

Call for contributions special issue Die Erde

“Plural Waters: Engaging Multiple Knowledges, Methods and Practices”

Guest editors (in alphabetical order)

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This special issue brings together different approaches (concepts, practices and methods) to pluralize water research and governance. As well-established scholarship and practice in geography and beyond argue, pluralizing water entails engaging with water not as a single, uniform resource but as a multiplicity of ecological, cultural, spiritual, ecological, political, and livelihood relationships (Bourguignon et al., 2023; Haeffner et al., 2024; Liao & Schmidt, 2023; Linton, 2022; Rusca et al., 2025; Vogt & Walsh, 2021; Yates et al., 2017). The use of the term *waters* - intentionally plural - emphasizes this multiplicity of relations, as well as the diverse ways of knowing them (Bourguignon et al., 2023; Vogt & Walsh, 2021). Such a perspective builds on relational understandings of water and society, in which the two are seen as coproducing one another shaped by historically and geographically uneven power relations (Linton & Budds, 2014). Pluralizing water calls for *taking seriously and actively engaging with the different ways individuals and communities experience, care for, know, value and ultimately make rivers, wetlands, aquifers and oceans* - as living beings, sacred entities, rights, commons, economic resources or sources of livelihoods and identity. This is not simply about presenting different yet equally valid perspectives on waters; rather, it involves recognizing and actively confronting the power dynamics, conflicts, and injustices that shape unequal relationships to waters - even among communities sharing the same territory (Hoogesteger et al., 2017). It is about recognizing that it matters how one thinks ontologically, epistemologically and materially about/with waters (Kanesu, 2025; Krause & Strang, 2016; Peters & Steinberg, 2019). And relatedly, it entails exploring ways towards staying with differences and partial perspectives (Acevedo-Guerrero et al., 2024; West et al., 2024) while interrogating what it means to relate well with others (Cattellino et al., 2019).

Pluralizing water has significant implications for research and governance practices as it means recognizing that there is no single “water problem” (or crisis) that can be understood and “solved” with a single “solution” (Nightingale et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2024). Rather it calls for new creative ways to engage with a diversity of perspectives, knowledges, visions and waters. As ways forward several authors propose grounding research and management practices (Zwarteveen et al., 2025), others discuss inter- and transdisciplinary modes of work as spaces towards potential mutual listening and dialogue (Luetkemeier et al., 2021; Rusca et al., 2026; Söller et al., 2026), others reflect on knowledge practices such a modelling but also writing (Alba et al., 2025; Franke & Peters, 2025; Hodžić, 2026), on legal frameworks (Parsons et al., 2021) and creative engagements with/through waters (Caretta & Turley, 2024; Tremblay & Harris,

2018). Together this literature suggests that engaging with different waters requires empirical research and management practices as well as theoretical frameworks that are attuned to the specificities of places and flows, the lived experiences of communities and bodies, their historical contexts, knowledge and visions. At the same time, it is crucial to make visible and engage with the relations between sites, people, aquatic life and waters while questioning universal solutions and approaches. Foremost, researching waters calls for an ongoing commitment to dwell with difference - embracing ambiguity and the messiness of narratives that do not easily converge into a single, unified story (Avecedo-Guerrero et al. 2024). All this, while people (users, water managers and decision makers) are facing everyday urgent needs to find ways forward to navigate water crises (Frick-Trzebitzky et al., 2025; Wilson et al., 2024).

This special issue aims to learn with and from diverse practices of plural water research and governance. Its goal is to first foster dialogue between different approaches that seek to expand the possibilities for reimagining and expanding plural water across real, future, and speculative registers as well as across different watery spaces – oceans, rivers, wetlands, aquifers, coastal and tidal regions. Second, we aim to contribute to create new pathways to do critical water (geography) research and to foster reflections on forms of collaborations. Rather than promoting a single framework, concept, or method, the issue seeks to highlight and learn from a diversity of perspectives and practices. Our interests span the challenges and struggles of pluralizing water as well as resistances against attempts of pluralization. At the same time, we are interested in encouraging experiences of pluralization that help move towards more just water relations.

We welcome contributions addressing the following aspects (not limited to):

- Examples of pluralizing water across research, policy, governance, and society
- Tensions that arise while pluralizing water and approaches for managing them
- Ways to bridge - and, at times, deliberately not bridge - different perspectives in research and policy
- Ways to think across multiple watery environments from oceans to aquifers
- Experiences navigating epistemic and ontological differences in water-related research, policy and activism
- Reflections on research and governance practices weaving together diverse knowledges and perspectives with/in geography.

We welcome submissions in English and from researchers at all career stages and from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds.

Please submit your abstract (150-200 words) and a short bio (max. 100 words) to Rossella Alba (rossella.alba@hifmb.de), Fanny Frick-Trzebitzky (fanny.frick@isoe.de) and Rebekka Kanesu (rebekka.kanesu@uni-wuerzburg.de).

Deadline: April 17th 2026.

The special issue will be published in early 2027.

More info about the journal: <https://www.die-erde.org> and for more info about the different formats: <https://www.die-erde.org/index.php/die-erde/about/submissions#authorGuidelines>

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