**Who Controls Asia's Rivers?  Studies of International and Domestic Contestation and Cooperation**

As so-called fugitive resources that frequently cross political boundaries, control of rivers have long posed critical and highly charged challenges to coordination across individual streams and entire complex drainage basins. From ancient times Asian societies organized a variety of local and regional organizations for resolving disputes, but the development of new materials (e.g., reinforced concrete), explosives and sophisticated power machinery in the post World War II era have increased engineers’ ability to alter water flow so dramatically that residents over distances of hundreds of miles are affected across broad regions and national boundaries. The panel begins with Daniel Haines’ discussion of the ways in which long-standing rivals/combatants still managed to resolve key issues in control of the Indus River, but not the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers. Vincent Lagendijk also examines the successful Indus River negotiations as a model for treating parallel issues in the Mekong River of Southeast Asia. Long-distance coordination of river use is not simply a problem for international concern, but remains a problem in domestic politics as well. Philip Brown takes up the extraordinary case of the Yamba Dam in the context of post-war Japanese river managements. Respondent Petra van Dam draws on the experience of her current comparative research on Dutch and Vietnamese water management to offer context and comment on the three presentations.

**Organizer:**

**Philip C. Brown**, Professor, The Ohio State University, 230 West 17th Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210 USA

Office phone: +1 614 292-0904

E-mail: brown.113@osu.edu

**Academic discipline**: History

**Research Interests**: Flood and landslide amelioration in early modern and modern Japan; Japanese environmental history; early modern and modern Japanese rural society and land systems.

**Recent publications:**

* *Environment and Society in the Japanese Islands: From Prehistory to the Present*, co-edited with Bruce Batten, Oregon State University Press, April 2015.
* “Floods, Drainage and River Projects in Early Modern Japan,” in *Environment and Society in the Japanese Islands: From Prehistory to the Present*, co-edited with Bruce Batten, Oregon State University Press, April 2015.
* “Call it A 'Wash'? Historical Perspectives on Conundrums of Technological Modernization, Flood Amelioration and Disasters in Modern Japan,” **The Asia-Pacific Journal, Vol. 12, Issue 7, No. 2, February 17, 2014** *Japan Focus. Special Issue 3.11+3: Japan's Triple Disaster Three Years On.* Edited by Paul Jobin and David McNeill
* “Constructing Nature,” *Japan at Nature’s Horizon*, Brett Walker, Julia Thomas and Ian Miller, eds., University of Hawai’i Press, 2013, 90-114.

**Other Presenters:**

**Daniel Haines**, Lecturer in Environmental History, University of Bristol, B.46, 13 Woodland Road, University of Bristol, Bristol BS8 1TB, UK

Office phone: +44 117 33 17079

E-mail: [Daniel.Haines@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Daniel.Haines@bristol.ac.uk)

**Academic discipline**: History

**Research Interests**: I work on modern environmental history, focusing on South Asia. My major projects to date have focused on rivers - whether damming them (as in my first book) or struggles between nations and political groupings to control them (as in my current research project, 'Rivers Divided: water, sovereignty and territoriality in the Indus Basin after Partition'). Through these and other projects I have interests in spatial history, colonialism and decolonization, international relations, and interdisciplinary links with political geography.

**Recent publications**:

* *Building the Empire, Building the Nation: Development, legitimacy, and hydro-politics in Sind, 1919-1969*, Oxford University Press (2013)
* ‘Disputed Rivers: Sovereignty, territory and state-making in South Asia, 1948-1951’, *Geopolitics* 19:3 (2014), 632-655
* ‘A “Commonwealth Moment” in South Asian Decolonization’, in Leslie James and Elisabeth Leake (eds), *Decolonization and the Cold War: Negotiating independence*, Bloomsbury (2015)

**Vincent Lagendijk**, Assistant Professor, Maastricht University, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, History Department,

Grote Gracht 76, room 1.18, PO Box 616, 6200MD Maastricht, The Netherlands

Office phone: +31(0)433882532

E-mail: vincent.lagendijk@maastrichtuniversity.nl

**Academic discipline:** History

**Research interests:** Transnational history of the Tennessee Valley Authority, History of Technology, International History, European integration history

**Recent publications:**

* “Divided Development: Post-War Ideas on River Utilization and Their Influence on the Development of the Danube.” *The International History Review* 37, no. 1 (2015): 80–98.
* “The Structure of Power: The UNECE and East-West Electricity Connections, 1947–1975.” *Comparativ: Zeitschrift Für Globalgeschichte Und Vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung* 24, no. 1 (2014): 50–65.
* Schot, Johan, and Vincent Lagendijk. “Technocratic Internationalism in the Interwar Years: Building Europe on Motorways and Electricity Networks.” *Journal of Modern European History* 6, no. 2 (2008): 196–217.

