


Wednesday, September 28 • 10:00am - 11:30am

(REF 28246) Socioenvironmental conflicts related to water in South America: tensions around access, use, and management

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Water is essential to people and the planet, and it is central to life processes. In South America, like worldwide, there are numerous water conflicts, related to scarcity (quantity and quality), floods, access to drinking water, among others. These socioenvironmental conflicts, which involve social, political and economic actors, are a consequence of multiple factors, including those related to economic and political interest, social inequalities, climate, land use, and water management. Water conflicts in South America tend to be more frequent as some trends, like the commodities production and the privatization of water and sanitation services, accentuate. This session will focus on existing water conflicts in five South American countries, analyzing their consequences on water management (public and/or private) and water access of vulnerable and other social groups. In addition to presentations of cutting-edge research, the panelists will engage in a rich dialogue to discuss the implications and potential contributions of their findings.

Speakers



Paúl Cisneros

Associate
Professor, IAEN

Paul Cisneros holds a Doctoral degree in Social Sciences with Specialization in Political Studies by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales. Since 2016 he works at the Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales in Quito, Ecuador where he lectures on public policy. His

research... [Read More](#) →



Maria Teresa Oré

Sociology and Master in Social Sciences, Maria Teresa Oré

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Professor on the Water Resources Master's program at the same university. Visiting professor of the National Agrarian University, and the Central University of Ecuador. Author of books: Aguas en... [Read More](#)

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Anahi Ocampo

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Assistant professor at the University of Chile, Department of Forestry Management and its Environment.

Ph.D. in Arid Lands Resource Sciences, an Interdisciplinary Graduate Program of the University of Arizona (2013). Studies in Integrated Planning for rural development and

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Ana Britto

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Geographer, a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and a PhD in Urbanism from the Institut D'Urbanisme de Paris - Université de Paris XII (Paris-Val-de-Marne). Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism and PROURB... [Read More](#) →



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Master and PhD in Environmental Sciences (Institute of Energy and Environment, University of São Paulo, Brazil) and Postdoctoral Researcher (Faculty of Sciences, Universidad de la República-UDELAR, Uruguay). She currently investigates topics related to water policy and

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Conveners



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Micaela Trimble is an Associate Researcher at the South American Institute for Resilience and Sustainability Studies (SARAS), Uruguay. She holds a PhD in Natural Resources and Environmental Management (University of Manitoba). Her

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Paul Cisneros holds a Doctoral degree in Social Sciences with Specialization in Political Studies by the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales. Since 2016 he works at the Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales in Quito, Ecuador where he lectures on public policy. His research deals with collaborations within environmental policy processes in the Latin America Region, with special emphasis on the collaborative governance of water, air, and minerals.

Policy narratives for effective cross-sectoral implementation of policy. The case of water and mining in Fierro Urco, Ecuador

Paúl Cisneros

Policy actors develop narratives to convey their understanding of policy problems, identify allies and rivals and propose and garner support for particular solutions. The Narrative Policy Framework is a theory of the policy process that focuses on the processes of narrative building on three levels: micro, meso, and macro. The meso-level, refers to interactions between coalitions where policy preferences are defined to influence the contents of policy. One particular aspect of narratives about water governance relates to the growing need to define mechanisms that secure policy coherence and coordination among sectors and levels of decision-making. The case of Fierro Urco, a region located in the Southern Ecuadorian Andes, involves a coalition of actors who organized to stop mining operations to defend Fierro Urco based on its importance for water provision and its intrinsic value as a sacred place for indigenous peoples. To achieve this goal, this coalition is constructing a narrative to guide the cross-sectoral implementation of existing policies. The analysis of this case shows the importance of cross-sectoral narratives -an aspect not tackled by NPF theory- and some of the difficulties for these narratives in altering existing policy patterns.

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Groundwater governance and socio-environmental conflicts in Peru

María Teresa Oré

The "agro-export boom" that Peru has experienced in recent decades is related to the exploitation of groundwater and technical irrigation. This meant the concentration of land and water in farms with modern technology that emerged in the desert of the Peruvian coast. "The California dream" of being like California, was the most widespread and proud speech among agri-exporters and governments. However, the lack of regulation and monitoring of groundwater led to overexploitation of the aquifer in various coastal valleys. Having as a result an ecological affectation due to the decrease in the water table and the emergence of new socio-environmental conflicts due to the decrease in the supply of drinking water in urban areas and in rural areas due to the decrease in water for irrigation, in medium and small farmers. Moreover, faced with the need to recharge the aquifer, the government proposed new projects to transfer water from the high Andean zone to the coast, also giving rise to social conflicts with the high Andean peasant communities, who saw their own water sources affected. This is the national panorama in relation to conflicts and that was exacerbated by covid19.

