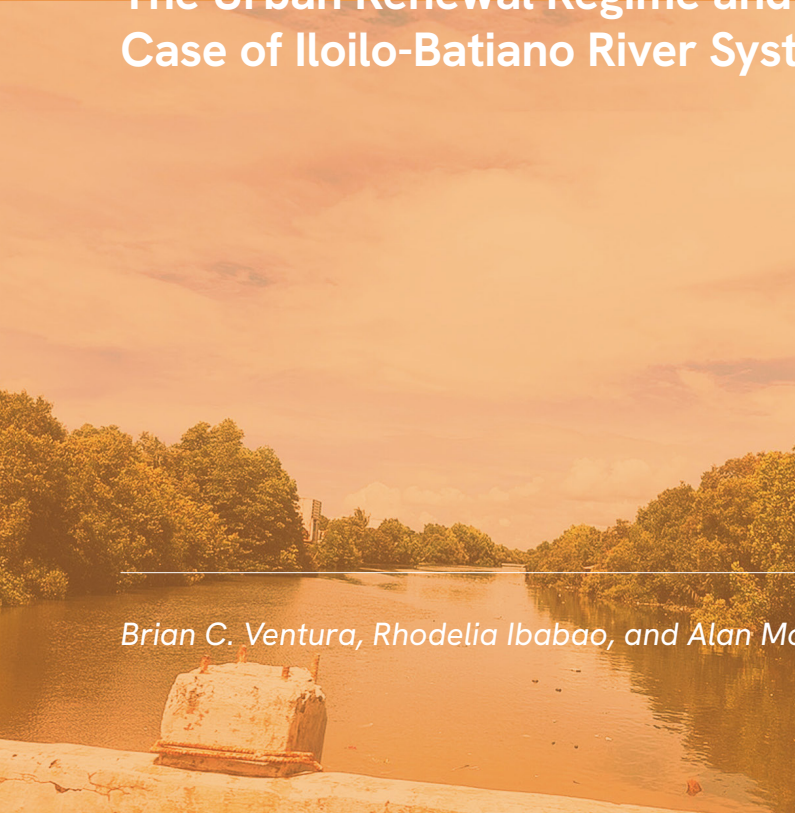


■ URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM

# The Challenges of Environmental Management for Highly Urbanized Cities

The Urban Renewal Regime and the  
Case of Iloilo-Batiano River System

*Brian C. Ventura, Rhodelia Ibabao, and Alan Moscoso*



■ URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM

# The Challenges of Environmental Management for Highly Urbanized Cities

The Urban Renewal Regime and the  
Case of Iloilo-Batiano River System

---

*Brian C. Ventura, Rhodelia Ibabao, and Alan Moscoso*



**UP CIDS Discussion Paper Series**

is published by the

**University of the Philippines****Center for Integrative and Development Studies**

Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni  
Magsaysay Avenue, University of the Philippines  
Diliman, Quezon City 1101

**Telephone:** (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268 / (02) 8426-0955

**Email:** [cidspublications@up.edu.ph](mailto:cidspublications@up.edu.ph)

**Website:** [cids.up.edu.ph](http://cids.up.edu.ph)



[cids.up.edu.ph](http://cids.up.edu.ph)

---

Copyright 2025 by the  
UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies.

The views and opinions expressed in this discussion paper are those of the author/s and neither reflect nor represent those of the University of the Philippines or the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies. No copies can be made in part or in whole without prior written permission from the authors/editors and the publisher.

**ISSN 2619-7448 (Print)**

**ISSN 2619-7456 (Online)**

---

**Cover image credit**

"Batiano River, Molo, Iloilo City"

BSrap, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

# Table of Contents

---

**2      Introduction: Regimes and Urban Renewal**

|   |                                                           |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Regimes                                                   |
| 4 | Urban Renewal                                             |
| 4 | Governing Urban Rivers in the Philippines                 |
| 6 | Urban River and Urban Renewal in Iloilo                   |
| 9 | Iloilo River Esplanade as Center of Urban Renewal Project |

