The world’s waters are a powerful historical force in their own right, and their materiality puts the predominance of human agency into question. Recent historiography presents a variety of trans-disciplinary paradigms like nature-culture, enviro-technical systems, or socio-natural sites. They creatively frame societal changes and anthropogenic constants through time, in rare cases even offering a longue-durée perspective that leads from antiquity to the Anthropocene. In this contested ‘age of humans’, whose agency is considered a geo-physical force, water has become ever more coveted as a commodity with conflicts ensuing over its accessibility. Here, much is still to be learned about water management in a diachronic approach that contrasts the ideas and ideals of empires, nation states and international institutions through (proto-)capitalist and socialist regimes in a world connecting.
Thursday, 2 May 2024

14:00–14:30 Opening Remarks

14:30–16:00 Leipzig on Water
Sophie Lindemann (Leipzig): Reconstructing the Medieval Water City of Leipzig through Archival Sources, Old Maps, Toponyms and Archaeological Finds


16:00–17:00 Heritage vs. Resource Exploitation in Urban Spaces and Beyond
Matthias Hardt (Leipzig): Mills, Millraces and Weirs on the Elbe, Havel and Spree in the High and Late Middle Ages

Michał Kępski (Poznań): Evolution of the Warta River Waterscape in Poznań. A Heritagisation Perspective

17:00–17:30 Coffee Break

17:30 Keynote: Dirk van Laak (Leipzig): Water as Infrastructure. Assessing the Fluvial Anthropocene in the German West

Reception and Discussion over Dinner
Friday, 3 May 2024

9:00–10:30 Water-Infrastructure-Conflict
Lutz Häfner (Bielefeld): Living Water? The Moskva River as a (Re)Source of Both Death and Life in the 19th and early 20th Centuries

Andrei Vinogradov (Leipzig): Fish vs. Oil. Volga Fisheries and Industrial Pollution of the River in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia

Constantin Iordachi (Vienna): Taming the Danube. River Infrastructure and Imperial Rivalry at the Lower Danube

10:30–11:00 Coffee Break

11:00–12:30 Wetland Transformations
Nataša Henig Miščič (Ljubljana): The Ljubljana Marshes. Human Agency and the Attempts of Turning the Area into a Fertile Granary

Luminiţa Gătejel (Regensburg): Turning Wetlands into »Productive« Land. Riverbank Engineering in Interwar Romania

Artan R. Hoxha (Tirana/Pittsburgh): Conquering Hydroscapes. Disciplining Waters, Gardening Nation, Engineering Inequalities. An Albanian Anthropogenic History

12:30–14:00 Lunch Break
14:00–15:30 Narratives-Imagination-Materialities
David Manolo Sailer (Vienna): In Disciplined Waters. Navigating the Fluid Histories, Narratives, and Sociopolitics of the Danube Region
Clemens Günther (Berlin): Micronesia in Macro-Perspective. Environmental Crisis in Eastern European Travelogues on Oceania

15:30–16:00 Coffee Break

16:00–17:00 Martin Schmid (Vienna): Hydroscapes. Observations on the State of the Field

17:00 Matthias Hardt (Leipzig): A Guided Tour of Leipzig’s Millraces in Past and Present
The Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) focuses its research on the regions between the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea and the Adriatic from late antiquity until the present day in a comparative perspective. We examine transformations and entanglements in a globalizing world. The institute thus seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of political, economic and social developments in the countries, societies and cultures of East Central and Eastern Europe.

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The Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) is one of the largest and longest established research institutions of its kind in Germany – its foundation dates back to 1930. Among others, historians, economists and political scientists work at the IOS. The institute researches the history as well as the economic and political development of Eastern and Southeast Europe, with a focus on the period since around 1800. Its multidisciplinary research focuses on transnational and comparative issues.

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Venue: GWZO, Specks Hof (Entrance A), 4th floor Reichsstrasse 4, 04109 Leipzig

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