

Report on the project “Dam history on the Czech-Austrian border: the case of Vranov Dam”

The project outlined in this report sought to deepen the understanding of dam and water history in relation to borders, with a specific focus on fostering academic collaboration across the Czech-Austrian border. By examining the case study of the Vranov Dam, the project aimed to contribute to the conceptual discourse surrounding borders and boundaries, enriching the academic landscape with interdisciplinary insights. The collaboration between Czech and Austrian scholars was designed to leverage their respective expertise—Czech participants provided localized knowledge on the Vranov Dam, while Austrian participants shared insights from their extensive research on energy history and dam studies, particularly in the context of the Alps. This cross-border academic cooperation was expected to yield a comprehensive research agenda that benefited all involved parties, enhancing their academic networks and collaborative opportunities.

The significance of interdisciplinary approaches in addressing complex water-related issues could not be overstated. The project aimed to integrate perspectives from social and environmental history, technology studies, and border studies, thereby promoting a holistic understanding of the multifaceted nature of water management and dam history. The collaborative nature of this project was underscored by planned activities, including public lecture and joint research workshop, which not only enhanced the academic competencies of participating PhD students but also contributed to the internationalization of teaching at both engaged institutions.

The project activities commenced with the planning and organization of two significant events aimed at fostering academic collaboration and enhancing understanding of dam and water history in relation to borders. The first event was an academic visit of Prof. Patrick Kupper at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University in October 2024. This event involved a three-day itinerary, which included Prof. Kupper's arrival in Prague, a meeting with academics from the history departments to discuss potential collaborations in student and teacher exchanges and a public lecture. The promotion of this event was supported by the History Students' Association of the Faculty of Arts, ensuring a broad attendance from academics, PhD students, and undergraduate students alike.

The second major activity was a workshop held from November 14 to 17, 2024, in Vranov nad Dyjí, near the dam itself. This workshop brought together Czech and Austrian project leaders, including Prof. Kupper and Dr. Karel Šima, alongside PhD students Jakub Vrba and Boleslav Šmejkal, who played crucial roles in organizing the events and presenting the history of the Vranov Dam. The workshop featured eight additional participants who contributed to the program through presentations and commentary, including scholars from the University of Innsbruck, Charles University, BOKU University in Vienna and the University of Bern.

The workshop commenced with an introductory keynote lecture by Prof. Kupper on the evening of November 14, followed by three seminar blocks on November 15. These sessions focused on various topics related to the history of dams and technology. The first session addressed the general issue of environmental history in the context of the history of energy, while the second session examined plans for dam construction in Czechoslovakia and the Alps. The final session discussed the future project on dam construction on multi-ethnic societies in the Vranov border region and the surrounding ecosystems. On November 16, participants visited the Vranov Dam and the associated power plant, further enriching their understanding of the practical implications of their discussions. Furthermore, they visited both national parks of Podyjí and Thayathal, which surround the dam and have been directly affected by its construction. The day concluded with a lecture and seminar by Prof. Kupper, attended by more than 20 PhD students from the Faculty of Arts, Charles University.

Participants departed the workshop venue on the afternoon of November 17, returning to Prague and Innsbruck. Following the workshop, an online debriefing session was organized to discuss further steps in developing new research collaborations, ensuring that the momentum generated during the events would lead to sustained academic cooperation.

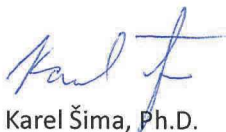
The project achieved all three outcomes that contributed to the advancement of research in dam history and facilitated international collaboration among scholars.

1. Workshop Report: A comprehensive report detailing the workshop held in Vranov nad Dyjí was prepared and submitted electronically to the network HSozKult. This report included summaries of the keynote lectures, seminar discussions, and participant contributions, thereby documenting the collaborative efforts and insights gained during the event. The publication aimed to reach a wider academic audience, fostering further discourse on the historical and contemporary implications of dam construction and management in border regions.

