Antarctica. There is not much conceptual room for sustainable peace in this scenario of ‘development.’ An enormous contradiction exists today between the popular idea of market-based development as the only way to eliminate poverty, and a growing literature on such development as a major cause of poverty, conflict, and the destruction of nature. A certain schizophrenia thus pervades the UN Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). More than any previous UN global agenda, the SDGs broadly embrace the promotion of peace and human rights and call for globally coordinated climate action, but at the same time emphasize greater economic development and market integration as the way to achieve these. As a result, sustainable peace at the international scale remains a hazy specter at best. For those who remain colonized, it may be a very bad joke. As of this writing, the United Nations, the largest and arguably most persuasive institution for world peace and human rights, appears increasingly at risk for obsolescence in the world. New configurations of authoritarian structural power are proliferating, promising to close out the world’s 70-year experiment with universal human rights. The possibility of general war again looms over us, even as global markets and billionaires flourish.<sup>4</sup>

Yet it appears to many scientists, activists and writers that our species has to adapt to the limits of ‘growth’ in order to survive. Such adaptation requires massive cultural change in order to positively resolve this social and ecological conflict, which includes new modes of attending to the reciprocity between peoples, and between people and the planet, in terms of wealth, resources and access. In this light, suggesting that states and Indigenous Peoples can evolve effective mechanisms of constructive conflict resolution is a relatively modest proposal. In this article, I describe what a 21<sup>st</sup> century science-based model of sustainable peace looks like, and examine how it could prove

4. For examples of the critical literature on development, cf. *The Anthropology of Development and Globalization*, Marc Edleman and Angelique Haugerud eds. (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2015); Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

useful to the analysis and solution of conflicts between states and Indigenous Peoples. At the same time, I also recognize how current structures of power pose considerable obstacles to the achievement of sustainable peace with Indigenous Peoples.

## **I. Towards a Science of Sustainable Peace**

In 2015, I had the privilege of participating in an Expert Group workshop on peace mapping, organized by a team of academics in the Advanced Consortium on Conflict, Complexity and Cooperation at the Earth Institute, Columbia University (AC4).<sup>5</sup> The workshop was part of a larger project initiated by the AC4 team, aimed at the greater application of current scientific methods to the study of sustainable peace, and contributing new knowledge and policy tools to inform decision-making processes with regards to social and environmental impacts. One key premise of the project is that the academic study of peace (or peace studies) has been hampered by a lack of consensus with regards to the definition of the field's key term: peace. The academic field of peace studies is highly interdisciplinary, and part of the lack of definitional consensus is owing to the nature of academic disciplinary divisions. Different disciplines tend to ask different questions, and often do not talk to each other all that well. Prior to the workshop, the project team addressed this issue by conducting a literature search on contemporary peace studies. Based on this, they followed up by contacting authors and carried out an expert online survey of 74 peace experts across 35 disciplines to gather a sample of the latest thinking on what sustainable peace consists of in terms of its meaning, its elements and its dynamics. The content of the survey responses was evaluated qualitatively, using thematic analysis and n-gram language structure analysis and visualization to determine prevalent terms and

5. Cf. AC4-1. The core team of academics for this AC4 initiative in 2015 are: Peter T. Coleman (Columbia University, Social Psychology), Beth Fisher-Yoshida (Columbia University, Communications), Joshua Fisher (Columbia University, Environmental Science), Douglas P. Fry (University of Alabama at Birmingham, Anthropology), Larry Liebovitch (Queens College, Physics), Kristen Rucki (Columbia University, International Education), and Philippe Vandebroek (shiftN, Complexity Science).

linkages between the different responses. I received the expert survey report prior to the workshop.<sup>6</sup>

Based on the results of the survey analysis, the project team identified four crosscutting core aspects of the meaning of peace: 1) that it is a dynamic process; 2) that it prevents negative and destructive outcomes (e.g. war and violence) and promotes positive constructive outcomes (e.g. well-being, justice); 3) involves an “enabling context” in order to exist (e.g. existing cultures of peace); and 4) is relatively durable (e.g. able to withstand changing conditions). In terms of the primary elements of peace, the project team arrived at seven elements, namely 1) justice and human rights; 2) economic and natural resources; 3) law and governance; 4) conflict resolution and management; 5) cooperative and constructive relations; 6) shared values; and 7) visions of peace and war. From these, the team constructed a working definition of sustainable peace around the dynamics associated with promoting constructive interactions and preventing or reducing destructive negative interactions. The general dynamics promoting constructive interactions they identified were: 1) robust cultures of peace; 2) well-being; 3) effective and innovative problem solving; and 4) stable resilient systems. Following UNESCO’s conceptualization, cultures of peace are envisioned as “values, attitudes, modes of behavior, and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogues and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.” More concretely, these may include strong, widely shared visions and values of peace, taboos against violence, and crosscutting ties between groups. Effective problem solving and innovation is applying “better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated needs or existing needs.” Stable resilient systems include working institutions of accountability and equitable justice that demonstrate durability in the face of change. The dynamic of ‘enhanced well-being’ is a subjective condition of existence in which health, happiness and prosperity are experienced as flourishing; i.e. eudaimonia. These core dynamics of peace sustainability are interrelated in multiple ways. A robust culture of peace contributes to

6. Mazzaro et al., *supra* note 2.

constructive interactions by enhancing capacities for effective problem solving and innovation, which then lead to more stable and resilient systems, which in turn can lead to higher levels of wellbeing in and across communities. The causal chain loops back around when the conditions of enhanced wellbeing bolster existing cultures of peace.<sup>7</sup>

The resulting full expression of what sustainable peacefulness is conceptualized as is the following: “a set of dynamics that result in a high probability of robust patterns of constructive interactions between stakeholders and communities, and a low probability of destructive interactions. Such dynamics [both] establish and are established by a robust, enabling, and self-perpetuating context for peacefulness.” By introducing probability into the mix, the working concept can be operationalized using quantitative as well as qualitative measures. At the nodal core of this concept is reciprocity between groups, which may vary from positive to negative, depending on the past and present conditions of the primary elements of interaction along with their future expectations.<sup>8</sup>

