



Conference Overview

War, Soil, and Freshwater Systems

Prague, Czech Republic | 15–17 October 2026

A working conference for problems that are not yet solved

The environmental consequences of war do not fit within a single scientific discipline, institution, technology or professional community.

A damaged territory may simultaneously involve:

- contaminated soil;
- groundwater and surface-water pollution;
- sediments;
- destroyed industrial infrastructure;
- unexploded ordnance;
- disrupted agriculture;
- damaged monitoring systems;
- population displacement;
- ecosystem change;
- public-health risks;
- and difficult questions about reconstruction and safe return to civilian use.

Understanding such a territory requires more than a collection of separate studies.

It requires different forms of knowledge to work together.

P&D is therefore not organised as a conventional academic conference.

It is an international working meeting focused on how complex conflict-related environmental problems can actually be investigated, understood and addressed.

No one has the complete answer

A researcher may understand contaminant behaviour but have no access to the affected territory.

A satellite company may identify changes that cannot yet be interpreted environmentally.

A GIS specialist may integrate datasets whose reliability remains uncertain.

A humanitarian demining organisation may determine whether environmental investigation is physically possible.

A laboratory may identify substances that existing monitoring programmes were never designed to detect.

An engineer or remediation company may know what information is missing before an intervention can begin.

A local organisation may understand the territory, institutions, logistics and communities better than any external expert.

An investor or development organisation may understand why a technically strong idea cannot yet become a viable project.

Each participant sees a different part of the system.

The purpose of the conference is to connect these parts.

Different knowledge. Equal seriousness.

P&D does not divide participants into an academic centre and a practical periphery.

Researchers, companies, laboratories, engineers, GIS and Earth Observation specialists, mine-action organisations, environmental consultants, investors, public institutions, NGOs and organisations from conflict-affected regions participate in the same analytical process.

Institutional status does not determine the value of a contribution.

The central question for everyone is:

What can you contribute to understanding or solving the problem?

A useful contribution may be:

- a research result;

- a field case;
- a technology;
- a dataset;
- a map;
- a laboratory method;
- an operational constraint;
- a failed approach and the lessons learned from it;
- a local perspective;
- a project concept;
- or an important question that has not yet been answered.

Real territories, not abstract examples

Conference work is connected with real conflict and post-conflict environments.

Current directions include cases and participants connected with:

Ukraine

Vietnam

Sudan

and other territories affected by war, military activity and long-term conflict-related environmental change.

These regions are not treated merely as examples used to illustrate external theories.

People and organisations connected with the territories are intended to participate in defining:

- what the real problem is;
- which evidence exists;
- which evidence is missing;
- what can realistically be investigated;
- what local capacity already exists;
- and what kind of international cooperation would actually be useful.

A central principle is that projects concerning a territory should include credible organisations from that territory in the design of the work.

From fragmented evidence to structured investigation

The conference is being developed around a practical sequence:

**Problem → Existing Evidence → Missing Evidence → Investigation → Interpretation
→ Intervention → Recovery**

This requires several kinds of work.

Critical Reviews

What do we actually know about war-related effects on:

- soils;
- freshwater and aquatic systems;
- settlement and land-use systems;
- environmental exposure;
- and public health?

The objective is not merely to summarise publications.

It is to distinguish:

what is reasonably established;
what remains uncertain;
what is contradictory;
what has never been adequately measured;
and what should be investigated next.

Applied Systems & Technologies

Technologies are examined as components of investigations.

Relevant areas include:

- GIS;
- satellite Earth Observation;
- SAR;
- drones;
- LiDAR;
- geophysics;
- humanitarian demining;
- UXO detection;
- robotics;
- environmental sensors;
- field analytical systems;
- laboratories;
- groundwater and water-quality monitoring;
- information systems;
- remediation;
- and agricultural recovery.

Companies are not invited simply to demonstrate products.

The relevant question is:

What can this method allow us to observe, measure or do — and where are its limits?

Case Labs

Case Labs begin with a real environmental problem.

For example:

How should a mined and potentially contaminated agricultural territory be investigated after land release?

How should a war-affected river or reservoir be assessed when historical monitoring is incomplete?

How should a damaged industrial site be investigated when contamination, groundwater pathways, structural hazards and UXO may coexist?

Participants work together to design the investigation.

The objective is not another series of presentations.

It is to answer:

What would we actually do?

Project Studios

Promising discussions can develop into preliminary projects.

A Project Studio considers:

Problem
Territory
Existing evidence
Critical uncertainties
Missing data
Methods
Local partners
Technology partners
Implementation capacity
Possible financing
Next steps

The aim is not to declare that cooperation is desirable.

It is to determine whether cooperation can actually begin.

A working Specification

An important part of the P&D programme is the development of the **Specification for the Investigation of War-Related Environmental Contamination**.

