

“Rethinking Scales in Urban Disaster Management for Local Sustainability: Insights from the Philippines’ Flood Risk Governance”

*by Dr. **Weena Gera** on 6 June 2018 at 12:30 p.m.*

The next Science Talk, organized by the Institute of Systems Sciences, Innovation and Sustainability Research, will be given by **Dr. Weena Gera** (University of the Philippines Cebu) on the topic “Rethinking Scales in Urban Disaster Management for Local Sustainability: Insights from the Philippines’ Flood Risk Governance”.

Her talk will take place on Wednesday, 6 June 2018 at 12.30 pm in the **meeting room of SIS (Merangasse 18, 1st floor)**. Duration: **Approximately one hour** including discussion. The participation is free of charge and there is no need to register. SIS usually organizes three to five guest talks in each semester, covering its main research fields, i.e., systems sciences, innovation and sustainability research.

Bio-sketch

Weena Gera is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of the Philippines Cebu. She holds a PhD in International Development from Nagoya University. She completed a JSPS-UNU postdoctoral research fellowship with joint affiliation at the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), Tokyo, and the Integrated Research System for Sustainability Science (IR3S) of the University of Tokyo (2012-2014). She also completed an OeAD Ernst Mach Grants-ASEA-UNINET research fellowship with joint affiliation at the Institute of Forest, Environmental and Natural Resource Policy at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (InFER-BOKU), Vienna, and the Vienna University of Economics and Business/WU Vienna (2016-2017). Her recent projects and publications focus on analysing structures of governance in fragile states and their implications for sustainable development. She is a recipient of the “2018 Gro Brundtland Award” for outstanding work in the field of sustainable development.

Abstract

Globally, cities are fast becoming the locus of initiatives for building urban resilience and local sustainability. However, imperatives for integration in disaster risk management amid boundary-transcending disasters in urban agglomerations, spur new contentions with regards to what constitutes as a responsive construction of the scale of the local, particularly in decentralized regimes.

The study examines the case of urban flooding and disaster management in the Philippines’ major metropolitan regions, and analyzes the pitfalls of current frameworks of urban flood risk governance across these conurbations, using the lens of scalar politics. It then assesses the relevance of the Philippines’ current framing of the city jurisdictions, as well as prevailing metropolitan governance arrangements and reform agenda, whether these are responsive to managing disasters and their required scales for integrated interventions. Taking off from the different flood risk analyses and integrated flood management master plans, the study illustrates the growing salience of the metropolitan region, beyond the political boundaries of cities, as a crucial scale for positioning urban governance capacity. It demonstrates, however, that prevailing intergovernmental and geopolitical fragmentation overwhelms existing metropolitan institutions and bodies. The paper argues that the Philippines’ construction of local political boundaries do not respond to the urgent need for integration and scale of urban disaster management. These would translate to either ad hoc inter-city collaborations or an impasse in inter-jurisdictional negotiations. These signify the limitations in the country’s decentralization system, which creates an ironic capitulation of metropolitan governance mandates to the central government. Centrally administered metropolitan institutions nonetheless remain constrained for integrated urban crisis management reforms, absent legitimate local political authority. It concludes that the country is in a critical juncture to seriously consider reconfiguring its intergovernmental political system, and adopt the more appropriate watershed/river basin strategy as a useful scale reference towards institutionalizing political mandates for metropolitan structures. The study ultimately makes a case - that responsive reframing of local regulatory authorities in accordance with required scales of integrated disaster interventions, might be a key reform agenda for governments to consider, if they are to seriously promote local capacity for urban resilience toward local sustainability.