



PROGRAM ON
WATER 
GOVERNANCE

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Final Report

COMPARATIVE WATER GOVERNANCE IN URBAN SITES OF AFRICA RESEARCH PROJECT (CWGAR)

Final update on L. Harris, SSHRC funded project on Water Governance in Accra and Cape Town: Access, Citizenship, and Narrative (2013-2019)

Project overview

The CWGAR project is a multi-year, multi-sited, research project of the [EDGES](#) (Environment and Development: Gender Equity and Sustainability) research collaborative and UBC's [Program on Water Governance](#), led by Dr. Leila Harris. The project involves several current and former EDGES and PoWG members: Dr. Lucy Rodina, Emma Luker, Scott McKenzie, Dr. Crystal Tremblay, and Dr. Julian S Yates, in addition to earlier contributions by [EDGES alumni](#): Dr. Cynthia Morinville, Megan Peloso and Dr. Elizabeth Dapaah. The team is based out of the University of British Columbia, with partners at the University of Ghana-Legon and at the University of Western Cape, South Africa. We also have several ongoing collaborations with faculty members at the University of Cape Town and with several NGOs (Environmental Monitoring Group and Iliso Care Society in Cape Town, and ISODEC in Accra). EDGES work is broadly concerned with research on marginalized and vulnerable populations (e.g., women, the impoverished, residents in underserved sites) and seeks to deepen knowledge and advance action

on equity dimensions of socio-institutional questions related to resource use, access, and politics. The work of the Program on Water Governance involves interdisciplinary research on water sustainability, as well as promoting dialogue with communities and decision-makers.

This project fits well between these mandates, with its focus on underserved sites in Accra, and Cape Town and particular interest in water access, use, and governance. Our work draws from diverse research traditions and methods, including those associated with political ecology, feminist and postcolonial research, critical development studies, and coupled social-ecological systems approaches. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used for the project, including interviews, focus groups, document and policy analysis, participatory video, and statistical analysis of several surveys. The CWGAR project has a specific focus on water access and governance in Accra, Ghana and Cape Town, South Africa. Our studies have focused on the intersections of water access/governance and citizenship in impoverished urban, peri-urban and underserved sites (e.g., Khayletisha and Phillippi in South Africa; Ashaiman, and Teshie in Accra). The project also analyzes broad water governance trends in South Africa and Ghana, including the effects of neoliberal policies and market instruments in the water realm (including privatization, participatory governance, full-cost recovery measures, and so forth.)

Funding sources

Funding has been generously provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC, Grant No. 453-2013-1145), the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies at UBC, and the Center for International Governance Innovation. While the initial SSHRC grant is now closed, there is still some work to be finalized in the coming year. We have also successfully secured a new grant that will engage some of these themes, with collaborators W. Jepson (TAMU), M. Galvin (Univ. Johannesburg), S. Walsh (UBC) entitled “Beyond Access: Comparative Dimensions of Non-Material Dimensions of Water Insecurities” (SSHRC Grant no. 435-2018-0316)

Project Goals

This project had a number of goals defined at the outset that evolved over time. The original objectives were: 1) To analyze the effects and experiences of shifts in contemporary water governance among relatively impoverished and underserved communities in Accra, Ghana and Cape Town, South Africa; 2) To analyze relationships between water use, access, governance, and citizenship; 3) To develop new approaches for narrative analysis, particularly for political ecology; 4) To contribute to policy debates regarding possibilities for extending water access and promoting participatory governance, particularly in underserved areas. In each of these case study sites, as well as through the body of our work we seek to connect with partners to build and promote research capacity and as a means to disseminate knowledge.

Project Timeline

2011

Work led by C. Morinville on participatory water governance and services in several sites in Accra, including in Teshie, Nima, Ayidiki, Sukura. This resulted in several publications, including: [Policy brief for the Centre for International Governance Innovation](#), [chapter in Contemporary Water Governance in the Global South \(2013\)](#) and [publication in Ecology and Society \(2014\)](#) and [WIREs Water \(2017\)](#).

2012

Implementation of a 487 household survey implemented with University of Western Cape-AOW (J. Goldin and team in the Anthropology of Water Group) and colleagues at the University of Ghana-Legon (A. Darkwah). The survey was conducted in two sites in and around Accra (Teshie and Ashaiman) and two sites in Cape Town (Khayelitsha and Phillipi), using the following survey instruments: [South Africa survey instrument 2012](#) & [Ghana survey instrument 2012](#).

Research by two MA students in Accra, C. Morinville and M. Peloso, focused on participatory water governance institutions in Accra (Local Water Boards), and everyday access to water and participatory governance possibilities in Ashaiman. A field debrief and community response forum was organized to solicit feedback on the analysis of the Local Water Boards. The work in Ashaiman resulted in the following publication: [Peloso and Morinville, Water Alternatives, 2014](#), documenting everyday practices involved in procuring water for daily needs that routinely lead residents outside of the official water supply system.

In South Africa, initial qualitative fieldwork was conducted in Khayelitsha, South Africa (Dr. L. Rodina), in collaboration with the Iliso care society. Interviews with NGOs and government officials were conducted in both Accra and Cape Town, undertaken by all members of the project team (L. Harris and L. Rodina for the Cape Town work). This research has resulted in several publications, including one focused on [lived experiences of the human right to water Rodina \(2016\)](#), and one on [notions of citizenship and the state in relation to water services and infrastructure in Khayelitsha \(Rodina and Harris, 2016\)](#).