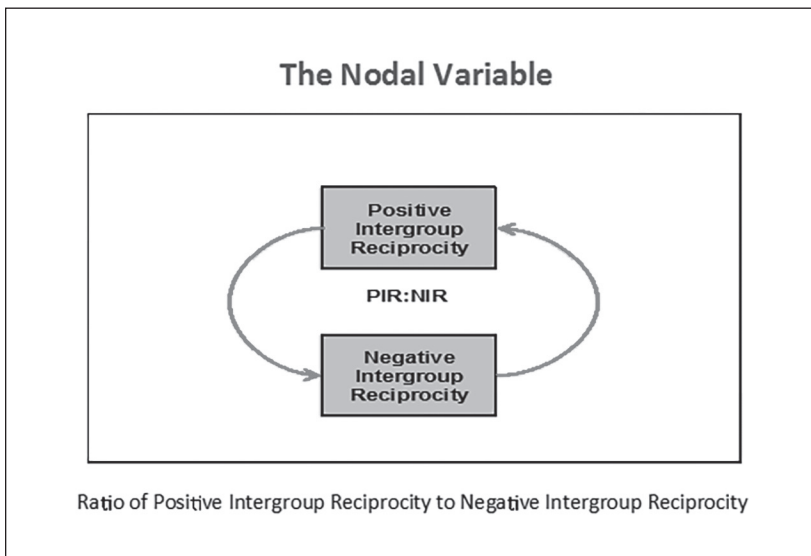
With this working definition of sustainable peace as dynamic process, the AC4 project team then developed a general model, drawing on systems theory, complexity science and visualization tools to build a series of causal loop diagrams in which the dynamics between the different elements of sustainable peace can be examined in a holistic and nonlinear map view, in terms of promoting or retarding patterns of constructive interactions. The AC4 is not the only group of scholars examining peace using a dynamic systems theory approach, however their model is distinctive. The Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP) also favors using systems theory to analyze and support positive peace, but the IEP approach takes a state-level indicators-based approach and builds on a priori assumptions, such as the value of economic development for peace building, whereas the AC4 model is designed to be tested against local realities and perceptions with regards to intergroup relations.<sup>9</sup> The ‘nodal variable’ or core conceptual nugget

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*

9. “Positive Peace Report: 2016,” Institute of Economics and Peace, <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Positive-Peace-Report-2016.pdf> and Mazzaro et al., *supra* note 2.

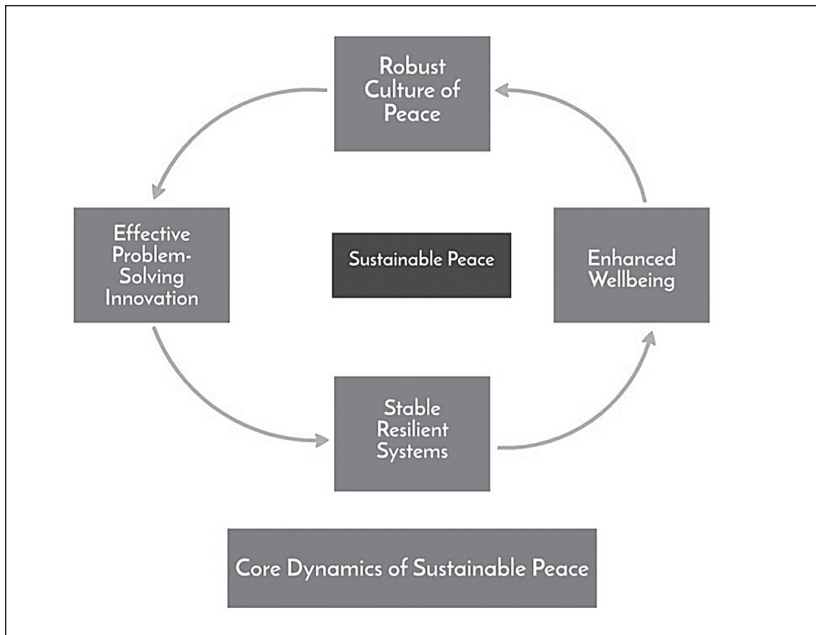
of the AC4 project is that sustained peace or conflict are outcomes of the reciprocal relations between groups, which vary from positive/negative reciprocity, in which stakeholder groups demonstrate more or less satisfaction with their interactions with other stakeholder groups (e.g. think Indigenous Peoples and states). The positive or negative qualities of these relations are substantively grounded in peoples' real-life experiences, memories and expectations of other stakeholder groups. Thus, at the center of the AC4 peace map is a core nodal variable of reciprocity.<sup>10</sup> It looks like this:



**Figure 1: Core nodal variable of sustainable peace**

The ratio of positive to negative intergroup reciprocity (pir : nir) is the proposed general measure of sustainable peace in figure 1. The dynamics that drive positive intergroup reciprocity—robust cultures of peace, enhanced well-being of people, effective and innovative problem solving, and stable resilient systems—are then arranged around the core node in the following meta-model, with arrows to indicate their interdependence:

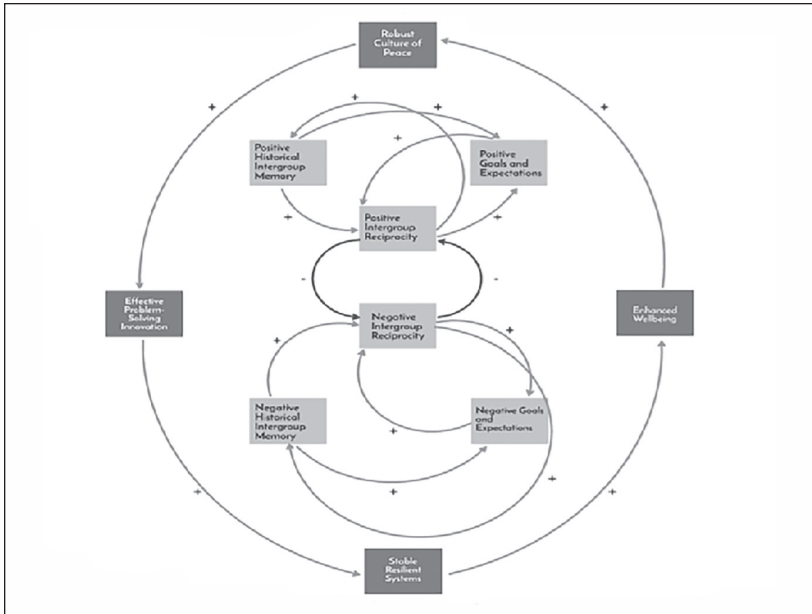
10. Figures 1–6 are reproduced from the peace map causal loop diagrams presented at the AC4 Expert Group workshop in October 2015. I thank Peter Coleman and the AC4 team for their permission to reproduce them here. Cf. "Mapping the Science," *supra* note 3.