The Specification is intended as a practical working structure for organising real investigations.

It is not presented as a final doctrine.

It is designed to be:

published → applied → tested → criticised → revised → improved.

The first English version will be publicly available before the conference.

Translations and regional applications will allow the structure to be tested against different historical, environmental and institutional conditions.

At the Prague meeting, the purpose will therefore not be simply to present the Specification.

The purpose will be to **test it against reality**.

What changes when it is applied in Ukraine?

What changes in the historical contamination context of Vietnam?

What happens in Sudan where baseline information and field access may be severely limited?

What does a GIS company find missing?

What does a laboratory require before the structure can become an analytical programme?

What does a demining organisation say about the sequence of field work?

What does a local organisation consider unrealistic?

What does a remediation company need before it can intervene?

If something does not work, that is useful information.

It means the structure can be improved.

From publications to information systems

P&D is also exploring how complex environmental knowledge can be organised beyond collections of separate publications.

Developing information systems examine relationships between:

- places;
- events;
- contaminants;
- environmental media;
- organisms;
- observations;
- historical sources;
- publications;
- hypotheses;
- competing explanations;
- spatial patterns;
- temporal sequences;
- and uncertainty.

An information system developed around dolphins and TCDD-related contamination provides one working example.

A broader **War Pollution Information System** is also being developed.

These systems are not intended to replace scientific publications.

They address a different problem:

how can fragmented evidence be organised so that relationships, contradictions, missing information and competing explanations become visible?

Important materials will be available before Prague

The conference is not built around withholding information until somebody presents it from a stage.

Important materials may be published or circulated before the meeting, including:

- the Specification;
- Critical Reviews;
- full papers;
- analytical briefs;
- regional dossiers;
- maps;
- datasets;
- methodological notes;
- and the P&D Unread Lectures.

Participants can therefore arrive already familiar with relevant materials.

Conference time can then be used for what cannot be achieved efficiently by reading:

criticism, comparison, investigation design, technology assessment, project formation and cooperation.

What participation can mean

Not every participant needs a conventional presentation.

Participation may include:

- presenting a short framing input;
- contributing evidence to a Critical Review;
- bringing a regional case;
- providing data;
- demonstrating a method against a real problem;
- participating in a Case Lab;
- joining an Investigation Design Workshop;
- helping develop a Project Studio;
- providing local implementation capacity;
- contributing technology or analytical capability;
- or challenging an assumption that others have overlooked.

The conference gives participants **roles in a process**, not simply places in a timetable.

Who should participate?

P&D is relevant to people and organisations working with:

Environmental research

soil, freshwater, sediments, ecosystems, toxicology, exposure and public health.

Geospatial technologies

GIS, Earth Observation, satellite imagery, SAR, drones, LiDAR and spatial data systems.

Field investigation

sampling, hydrogeology, geophysics, environmental chemistry and monitoring.

Mine action and safe access

humanitarian demining, UXO, robotics and hazardous-area investigation.

Environmental recovery

contaminated sites, remediation, waste, water treatment, agriculture and ecosystem restoration.

Infrastructure and engineering

water systems, industrial sites, transport, reconstruction and long-term monitoring.

Local implementation

organisations from affected regions capable of providing field access, local knowledge, logistics, operations, institutional connections and long-term project ownership.

Project development and finance

foundations, development institutions, investment organisations, banks and companies interested in turning technically credible concepts into implementable projects.

What can come out of Prague?

Potential outcomes include:

a pilot site;

a local implementation partnership;

a technology validation case;

a new dataset or monitoring system;

a revised investigation protocol;

an information-system module;

a comparative regional study;

a remediation concept;

a project consortium;

a funding concept;

or simply:

a much better understanding of what we still do not know.

Not every discussion needs to become a project.

Not every uncertainty will be resolved.

Sometimes identifying that a question has been asked incorrectly is itself an important result.

Why Prague?

Many of the territories discussed at P&D are difficult, dangerous or expensive to access.

Prague provides an accessible international meeting point where participants from different regions and professional backgrounds can work together before decisions are made about field activity.

The conference takes place in central Prague, close to Charles Bridge.

The location also creates space for something that matters in complex cooperation:

time for conversations outside formal sessions.

Projects often begin not only during scheduled meetings, but over coffee, dinner or an additional discussion after the programme has ended.

The central idea

P&D does not assume that somebody already possesses the complete methodology.

It begins from a more realistic position:

the problem is complex, knowledge is fragmented, and different participants possess different parts of the capability required to move forward.

P&D is not a meeting of people who already know the answers.

It is a working meeting of people who possess different parts of the capability required to find them.

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War, Soil, and Freshwater Systems

Real territories. Real evidence. Real uncertainty. Real cooperation.

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