---

**10     Problem Description**

|    |                                                                       |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10 | LGU and NGA Coordination                                              |
| 11 | Water Quality and Septage Regulation                                  |
| 12 | Inter-local coordination                                              |
| 14 | Summary of Findings and the Current State of the Urban Renewal Regime |

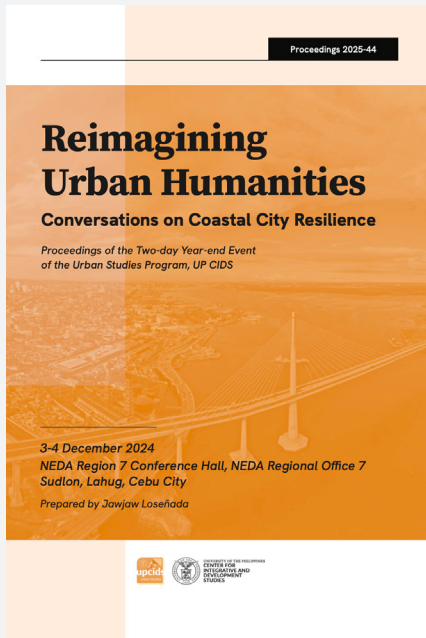
---

**15     Policy Options and Conclusion**

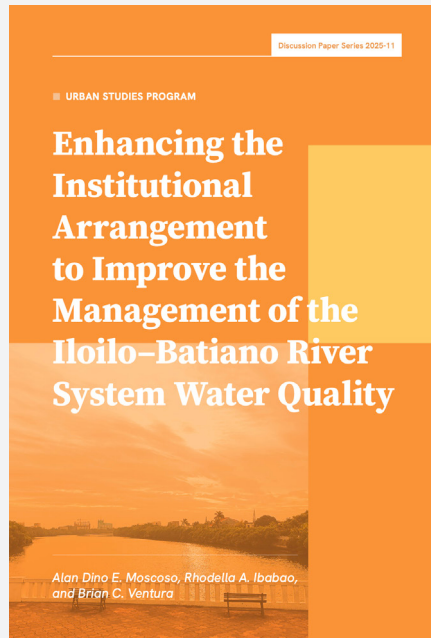
---

**16     References**

**Download related policy papers  
for free**



***Reimagining Urban Humanities:  
Conversations on Coastal City Resilience***



***Enhancing the Institutional Arrangement to  
Improve the Management of the Iloilo-Batiano  
River System Water Quality***

**[cids.up.edu.ph/collection-database](https://cids.up.edu.ph/collection-database)**

**Get your policy papers published.**

**Download open-access articles.**

The Philippine Journal of Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives (PJPP), the annual peer-reviewed journal of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), welcomes submissions in the form of full-length policy-oriented manuscripts, book reviews, essays, and commentaries. The PJPP provides a multidisciplinary forum for examining contemporary social, cultural, economic, and political issues in the Philippines and elsewhere. Submissions are welcome year-round.

*For more information, visit [cids.up.edu.ph](http://cids.up.edu.ph).*

*All issues/articles of the PJPP can be downloaded for free.*

**Get news and the  
latest publications.**

Join our mailing list to get our publications delivered straight to your inbox! Also, you'll receive news of upcoming webinars and other updates.

*[bit.ly/signup\\_cids](http://bit.ly/signup_cids)*

**We need  
your feedback.**

Have our publications been useful? Tell us what you think.

*[bit.ly/dearcids](http://bit.ly/dearcids)*

# THE CHALLENGES OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT FOR HIGHLY URBANIZED CITIES

The Urban Renewal Regime and the  
Case of Iloilo-Batiano River System

---

*Brian C. Ventura<sup>1</sup>, Rhodelia Ibabao, and  
Alan Moscoso*

---

<sup>1</sup> University of the Philippines Visayas, Urban Studies Program, [bcventura@up.edu.ph](mailto:bcventura@up.edu.ph)

# INTRODUCTION: REGIMES AND URBAN RENEWAL

## *Regimes*

The concept of regime is a useful tool to uncover the relationships of actors and salience or weakness of rules governing a particular policy area. A regime is defined as “rules and basic political resource allocation according to which actors exercise authority by imposing and enforcing collective decisions on a bounded constituency” (Kitchelt 1992, 1028). When political and other societal actors confront urgent concerns or collective action problems, they assemble, propose, or negotiate the inclusion or exclusion of players, allocate powers, clarify interests, and chart agenda into a constellation which forms a regime (Stoker and Mossberger 1994). In the context of urban politics, regime formation can be a “response to urban change” (Stoker and Mossberger 1994, 196), when local actors realize that national resources need to be adopted to the local context and that this adoption requires a new and as yet non-existent arrangement of powers, actors, and resources. A major part of this arrangement lies on the inclusion of non- governmental actors, such as civil society groups, private sector, and other community members that vary from one locality to another and are too specific for any national level authority to identify.

