Conclusions

Neglected in the southeast European historiography, fluvial islands were vital for the riparian population and for the riparian states. As sources of revenue for the state, as sources of conflict between an emerging capitalist class of local entrepreneurs supported by the young nation-states and the local people whose livelihood they threatened, fluvial islands were and are disputed and contested, connected to and disconnected from the mainland. They are 'webs of live' in which the human and the non-human are intimately intertwined.

Notes

[1] The National Archive of Romania, Fund Ministerul Agriculturii, Regii, File no. 2283/1889, p. 19
[2] See for more details on this process Dorondel, Serban and Cain (2019)
[3] Monitorul Oficial al Romaniei nr. 6, Marti 10(22) ianuarie 1878, p. 116
[4] The National Archives of Romania, Fund M.A.D. Regii, File 910/1888, p. 15
[5] Fieldwork carried out within the research project State, Communities and the Nature of the Lower Danube islands: an Environmental History (2021-2023) funded by the Romanian National Research Agency (UEFISCDI) (PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-1238)

Bibliography

Chakrabarty D (2022): The Climate of History in a Planetary Age. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London

Dorondel S, Serban IS, Cain D (2019): The Play of Islands: Emerging Borders and Danube Dynamics in Modern Southeast Europe. Environment and History 25(4), 521-547

Dorondel S et al. (2023): Stat, comunități și natură în zona Dunării de Jos: o istorie a insulelor dunărene (1830-2020). Raport științific 2023 [State, Communities and Nature of the Lower Danube Islands: An Environmental history (1830-2020). Scientific Report 2023]. https://danislandsproject.wordpress.com/publications/

Dorondel S, Ion A (under review): The Entangled Life of Islands: Or, Why the Nonhuman Resettlement Project of Ada Kaleh Failed. In: Heidemann F, Schorch Ph (eds.): Experiencing Islandness: Oceans and Beyond. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu

Iancovici S (1960): Fuga locuitorilor din ostroavele Dunării din cauza exploatării boierești (1833-1834). Studii Revistă de Istorie XIII(4), 158-182

Kayapinar A (2004): Les îlles ottomans du Danube au XVIs siècles. In: Nicolas V, Veinstein G (eds.): Insularité Ottmanes. Maisonneuve et Larose, Institute français d'études anatoliennes, Istanbule, 177-202.

Krause F (2016): Rivers, Borders, and the Flows of the Landscape. In: Kannike A, Tasa M (eds.): The Dynamics of Cultural Borders. University of Tartu Press, Tartu, 24-45

Krause F, Eriksen TH (2023): Inhabiting Volatile Worlds. Social Anthropology 2023, 1-13. doi:10.3167/saas.2023.04132300

Lahiri-Dutt K, Samantha G (2013): Dancing with the River. People and Life on the Chars of South Asia. Yale University Press, New Haven and London

Patton M (1996): Islands in Time. Island Sociography and Mediterranean Prehistory. Routledge, London and New York

Prokić M, Šimkova P (2024): Entire of Itself? Towards an Environmental History of Islands. The White Horse Press, Cambridge

Schneider E (2015): The Danube Delta: Lessons Learned from Nature Restoration Projects. In: Iordachi C, Assche K. van (eds.): The Bio-Politics of the Danube Delta. Nature, History, Policies. Lexington Books, Lanham, 87-114

Wyrick JR (2005): On the Formation of Fluvial Islands. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Oregon

The SOS-Water Project

Silvia Artuso, Taher Kahil, Emilio Politti

IIASA (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis), Laxenburg, Austria, email: silvia.artuso@iiasa.ac.at

Background

Our planet can be seen as a complex system with several critical components that influence its health, such as climate and biodiversity. The Safe Operating Space framework establishes safe thresholds for these components, ensuring that humanity operates within a zone where the Earth System remains within its functional boundaries, while at the same time a just humanity can thrive.

The SOS framework has found its way into the public debate, stimulating the irrevocable discussion on the cooperative coexistence of human society and the Earth system. The framework moves away from the classic opposition between human benefit and nature conservation and sets the stage for a new narrative based on cooperation between nature and society. Yet the inspiring principles of the SOS framework have rarely, if ever, found their way into practical applications.

One of the most important components of the Earth is freshwater use. Scientists estimate that we've exceeded the safe limit, meaning we're using and polluting freshwater faster than nature can replenish it. This can lead to water scarcity, affecting everything from ecosystems to agriculture and drinking water supplies. In the coming decades, these challenges are likely to be exacerbated by climatic and social changes in many regions of the world. There is therefore an urgent need to define a safe operating space (SOS) for water resources in a changing climate and society, to ensure sufficient and reliable water supplies of a quality acceptable for human activities and natural ecosystems.