2. Presentation of Workshop Materials: The materials from the workshop, including the program and a summary of presentations and discussions, were made available on the web page of the Faculty of Arts at Charles University. This initiative not only served as a resource for participants but also provided access to valuable information for those unable to attend. By disseminating these materials online, the project aimed to enhance visibility and engagement with the research themes discussed during the workshop, thereby promoting ongoing academic dialogue.

3. International Collaboration Plan: A detailed plan was developed for future collaboration. This plan outlined the areas in which both Czech and Austrian participants plan to collaborate, emphasizing the importance of fostering connections among scholars, practitioners, and institutions engaged in dam research. The plan aims to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, resources, and best practices, thereby enhancing collaborative research efforts across borders.

In summary, this project represented a significant step towards fostering academic cooperation and advancing research perspectives in the field of dam and water history. By focusing on the Vranov Dam and the broader implications of borders in water management, the project aspired to create a robust framework for future research and collaboration. The expected outcomes included enhanced academic networks, interdisciplinary research agendas, and a deeper understanding of the historical and contemporary significance of dams in relation to borders, ultimately contributing to the sustainable management of water resources in the region.



Mgr. Karel Šima, Ph.D.

The Institute of Economic and Social History
Faculty of Arts
Charles University
Celetná 20, Praha 1, room C129/130
E: karel.sima@ff.cuni.cz
T: +420 221 619 713



Prof. Dr. Patrick Kupper

Institut für Geschichtswissenschaften und
Europäische Ethnologie
Universität Innsbruck
Innrain 52, A-6020 Innsbruck
E: patrick.kupper@uibk.ac.at
T: +43 (0)512 507 43233 (sekr. 43239)

Attachment 1:

List of participants:

Academics:

Mgr. Karel Šíma, Ph.D. (Charles University)
Prof. Dr. Patrick Kupper (University of Innsbruck)
Dr. Ute Hasenöhr (University of Innsbruck)
Dr. Sebastian De Pretto (University of Bern)
Doc. Mgr. Matěj Spurný, Ph.D. (Charles University)
Doc. Mgr. Michal Pullmann, PhD. (Charles University)
Mgr. Jiří Janáč, Ph.D. (Charles University)

Students:

Jakub Vrba (Charles University)
Boleslav Šmejkal (Charles University)
Eliška Švarná (Charles University)
Anna Kolářová (Charles University)
Sophia Leona Rut (BOKU University in Vienna)
Matěj Moravanský (Charles University)

Attachment 2: Workshop Report

Dam History on the Czech-Austrian Border

Organizer: Karel Šima

Organizing institution: Institute for Economic and Social History, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague

Place: Vranov nad Dyjí

Country: Czech Republic

Took place: In person

From-To: November 14–17 2024

Environmental history and the history of dam building have gained increasing attention in the global context and especially in an interdisciplinary perspective in recent years. These topics in Central European settings were the main focus of the workshop organised by the Institute of Economic and Social History (Faculty of Arts, Charles University) in Vranov nad Dyjí on Austrian-Czech border in November 2024 with contributions by relevant scholars from University of Innsbruck, University of Bern, Charles University, Czech Academy of Sciences and BOKU University in Vienna. While the main aim of the workshop was to discuss different approaches and projects concerning the environmental and dam history, the workshop also helped to foster an academic exchange between academics from the Czech Republic and Austria in this field. Apart from the workshop exposés themselves, the participants visited the dam and power plant Vranov nad Dyjí, as well as the Podyjí National Park Centre and the Austrian town of Hardegg in the Thayatal National Park. The workshop was supported via Czech-Austrian AKTION programme.