**Figure 2: Meta-model of sustainable peace**

In the next diagram, the substantive bases of reciprocity (experience and expectations) are situated in-between the core node and the dynamics, again with arrows to indicate their interdependence. Robust cultures of peace can lead to effective problem-solving and innovation, which in turn contributes to stable, resilient systems that enhance the wellbeing of the stakeholders, and that wellbeing then feeds into strengthening the culture of peace, and so on. At this point, the model starts to demonstrate non-linear feedback loop processes.





**Figure 3: Core engine 1**

In the next figure (Figure 4), the model shows the relations between the dynamics and the core node of reciprocity, for example how the presence/absence of any or all four dynamics may drive negative intergroup reciprocity.

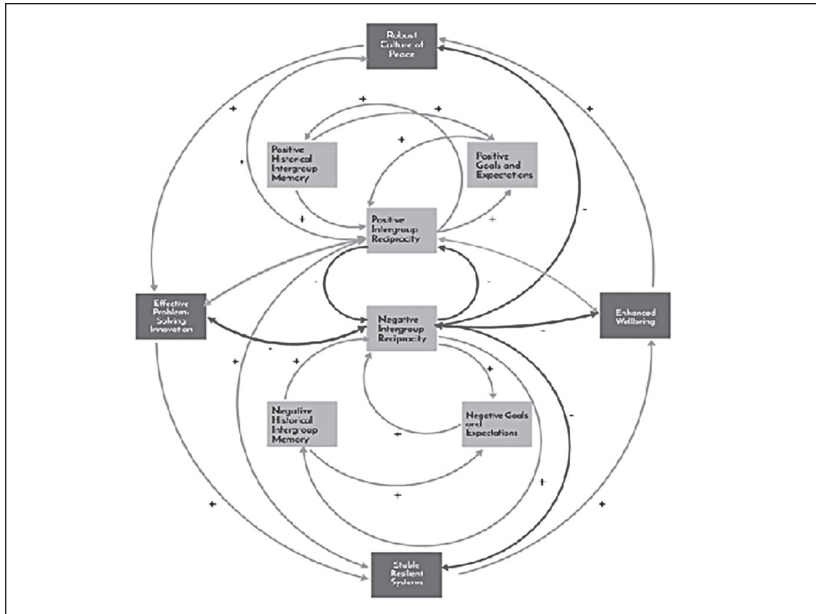


Figure 4: Core engine 2

With this core engine in place, the elements of sustainable peace can be situated around the dynamics, and their nonlinear, multidirectional associations can be further mapped out as they give shape to the dynamics, for example in Figure 5.

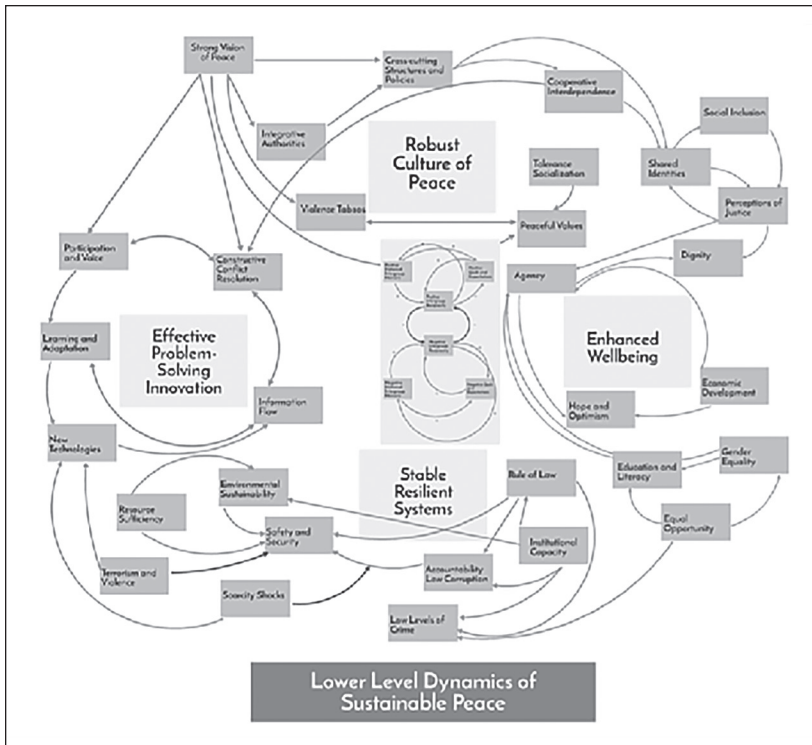
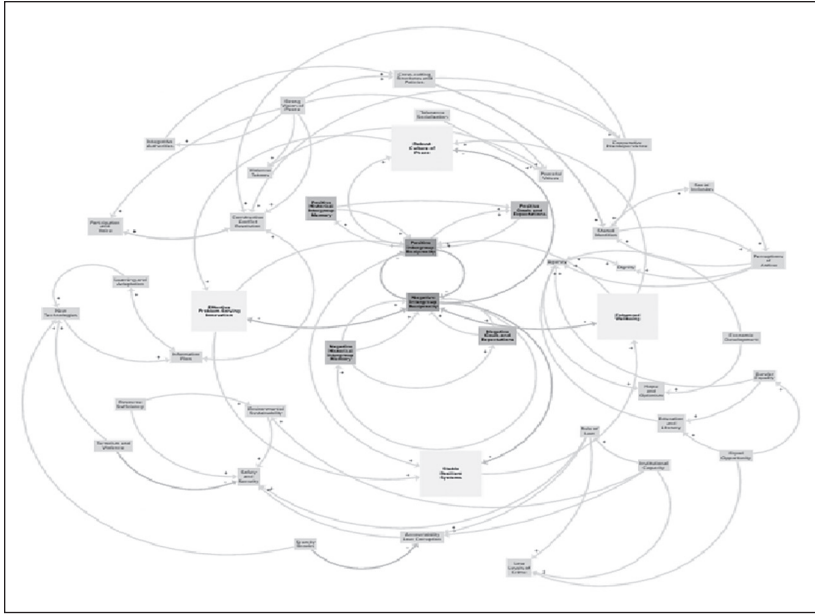


Figure 5: Lower level dynamics of sustainable peace

Finally, the full map of the sustainable peace model shows a highly complex set of interconnections between elements and dynamics but that remains grounded on the core node of intergroup reciprocity. At this point, the visualization begins to look like a bowl of spaghetti, but nonetheless conveys the complexity that is involved with building sustainable peace.