2013

[Field debrief with community members](#) in Khayelitsha based on MA research by Dr. L. Rodina, facilitated by Iliso Care Society and the Environmental Monitoring Group.

Field work in Accra, Ghana in Madina and Ga Mashie, focused on water access and governance, led by MA student Elizabeth Koryoo Dapaah. This work involved a 200 household survey, in addition to a range of interviews with local government officials and community members.

L. Harris was also awarded a SSHRC partnership development grant for [International WaTERS](#): Water related Training, Education and Research in the South, involving several partners in the earlier CWGAR collaborations.

2014 and 2015

Initiation of a participatory video project, led by SSHRC post-doctoral fellow Dr. Crystal Tremblay. Participatory video workshops were conducted in Site C, Khayelitsha in collaboration with the Iliso Care Society and with support from the Environmental Monitoring Group; and in Teshie, Accra, in partnership with ISODEC. The video '[Water is Life](#)' is a collaboration with ISODEC documents community challenges related to water and sanitation in Teshie, Accra. The film '[It's Your Chance](#)' is a co-production with the Iliso Care Society in Khayelitsha based on community interviews youth conducted on water and sanitation concerns in the community (Site C, Khayelitsha). These videos have been screened in both communities and used in focus groups with local government officials as a communication and action research tool to raise awareness on issues related to water and sanitation.

2016

For six months in 2016, Leila Harris served as a [resident Fellow](#) at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS). In August 2016, several of the EDGES members worked to organize and host a Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies funded [workshop](#) on Water Equity and Resilience in southern Africa, with co-funding from SSHRC, NEPAD Water Centers of Excellence, the South African Water Resources Commission and several other sponsors (also as part of the International WaTERS collaborations). This workshop brought together approximately 35 scholars and activists from throughout southern Africa, and was a great success. Additionally, L. Rodina and L. Harris participated in a workshop on Water Equity and Resilience led by Gina Ziervogel and Lorena Pasquini from the University of Cape Town and Mark Pelling of King's College London and supported a workshop organized by the Cape Town based NGO, the Environmental Monitoring Group. Emma Luker conducted her MSc field work in Cape Town which looked at water supply diversification and groundwater exploration in the face of the ongoing drought in Cape Town, South Africa.

2017

Dr. [Lucy Rodina](#) published an [op-ed in The Conversation](#) on the situation of water management in Cape Town, as the city was in the midst of facing one of its worst droughts in over a century. Scott McKenzie conducted his field work in Cape Town and Accra, focusing on community groups and those in the legal profession who were working collaboratively to address water related issues. Emma Luker successfully defended her MSc thesis and graduated. Her thesis was titled "[Transitioning towards water supply diversification : possibilities for groundwater in Cape Town, South Africa](#)"

2018

Dr. Leila Harris was a Scholar in residence with the Peter Wall Institute for Advanced Studies at UBC. Among other engagements, she presented a seminar titled “Implementing, Narrating, and Resisting the Human Right to Water” at Texas A&M University and also at Ohio University as part of the Global Solidarities speaker series. Also, together with Prof. Jiaying Zhao and Martine Visser, Professor Harris wrote [an op-ed in *The Conversation*](#) to discuss key tactics to enable water savings in the city of Cape Town. Dr. Lucy Rodina successfully completed her PhD and graduated. Her dissertation was titled “[Tracing and situating water resilience across scales.](#)” Emma Luker published her work on groundwater governance focused on Cape Town (see bibliography below). Dr. Crystal Tremblay led the publication of a piece in *Geoforum* on our participatory video work in Cape Town and Accra. Professor Harris was also invited to join the steering committee of the [HWISE-RCN](#), a research network on household water insecurity that significantly broadens and extends the work we have done in the two sites that were the focus of this project, also putting our work into conversation with a range of interdisciplinary scholars working in diverse contexts.

2019

Prof. Jacqueline Goldin completed a related special issue of *Human Geography (Hydro-social Intersections, Volume 12, Number 1, 2019)*. This [special issue](#) captures key themes and case study material thus adding to the body of knowledge and understanding of resilience and vulnerability in the southern Africa region and beyond. Several CWGAR members published as part of a [special forum of *IJURR on Water Scarcity beyond Crisis*](#), focusing on the work in Accra. Dr. Lucy Rodina published [several articles](#) on themes of water resilience, including focus on the case of [Cape Town](#), while Leila Harris published a [piece on state-society dimensions of water services](#) in the journal *Environment and Planning C*, and a chapter based on what she presented at an earlier meeting in Paris was published (see full list below).

The majority of the work for the CWGAR project has been completed. Scott McKenzie continues to analyze data and draft articles related to his research in Cape Town and Accra, while Professor Harris continues to work on themes of the human right to water, links to democracy, narrative methods, and follow on work related to non-material dimensions of water insecurity. Parallel efforts related to the International WaTERS Network also wrapped up with the launch of the online training modules, link [here](#).

Our [website](#) is the best source for up to date news on our projects. There, you can find links to research papers, participatory videos, policy briefs and an overview of data sets.

Project related publications

(www.edges.ubc.ca for full list)

Publication Totals

Journal Articles: 17

Book Chapters: 5

Policy Briefs or Reports: 4

Videos: 2

Op-Eds: 2

Edited Volume: 1

Tremblay, C. & Harris, L. (forthcoming). Critical video engagements: empathy, subjectivity and changing narratives of water resources, In: Chandrasekaran, P. (Ed.) "Resources of Water". IntechOpen.

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