



January 13-15, 2021

**ORGANIZED BY**  
DELTA project team - Volatile Waters and the  
Hydrosocial Anthropocene in Major River Deltas

**IN COOPERATION WITH**  
Global South Studies Center

**VENUE**  
Virtual via Zoom, Central European Time (CET, GMT+1)  
Full programme available at  
<https://ukoeln.de/CDN6G>

**REGISTRATION**  
<https://forms.gle/zV1PNUzBVqERfKC17>

**CONTACT AND FURTHER INFORMATION**  
[delta-info@uni-koeln.de](mailto:delta-info@uni-koeln.de)  
[delta.uni-koeln.de](http://delta.uni-koeln.de)  
[gssc.uni-koeln.de](http://gssc.uni-koeln.de)



# MAKING AND UNMAKING VOLATILITY: CONTEXTUALISING CRISES IN DELTAIC LIFEWORLDS

Speakers include: Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt (ANU); Thomas Hylland Eriksen (University of Oslo); Nora Horisberger (UoC); Ian Scoones (University of Sussex); Sandro Simon (UoC); Veronica Strang (Durham University); Nikhil Anand (University of Pennsylvania); Franz Krause (UoC); Beth Cullen (University of Westminster); Casper Bruun Jensen (Osaka University); Kirsten Keller (Aarhus University and University of California Santa Cruz); Benoit Ivars (UoC)

For the inhabitants of river deltas, uncertain, rapid and often profound changes in land and water conditions are more the norm than the exception. Their lifeworlds are characterised by volatility. In recent years, global research and journalism have increasingly portrayed deltas as undergoing environmental and climatic crises. They describe phenomena like sea level rise, erosion and salinization using terms such as vulnerability, fragility and threat. But do the crises depicted by research and journalism reflect the volatilities experienced by delta inhabitants?

Without denying the extent of the current transformations in these regions, this workshop discusses anthropological approaches to environmental/climate changes in deltas. It probes into the cultural, political, economic and historical contexts in which delta inhabitants experience and negotiate volatilities. The focus is thus on volatility in rather than of deltas, considering that the production and experience of volatility must be put into context. In this sense, the workshop will provide a context for interrogating the totalizing discourse of the 'delta crisis' and the necessarily bleak portrayals of changes often documented in global research and media.

On the one hand, the workshop traces how historical developments in these regions, notably their postcolonial past, have shaped the volatile social and material conditions of life. The ecological instability experienced in deltas intersects with histories of political marginalization and economic

dependencies. Rapid changes have sustained – and continue to sustain – possibilities and hopes but also serve as a pretext for exploitation and violence. On the other hand, this workshop focuses on the perspectives and practices of delta inhabitants, considering their specific social, economic and geographical positionality and acknowledging that socio-material configurations and their volatility are experienced and negotiated in different – and often unequal – ways. Developing an anthropological approach to volatile transformations must build on ethnographic insights and hence be rooted in the experience of local inhabitants. Discussing this situatedness implies reflecting on the ways volatile movements spatially and temporally impinge on, and are co-produced by people's everyday lives. This includes critically interrogating notions of movements, (im)mobility and "stuckness", and exploring the agencies of people negotiating fluctuating and often uncertain conditions of life.

This workshop will focus on different approaches – both empirical and theoretical – to volatility in deltas and other environments considered as being "in crisis", i.e. facing radical social and material transformations. These discussions will contribute to thinking of volatility and change not as overarching conditions of life but as modes of transformation that are socially produced and negotiated. By analysing and comparing different contexts, discussions will provide an opportunity to reflect on the political nature of volatilities and their significance for those who experience them on a daily basis.