**Respondent:**

Prof. Dr. Petra J.E.M. van Dam

Hoogleraar Waterstaatsgeschiedenis

TELEFOON: 020-598.6434

e-mail: [p.j.e.m.van.dam@vu.nl](mailto:p.j.e.m.van.dam@vu.nl)

Professor van Dam is a specialist in early 20th century Dutch water management and is currently commencing a project that studies the Red River, Tonkin, Vietnam.

**Presentations:**

**The Phantom of Cooperation: An Afterlife of The Indus Waters Treaty**, **Daniel Haines**

The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty has a reputation as a rare instance of cooperation between an otherwise belligerent India and Pakistan. Based on archival research in South Asia and the US, this paper argues that the treaty failed to resolve broader tensions, but did establish a precedent by defining a river basin as a unitary object of development (and subject of negotiation). The idea of organizing cooperative development across a whole river reappeared in American proposals for resolving an India-Pakistan dispute over the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers in divided Bengal (East Pakistan, now modern Bangladesh) during the later 1960s and 1970s. Such proposals, however, met with outright hostility from Indian politicians, bureaucrats, and press. The spectacular failure of river-basin scale cooperation in eastern South Asia contrasted with its relative success in the Indus Basin. The story of Ganges-Brahmaputra negotiations – or, more usually, the reasons for the lack of them – demonstrates the historical and geographical peculiarity of the original Indus treaty. The paper's broad conclusion is that schemes geared towards encouraging broader cooperation in South Asia rather than solving specific and clearly-defined sets of problems, tend to decontextualize the 'success'.

Keywords: International cooperation, rivers, India, Pakistan, United States

### **'We Can Make Money, But We Can't Make Water': The World Bank's Development Diplomacy in the Indus and Mekong Basins,** **Vincent Lagendijk**,

After World War II, international organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank recognized rivers as a potential resource and backbone for regional development. According to a recent inventory, the world has 263 international river basins. River therefore not only act as potential resources, they also constitute potential problems. The World Bank gained extensive experience dealing with both river development and mediating between antagonizing riparian states, which gained the label of 'development diplomacy'.

Based on original archival research at the World Bank and the United Nations, this paper examines how the World Bank's experiences from the Indus Basin mediation (leading to the Indus Water Treaty of 1960) influenced its actions in the Lower Mekong Basin. It seeks to unravel how the World Bank the origins, application, and evolution of a non-political, technical approach to riverine conflicts by tying them to development schemes.

Keywords: International cooperation, rivers, India, Pakistan, World Bank, United Nations

**Desktop Planning, Local Knowledge and the Yamba Dam Project (Gunma, Japan), Philip C. Brown**

On January 22, 2015, construction began on a large gravity dam on the Agatsuma River. From planning to the start of construction of the dam took a “mere” 66 years. En route to that date, planners motivated by a desire to prevent massive flooding in the Tokyo/Kanto region layed out a massive civil engineering project that restructured all of the major, and many tributary rivers over five provinces. The Yamba Dam was the final piece of that project, but its construction more than a half century after its construction was announced was not the product of the original plan. Engineers in Tokyo planned a project that ignored local conditions which made construction highly problematic, made inadequate provision for relocating affected populations, took no account of the area’s economic foundations, and in the long run did much to destroy even those parts of the town that were not directly affected by the construction of the dam and its reservoir. Controversial from its inception and ignoring local wishes in newly democratized Japan, this project ultimately became the poster child for environmentalists’ criticism of overbuilding and a focal point in the 2009 parliamentary election.

Keywords: Japan, dams, local knowledge, environmental criticism, democracy