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Water Security Across Scales: Intersections of the International

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Over the past two decades, water security studies have expanded rapidly. Global risks to water frequently rank among the most prevalent challenges in major surveys by the World Economic Forum. Worldwide, freshwater ecosystems are severely threatened, and urban water challenges make headlines from Cape Town and Rio de Janeiro to Flint, Michigan. The purpose of this panel is to examine water security across scales in order to consider how intersecting social, historical, environmental, political, and economic factors affect both empirical explanations and conceptual concerns. The panel has several aims: First, it examines how understandings of water security have evolved alongside new understandings of global risks—from economic and political crises to those arising from impacts on water systems in which the division of the ‘human’ from the ‘natural’ is increasingly blurred. Second, it juxtaposes papers that use different scales of analysis in order to identify aspects of water security challenges that may intersect in surprising ways with both larger- and smaller-scale dynamics. Third, it identifies future areas for water security studies through papers that examine understudied aspects of water insecurity. Together, the three aims offer an opportunity to rethink the boundaries and connections of water systems that connect the everyday to the ecological and to the international.

Track Classification: Environment Working Group