
Geneva Water Hub - Research Network Consolidating Grants Recipient Info Sheet

“Negotiation, Tinkering and Bricolage: The Strategies of Rural Outliers and Street-level Bureaucrats in Everyday Water Politics”



Background

Dr Jeltsje Sanne Kemerink-Seyoum is a water engineer and a social scientist.

Scientific Interest

Dr Kemerink studies water allocation policies and practices, focusing on questions of equity and social justice. Her research includes the study of different modalities of regulating water flows, including technologies and institutions, and of ways to understand and legitimize these. Dr Kemerink uses an interdisciplinary approach, seeing water allocation and distribution as the outcome of interactions between nature, technologies and society.

Grant Project Description

Often to the disappointment of policy makers, water flows in agriculture seldom follow policy directives. In response, much attention is paid on ‘getting the policies right’ in an attempt to overcome this disjuncture rather than trying to understand what happens to, and with, water that escapes stipulated plans, prescribed rules of control and visible decision-making arenas. Especially given the notoriously capricious nature of water, relatively little is known what happens between government's policies on paper and everyday water management practices within rural waterscapes. This proposal zoom in on this ‘grey’ area, in a concerted attempt to identify and shed light on spaces of negation, tinkering and bricolage. The main hypothesis that guides this research is that better recognition and explicit nurturing of such spaces can provide a crucial ingredient in pragmatic water conflict prevention and resolution strategies. In particular, this research will study the agency and strategies of street-level bureaucrats and rural outliers, actors who do not and cannot quite fit and who shape policy outcomes by actively looking for the cracks in the system of domination.

Grant Project Quote

“By studying the actors who operate in the cracks in the system of domination we can better understand why policy interventions in water management often lead to unexpected outcomes.”