

## ABSTRACT

This postgraduate research project proposes to explore water security discourses in Central Asia, which is one of the global “climate hotspots” (Giorgi, 2006, p. 33). Recent increases in temperatures exceeding global historical averages are causing more frequent droughts and earlier snowmelt, which has a major influence on future water availability in an already water-stressed region (Bernauer and Siegfried, 2012; Sorg et al., 2013). These impacts affect individuals and segments of society differently and aggravate already existing gendered vulnerabilities and diverse capacities to face its consequences (Sultana, 2018, p. 19).

There is a growing consensus that water relations in societies are affected by social relationships related to gender (Fröhlich et al., 2018). Several case studies have indeed highlighted that water (in)securities are rooted in gendered water-related labour division and associated social norms, and could be worsened by climate change (Rao et al., 2019, Adams et al., 2018, Bacon et al., 2022). However, the geography of this literature body is uneven: existing studies are focused on Southeast Asia, Africa, and Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

While there is a growing research interest to gendered realities and insecurities in water sector, the academic literature in and on Central Asia rarely approach these topics in connection. Most research on water security in Central Asia has taken a state-centered approach, concentrated on the strategic interests of riparian nations' and power imbalances, or an economic approach, focused on benefit-sharing arrangements (Sehring, 2021, p. 7). Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to offer a new perspective by assessing previously overlooked and silenced gendered realities in the Syr Darya river basin together with the state-produces water security discourses.

Keywords: Central Asia, water security, gender security, Syr Darya river basin, discourse analysis, feminist political ecology (FPE).