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Editorial

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Dear Readers,

For the first time, I have the pleasure to introduce you to a fresh issue of *Water History* as a new co-editor-in-chief alongside Ellen Arnold. As usual, we offer a rich mix of original research, this time from no less than four continents and spanning some five millennia.

I cannot avoid opening this on a personal note. I live and work as an environmental historian in Austria, close to the river Danube in Vienna. About 500 km from here, the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine has been raging for at least 17 months. In war, when bridges are bombed, dams blown up, and water-cooled nuclear power plants are surrounded by combat, it becomes obvious how comprehensively and profoundly all modern industrial warfare threatens and destroys ecosystems, particularly also aquatic systems.

In this issue's first article, Elodie Charrière and Nancy Langston demonstrate how, even in rather peaceful times and places, the very production and existence of weapons, rearmament, and militarization inevitably result in environmental problems. Their paper follows the trail of military waste dumped into one of North America's Great Lakes, Lake Superior, in the decades after World War II. The authors discuss this as a matter of justice. Who is threatened by such harmful substances, and how much, depends not only on currents, water temperatures, and chemistry but also on whether societal groups are successful in creating publicity and public debate to respond to the secrecy and censorship of those responsible for the environmental damage.

The expansion of modern water infrastructure like hydroelectric power plants has been discussed as a question of media, publicity, and justice, too. Åsa Össbo takes us to the north of Europe, to Sápmi, the land of the indigenous Sámi, where she analyses modern hydropower as a question of competing narratives and counter-narratives that aim to highlight and hide different groups' interests, perceptions, and perspectives on power plants, land, and water.

Two articles then bring us to European cities in the estuaries of large rivers: Olga Malinova-Tziafeta takes us to Petrograd/Leningrad in the delta of the Neva and Constantin Ardeleanu to Sulina in the Romanian delta of the Danube. Both contributions show how (world) political circumstances and changes impact very local hygienic conditions. As the seat of the "European Commission of the Danube," small Sulina, a "hydrobiological melting pot" between the Black Sea and the Danube, as Ardeleanu puts it,

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was able to exploit an international network of expertise to provide its inhabitants with clean drinking water. In Malinova-Tziafeta's story of Leningrad, on the other hand, fear of war and the international political crisis of 1927 put an end to the cooperation with experts from, among others, the US for the construction of a modern sewage system in the Soviet metropolis on the Baltic Sea.

Edmund Chilaka draws on a wide range of sources and data to discuss the colonial and postcolonial efforts of dredging the Lower Niger to improve this Western African river's navigability. Starting with the British colonial administrator Frederick Lugard in the early 1900s, the author shows how politics and economics, including corruption and poor infrastructure, together with geomorphology, rocky riverbeds and extreme events, turn such dredging activities, in the long run, into never-ending attempts to "manage" and control large rivers for specific interests.

With Jesse Casana and Rita Wright, we then dive much deeper into the common history of rivers and humans. The authors use remote sensing data and combine it with archaeological findings to identify the remains of an irrigation canal system from the mid-third to early second millennium BCE in what is now Pakistan's Punjab. The article impressively shows how new methods and data make isolated, scattered remains visible again after millennia, which can then be put together to a larger historical picture of an era, the Indus era in this case. In this way, water history research creates a solid base of facts and evidence to reframe and answer big questions like those about irrigation, agriculture, its intensification, sustainability and societal complexity.

Intensive and instructive months lie behind me as a new coeditor-in-chief. My learning curve has been steep and I could never have taken it without the support of all who make up this journal together: Our authors, reviewers, our partners at Springer; but most of all I thank Ellen Arnold, whose constant striving for scientific and editorial quality and whose enthusiasm makes this journal so unique. As a signatory of DORA (sfdora.org), an initiative that advocates for an evaluation of research based on content quality rather than on what can be counted in numbers (e.g., "impact factors"), I am concerned about some developments in the world of academic publishing. Since its start, *Water History* stands for an approach that consequently puts quality over quantity. Those who entrust us with their papers can rely on a review process that is as conscientious as it is fair, professionally competent, and timely. Ensuring this quality sometimes takes a little longer—in choosing and convincing the right reviewers, in then weighing their critique, through the revisions of articles to their final editing. This all takes time. On the other hand, to secure the attention our author's works deserve, we need to make *Water History* score even better in the metrics prevailing in the world of academic publishing. Ellen and I have started to work on this together with our editorial board, and we will certainly do this without compromising on the quality of your and our content.

I am following in the big footsteps left by Maurits Ertsen, one of the founders of this journal in alliance with our partnering academic society, the International Water History Association (IWHA). For Maurits, diversity of content, methods and disciplines was particularly important in building this journal, as can be read in his "Goodbyeee" (Ertsen 2022). Like him, I work as an environmental historian at a technical university, we both share an enthusiasm for water (ok, that might not surprise you), but also for archaeology. Now I am happy to take over this torch from Maurits, or better, this colorful bouquet of *Water History*'s diversity, to carry it forward, together with you.

Reference

Ertsen M (2022) Goodbyeee. Water Hist 14:1–3. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12685-022-00300-3