There were two keynote lectures took place in this workshop. In the first of them, JIŘÍ JANÁČ (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences) introduced his upcoming book *Vodní socialismus* (Hydrosocialism). He explained the development of different approaches towards water and water management in the milieu of the hydro experts of the socialist Czechoslovakia and analysed the question of whether there has been a distinct socialist way of hydro management. The second keynote lecture was

held by PATRICK KUPPER (Department of History and European Ethnology, University of Innsbruck). In his lecture, Kupper illuminated the history of National Parks from a global point of view while focusing on different entanglements and developments of the concept itself as well as of actual National Parks.

The first panel of the workshop covered the environmental history of Central Europe in general. In this panel, ANNA KOLÁŘOVÁ (Faculty of Arts, Charles University) explored the historiography of the cultural and environmental history of the borderland regions in Central Europe. While focusing on case studies of Bohemian-Bavarian and Podjízí-Thayatal borderlands, she argued for combining the cultural and environmental lenses when approaching the history of these regions. SOPHIA RUT (Institute of Social Ecology, BOKU University) introduced her new project on the history of environmentalist movements, their perceptions and ideals in 1970s Austria. Rut then illuminated how these perceptions and ideals were embedded in the “biophysical realities” of the energy system. Lastly, MATĚJ MORAVANSKÝ (Faculty of Arts, Charles University) explained his approach to the concept of the Great Acceleration and the broader, revolutionary changes in social-nature relationships as a framework for studying the environmental history of the state socialist Czechoslovakia. UTE HASENHÖHRL (Department of History and European Ethnology, University of Innsbruck) was the commentator for this panel who underlined the importance of thinking about concepts such as great acceleration in the context of the eastern bloc.

The second panel of the workshop was aimed at the history of dams and reservoirs in the Central Europe. ELIŠKA ŠVARNÁ (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences) explores different aspects of the Lipno dam in southern Bohemia. While seeing it as a “great construction of socialism” she analyses the state and regional aspects of the dam as well as the environmental history connected to it. In the second presentation SEBASTIAN DE PRETTO (Institute of History, University of Bern) explained the histories of reservoir development and resettlement policies in post-1945 Switzerland. He did so by presenting three case studies of villages in different cantons of Switzerland where the local population did not struggle against resettlement caused by the dam building. Finally, KAREL ŠIMA, BOLESLAV ŠMEJKAL (both Faculty of Arts, Charles University) and JAKUB VRBA (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences) presented their emerging project on the social and cultural history of the Vranov dam in the 20th century. They illuminated the history of the region around the dam

and the dam itself using the conceptual framework of borders and boundaries and focusing on topics such as identity, environment, labour, tourism and technology. Patrick Kupper was the commentator for the panel and important points in the discussion were also raised by MATĚJ SPURNÝ (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences) and MICHAL PULLMANN (Faculty of Arts, Charles University).

The workshop brought lively discussions and all the participants have drawn vital points for their projects. The discussions acknowledged the importance of trying to navigate between the fields of social, economic, cultural and environmental history, especially in face of the global climate challenges. The workshop also confirmed that the environmental history and especially the history of water management have to be studied from a cross-border perspective with the global view of the environmental changes in economic, political as well as cultural history. Last but not least, the perspective that focuses on peripheral areas within these issues has also proved to be a useful one.

Boleslav Šmejkal, Jakub Vrba

Overview of the programme:

Panel 1 „Environmental History and Central Europe“

Anna Kolářová (Faculty of Arts, Charles University): Landscapes of Transitions: Writing Environmental and Cultural Histories of Central European Borderlands

Sophia Rut (Institute of Social Ecology, BOKU University): Contested power plants. Environmentalism and energy system in Austria's long 1970s

Matěj Moravanský (Faculty of Arts, Charles University): Great Acceleration as a Conceptual Framework for the Environmental History of State Socialist Czechoslovakia

Commentator: Ute Hasenhöhl (Department of History and European Ethnology, University of Innsbruck)

Panel 2 „History of Dams and Reservoirs“

Eliška Švarná (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences): Lipno Dam as a Great Construction of Socialism: Post-war Transformation of the Landscape and Society in the Czechoslovak Borderland