**Figure 6: An example of a complete map**

The AC4 sustainable peace map is a general model that is subject to modification through empirical testing against the evidence of historical and contemporary reality. To build on this theory, the project team invites research-practitioners to develop their own causal loop diagrams of sustainable peace in the communities or regions in which they work, and then compare and contrast them with the general model. As with any science, the model here is subject to change in light of new data. The end goal is to continue refining the model of sustainable peace, to the point where causal loop diagramming can become a normative approach to decision-making amongst policy-makers and community leaders when considering social and environmental impacts.

## **II. Testing the Map Against the Territory (I): Comparative and Historical Data Analysis**

The next step proposed by the project team is to test the general model or map of sustainable peace against the data of historical and

contemporary intergroup relations. While much of mainstream history is focused on war and conflict (with good reason), there are significant cross-cultural historical data of societies in which durable and resilient peace practices or systems are evident. One of the better known historical examples of Indigenous Peoples and sustainable peace is offered by the theory and practices of peace mobilized by confederated Haudenosaunee/Iroquois peoples, specifically the *Gayanashago:wa*—the Great Law of Peace. *Gayanashago:wa* is the name of a dynamic process of peacemaking through unity that involves promoting the conditions for constructive interactions between groups through consocial and inclusive democratic organization, consensus-building, a strong vision of peace, and ceremonies of condolence and reciprocity. And it involves reducing or preventing negative interactions through dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms, institutions of justice, strong rule of law and equity of resources. Through its metaphoric and inclusive vision of a tree of peace with roots extending in all four directions, where anyone from anywhere can follow the roots to their source, and there join in the confederacy, and the covenant chain (i.e. that once agreed to join, all groups have responsibility to renew or polish the bonds they now share with other groups, through exchanges of allegiance, resources, ceremonies and words), the articulation of *Gayanashago:wa* generated a social and geographic environment that enabled peacefulness between multiple peoples. While officially, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy began with five, later six nations, many other groups followed the roots of peace to their source and joined in, especially during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Oral traditions indicate that over 90 nations joined the Confederacy during the centuries in which it flourished, many of them refugees and survivors of wars and epidemics brought by settler-colonizers.<sup>11</sup>

11. For comparative and holistic studies of peace and peace systems, cf. *War, Peace and Human Nature*, Douglas P. Fry ed. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2013); Douglas P. Fry, *Beyond War: The Human Potential for Peace* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2007). The description of the Haudenosaunee peace system is based on Arthur C. Parker, *Parker on the Iroquois* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1968); and Neal B. Keating, *Iroquois Art, Power, and History* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

Haudenosaunee praxis enabled a multi-nation confederacy that was able to withstand over three centuries of colonial settler invasions. Not only was the Confederacy grounded in a strong vision of active peace, but it also featured effective and innovative problem-solving mechanisms that resulted in a resilient sociopolitical system that provided a sense of relative wellbeing for its members in a time when their world was otherwise turning upside down. In Charles Kupchan's analysis of "turning enemies into friends," he finds significant parallels between the centuries-long peace dynamics of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the centuries-long relative peace that came out of the 1648 treaty of Westphalia, and more recently the European Union.<sup>12</sup>

Despite its historicity and the massive American and Canadian seizures of Haudenosaunee territory that followed after the American Revolution, the Confederacy system has maintained cultural continuity into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and its vision of peace continues to impact the framework of international human rights today. It is widely acknowledged that the international Indigenous rights movement commenced in the 1920s when Deskaheh, a Haudenosaunee *royaaner* (peace chief), sought entrance for his peoples into the League of Nations as a means of resolving their conflicts with the Canadian state.<sup>13</sup> During the 1970s, when Indigenous Peoples began engaging directly with the United Nations, Haudenosaunee *royaaners* and faithkeepers played key roles in opening the doors that would eventually result in the General Assembly's adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007. In 1988, the government of the United States acknowledged that a good deal of the peace-enabling elements of the American governance system (such as democracy, checks and balances, and gender equality) is based on the Haudenosaunee system.<sup>14</sup> During the 1990s, another *royaaner*, Chief Jake Swamp, undertook an international mobilization to physically plant trees of peace in conflict zones around the world. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one of

12. Charles A. Kupchan, *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace* (Trenton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012).

13. Ronald Niezen, *Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003).

14. Some 200 years after the fact, the United States Congress officially acknowledged as much in US H.CON.RES. 331.

the ceremonies of *Gayanashago:wa* (the thanksgiving address, or *Ganohonyohk*) is carried out by the Haudenosaunee *Tadodaho* each year at UN Headquarters in New York City at the start of the meetings of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. The Haudenosaunee words for peace (*sge:no*, *she:kon*) remain a common and informal way to greet people and say hello.<sup>15</sup>

While the Haudenosaunee may be the best-known example of an Indigenous peace system, it is by no means the only one. Most of the documented evidence of sustainable peace systems in human societies comes from Indigenous Peoples throughout the world. Prior to WWII, the cross-cultural studies of Polanyi and Mauss concluded that the principle of positive reciprocity in exchanges was likely the governing principle in most human societies prior to colonization and “market integration.” When a broad and holistic approach is taken to the history of peacemaking, the evolutionary, archaeological, primatological, as well as ethnological evidence suggest that the interest in peace is present in human history as much or more than is the interest in war. Following the work of Douglas Fry, if we take the last 50,000 years into account, for about 99% of that history, the interest in intergroup cooperation far outweighs the interest in making war. The tendencies towards intergroup aggression and violence are associated with the rise of states and appear nowhere else so pronounced as they do in our own industrialized and marketized modern nation-state societies. Yet the interest in peace and nonviolent conflict resolution are in strong evidence even in market-based societies, so much so that it goes largely unnoticed.<sup>16</sup>

Take for another related example the kinds of cooperation that happen every day in places like the New York City subways during rush hour. Millions of people participate in this daily ritual, and overwhelmingly show kindness and consideration towards the other riders, even when the subway cars are voluntarily packed by humans

15. Based on Keating, *supra* note 11, and Keating unpublished field notes.

16. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1944); Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 1950); and Fry (2013), *supra* note 11.

like a sardine can.<sup>17</sup> The difficulties in achieving (or even thinking) peace today are based in our particular cultures of modernity, rather than in a posited ancient, universal warlike human nature. That such a nature characterizes the human past is a narrative that modernity tells itself. It remains that if culture is subject to rapid change, there are empirical grounds for proposing that peace is possible, even if the current configurations of culture and power appear to maintain it as a fool's errand. By including Indigenous Peoples in a theory and science of a proposed human universal tendency, the peace mapping project not only contributes to decolonizing methods, but also strengthens a decidedly non-hegemonic observation: it is in our nature to seek peace. Rather than a utopian project, peacemaking is an old, widespread pragmatic characteristic of humans, if not an evolutionary trait, that has well served our species' adaptive needs for survival. Some might even call it common sense.

