



Symposium: *Co-Producing Knowledge for Water, Climate and Risk Governance*

23 June 2026 | Vrije Universiteit Brussel
13:00 – 18:30

Room D.2.01

This symposium explores how research can extend beyond academia through direct engagement with communities and institutions addressing environmental challenges. It brings together case studies from Vietnam, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Cuba and Bolivia, including school-based disaster risk prevention, community-led water quality monitoring in rural wetlands, and participatory water governance processes under climate change

Across these contexts, the contributions offer a critical reflection on both the successes and the limitations of involving students, local communities, and public actors. From classroom-based risk awareness to citizen-generated water data and multi-stakeholder decision processes, these experiences provide grounded insights into the opportunities and limitations of co-producing knowledge, and their implications for more inclusive and effective natural resource governance.

13:00 – 13:05 Welcome Prof. Karin Vanderkerken

Vice Rector for Internationalization, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

13:05 – 13:10 Opening Remarks Prof. Ann van Griensven

Head of the Department of Water and Climate, Vrije Universiteit Brussel

13:10 – 13:15 Introduction to the Symposium Dr. Afnan Agramont Akiyama

Department of Water and Climate , Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Brief introduction to the symposium objectives and reflections on research beyond academia through community engagement, citizen science, and participatory governance.

Session I — Citizen Science for environmental and risk governance

Chair: Ann van Griensven

13:15 – 13:30 From Field to Map: The Kivu Citizen Observer Network Building Disaster Risk Knowledge in Eastern DRC (Presentation)

Dr. Caroline MICHELLIER

Royal Museum for Central Africa, Belgium

13:30 – 13:45 A Citizen Science Approach to Community Disaster Risk Reduction in Western Uganda (Presentation and short video)

Dr. John Sekajugo

Mountain of the Moon University, Uganda



13:45 – 14:00 Citizen Science for Climate Change Adaptation among Smallholder Farmers in South-Western Uganda (Presentation)

Dina Nabasumba

MUST & NARO, Uganda

14:00 – 14:15 From Researchers to River Stewards: Citizen Science for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health Monitoring in Tanzania (Presentation)

Dr. Winfred Mbungu

Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania

14:15 – 14:30 Lessons learned from the implementation of citizen science for water quality monitoring in Villa Clara, Cuba (Presentation and video)

Dr. Lamberto Moises Alvarez Gil

Universidad Central Marta Abreu de las Villas, Cuba

14:35 – 15:00 Discussion and Q&A

15:00 – 15:30 Coffee Break

Session II — Inclusive Participation for Governance and Climate Adaptation

Chair: Prof. Matthieu KERVYN

15:30 – 15:45 Participatory Approaches to Environmental Monitoring and Risk Assessment in Vietnam (Presentation and video)

Dr. Vu Kim Chi

Vietnam National University – IVIDES

15:45 – 16:00 Empowering ethnic minority students through participatory 3D mapping, IoT rainfall monitoring, and risk awareness education in mountainous Vietnam (Presentation and video)

Dr. Dr. Chinh Luu, Dr. Quynh Duy Bui

Hanoi University of Civil Engineering (HUCE)

16:00 – 16:15 Assessing Water System Vulnerabilities and Adaptation Strategies under Deep Uncertainty in Tanzania (Presentation and video)

Mr. Erasto Benedict Mukama

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

16:15 – 16:30 Reframing Participation under the Climate Risk Informed Decision Analysis Framework (Presentation and video)

Dr. Afnan Agramont Akiyama

Vrije Universiteit Brussel



16:30 – 17:30 Panel Discussion

Beyond Academia: Opportunities and Limitations of Co-Producing Knowledge

Panellists: Dr. John Sekajugo, Mrs. Dina Nabasumba, Dr. Winfred Mbungu, Dr. Chinh Luu, Dr. Caroline Michellier

Chair: Prof. Liliana Lizarazo Rodriguez, Brussels School of Governance

Guiding questions:

What happens when research moves beyond the university and into communities?

Can participatory approaches genuinely reshape environmental decision-making?

How do local experiences and scientific knowledge interact — and sometimes conflict — in practice?

What are the limitations of citizen science and participatory governance in contexts of inequality and institutional fragmentation?

How can research contribute to environmental awareness, local ownership, and long-term engagement rather than short-term project participation?

What lessons emerge across different contexts — from schools and wetlands to river basins and climate adaptation planning?

Audience participation encouraged.

17:30 – 17:35 Closing Reflections and Networking Invitation

Prof. Matthieu KERVYN

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

17:35 – 18:30 Reception and Networking (Room KRC 1.03)

Informal reception with drinks and networking opportunity for speakers, participants, students, and invited guests.