

Water Diplomacy 4.0: Process Matters

Hosted by GDL member Kathryn Bryk Friedman

Proposed date and location: hybrid events from 14 to 16 June 2022 in Berlin & end of August in Slovenia (TBC)

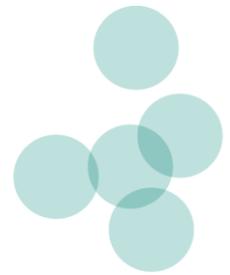
Are you interested in building communities of practice and strengthening the problem-solving capacity of traditional diplomacy and civil society leadership? Do you believe that designing processes matters (or are you willing to learn?) Are you interested in co-creating a space for participatory diplomacy at local and global levels? If so, this Lab is for you!

The provision of adequate freshwater resources for people and ecosystems is one of a number of major global challenges facing society in the 21st century. Although predicted global water wars have not materialised, conflict and tension over this natural resource are the norm – particularly in transboundary water systems (TBWS). In TBWS, the need to cooperate is compelling, but problem-solving takes on added dimensions. Decision-making across an international boundary means that every process, policy, decision and action must chart a course through at least two (and often many more) different national, subnational and local systems, all with different sets of priorities, resource bases, legislation, politics, policies, cultures, national identities and institutions. Furthermore, if technical water expertise is available in TBWS, it is usually overshadowed by power politics either at the subnational or national level. Compounding this local situation, there is a lack of agency at the international level which challenges the international community when it comes to systematically taking timely action to respond to emerging crises and reinforce cooperation.

It should therefore come as no surprise that most transboundary water conflicts arise not over natural supply, but over human interventions to manage them. In other words, managing and securing access to water in TBWS is a matter of effective governance, i.e. creating a shared understanding of the nature of the problem, as well as a process that builds strong levels of trust, a commitment to collaboration and robust relationships.

So how can this be done? How can you achieve effective governance in TBWS? The short (partial) answer is through a well-designed, thoughtful process. This Lab targets:

- GDL members who live and/or work in a TBWS region facing governance challenges;
- GDL members who may not live in a TBWS region but who have an interest in the topic and/or in building diplomacy skills;
- Challenge Holders and partners supporting and joining the Lab, which will have desirable outputs (proof of concept, diplomatic toolkit and policy recommendations) and outcomes (strengthened capacity and network, changes in approach to challenge).



This Lab proposes two phases: first, the GDL will host an **Incubator Lab in Berlin from 14 to 16 June 2022** that will focus on storytelling and training. Participants will be exposed to myriad diplomacy tools, including a very effective participatory process tool – scenario analysis. Scenario analysis is not about making predictions, but about empowering participants, building relationships, and creating alternative stories about the future that are not impossible to achieve. How could the future be different from the present? What forces are driving changes? What are the key uncertainties? Understanding the answers to these questions leads to one further question: if the future unfolds as described in the scenarios, which is most desirable, what can we collectively do to realise that future? Secondly, with this context and training in mind, the GDL will **host up to two Impact Labs in regions experiencing TBWS challenges** to apply ideas and skills gained from the Incubator Lab.

Taken together, this training and execution – which emphasises bringing together people from across sectors (public, private, academic, NGO, non-profit) and levels (local, regional, state-provincial, federal, international) – embodies *Diplomacy 4.0*¹ and supports the GDL's mission.

¹ *Diplomacy 4.0* stands for a new approach to diplomacy at the GDL. It draws on innovative methodologies to reconcile the interests of multiple stakeholders and to build trust. Diplomacy 4.0 allows governments to operate as sovereign actors while leveraging the influence and potential of other actors via a new diplomacy track. Read more here: https://global-diplomacy-lab.org/files/gdl_publication_strategy.pdf.