



Difficulties in gathering information on the impact of hostilities on the environment in Ukraine

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Conflict and Environment Observatory

CEOBS is a UK charity working to increase the protection of people and ecosystems from the impact of armed conflicts and military activities.

Our work on Ukraine

- Helping to publicise environmental risks since 2015; collaboration with Zoï Environment Network.
- Providing legal and technical support to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 2016.
- Since February: data collection, advocacy and legal support.



The Ukraine conflict's legacy of environmental damage and pollutants



Monitoring the monitors studying the Ukraine conflict's environmental impact



Exploring environmental governance in eastern Ukraine



UNEA-2 passes most significant UN resolution on conflict and the environment since 1992



Are abandoned mines flooding in Ukraine's Donbas region?



Legal accountability for environmental destruction in Ukraine



Contents

- Characteristics of harm
- How conflicts influence data collection
- Challenges in Ukraine
- Opportunities in Ukraine



Why do we collect environmental data?

Advocacy: the environment is a low priority in conflicts.

Assessment: to inform remedial actions on the ground.

Accountability: even though avenues are limited.

Norm strengthening: to inform legal/policy change.



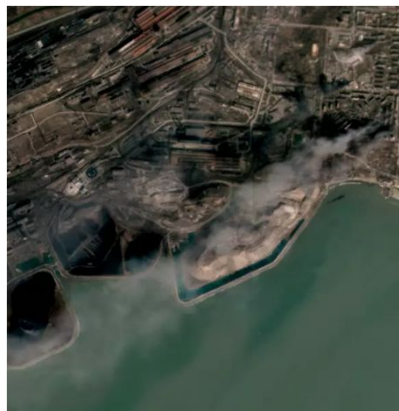
Characterising harm

- Direct or indirect.
- Ephemeral or permanent.
- Widespread or local.
- Cumulative or unique.
- Deliberate or incidental.



How conflicts impede data collection

- Access and security.
- Interruption of monitoring systems, where they exist.
- Under-prioritisation.
- Politicisation, manipulation and disinformation.

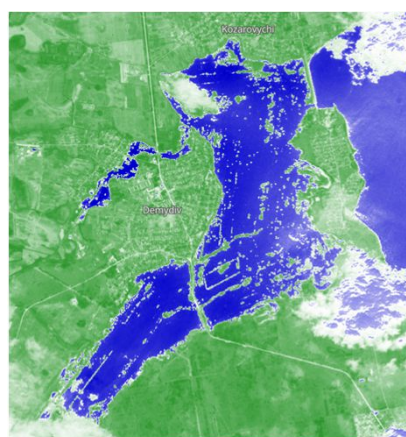


Navigating constraints in data collection

- Satellite remote sensing.
- Open source intelligence using social media and diverse sources.
- Local expertise.
- Crowd-sourced verification for incidents.

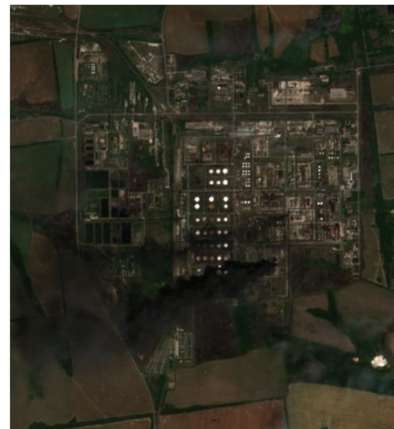
Limitations of this approach

- Precise characterisation of health or ecological risks.
- Temporal or geographic limitations in trends.
- Pre-existing environmental issues.
- Understanding complex environmental relationships.



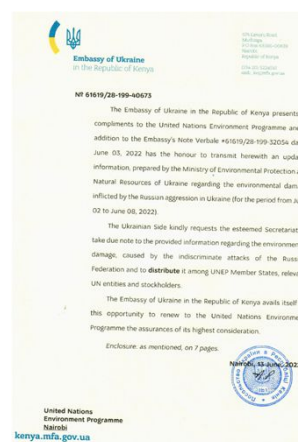
Data collection challenges in Ukraine

- Pace, intensity and geographic scale of the invasion.
- Skewed towards the most visible incidents, such as major fires.
- Disruption to monitoring and displacement of expertise.
- Restrictions on reporting locations of incidents.
- Clouds, and access to very high resolution imagery.



Data collection opportunities in Ukraine

- The invasion is comparatively well documented thanks to a confluence of factors.
- The invasion builds on a pre-existing environmental narrative.
- Ukraine is leveraging environmental diplomacy.
- Civil society capacity – NGOs, researchers; and governmental capacity - MEPNR.
- Less environmental disinformation than expected.



Data collection priorities in Ukraine

- Linking remotely gathered data to local data.
 - Strengthen cooperation between international and local expertise, e.g. tools like citizen science.
 - Look at longer-term change.
- Scrutinise how the war is changing domestic environmental governance, and its indirect environmental consequences.
- Find and tell new stories to keep the environmental dimensions of the war on the national and international agenda.
- Continue to draw attention to sustainable recovery.

Environ Monit Assess (2019) 191: 618
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10661-019-7773-9>

Civilian science: the potential of participatory environmental monitoring in areas affected by armed conflicts

Doug Weir · Dan McQuillan · Robert A. Francis 

Received: 11 December 2018 / Accepted: 27 August 2019 / Published online: 6 September 2019
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Conclusions

- Understanding *why* data is being collected helps to inform *how* it should be collected.
- Biases emerge from the context of data collection and the tools we use.
- The potential for environmental data collection on the invasion is far greater than in many other conflicts.
- It's time to expand focus from incidents to longer term trends, and from generalisation to detail.
- Keeping the environment on the agenda in the long-term will be vital.





Thank you

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