# P25 / Centering Community in Climate Change Resilience, Water Governance and Policy Innovation

**Topic :** ENVIRONMENT, SDGs, ENERGY

**Chair :** Carolyn Johns (Toronto Metropolitan University)

**Second Chair :** Debora VanNijnatten (Wilfrid Laurier University)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Public policy scholars and practitioners have long espoused the benefits of involving communities directly in decision-making and policy development – not only for the communities themselves but also with the goal of making better decisions, designing implementation and improving outcomes. Effective policy-making and policy outputs require a deeper understanding and direct involvement of the targets of policy – most often communities – and diverse scholarship has interrogated and challenged how to think about the appropriate scales for real policy change, with considerable hope focused on the community level (Luluquisen & Pettis 2016). Indeed, there is a well-established body of public policy and public administration scholarship which advocates for inclusive policy processes that can bring ‘street-level’ knowledge and experience into decision-making and redress power imbalances for the purpose of attaining better outcomes (e.g., Freudenberg & Tsui 2014; Rijal 2023).

More recently, public policy scholars and practitioners are focusing their analytical lenses on how communities are responding to the myriad impacts of climate change, which are rapidly becoming evident at the local level, particularly as water governance challenges (Ross et.al.2016; OECD 2024). Here, the focus is on how communities can adapt and how resilient they need to be as conditions transform around them, but also how we might harness community knowledge and practices on the ground to improve our policy and governance responses to accelerating climate change (Burton & Mustelin 2013). Of particular concern are significant changes to water resource quality and availability, which pose existential threats to livelihoods, safety and security, as well as cultural and social cohesion. Indeed, local communities are seen as key to achieving sustainable water management since they are closest to, and most able to, influence individual values, activities and behaviours (Warburton & Yoshimura 2005).

The primary objective of this panel is to explore the role of communities in policy and governance responses to climate impacts, particularly (but not exclusively) in respect to water resources. We invite papers that explore several research questions:

First, what is the state of our understanding of community resilience and adaptation in the face of climate change? Given the in many communities climate change is manifesting as water challenges, what role do communities play in policy innovation in response?

Second, given their critical importance to the success of managing resources under conditions of accelerating climate change, how might we move local communities to a more central position in our conceptual, theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding and enhancing policy-making and governance frameworks – in spite of scholarship and empirical work that portray local communities as "vulnerable", “marginalized”, “underrepresented”, and “disempowered” (Espindola & Villar 2023).

Third, how much do we know about the mechanisms that exist to channel and support community engagement in climate change and water policy-making, including across scales and across borders? Given that 40% of the world's population lives in river and lake basins that comprise two or more countries and are generally governed by institutionalized policies and policy actors, how can we ensure that scholarship focuses on the key roles that local communities play in climate change and water governance? In addition, what is the role of communities vis-à-vis the whole range of public and private users involved in inter-state management arrangements?

We are particularly interested in what innovative research approaches might be used to exploring community roles and resilience vis-a-vis climate policy and governance responses. Further, what is the potential yet also the challenges associated with community-based and community-engaged research in this area?

## CALL FOR PAPERS

We are interested in papers which embrace ‘the community’ in climate-water governance and policy

processes, research approaches and methodologies. Papers that examine the role of communities in existing climate change and water policies, agreements, and institutions; that focus on rethinking policy approaches in such a way that community needs, experiences and insights are central in policy research and processes; that experiment with new methodologies and empirical tools to investigate community impact and influence at various scales and levels; and that examine how community adaptation and resilience might be supported through global and transboundary water policies and governance are very welcome.

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## Session 1

Thursday, July 3rd 16:00 to 18:00 (E2)

### Bringing the Local to the Centre in Transboundary Water Governance: An Assessment Framework and Application in the U.S.-Mexico Rio Grande/Bravo Basin

Debora VanNijnatten (Wilfrid Laurier University)

### Adapting Transboundary Water Treaties for Resilience: A Sister-City Approach to the 1944 Water Treaty in the Rio Grande/Bravo Basin

Vianey Rueda (University of Michigan)

### (Virtual) Problem brokers and policy entrepreneurs: NGOs and CBOs in the Salton Sea, California

Isabel Jorgensen (University of Waterloo)

Graham Epstein (University of Waterloo)

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## Session 2

Friday, July 4th 08:00 to 10:00 (SME-F5)

### Community-Based Participatory Research in Water Governance and Policy Transformations: Working Towards Resilience

Amanda Shankland (Toronto Metropolitan University)

Carolyn Johns (Toronto Metropolitan University)

### Using Participatory Action Research to Enhance Local Knowledge in Northern Laos

Yingshan Lau (National University of Singapore)

### Human-Nature Relationships Based on Ethnic Knowledge in Thailand and Japan for Watershed Forest Management Affecting Climate-Induced Disaster Policy

Sudarat Rattanapong (Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy)

### Social technologies to guarantee access to water for the rural population living in poverty: the Brazilian experience

Vitor Santana (Ministry of Social Development of Brazil)