

**American Association of Geographers Annual Conference
Denver, Colorado, USA (March 23-27, 2023)**

Proposed Session(s) Title: *Unconventional Waters and the Contemporary Dynamics of Power and Politics*

Organizers:

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Keywords: Desalination, Human Geography, Political Geography, Political Ecology, Political Economy, Socio-ecological Fixes, Climate Adaptation, Financialization of Nature, Sociology of Development, Development Studies, Environmental Sociology, Anthropology of Infrastructure

Call for Papers:

In recent years, the social sciences have developed a range of studies of the uneven social dynamics surrounding water in varying contexts. “Unconventional waters” such as desalination and recycled water are now proliferating through the hydro-social cycle through myriad natural, social, political, economic, and cultural configurations, originating from small-scale technologies to mega-infrastructure projects across the World-system. Investigating this “uncooperative commodity,” as Karen Bakker (2005) calls it, scholars have used issues surrounding “new” waters to expose the tensions societies face regarding the use, allocation, and access to water resources as well as how to adapt to climate change. Our session(s) at this year’s Annual American Association of Geographers (AAG) meeting aim to excavate the limits and potentialities of this pattern.

In the case of desalination, while engineers have touted its merits across its rural, urban, oceanic, and inland applications, the emerging social science scholarship has begun to show troubling trends. Encounters at this emergent resource frontier have not necessarily eased perceived situations of water scarcity but may in fact compound socio-spatial inequalities as Capital seeks to produce, in Andreas Malm’s terms, a *stock resource* from a *flow* (2016). The quest for unconventional water, scholars have argued, marks an important – and potentially transformative – change in the hydropolitics of capitalism (Swyngedouw 2013; Gandy 2014; March 2015; Williams 2022). Desalination thus presents itself as a profound site of contradiction facing a climatically changing and politically contentious world-ecology (O’Neill 2020; 2022a, b). Furthermore, as desalination is linked to the circuits of finance capital, new research is needed to understand and expose emerging patterns of accumulation, dispossession, and delivery (Loftus and March 2016).

We are seeking empirical or theoretical papers that develop a critical understanding of unconventional waters of any form, from any region, that illuminate questions about inequality, social power, ideology, expertise, and political economy, among others. We specifically encourage original research submissions originating from scholars working in social science traditions.

If you are interested in participating, **please email all three organizers (emails above) with your abstract (~200 words) and whether you will attend AAG 2023 in person or remotely by October 28, 2022.** We plan to accommodate both in-person and remote presenters, and we will announce the chosen abstracts in November 2022.

References

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