

Global Studies Seminar
Brown Bag Series #35

Nazia Hussain (Policy Alternatives Research Institute, The University of Tokyo)
Scarcity and Contention in Cities in the Global South



Date: January 28, 2019
Time: 17:30 - 19:00
Venue: Collaboration Room 1 on the 4th Floor of the Building 18, Komaba Campus, UTokyo
Language: English

Cosponsored by LAINAC, TINDAS (Center for South Asian Studies), and Research Center for Sustainable Development
Supported by IAGS (Institute for Advanced Global Studies)
*IAGS will host a welcome reception after the presentation.

1) Introductory Remarks (17:30-17:45)



Takeshi Wada
(Global Studies Initiative, The University of Tokyo)



Fumiko Nishizaki
(Director of the Institute for Advanced Global Studies, The University of Tokyo)



Hiroyuki Ukeda
(Vice Director of the UTokyo LAINAC, The University of Tokyo)



Akio Tanabe
(Director of the University of Tokyo Integrated Area Studies on South Asia)



Yuichi Sekiya
(Director of the Research Center for Sustainable Development, The University of Tokyo)



Kiichi Fujiwara
(Director of the Policy Alternatives Research Institute, The University of Tokyo)

2) Main Lecture (17:45-19:00)

Nazia Hussain (Policy Alternatives Research Institute, The University of Tokyo)
Scarcity and Contention in Cities in the Global South

Cities of the Global South, beset with challenges of formal governance, organized crime, and violence associated with criminal and political players, face emergent crises in the age of urbanization and climate related risks. Concerns especially arise about potential resource scarcity, notably, water. Resulting from increasing populations, changing weather patterns, and inequality in access rooted in local political economies and histories, water crises are not distant scenarios but near-present realities.

Dominant policy explanations, based on ideal types, warn about dystopian futures for these places, calling them battlegrounds for future warfare. These ideal types, I argue, present a starting point, but are not the final word. At best, they provide a static snapshot in time. Yet, lived realities illustrate dynamic interactions among residents, political and criminal players, government officials as well as those who navigate multiple worlds of formal/(in)formal and licit/illicit with ease.

My work presents an alternative approach. It draws on scholarship on cases from Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, which challenges these macro generalizations and identifies an 'order' within seeming 'disorder'. Where the state is perceived absent, scholars point out relationships among actors, including those operating in the grey zones of legality and illegality and government officials at varying levels.

My work builds on these explanations. At the same time, I focus on emergent crises, which have predominantly remained outside the purview of these conversations. In some cities, violence levels compare to those in war zones; in others, even if body counts do not reach similar levels of intensity, insecurity has become a part of the urban existence, especially for those at the margins. How might political order shaped by violence, crime and deregulated service provision respond to depleted water resources in these places?

My approach suggests stepping away from explanations of 'order' or 'disorder' in favor of a high-resolution understanding developed at micro and meso levels. To that end, mechanisms (shaped by methodological preferences) serve as workhorses of explanation. These mechanisms may be comparable across contexts and offer insights of potential use, not only for academic research, but also for pointed policy interventions.

Understanding how, if, or to what extent such crises may contribute to contention, an increase in frequency and intensity in criminal and (or) political violence or deeper schisms within society along different fault lines is an anticipatory project. Yet, it is a relevant and timely enterprise.

Making sense of how access to water is implicated in the dynamics of local politics and governance presents an opportunity to address these concerns. My research focuses on these questions in the cities of Karachi, Pakistan and Manila, Philippines.

3) Reception (19:00-20:30)

Venue: Open Space on the 4th Floor of the Building 18, Komaba Campus, UTokyo
Cost : 1,000 yen. Free for students. No advanced reservation necessary.

