

Call for Papers ÖGS-Kongress Graz, 30.6.-2.7.2025

Studying society through the flow of water: Between political economy and infrastructure studies

Organizer: Silvia Rief, Department of Sociology, University of Innsbruck

The study of waterscapes and hydro-social cycles is an established topic of research within political ecology, environmental anthropology or human geography. Within sociology, attention to the topic has been much more muted, and confined to regions and cities across the globe that suffer from severe water scarcity, water conflicts or water-related health and environmental crises. With progressing climate change, water is becoming a matter of concern also in water-rich countries such as Austria. However, the sociological study of water and hydro-social cycles in the German-speaking countries is in its infancy at best, frequently emerging from interdisciplinary and applied research projects dealing with water management. This session aims to facilitate discussion about theoretical and methodological approaches and research questions that could orient more systematic sociological research in this emerging field. In particular, it aims to explore possible synergies between political economic and economic sociological approaches on the one hand, and STS and infrastructure studies on the other hand. In addition, it intends to showcase current empirical research into the transformation and adaptation of water-related infrastructures. The objective is to enrich both, theory development and empirical study.

Planned format of the session

The aim of the session is to bring together researchers to facilitate debate over theoretical perspectives and current empirical studies on water infrastructures and water services. As anticipated at this stage, the session will be conducted in English as international speakers might also attend.

Please send your paper proposal (max. 300w) by March 27th 2025 to: silvia.rief@uibk.ac.at