### **III. Testing the Map Against the Territory (II): Ground-truthing**

In addition to cross-cultural history, the peace-mapping project proposes testing out causal loop modeling of sustainable peace within contemporary conflict zones through a methodology currently referred to as "ground-truthing." This is a form of rapid ethnographic appraisal generated through field-based research in which stakeholder groups in conflict are invited to participate in guided dialogues about the conditions and dynamics of local conflict that include elicitations of stakeholders' narratives and visions of what long-lasting peace would look like. These data are then qualitatively analyzed for their thematic content and elements, and their causal loops of relations mapped out onto a surface. The resulting local peace map can then be compared against the general model, with an applied aim of discovering

17. The NYC MTA estimates daily ridership during Monday-Friday in 2015 at 5.7 million people. *Introduction to Subway Ridership*, Metropolitan Transport Authority of New York City, <http://web.mta.info/nyc/facts/ridership/>



unforeseen connections that can potentially become drivers of peace, as well as a theoretical aim of refining the general model.<sup>18</sup>

I use the term ‘ethnographic’ in a critical and reflexive sense when associating it with the ground-truthing methodology (i.e. a critical method of active listening in which the articulations of local groups are foregrounded as primary sources of information, their own voices privileged over those of groups that would speak for them). This is particularly relevant when considering a peace-mapping project with Indigenous Peoples. One of the most widespread tactics of domination used by states against Indigenous Peoples is to silence or invisibilize them. A further potential benefit of ground-truthing practice is that just by coming to conflict-ridden communities and opening space for dialogue on what peace looks like to people, the practice may itself contribute as a peace-enabling mechanism, particularly in places where ongoing conflicts are happening. Through talking about and visually mapping out multiple lines of relations, participants may start to make new causal connections about intergroup relations and learn new strategies for social action. In turn, the concrete information provided by participants can feed into the project database to mathematically test the causal loop model, and modify its design to better explain the data.

One potential weak spot in the ground-truthing method is that, because its design is more rapid than traditional ethnography, it risks inadvertently convening focus groups that may not fully represent the spectrum of aspirations in a given locale. For example, in an early pilot of this methodology in Colombia—where long-running civil war has been the norm for several decades—the researchers relied on the local World Bank Office to arrange for the local people who would participate in the focus groups and workshops. The result was that the participants included representatives of FARC and the Colombian state, but did not include Indigenous Peoples, many of whom have been caught in the crossfire between FARC and the Colombian state, and who would have likely brought important and different aspirations

18. Beth Fisher-Yoshida, et al., “Peace Mapping: Visualization and Dynamic Systems Modeling: An Approach to Generating Sustainable Peace in Dialogue with Indigenous Peoples from Asia,” from the AC4 Side Event at the 15<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York City (May 17, 2016).

to the visualizations of peace dynamics.<sup>19</sup> Based on my own fieldwork with Indigenous communities in the conflict zones of Cambodia, even a small village of just a few hundred people will be socially fractured by multiple lines of alliance that are political, economic, religious and personal. Identifying these different lines and the individuals that represent them, and getting them to all sit at the same table, is not always an easy task.<sup>20</sup> The ground-truthing component in the peace-mapping project is a critical component, without which there is no empirical qualitative data of contemporary peace and conflict dynamics. But a slower approach to carrying it out would greatly strengthen the research design, particularly should peace-mapping be carried out with Indigenous communities, where significant linguistic and sociopolitical differences may require greater appreciation prior to the start of ground-truthing dialogues.

#### **IV. A Side Glance at Peace-Mapping at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues**

I was invited to the AC4 Expert Group workshop as an anthropologist studying the human rights movements of Indigenous Peoples. As we introduced ourselves, I observed there were no Indigenous People at the giant table we sat around. Throughout the workshop I could not shake the question of how an activity like dynamical peace-mapping could be relevant to contemporary Indigenous Peoples whose situations are long-term conflicts with states that are founded not only in resource competition but also deep-seated intractable racism and discrimination against Indigenous Peoples at the hands of the groups controlling the states? To follow the voices of thousands of Indigenous activists who made spoken and written interventions at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues since 2002, the resolution of their conflicts with states involves first and foremost that states recognize their presence

19. Josh Fisher et al., *Contribution of Reconciliation and Victim Memory to Sustainable Peace in Colombia* (New York: Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity, 2015).

20. For an example of complex fissioning within Bunong communities, cf. Neal B. Keating, "Kites in the Highlands: Articulating Bunong Indigeneity in Cambodia, Vietnam and Abroad." *Asian Ethnicity* 17, no. 4 (2016): 566–579.

as peoples with rights to self-determination, an acknowledgement which states are, for the most part, reluctant to do.<sup>21</sup> The polite term for this reluctance is ‘lack of political will.’ Within those few states that do recognize Indigenous Peoples in their laws, such recognition is limited, qualified, and often overrode by other state interests, such as economic development and national security.<sup>22</sup> The feeble existence of resilient systems and cultures of peace between states and Indigenous Peoples, combined with ineffective problem solving and Indigenous Peoples’ long-term experiences of deprivation, pose considerable problems for applying a model of sustainable peace.

With this question in mind, I offered a suggestion to the AC4 team to present the peace-mapping project at a side event during the 2016 UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues as a means of bringing Indigenous activists into the discussion, especially given the theme of the 2016 UNPFII on “conflict, peace and resolution.”<sup>23</sup> The idea was to bring some of the project team members into the Forum, to present the model of sustainable peace and to stimulate a public dialogue with Indigenous activists, and to elicit participants to share a story of what peace means to them. To facilitate these goals, I invited two Indigenous activists from Asia to collaborate on the side-event, one from Cambodia and one from Bangladesh. They were provided by the AC4 team with project materials in advance and asked to speak to the peace-mapping initiative at the side event.

