

## [Disaster Justice in Anthropocene Asia and the Pacific](#)

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Call for Papers

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Singapore

Subject Fields:

Environmental History / Studies, Geography, Government and Public Service, Humanities, Urban Design and Planning

This interdisciplinary conference brings together research on environmental disasters in Asia to illuminate questions of disaster justice from historical and contemporary perspectives. As all disasters occur in political space, disaster justice is situated in spheres of governance and in the context of Asia's rapidly urbanizing societies that are increasingly impacted by the advent of the Anthropocene, namely, the destructive human transformations of nature that are significant drivers of environmental disasters. As awareness grows of human complicity in creating socially and spatially uneven vulnerabilities to disasters, discontents and mobilizations for disaster justice are being generated as moral claims for more effective and inclusive modes of disaster prevention, mitigation, management and redress.

This event combines the richness of on-the-ground research with new insights into how to conceptualize and govern disasters from normative as well as explanatory perspectives. Our central premise is that disaster justice as a moral claim on governance arises from anthropogenic interventions in nature that incubate disasters and magnify their socially and spatially uneven impacts. Posing disaster justice as a problem of governance thus covers a set of issues that encompass but are also differentiated from such allied concepts as environmental and climate justice. As intense events that cause widespread harm and overwhelm existing capacities to respond, disasters generate highly charged but exceptionally complex questions of justice. These factors, combined with the increasingly compound characteristics of environmental disasters (for instance, when a tsunami leads to a nuclear power plant meltdown) further complicate issues of justice in establishing causalities, attributing blame, identifying victims and (re-)establishing working solutions.

Changing geographies of vulnerability accompanying Asia's urban transition are adding new dimensions to disaster governance and justice. Urbanization can erode traditional intergenerational responsibilities and customary law, leaving vacuums in authority and achieving justice. As reliance on the state for justice increases with urbanization, rural-urban migration is producing large slum populations in environmentally precarious locations along urban waterways. The vulnerability of these settlements is exacerbated by urban mega-projects that cover cityscapes with non-porous surfaces and abet ground subsidence while further pushing low-income households into high disaster risk areas. Minorities, women, children, the elderly and disabled are also among the ranks of those who are unable to access and thus have low confidence in government disaster support systems. Self-reliance in disaster resilience is often the only recourse, and as grassroots efforts grow, so do calls

for disaster justice that extend into issues of land ownership, the right to dwell in the city, and participation in governance, all of which move beyond a disaster event to present growing challenges to prevailing political structures.

Asia's urban turn also brings environmental disasters into wider global urban networks of flows of information, ideas and technologies. Whether in cities or world peripheries, awareness of our planetary interconnectedness is growing, and along with it calls for disaster justice are appearing from local to global scales. Cooperative inter-city networks of mainly urban-based disaster recovery and humanitarian assistance organizations and programs are furthering acceptance of the principle that people everywhere are entitled to receive help when disasters strike. Cities across Asia are also emerging as sites of innovation in promoting more inclusive forms of participatory governance through wider circles of civic engagement that assert rights-based strategies in building resilience for more socially just post-disaster futures.

We invite submission of papers from scholars, policymakers, planners and development practitioners to explore the governance of disaster justice in urbanising Asia. We encourage applicants to consider empirical studies and theories within comparative Asian contexts to draw lessons that can be learned from disaster justice in other urbanising world regions. Questions that will guide the conference proceedings to speak to related themes across disciplinary and geographical boundaries include:

- How can we theorize questions of justice in the context of environmental disasters in Asia and other world regions?
- Is activism for disaster justice emerging in specific contexts? Why or why not? If it is, how is it manifested, and to what effect?
- What kinds of innovations in governance are appearing to provide redress for real and perceived injustices related to disasters?
- Do such concepts as vulnerability, disaster risk reduction, resilience and capacity building contribute to a useful discourse on disaster justice? Are other analytical frameworks needed?
- What kinds of actions are needed at various scales of disaster governance, ranging from the neighbourhood to city region, transboundary and global levels of seeking disaster justice? How can actions at all levels be articulated toward combined visions of disaster justice instead of becoming territorially divisive?

### Submission of Proposals

Paper proposals should include a title, an abstract (250 words maximum) and a brief personal biography of 150 words for submission by **30 June 2016**. Please send all proposals in word document to [arios@nus.edu.sg](mailto:arios@nus.edu.sg) and for a copy of the submission form, click [here](#). Successful applicants will be notified by **15 July** and will be required to send in a completed draft paper (5000-8000 words) by **31 October**.

### Conference Covenors

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