In a unitary constitutional set-up such as the Philippines, national boundaries are crucial parameters for urban regimes, but they do not always suit the local needs. Therefore, the regime arrangement must be contextualized within local power and resources. Conversely, local power and resources may also need to be reconfigured to take advantage or respond to national boundaries or other external demands. In some cases, the administrative functions of national agencies require information and other inputs that local regime dynamics can potentially provide (Zhao et al 2021). In the context of environmental governance, the geographic scale that requires regime attention may exist in area within the context of spatial scales that may be beyond the regular jurisdictional boundaries of local authorities. (Gibbs and Jonas 2000)

More specifically, in governing urban rivers, local government authorities and other regime actors work within the context of national administrative and political boundaries. City governments, in particular, possess, the power to include the management of rivers and communities surrounding it in their

land use development plans. In the Philippines, however, being a unitary state, it is given that national line agencies also play an important role as sources of expertise, material resources, and provider of national mandate for implementation within the territory of local government units (LGUs). However, since regimes give primacy to territorial actors, the lead role of LGUs is still retained. Local government entities have powers to allow or disallow actions, vis-a-vis rivers under their jurisdictions, according to their own regulations, as an interpretation of national rules, and in cooperation with other local authorities.

As a jurisdiction, however, governing urban rivers may require more than just the territorial power of local government authorities. There are four reasons for this;

1. As geographic entities, rivers tend to stretch though areas covering more than one local government authority.
2. Even if a river is under one local government authority, it can still can be connected to creeks and tributaries under different local authorities.
3. The multi-use nature of rivers embraces a diversity of stakeholders, from local authorities, community organizations and private profit-oriented players.
4. The urban sustainability agenda used in governing urban rivers may require campaign among actors with differing ideological positions.

Given the realities confronting the regime governing urban rivers, it is essential for local actors to look at an arrangement that recognizes the contextual and diverse nature of participants and rules for resource allocation. While local authorities still have the power to enforce and impose, the subject of such actions are not just powerless entities who can be made to submit without contestation. National agencies, private sector actors, and community organizations exist within the territory of local authorities, but they can still question the legitimacy of the local actors' jurisdiction. This can appear in a form of appealing to rules or institutions above local authorities, such as in the form of lobbying national agencies, or subjecting contested issues to prolonged litigation. These challenges can inevitably undermine the resource allocation power of local authorities, preventing—or at least delaying—its capability to impose and enforce rules within its jurisdiction.

## ***Urban Renewal***

Urban authorities around the world confront a multitude of social and environmental issues that require the convergence of many actors. To address these demands, many have turned to urban

renewal projects as a way to mobilize resources and to direct the agenda of their diverse constituencies. In a survey of various studies of urban renewal from around the world, Zheng, Shen, and Wang (2014) identified three broad goals why local authorities embark on an urban renewal projects. First is when cities decide to improve land values and enhance the environmental quality of the city or areas within it. Second is when cities try to arrest cases of urban decay and try to hit their socio-economic development goals at the same time. Lastly, when cities want to address problems of social inclusion and help improve the conditions of vulnerable social groups.

Governing urban rivers, especially those that have histories of hosting the center of economic activities of the city, can become the focus of urban renewal projects that may cover most if not all of the three objectives above. The decline of environmental quality in river areas can be a result of decades of resource extraction and unregulated disposal of solid waste and sewage by communities and industries. The persistent lowering of water quality around the bodies of water such, as in urban rivers, can in turn lead to decline in quality of life of the community, the reduction of property value for private owners, and discouragement of commercial activities in the surrounding area.

