

Lessons from the Entanglements of Water Diplomacy and Lived Experiences: Regional Focus on Middle East, South Caucasus and Central Asia

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In this workshop, we seek to examine the *everyday life* of *water diplomacy* in interconnected cross-border regions facing acute water security challenges due to climate change, geopolitical shifts, political tensions, mismanagement, and extensive infrastructure building. We broadly define ‘water diplomacy’ as efforts of state and non-state actors to build confidence, institutions and arrangements to manage shared water resources. With an emphasis on the *everyday*, we interrogate the interface between water diplomacy practices and lived experiences of individuals and communities who are in direct contact with water.

We invite papers that are concerned with how water diplomacy practices at the national or regional level, local water management processes, cross-border (im)mobility of water *and* humans get entangled with each other. Such entanglements may, for example, arise in hydropower development, irrigation, farming, fisheries and (forced) migration. This workshop welcomes papers that tackle one or more of the following:

- How do the (im)mobilities of water intersect with the practices and politics of water diplomacy in transboundary river and marine contexts?
- How do transboundary water governance practices (or their absence) shape local or trans-local responses to water (in)security, or water-related crises (floods, droughts, soil erosion, and environmental degradation)?
- How can we study these entanglements across time and space?
- What are the lived experiences of water (in)security as they relate to water diplomacy in transboundary water basins?
- How can rivers, lakes, aquifers and oceans be understood through the lenses of relationality and “more-than-human” epistemology?
- How do geopolitical ruptures and transitions of the 20th and 21st centuries (e.g. post-imperial, post-Soviet or post-Cold War) reposition water bodies, their meanings and functions in cultural, economic and political terms for populations inhabiting or moving along/across/near/further away from them?

To this end, we invite authors to engage with concepts such as relationality, entanglement, displacement, land-grabbing, diplomacy and securitisation to foreground the frictions and fluidities of socio-environmental and political-economic transformations in the borderlands. The workshop will focus on three areas owing to the hard water security challenges there, namely the borderlands of Turkey in the Euphrates–Tigris basin (Dinc and Eklund 2023), the Kura–Araz river basin in the South Caucasus (Mukhtarov and van der Meer, 2024) and the Amudarya and Syrdarya river basins in Central Asia. However, we remain open to submissions focusing on other geographies, provided their conceptual depth and theoretical relevance for the workshop. We hope to develop a high-quality publication from the workshop.

References

Dinc, P., & Eklund, L. (2023). Syrian farmers in the midst of drought and conflict: the causes, patterns, and aftermath of land abandonment and migration. *Climate and Development*, 16(5), 349–362. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2023.2223600>

Mukhtarov, F. and van der Meer, D. (2024). Navigating the stormy waters: How the South Caucasus Water Academics Network (SWAN) is furthering discussions on water diplomacy in the South Caucasus and beyond. Bliss (ISS Blog).