Sebastian de Pretto (Institute of History, University of Bern): For the Sake of the Nation? Reservoir Development and Resettlements in Switzerland After 1945 (online)

Karel Šima, Boleslav Šmejkal (both Faculty of Arts, Charles University), Jakub Vrba (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of Sciences): Dam on the Borders. Transboundary regimes at the Vranov Dam

Commentator: Patrick Kupper (Department of History and European Ethnology, University of Innsbruck)

Keynote 1

Jiří Janáč (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences): Hydrosocialism. We Only Have the Water Which Fell upon Us.

Keynote 2

Patrick Kupper (Department of History and European Ethnology, University of Innsbruck): "The National Park: a global history"



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Mezinárodní vědecký workshop „Dam History on the Czech-Austrian Border“

10.1.2025 Nástěnka Nezařazené

Ve dnech 14. 11. – 17. 11. 2024 pořádal Ústav pro hospodářské a sociální dějiny FF UK v jihomoravské obci Vranově nad Dyjí mezinárodní workshop s názvem **Dam History on the Czech-Austrian Border**.

Dam History on the Czech-Austrian Border Vranov nad Dyjí, Czech Republic (14. 11. – 17. 11. 2024)

Thursday, 14. 11.

20:00 Introductory talk and debate on the possibilities of further cooperation

Friday, 15. 11.

9:45 Karel Šima (Faculty of Arts, Charles University): Opening Speech

10:00–11:00 J. Páral: Environmental History and Central Europe

Anna Kaldová (Faculty of Arts, Charles University): Landscapes of Transition: Writing

Environmental and Cultural Histories of Central European Borderlands

Szepka Rika (Institute of Social Ecology, BOKU University): Contested power plants.

Environmentalism and energy system in Austria's long 1970s

Matěj Mrosovský (Faculty of Arts, Charles University): Great Acceleration as a Conceptual

Framework for the Environmental History of Border Societies: Czechoslovakia

Commentator: Ute Hasenbörger (Department of History and European Ethnology, University

of Innsbruck)

12:00–13:00 Lunch

14:00–15:45 J. Páral: „History of Dams and Reservoirs“

Elžka Burešová (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Masaryk Institute and Archives of the

Czech Academy of Sciences): Lipno Dam as a Great Construction of Socialism: Post-war

Transformation of the Landscape and Society in the Czechoslovak Borderland

Sabine de Pétio (Institute of History, University of Bonn): For the Sake of the Nation?

Reservoir Development and Resettlement in Switzerland After 1945 (prelim.)

Karel Šima, Benedek Székely (both Faculty of Arts, Charles University), Jolán Jóna (Faculty

of Arts, Charles University / Masaryk Institute and Archives of the Czech Academy of

Sciences): Dam at the Borders: Transboundary regimes at the Vranov Dam

Commentator: Patrick Kupfer (Department of History and European Ethnology, University of

Innsbruck)

15:00–16:00 Break

16:00–17:00 Debate on the future project on the Vranov dam

Commentators: Michal Polišenský (Faculty of Arts, Charles University) and Štěpán Bozák

(Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of

Sciences)

17:00–18:30 Dinner

19:00 Jit Janáč (Faculty of Arts, Charles University / Institute of Contemporary History,

Czech Academy of Sciences): Hydroscapes: Via Drgy Above the Water Which Fell upon Us

Saturday, 16. 11.

10:00 Visit to the dam and power plant Vranov nad Dyjí

12:00 Lunch

14:00 Visit to the National Park Centre and the Austrian town of Haindlitz

17:00 Dinner

18:00 Patrick Kupfer (Department of History and European Ethnology, University of

Innsbruck): “The National Park: a global history”

Sunday, 17. 11.