### **Workshop Convenors**

DELTA project team

### 13 JANUARY 2021 – WEDNESDAY

<b>08:30 – 08:40</b>	<b>WELCOME REMARKS</b>	
<i>08:30</i>	<b>FRANZ KRAUSE</b> , University of Cologne <b>BENOIT IVARS</b> , University of Cologne	
<b>08:40 – 09:00</b>	<b>INTRODUCTORY ROUND</b>	
<b>09:00 – 13:10</b>	<b>SESSION 1 – CONTRASTING APPROACHES TO SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL TRANSFORMATIONS AND VOLATILITY</b>	
Chairpersons	Benoit Ivars and Franz Krause	
Technical chair	Sandro Simon	
<i>09:00</i>	<b>KUNTALA LAHIRI-DUTT</b> Australian National University <b>JENIA MUKHERJEE</b> Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur	River islands in the Delta? Chars destabilize the land-water binary, with Q&A
<i>09:30</i>	<b>IAN SCOONES</b> Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex	Confronting uncertainties in pastoral areas: from control to care, with Q&A
<i>10:00</i>	<b>VERONICA STRANG</b> Durham University	The hard way: volatility and stability in the waters of the Brisbane River delta, with Q&A
<b>10:30 – 11:00</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
<i>11:00</i>	<b>BENOIT IVARS</b> University of Cologne	Alluvial (is)lands only last for a while: making “continuity” along an unending ecological frontier, Ayeyarwady Delta, Myanmar, with Q&A
<i>11:40</i>	<b>DISCUSSION I</b>	
<b>13:10</b>	<b>END OF DAY</b>	

## 14 JANUARY 2021 – THURSDAY

<b>09:00 – 09:10</b>	<b>OPENING REMARKS</b>	
09:00	<b>FRANZ KRAUSE</b> , University of Cologne <b>SANDRO SIMON</b> , University of Cologne	
<b>09:10 – 17:30</b>	<b>SESSION 2 – VOLATILITY AS A CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY</b>	
Chairpersons	Franz Krause and Sandro Simon	
Technical chair	Teresa Cremer	
09:10	<b>NORA HORISBERGER</b> University of Cologne	<i>‘Vida sossegada’</i> : on living a peaceful life amidst volatile changes on the islands of the Parnaíba Delta, Brazil, with Q&A
09:50	<b>CASPER BRUUN JENSEN</b> Osaka University	Cosmo-ecological deltas: sophisticated conjunctions and ontological politics—via the Upper Mekong, with Q&A
<b>10:20 – 10:50</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
10:50	<b>DISCUSSION II</b>	
<b>12:20 – 14:30</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
Chairpersons	Sandro Simon and Teresa Cremer	
Technical chair	Benoit Ivars	
14:30	<b>THOMAS HYLLAND ERIKSEN</b> University of Oslo	Clashing scales and accelerated change, with Q&A
15:00	<b>FRANZ KRAUSE</b> University of Cologne	Valued volatility: uncertain flux as an asset in the Mackenzie Delta, Canada, with Q&A
<b>15:30 – 16:00</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
16:00 – 17:30	<b>DISCUSSION III (OPEN SPACE)</b>	
17:30	<b>END OF DAY</b>	

## 15 JANUARY 2021 – FRIDAY

<b>14:00 – 14:10</b>	<b>OPENING REMARKS</b>	
14:00	<b>BENOIT IVARS</b> , University of Cologne <b>TERESA CREMER</b> , University of Cologne	
<b>14:10 – 17:50</b>	<b>SESSION 3 – NEW APPROACHES TO VOLATILITY</b>	
Chairpersons	Teresa Cremer and Benoit Ivars	
Technical chair	Franz Krause	
14:10	<b>NIKHIL ANAND</b> University of Pennsylvania	Anthroposea: urban life in muddy waters, with Q&A
14:40	<b>SANDRO SIMON</b> University of Cologne	Presence and absence in volatile mollusc lifeworlds, with Q&A
15:20	<b>KIRSTEN KELLER</b> Aarhus University and University of California Santa Cruz	Mussels and megaprojects: making subsidence in Jakarta, Indonesia (pre-recorded presentation)
<b>15:50 – 16:20</b>	<b>BREAK</b>	
16:20	<b>DISCUSSION IV</b>	
<b>17:50 – 18:00</b>	<b>CLOSING REMARKS</b>	
<b>18:00</b>	<b>END OF WORKSHOP</b>	