In the run-up to the UNPFII we ran into trouble. One of the invited activists (I’ll call him ‘Bong’) dropped out at the last minute, on the grounds that he did not understand what the academics were asking of him. This ought to provoke a pause. Bong is someone I have collaborated with over the last several years. While he may not

21. This was readily apparent in the many states’ qualifications of their vote to adopt the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples on September 13, 2007. Cf. Neal B. Keating, “UN General Assembly Adopts the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,” *Anthropology News* 48, no. 8 (2007): 144, front page photograph, and 22–23.
22. Cf. Discussions in Povinelli, *supra* note 2; and in Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life at the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014).
23. Cf. E/C.19/2016/L.1/Rev.1.

have received the privileges of higher education, he is a Tampuan intellectual who is involved in a struggle to resolve complex land conflicts with transnational rubber plantation companies in his home territory in Rattanakiri, Cambodia; that include the IFC arm of the World Bank, a Vietnamese corporation and its subsidiaries, a development financier based in the United Kingdom, multiple NGOs, and 17 villages of Tampuan, Bunong, Kreung and other Indigenous Peoples whose lands and forests have been recently taken by the rubber companies. His insights and analyses of these struggles have guided my own comprehension of the human rights situations facing Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia.<sup>24</sup>

Why then did Bong say he did not understand the nature of this relatively simple side event? Surely if he can grasp the dynamics of complex conflicts like those back home, he can comprehend the model of sustainable peace discussed here. In the hubbub of the Forum, I was unable to follow up with him, instead scrambling to secure a last minute replacement for Bong at the side event. Another colleague from Cambodia who was attending the Forum (I'll call him 'Sam'), graciously agreed to step in. As the inaugural president of an Indigenous youth association in Cambodia, Sam is a Bunong person with many years of experience working on multiple Indigenous issues in Cambodia, and is widely respected for his knowledge and abilities as a human rights activist and community organizer.

The activist from Bangladesh (I'll call him 'Pao'), like Sam, is internationally recognized as a knowledgeable and effective Indigenous leader. Pao is a member of the Jumma peoples, from the Chittagong Hills Tracts. The countries that Pao and Sam come from are riddled with ongoing conflicts between the state and the communities that self-identify as Indigenous Peoples. The governments in both countries have legislated policies that somewhat recognize these communities as Indigenous Peoples. In Bangladesh, these are grounded in the 1997 Chittagong Hills Tracts Peace Accords, although after a recent amendment to the Constitution, the government emphatically

24. Cf. Neal B. Keating and Mong Vichet, "Cambodia," *The Indigenous World 2016*, C. Mikkelsen ed. (Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2016).

claims there are no Indigenous Peoples in the country. In Cambodia, Indigenous policies are based on the 2001 National Land Law. In both countries, the actual implementation of these policies is woefully lacking. The peoples standing with Pao and Sam are experiencing extensive dispossession of their lands and territories, combined with an ambience of state-based violence against their persons and cultures. Clearly, they are stakeholders in the discussion of sustainable peace.

Yet when I sat down separately with Pao and Sam to go over the materials for the side event, a similar exchange transpired each time. When I started the conversation by saying, “Okay, so this is about sustainable peace science,” they each tilted away their face slightly while maintaining eye contact with me, giving me a sideways glance, which I interpreted as an indication of suspicion or doubt. This feeling of suspicion did not go away, and was palpable during the side event in the form of an awkward social vibe of disconnect in the room. It was not simply caused by non-academic Indigenous activists feeling unsure of what the academics were getting at. It was also that the academics were not sure of where the Indigenous activists were coming from. The sideways glances Pao and Sam gave me are thick with multiple meanings. I myself am complicit in this effect, possibly projecting it as much as observing it.

From a critical anthropological view and as much, if not more so, from a critical Indigenous view, the application of science to solving social problems has a largely negative history. The social scientific methods applied towards the problems facing Indigenous peoples in the past have advanced many models of assimilation that are now recognized as genocidal in their application. In the present, mainstream social theory of the contemporary world, including most development theory, still largely fails to take into account the ongoing significance of Indigenous Peoples in the world. On the other hand, reflexive and critical science is becoming more imaginable, and the peace-mapping initiative represents one example of such practice, particularly through its use of ground-truthing.

Beyond the problem of applied science, the pursuit of gain by member states at the UN has a tendency to cancel out or “invisibilize” those collective aspirations that fall outside of their logic. If there is

no clear market share to be had in such expressions, then they are excluded from the process of decision-making. For example, the non-marketized local desires of biodiverse forest peoples do not figure into such decisions. Such exclusions are violent, and over the last three decades in particular have intensified in many Indigenous territories around the world. Based on my field research at the UN since 2007, I am confident that the experience of invisibilization is known to most of the Indigenous activists that find their way to the UNPFII. The side glance of suspicion that Sam and Pao threw my way perhaps comes out of this sustained exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from decision-making regarding development.<sup>25</sup>

For Sam and Pao (and possibly Bong as well), the idea of a positive and applicable science of peace being proposed to Indigenous Peoples at a place like the UN may also have seemed ironic, or bitter. It is not Bunong, Jumma or Tampuan peoples who are generating conflicts in their countries. Rather, it is UN member states and financed companies generating conflicts in their traditional territories. Both Jumma and Bunong peoples have traditional systems of nonviolent conflict resolution that worked relatively well for them, but that were destroyed by the encroachment of these other actors. It is a bit like the story of the NGO worker sent out to deliver workshops on community gardening and forest conservation, to communities of Indigenous Peoples whose practices of shifting cultivation and forest foraging are now terminated by massive logging concessions of their territories. He meets with resistance in the communities: “Why not go give these workshops to the government and the businessmen destroying the forests? We already know how to garden and take care of the forest.”<sup>26</sup> It is the same with peace; it is the states that need to learn this, not the Indigenous Peoples.

25. The Indigenous thesis of invisibilization was made clear to me in 2011 over the course of dialogues with Mayan artists and activists during a gathering in Guatemala City.

26. Cf. Neal B. Keating, “From Rights Advocacy to Party Politics: The Transmotion of the Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Democracy Party,” for a special issue of *HAU: A Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, Neal B. Keating and O. Paredes eds. (forthcoming).

