Water Wars and New Ecological Imaginaries on the India-Pakistan border.

My paper focuses on the disputed Kishanganga dam in the Indian-administered Kashmir valley to show how infrastructural developments to “harness” water are key modalities of warfare in a region that has been at the center of a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan since 1947. More broadly, I am interested in how political strategists in India and Pakistan represent dam-induced environmental disasters (such as floods and droughts) as critical weapons of war, both to mobilize public support in favor of mega-dams but also to disregard their devastating impacts on Kashmir’s ecology and its people. Dams are considered integral to India’s national security and important symbols of progress and nationhood, but such narratives ignore Kashmir’s long drawn struggle with India over questions of resource and territorial sovereignty. I draw from my ethnographic work from Gurez in Northern Kashmir to elaborate how border communities, whose lives are most severely disrupted by the dam, experience India and Pakistan’s obsessive focus on hydropower as a weapon of war. I am also interested in analyzing how Gurezis articulate new ecological imaginaries that profoundly challenge state-sanctioned uses of their rivers and resources.