



**APRU FELLOWS PROGRAM 2012**  
*in partnership with NUS Asia Research Institute*

28 May – 1 June 2012, Singapore

**The Value of Water:  
Water, Values and Society in the Asia Pacific Region**

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- ◆ **How do we value water – culturally, economically – in a diversity of contexts? What can we learn from the different ways of valuing water?**
  - ◆ **Who owns it? How do we govern its use? Through better governance, how might we ensure equity and intergenerational protection of eco-systems?**
  - ◆ **How can we align community values, engineering and other technical approaches to water management?**
  - ◆ **How might we develop and reform the framing of freshwater research and management around the Asia Pacific region?**
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Oceans cover 70 per cent of the globe. The Pacific Ocean makes up 30 per cent of the Earth's surface – larger than the Earth's entire land mass. Access to water of an appropriate quality presents a long-term crisis of social equity and environmental sustainability.

Societies of the Asia Pacific region face huge challenges from the social, economic and environmental impacts of water availability and use. These include changes to traditional patterns of use, rapid urbanization as mega-cities rise around the Pacific Rim, natural hazards from earthquakes and tsunamis, pollution, cross-border competition for water resources as industrial processes and sustaining human populations lead to an insatiable demand, the privatization and marketization of water as a commodity, together with the restriction of rights of access to fresh water rivers, lakes, and aquifers. Along with this are the pressing need for sophisticated regimes of water management which preserve the environment, especially hinterland forests and watersheds, amidst the threats of rising sea levels and the increased frequency of flooding and drought associated with climate change.

The UN General Assembly in 2010 recognized access to clean water as a basic human right. Yet an estimated 884 million people globally lack access to safe drinking water and more than 2.6 billion people, 40 per cent of the global population, do not have access to basic sanitation. In Asia, home to 60 per cent of the world's population but only 36 per cent of the world's freshwater resources, demand for freshwater has increased by over 300 per cent in the last 50 years. Critical concerns for human prosperity and survival, alongside environmental and cultural values, must be addressed in both freshwater and oceanic systems.



Important technical advances have been made towards water sustainability. Yet policy-makers and urban elites are disconnected from the immediate effects of environmental degradation. **It is now time to investigate whether and how values and social attitudes in different societies and physical settings can better inform public policy and scientific enquiry to ensure the protection and sustainability of water as a resource.**

The APRU Fellows Program 2012 will bring together leading early career researchers in the full range of disciplines from APRU universities (including the humanities, engineering, business and finance, public health, physical, life and social sciences) to examine these and related issues. They will present papers which engage with the topic of water, values and society in the quest for international solutions to environmental sustainability and social equity. They will be tasked with developing collaborative research with each other. Trans-disciplinary lessons learnt from across the Pacific region will be used to develop targeted research and management 'plans of action'.