In my observation, the ensuing peace-mapping side event thus became a kind of “contact zone” at the UN, between people with highly unequal social statuses and positions (non-Indigenous academics and Indigenous activists), who on another scale of asymmetry came together in a club where the only members are the governments.<sup>27</sup> Despite any suspicions, fears or misunderstandings about peace, the room filled with about twenty-five people and for a little over an hour, participants engaged in a discussion of the possibility of sustainable peace and what that might look like. The two academics that led the side event made their presentation, followed by Sam and Pao, who made brief statements, followed by open discussion and elicitation of short stories of peace from all the attendees. Sam and Pao remained subdued throughout the event. When it ended, the stories were collected and later examined using content analysis and causal loop diagramming. As it was a very contingent and international group that were mostly strangers to each other, there was not a great deal of thematic overlap in their peace stories. Yet there was nevertheless an evident emphasis on land issues in the responses.<sup>28</sup>

The sorts of tensions alluded to above bring up the other key premise of the sustainable peace initiative. Violence and conflict are pervasive in the world today, to the point that it is difficult to talk about peace with any assurance. This is certainly the case when it comes to land. For Indigenous Peoples, the primary physical manifestation of pervasive conflict is state-sponsored land grabbing, again and again, around the world. The beliefs accompanying this patterned behavior are that war and aggression are inevitable and part of human nature, if not divinely ordained in order for progress to march forward. Certainly, modern states do a good job of making these beliefs convincing.

## V. Thinking Peace: An Ethnographic Experiment

What would it take to achieve sustainable peace in the communities and territories of Indigenous Peoples today? I offer here a summary from ongoing research with Bunong people in Cambodia, where there

27. The concept of “contact zone” originates in Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, 1992).

28. Cf. Fisher-Yoshida et al., *supra* note 18.

is no robust culture of peace between Indigenous Peoples, the state, corporations and new migrants. Instead there is a robust culture of conflict driven by marketized development of land, mainly timber, plantations and dams. This culture has been imposed upon Bunong communities without their consent. In Bunong history, there was a functional culture of peace based on inter-village ceremonies of reciprocity, but it functioned in an environment of expansive forests and autonomous communities. After waves of French colonials, Khmer post-colonials, Viet Minh, Viet Cong, American bombs, Khmer Rouge and now the Khmer Riche, little remains of this culture of peace although Bunong people and culture are still very much here. The neoliberal Cambodian systems of justice and dispute resolution are grounded in asymmetrical patronage networks more than they are in a clear impartial rule of law. By current standards, Cambodia is reckoned to be one of the most corrupt states in Southeast Asia. Over the last two decades, the health and wellbeing of Bunong people has declined while the confiscation of their lands and removal of forests has increased. The traditional cultures of Bunong and other Indigenous highland communities are regularly denigrated by the dominant culture as backwards and primitive, and in need of change.<sup>29</sup>

Specifically, this thought experiment centers in one particular Bunong place in northeastern Cambodia, an area of about 20,000 hectares where Bunong people have lived for a long time. It is near a giant black stone dune of a mountain named *Yok Nam Yang* (mountain/time of spirits), from under which it is said that the Bunong people first came into this world. Today there are about seven village communities clustered in the vicinity of *Yok Nam Lang*. Despite the conflicts that happened here during the last century and a half, most of this area prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century remained forested. A long-standing symbiosis between communities and the forest somehow survived heavy US aerial bombardment followed by Khmer Rouge military occupation. This changed in early 2008, when—without notice—large bulldozers began to appear in the area and started knocking down the forest around *Yok*

29. Cf. Keating, *supra* note 20; Neal B. Keating, “Kuy Alterities: The Struggle to Conceptualize and Claim Indigenous Land Rights in Neoliberal Cambodia,” *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 54, no. 3 (2013): 309–322.



*Nam Lang*. When the communities protested, they were informed that the government had rented out their land to a joint-corporate venture to develop a rubber plantation company where their forest used to be, for the next seventy-five years or so. There was no prior consultation with the affected communities, and no plan of compensation.<sup>30</sup>

It was a classic neoliberal scenario of a corporation and a state making a private decision on the lands, territories and resources of Indigenous Peoples, and acting on it with little indication that the interests of the impacted communities were of any concern. The bulldozers removed over 10,000 hectares of highly biodiverse forest. In place of this biome, the corporation applied chemical inputs and planted a new monocrop forest of rubber trees across the area, as well as limited the communities' access to *Yok Nam Lang*. In the absence of relief provided by the government or the company, a large group of Bunong descended on the plantation headquarters in 2009 and began destroying the bulldozers and pulling up rubber seedlings. The authorities responded by arresting Bunong protestors. The corporation responded by making overtures of compensation and mediation, in the form of a promoted "tripartite committee" consisting of corporate, state and community leaders. This proposed committee would then resolve the conflict through finding "win-win" solutions that would benefit all. However, it appears the corporation exercised dominant control over this committee, and as a result limited the possibilities of resolution; namely that no land would be returned to the communities, and the meager compensation offered by the company to affected community members was on a "take it or leave it" basis. The first tripartite committee fell apart by 2012, and the communities' grievances continued to grow. Infighting within the communities became more and more pronounced. As a renewed Bunong mobilization to end the plantation emerged in 2015, the company established a second tripartite committee, but it carries forward the same problems as the first: the dialogue is largely controlled by the company, with little time or space allocated to community members to express their views. When I visited the communities in 2016, there were deep divides within individual families

30. Discussion of this case is based on fieldwork in Cambodia during May-July 2016. Cf. Keating, *supra* note 26.

and villages between those Bunong who sided with the company, those who wanted the company to leave, and those seeking various kinds of accommodation in between. Neither the state nor the corporation appears to be acting in good faith with regards to the Bunong communities overall, and because of the disunity within the communities, there is no clear leadership coming forward to effectively negotiate with the company or government. The local government officials I spoke with (also Bunong) expressed doubt of the company's intentions, and frustration with the national level of governance that made the deal to begin with. By most Bunong accounts I heard, their quality of life has plummeted since the arrival of the rubber company.