Anahi Ocampo

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Assistant professor at the University of Chile, Department of Forestry Management and its Environment. Ph.D. in Arid Lands Resource Sciences, an Interdisciplinary Graduate Program of the University of Arizona (2013). Studies in Integrated Planning for rural development and environmental management (MSc) in Spain and Environmental Engineering in Bolivia. Over 10 years of experience in the integration of social and environmental dimensions, along with the local and scientific knowledge towards improved environmental management, land planning and climate change adaptation. Last couple of years researching on water security, climate change and participation in the Chilean context. Research interests: Integrated analysis of social-ecological systems, climate change adaptation, knowledge co-production for environmental management and sustainable development.

Science-policy challenges addressing complex water conflicts: The Aculeo Lake process in Chile

Anahí Ocampo-Melgar

The drying of the Aculeo Lake, a 12 km² water body near Santiago de Chile impacted different economic activities and generated deep conflicts among users. A governmental watershed collaborative process was implemented to find solutions for the water scarcity problems, while at the same time, an academic team conducted a surface-groundwater hydrological study to find answers to the lake desiccation. This talk presents insights from both processes as these initiatives collided and collaborated. The science-policy experience shows that i) understanding values and perceptions, along with history of a site, are key for planning a successful collaboration, ii) disagreements over the causes and effects of the water scarcity may not be overcome with modeling tools, and iii) scientists are ill-prepared to address value-driven aspects of water management. The Aculeo Lake desiccation is an example of where neither science by itself, nor public participation alone were enough to properly address the conflicting views of a water related wicked problem. When conflicts are high and attribution of climate change is uncertain, robust science processes and stakeholder collaboration are key in finding management options to reduce the conflict. Transdisciplinary science-policy agendas could better support production of useful and socially acceptable hydrological science.

Ana Britto

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Professor

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Geographer, a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and a PhD in Urbanism from the Institut D'Urbanisme de Paris - Université de Paris XII (Paris-Val-de-Marne). Professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism and PROURB - Postgraduate Program in Urbanism at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, since 1997. Coordinator of LEAU, Laboratory of Urban Water Studies; researcher at the Observatory of Metropolis. Working mainly on the following topics: water and sanitation services management, water sensitive urban design, urban environment, environmental justice, metropolitan governance, and climate change.

New trends on water services privatization in Brazil: conflicts concerning the right to water and SDG6

Ana Lucia Britto

Over the past three decades, processes of financialization, commodification, marketization and privatization have transformed water services in many countries. Brazil is no exception to these broader trends in the transformation of water utilities. Within a context of neoliberal policies implemented in the country since 2018, this presentation explores how Brazilian water supply sector has undergone significant changes, such as an expansion in the participation of private sector agents in water service provision, facilitated and enacted within a new national legal framework. The main challenge to water and sanitation in Brazil, consists in ensure access to water and sanitation for populations located in periurban areas, slums, and other informal settlements, which are very condensed and in rural areas, A key question arises: how to guarantee the profits for private providers and, at the same time, guarantee the access to services to vulnerable populations with little or no ability to pay for them? In a scenario of austerity polices implemented by a neoliberal government, new water welfare policies are not on the political agenda, bringing new issues for the implementation of SDG 6 “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”

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Master and PhD in Environmental Sciences (Institute of Energy and Environment, University of São Paulo, Brazil) and Postdoctoral Researcher (Faculty of Sciences, Universidad de la República-UDELAR, Uruguay). She currently investigates topics related to water policy and management, and hydrosocial approaches (Political Ecology of Water perspective). She is a professor of the Multidisciplinary Seminar at the Faculty of Social Sciences (Unidad Multidisciplinaria) at UDELAR.

Controversial hydraulic project in coastal Uruguay: conflict around privatization and lack of social participation

Natalia Dias Tadeu, Micaela Trimble, Marila Lázaro

More than half of the population of Uruguay is supplied by water from the Santa Lucía River Basin (SLRB), where water quality is impacted by agricultural, industrial, and urban activities. For decades there has been concern about diversifying the water sources supplying this region (Metropolitan area of Montevideo). Here we analyze a conflict about a hydraulic project (“Neptuno”) that involves the construction of a purification plant using water from the Río de la Plata estuary (close to the SLRB). The Neptuno Project, proposed by a consortium of private companies and supported by the Ministry of Environment and the State Water Company (OSE), has been approved by the Presidency of the Republic. However, it has been contested by various social organizations, academics, and unions, among others. For instance, they claim that the project should have been discussed in the formal forums (e.g. basin committees) created after a constitutional reform that determined social participation (in water planning, management and control), and water and sanitation services offered only by state-owned companies. We analyze these and other positions of the actors involved in the socioenvironmental conflict associated with the Neptuno Project, and its implications for water management.

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Micaela Trimble is an Associate Researcher at the South American Institute for Resilience and Sustainability Studies (SARAS), Uruguay. She holds a PhD in Natural Resources and Environmental Management (University of Manitoba). Her areas of expertise include environmental governance and adaptive co-management of social-ecological systems, such as watersheds, small-scale fisheries and marine protected areas, with a geographic focus on South America.