



Editors' introduction

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Editors' introduction

Dear readers,

Our fourth issue for 2023 is again composed of articles from the open submissions assembled under two thematic categories: *water governance* and *transboundary waters*. In addition we have included an article from the International Water Resources Association's (IWRA) Publication Mentoring Initiative. We close the issue with two book reviews.

Under the usual category *water governance*, we have included four articles offering good geographical diversity and a variety in the topics.

Guba et al. study the sustainability of multiple-use water systems (MUS). This is a topic we have already published on for the case of Nepal (Clement et al. 2019; Raj et al. 2022). The focus here is on two rural communities in north-western Ghana, which have benefitted from a MUS project. MUS is designed and managed to consider the several uses of water; it focuses on expanding access to water for domestic and productive uses such as small-scale agriculture or microenterprises. In theory, the MUS approach involves low financial costs and moderate investment. The authors confirm the potential of the MUS approach to improve livelihoods in rural Ghana. It has enhanced traditional sources of livelihood and created new opportunities. Unfortunately in the studied communities, the MUS approach did not last, leading to social disruptions. The reason, as is often the case, is the lack of capacities to adopt new approaches that are introduced. According to the authors, capacity-building is required for technical support and creating innovative fund-raising strategies.

With Krpesova and Raska we move to Central Europe and, more precisely, to Czechia. In Europe, floods represent the most serious natural hazards, and Czechia is one of the most affected countries. The authors present a study of the municipal flood plans that represent the most decentralized flood planning documents that complement the obligatory flood risk management plans. The European Union Floods Directive of 2007 aimed at regulating flood risk and has stimulated a shift from traditional flood protection towards holistic and adaptive flood risk management. The new approach represents a challenge for policymaking and risk governance schemes, and requires a collaborative multistakeholder process calling for the integration of spatial planning and water management in flood risk management. Based on this evolution, the authors have explored the processes of drafting the municipal flood plans in Czechia and the practical value assigned to these plans by municipal representatives. According to their findings, the municipalities are well motivated to draft flood plans but have limited capacities. Collaborative efforts remain weak, and in the end the flood plans, which are inadequate, lie unused. There is no doubt that the situation needs improvement with more integration of local and national expectations in a more collaborative process.

Nicolas-Artero adopts an international and historical perspective to describe the Chilean water bureaucracy in the second half of the 20th century. According to the author, research focusing only on the highly controversial 1981 Water Code and the current Constitution hides the influence of foreign actors and institutions in shaping the water bureaucracy from before the 1973 coup d'état until today. Nicolas-Artero demonstrates that from the second half of the 20th century onwards, international donors played an important role in the development of public action frameworks for water, with the cooperation of civil servants in the water institutions who played a central diplomatic role in redefining water policies as a result of exchanges between actors from multiple countries at congresses and various meetings. This legal and institutional complexity of the water sector needs to be considered when thinking of a reform and trying to find a solution to the existing crises. How can one not agree with the author's conclusion that an 'understanding of the geographical, social, political, economic, and cultural specifics of the country should be a prerequisite for any definition of a new water policy'.

Our last article under *water governance* is by Hoominfar, who compares opposition by environmental movements on water transfer projects in Colorado and Western Iran. By looking at the state's role, the author shows how environmental social movements' experiences in the United States (capital democracy) and in Iran (centralized statist system) are similar regarding understanding the projects as a method for the marketization of water and injustice issues, but different in how they play out under neoliberalism. Both water projects intended by their proponents to cover water needs are seen by their opponents as affecting water resources' economic values with serious environmental and social costs. The author concludes that while some outcomes might be the same in Colorado and Iran for achieving the marketization of water, the means that the state/market uses to achieve those ends are different. Future research should thus develop the role of the state in different political-economic systems. This article is our editors' choice for this issue. Its access will be free for three months.

Under *transboundary waters*, Rosenblum explores cooperation over transboundary wetlands through the case of the Hamoun Wetlands, Okavango Delta and Wadden Sea. The author aims to discover the extent to which countries cooperate over shared wetlands, how they do it, what benefits and barriers exist, and what conditions promote cooperation. The author has built her research on international water governance to introduce the concept of transboundary wetland cooperation. While transboundary water management inherently includes wetlands, these may remain insufficiently covered and protected. New perspectives covering wetlands in their specificities can be adopted from the Ramsar Convention and other legal frameworks.

Our final article is from the first IWRA mentoring programme (Varady et al., 2022). Raut et al. examine the effectiveness of gender and social inclusion policies in water resource management at the community level in two distinctly different localities in Nepal. In both cases, and as one would expect, it is difficult to combine devolution of water rights to the community level with changes in existing social and power structures. It may in effect make matters worse. The authors hope that Nepal's move to a federal model may give local governments leverage over communities to induce them to be more inclusive.

The mentoring initiative is now calling for applications from early career (35 years old and younger) water professionals and academics to participate in

the second round of this unique opportunity to be mentored by a senior expert in the field to produce a manuscript at the interface of science and policy that we will consider publishing in *Water International*. The deadline to apply for this activity is 31 July 2023. For more specifics, see ww.iwra.org/call-for-applications-pmi. Don't wait!

We close out the articles with two book reviews: one by Lee of Biba's analysis of cross-border conflict and cooperation on the Mekong (Lancang) River, with focus on China; the other by Nguyen of Biswas et al. who explore the factors behind the surprising success over the past three decades of the water authority of Phnom Penh, a downstream metropolis along the Mekong.

The last item in this issue is the announcement of the Best Paper Awards for 2022. This time it was a virtual tie, so we have two Best Paper Awards and no Honourable Mention to present. The announcement for 2021 appeared in the April special issue.

IWRA's XVIIIth Congress is fast approaching. It will be held in Beijing, China, on 11–15 September 2023 (<https://www.worldwatercongress.com>). We hope you will join us there!

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