When this situation is examined using the model of sustainable peace, it can be observed that none of the four dynamics of sustainable peace are in evidence here. Most of the seven elements are also absent or negative. At the causal node of the model, negative intergroup reciprocity is far more robust than its corollary. What would it take to transform this conflict into a condition of sustained peacefulness? At a general level, it does not appear that complicated; presuming the ongoing communities of Bunong people seek to maintain their existence, shifting the dynamics of reciprocity could happen in multiple ways. Perhaps the most obvious way to effect this would be for an actual tripartite process of conflict transformation to occur; 'actual' in the sense of spatial and political equality between the parties. That the company took the pains to create the appearance of two previous tripartite committees shows this possibility even if in a chimeric form. But to draw on Haudenosaunee peace theory, a necessary prerequisite to such a process having a positive effect on reciprocity is what might be called cultural and environmental triage, involving the company and the state acknowledging in a meaningful way the development aggression that started in 2008, and the total impacts and losses it caused to the Bunong peoples living near *Yok Nam Lang*. Not a reconciliation, but a conciliation; or to put it in a Haudenosaunee frame, a ceremony of condolence to genuinely wipe away the tears and bring everyone's minds together as one. By addressing the negative impacts together, the process could begin to change peoples' future expectations, create new and innovative problem-solving approaches that could reform

existing systems of justice, loop into enhanced wellbeing and build cross-cutting ties that would in turn feed back into a revitalized culture of peace. But all of this would likely hinge on the return of at least some Bunong control over land-use planning.

Admittedly, the possibility of an actual tripartite process is likely to remain chimeric under current sociopolitical conditions, where both the state and the company have consistently infantilized the Bunong as ignorant misbehaving children who don't know what is good for them. The implicit suggestion here, that such patrimonial mindsets and related behaviors can give way to something more constructive, is likely to strike many readers as so much idealistic dreaming, especially to those familiar with Hun Sen's Cambodia.<sup>31</sup> But my point in offering it up is not to suggest that I have the answer (I do not), but to suggest that it is possible to intervene in the current patterns of negative reciprocity. Other interventions at other nodes on the peace map might do a much better job of shifting the dynamics towards a more positive reciprocity between Indigenous Peoples and the ambient state-corporate groups. One such alternative approach is currently being tested by the formation of an Indigenous Peoples democracy party that aims to change the structures in which negative reciprocity has been enabled, by stepping directly into the arena of Cambodian politics.

## VI. Conclusion

A durable positive peace may be good to think, but in the current climate it is very difficult to think. It almost feels like a criminal act of heresy. Yet if one can bracket off the dominant paradigms of our time, and consider the existing evidence for social conditions of lasting peace between human groups, thinking peace becomes possible. But it is hard work. And thinking it is just the beginning. To generate a positive lasting intersocial behavioral pattern in the world that dynamically loops together the aspects and elements in the proposed peace map modeling is even harder work, especially when it includes those groups who persist under conflictual neocolonial rule.

31. Sebastian Strangio, *Hun Sen's Cambodia*, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2014).

The two premises on which the AC4 initiative on sustainable peace science proceeds are that there is at present no general consensus of what peace is beyond the absence of war, and that conflict and violence appear to be pervasive in the world. While these contribute to the difficulty in visualizing peace, the application of science-based approaches to peace can overcome these difficulties, and offer new models for policy and decision-making that take peace into account. However at a structural level, the elusiveness of peace may also be due to its inescapable semiotic relationship with its opposite—war. Following Donald Tuzin’s cross-cultural analysis, ‘peace’ is always a specter that looms inside the more visceral practice of war; much war is carried out with intended aims of making peace; and these two terms (war and peace) are imbricated with each other.<sup>32</sup>

Peace is difficult to define because it operates semantically more as a regulative concept than as a specific condition. He compared it with other regulative concepts, such as health and truth, both of which (like peace) find their definitional groundings in the negative: health as the absence of illness or disease, and truth as knowledge that has so far passed the test of falsification. As such, peace, health and truth serve to organize, regulate and point towards aspirational or general behavioral goals, and do not just prescribe the kinds of specific concrete actions that are associated with ending war, battling an illness, or testing a hypothesis. They also propose frameworks or directions for general aspirations and behavior, such as “building cross-cutting ties,” “eating well and exercising,” and “improving theory.” This is an important point—that peace is intimately connected to war, but not simply as opposites; peace operates as a conceptual regulator of the material horrors of war. Tuzin’s point is that peace is in war as well as beyond war. In this light, there is little to be gained from searching for a static definitional essence of peace.

The nodal variable core of the AC4 peace-mapping model approximates this regulator relationship between peace and war in terms of a dynamical ratio between positive and negative intergroup

32. D. Tuzin, “The Spectre of Peace in Unlikely Places: Concept and Paradox in the Anthropology of Peace,” *A Natural History of Peace*, T. Gregor, ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996): 3–33.

reciprocity, and so finds support from the spectral theory of peace. Furthermore, the design corresponds with Indigenous theories of peace such as the *Gayanashago:wa* that view peace as an active process of ongoing renewal and ‘requickening’ of intergroup relations. The model proposes sustainable peace as a dynamic effect generated not only by the presence or absence of given elements and aspects that may enable peace or trigger conflict, but also produced by the shifting nonlinear relations between these different elements and aspects over time. By incorporating complexity science visualization methods, the multiple feedback loops these relations may generate can be rendered comprehensible.

The idea of a model of sustainable peace that can be tested and refined through comparison with cross-cultural and historical evidence, as well as through field-based ethnographic ground-truthing dialogues with stakeholders, gives this approach an empirical credibility that most other attempts to model peace are lacking, including that of the IEP. While the introduction of peace-mapping to Indigenous activists at the UNPFII was met with ambivalence, this is understandable as a result of historical and contemporary experience more than a repudiation of the model. With so much ongoing conflict, the question of what sustainable peace would look like in your territory is unusual if not startling. For all the conflict near *Yok Nam Lang* and the attempts to resolve it, no one has really asked that question of the impacted Bunong communities. The AC4 initiative is still in the incubation phases of testing and development, but as of now holds promise of producing a coherent and reliable predictor of the dynamics that might result in a more robust specter of peace. The hard problem will be getting those in power to purchase it. Contemporary peacemaking is messy work that often results in unanticipated counter effects.<sup>33</sup> The AC4 model could contribute to improving those outcomes. For Indigenous activists, the model may represent an alternative approach to realizing human rights that goes beyond policies of recognition.

33. For examples of the pitfalls of contemporary peacemaking, cf. Barbara Rose Johnston and Susan Slymovich, *Waging War, Making Peace: Reparations and Human Rights* (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2009).