Breakfast and departure



Ve dnech 14. 11. – 17. 11. 2024 pořádal Ústav pro hospodářské a sociální dějiny FF UK v jihomoravské obci Vranově nad Dyjí mezinárodní workshop s názvem **Dam History on the Czech-Austrian Border**. První část jeho programu tvořily odborné panely, které se týkaly obecněji environmentálních dějin ve střední Evropě i konkrétních případových studií o historii jednotlivých přehrad v daném regionu. Dále byly předneseny dvě inspirativní přednášky, na které již byli přítomní také studentky a studenti doktorského programu našeho ústavu. Zatímco dr. Jiří Janáč hovořil o přístupu československého státně socialistického státu k hospodaření s vodou, prof. Patrick Kupper o globálních dějinách národních parků. V rámci doprovodného programu navštívili účastníci workshopu vodní elektrárnu, která je součástí místní přehrady. Zajímavý vhled do činnosti Národního parku Podyjí pak poskytla návštěva jeho centra v nedaleké obci Čížov. Workshop však zejména přispěl k prohloubení spolupráce mezi naším ústavem a Ústavem historie a evropské etnologie Univerzity v Innsbrucku a k přípravě akademické výměny a dalších projektů, které by měly být realizované v budoucnosti. Za finanční podporu, bez které by se tato událost nemohla konat, je nutné poděkovat česko-rakouskému vědeckému programu AKTION.



Zveřejněno 10.1.2025 Nástěnka Nezařazené

Attachment 4: Plan for Future Academic Cooperation between Charles University and University Innsbruck in Social and Environmental History leading to creation of an international networking group on the dam history

This plan outlines a framework for future academic collaboration between Charles University and the University of Innsbruck. The collaboration will focus on social and environmental history, with a particular emphasis on the history of dams. This cooperation aims to enhance research capabilities, foster interdisciplinary dialogue, and promote citizen science initiatives that engage local communities in historical research.

We aim at several objectives that can enhance the cooperation.

The Czech scholars (under the principal investigator Karel Šima) will apply for the History of Vranov Dam research project. The proposed project will be submitted to the Czech Science Foundation and will serve as a cornerstone for this collaboration. It aims to:

- Investigate the historical context of the Vranov Dam's construction and its socio-economic impacts on surrounding communities.
- Analyse the environmental changes resulting from the dam and the historical narratives that have emerged regarding its role in local culture and identity.
- Engage local communities through citizen science initiatives, allowing residents to contribute their personal histories and perspectives on the dam's impact.

The Czech and Austrian scholars will organize workshops and conferences that bring together historians and students from both institutions. These events will facilitate the exchange of ideas and methodologies, particularly in the context of citizen science and its role in historical research. Furthermore, PhD students from the Faculty of Arts, Charles University will spend a research stay at University Innsbruck. Karel Šima will teach a guest lecture and seminar at University Innsbruck in June 2025 funded by the Erasmus teacher mobility.

Both sides plan to collaborate on developing joint course and educational materials that address the historical significance of dams and their environmental implications within the Blended Intensive Programme (ERASMUS+). This curriculum will incorporate case studies from both the Czech Republic and Austria, providing students with a comprehensive understanding of the socio-environmental dynamics at play.

Among others, the outcome of the future project will include co-edited monographs that focus on the findings from joint research projects. This will include exploring the transformative impacts of dams on local communities and ecosystems, as well as the historical narratives that have emerged from these developments.

Within the future project, the team plans to develop citizen science projects that encourage community participation in documenting the historical and environmental narratives associated with dams. These projects will aim to collect qualitative and quantitative data from the Czech-Austrian border region affected by dam constructions, thereby enriching the historical record and fostering community engagement.

The proposed cooperation between Charles University and the University of Innsbruck presents a unique opportunity to advance the field of social and environmental history, particularly in understanding the complex histories of dams. By leveraging joint research, interdisciplinary dialogue, and community engagement, this partnership aims to create a rich tapestry of historical knowledge that reflects both the challenges and transformations brought about by dam constructions.