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History

Born in 1986 in Kyiv  
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### ARBEITSVORHABEN

## Water Connections: Irrigation in the Ukrainian South from Stalin to Independence

Within days after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the dam that prevented water flowing from the North Crimean Canal was blown up by the Russian military forces in order to renew the fresh water supply to occupied Crimea. In 2014, the Ukrainian authorities had cut the flow of water as a political response to the Russian occupation of the peninsula. Control over water infrastructure might have not been the goal of the war, but it was vital for the economic life of Crimea.

At the Wissenschaftskolleg, I am developing a project that seeks to explain how the construction of irrigation systems in southern Ukraine in the 1950s to 1980s changed these territories socially and environmentally. Since the onset of the "irrigation age" in the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, all kinds of political regimes – empires, democracies, and authoritarian states alike – undertook large irrigation projects in quest of modernization, progress, and prosperity. After World War II, which was followed by drought and famine in southern Ukraine, the Soviet leadership saw irrigation as a solution to the climatic unpredictability of the dry steppe and as a way to increase harvests and guarantee food security for the decades to come. At the same time, building water reservoirs and irrigation canals meant altering landscapes, changing habitual regimes of water use, flooding large populated areas, and resettling hundreds of thousands of people to work the newly irrigated fields.

Environmental and technological transformations on such a scale involved multiple actors: Soviet central and local authorities, scientists, workers on construction sites, journalists, local residents, and settlers from other regions of Ukraine. This research aims to look into their debates and perspectives to identify the loci of cooperation and contention, inclusion and exclusion, continuity and disruption in the process of the environmental transformation of southern Ukraine. Ultimately, I am interested in how these water management projects contributed to the "making" of modern Ukraine and how the Soviet-built water infrastructure continued to shape social and political life in the region and in Crimea after Ukraine gained independence.

### Recommended Reading

Burkush, Kateryna. "On the Forest Front: Soviet Labor Relations and Seasonal Migration in 1960s – 80s." *Labor History* 59, no. 3 (2018): 295–315. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2018.1428776>.  
–. "Inglorious Heroes of Labor: Transcarpathian Labor Migrants in Late Soviet Union" [in Ukrainian]. Posted on January 17, 2022. Spilne/Commons. <https://commons.com.ua/uk/bezslavni-geroyi-praci-zakarpatski-zarobitchani-v-radyanskomu-soyuzi>.

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PUBLIKATIONEN AUS DER FELLOWBIBLIOTHEK

Burkush, Kateryna (Abingdon,2018)

On the forest front : labour relations and seasonal migration in 1960s-80s

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1812820542>