Staying within the safe zone for water requires innovative solutions, from water conservation to sustainable agricultural practices, to ensure a healthy future for all.

Project outline

SOS-Water is a project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. It has a consortium of ten European partners and one additional partner from Vietnam. SOS-Water is coordinated by the Water Security Group of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA).

SOS-Water aims to create a holistic framework for the assessment of the SOS of water systems. The basis of this framework will be developed in four different case studies in close collaboration with local key stakeholders on the Rhine, the Danube, the Jucar Basin in Spain and the Mekong Delta.

SOS-Water will develop a set of indicators to assess the state of the water system, taking into account not only water values, but also biodiversity and even the interactions of society, policy and economy with water use and the environment. This assessment will be driven by a strong local stakeholder engagement process. At the same time, the project will develop a robust and diverse modelling infrastructure that will allow to examine the current state of the water systems in the case studies and make predictions for the future. Ultimately, this will allow to design a multi-dimensional SOS of policies and water management pathways, that will be evaluated across a wide range of future scenarios. The results of SOS-Water will contribute to a better understanding of water resource availability and facilitate water planning and management from local to regional scales, so that the allocation of water to societies, economies and ecosystems is economically efficient, socially equitable and resilient to socio-economic (e.g., financial crises) and climatic shocks (e.g., droughts and floods).

First stakeholders' workshop for the Danube case study

On November 22, 2022, the first SOS-Water project stakeholder workshop for the Danube basin was held in Vienna, Austria. A total of 29 people from five countries attended the workshop, including stakeholders representing a wide range of freshwater-related institutions in the Danube basin. The International Association for Danube Research (IAD) was also present. The workshop was organized by researchers from the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), the Norwegian Institute for Water Research (NIVA), the Romanian National Institute for Research and Development of Marine Geology and Geoecology (GeoEcoMar) and the IGB Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries.

The aim of this first workshop was to establish an ongoing dialogue involving all significant interest groups related to freshwater in the Danube basin. Through interactive and engaging activities, stakeholders and researchers collectively identified which are the local water challenges in the Danube basin, as well as the needs and preferences of stakeholders. The participation of representatives from three institutions in Romania facilitated collaborative discussions addressing the distinctive issues faced by the Danube Delta in comparison to the rest of the basin.

It was a fruitful day of discussion and exchange, highlighting the importance of collaboration, especially in the framework of a transboundary basin, and emphasizing the need for coordinated efforts to address complex water management challenges.

The insights gained from the workshop will inform the formulation of a Safe Operating Space framework for water resources. Over four years the SOS-Water project will host a total of four workshops for the Danube basin that will culminate in a case-study-specific SOS-Water framework, which aims to illustrate diverse water futures depending on water allocations for human water use and the environment to support healthy ecosystems and ecosystem services.

More information on the project and the Danube case study can be found at www.sos-water.eu.

Link to IIASA pictures: https://www.flickr.com/photos/iiasa/albums/72157648154449307

Danube Congress Ingolstadt

Christine Margraf

BUND Naturschutz in Bayern (Friends of the Earth Bavaria), Munich, Germany, e-mail: naturschutz@bund-naturschutz.de

'Securing the Future of the Danube as a Habitat for People and Nature' was the topic of the 32nd International Danube Congress of the BUND Nature Conservation (Friends of the Earth) on December 2, 2023, in Ingolstadt. The central needs of today are: more restoration, more dynamics, more ecological connectivity across the Danube throughout Europe and thus more recreational space for the population.

The conference began with project ideas for the restoration of the Danube in Ingolstadt. Landscape architect Georg Kestel, together with Reglind Seyberth from the local group BUND Ingolstadt, presented a concept for the development of more dynamics and closeness to nature on the banks of the Danube in the urban area: 'A natural Danube for people and nature'. Not only little ringed plovers and huchen (Danube salmon) should benefit from this, but also people through the increase in attractive and at least partially more accessible riverbanks. The talk was supplemented by the presentation of the development of a Danube city park in Ingolstadt as part of the EU Blue Green City project by Thomas Schneider from the Climate, Biodiversity & Danube Office of Ingolstadt. Elements include a jetty cafe, a Danube stage and riverbank flattening for restoration. The Danube is an indispensable building block for a climate-adapted and livable Ingolstadt. Improving the biotope