Rivers often occupy a defining geographic, economic, and cultural landscape of many major cities in the country. It is therefore to be expected that when urban authorities identify them as focal points for urban renewal projects, they require a convergence of many actors and interests, to exploit existing rules and resources, or craft and muster new ones. In this context, rivers and urban renewal regime means the use of political resources, norms and procedures to address the problems of urban decay, improve environmental quality, and achieve socio-economic objectives in using the revitalization or revival of urban rivers as the focal project.

## ***Governing Urban Rivers in the Philippines***

In the Philippines, local authorities exercise jurisdiction over bodies of waters such as rivers based on existing key existing rules and regulations.

The Local Government Code allows local authorities to generate revenues bodies of water by charging fees for the extraction of sand and other quarry activities (Sec. 138). It also mandates local legislative bodies in provinces, municipalities, and cities to pass ordinances pertaining to environmental protection, including imposing penalties for violations (Secs. 447, 468, and 468).

In cases where urban rivers are used for fishing activities, the Fisheries Code also allow local authorities to define their own coastal zones, including estuarine rivers (Sec. 4), and regulate the operation of fish ponds, pens, and cages (Sec. 46). They also have jurisdiction over the use of rivers as navigation and as migration paths (Secs. 51, 55, 56, 103, and 105). To govern bodies of water, including rivers, covering two or more political territorial boundaries, local authorities are

also mandated to create an Integrated Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils (IFARMCs) to form intergovernmental alliances.

The Water Code of the Philippines vests the ownership of bodies of water like rivers to the State, and activities like raising or lowering water levels and drainage are under the authority of national government agencies. (Art. 5, 32, 43, and 44). It also governs the definition of river easement based on whether the area is defined as urban, agricultural, or forest land (Art. 51). The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) has the power to give permission for activities and projects related to flood control, navigation, watershed, and mining (Chap. V, VI, and VII). The Clean Water Act mandates the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to serve as the primary national government agency in monitoring and establishing water quality of rivers.

In summary, national government agencies have power over infrastructure projects related to flood control and navigation, definition of easement, and establishment and monitoring of water quality, while local authorities have the power over zoning, charging of fees, generating revenues, and environmental ordinances and imposing penalties for violations.

# Urban River and Urban Renewal in Iloilo



■ **Figure 1.** The Iloilo-Batiano River System (Iloilo-Batiano River Development Program (IBRDP) 2023)

Historically, Iloilo City served as major urban center for textile and sugar cane trade in the country. In the 17th century, the city experienced the peak of its textile boom, with numerous household managing looms to produce weaves sold throughout the country. In 1855, the opening of the Iloilo Port to global trade further bolstered the wealth and the prominence of the city. A major part of this trade is due to the large sugar industry in Panay and the neighboring islands. (Funtecha 1992)

Throughout this period, the Iloilo river and the city streets surrounding the area, served as a center of the city. The function of the river as port is a vital part of the way the city view progress as an urban center. When policy makers and the community as a whole look at the city and the river in 1990s, it is therefore not surprising that the way they visualize urban renewal is anchored on the role of the river and the surrounding areas. (Funtecha 1992)

As a response to this view of urban renewal, Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas signed EO no. 234 in 2002, creating the Iloilo River Development Council (IRDC) as the primary body tasked to lead the rehabilitation of the river. In 2003, the Iloilo River Masterplan (IRM) was formulated under the auspices of the IRDC to guide the various stakeholders in revitalizing and preserving the river as an ecosystem confronting various challenges and as a place that holds an important contribution to the historic legacy and the current vitality

of the city. The development of the IRM was a joint undertaking of Iloilo Business Club, Iloilo City Government, United States-Asia Environmental Partnership Program (US-AEP), and Asia Foundation.

The IRM identified 16 issues that require a sustained and coordinated effort to revitalize the Iloilo river. There are the following;

1. Poor water quality
2. Presence of solid waste and other floating debris
3. Siltation and sediment loading,
4. Laxity of issuance of Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC)
5. Deficient garbage disposal system
6. Encroachment/reclamation of Iloilo river
7. Inadequate public access infrastructure
8. Worn-out structures and buildings from the mouth of the river to Quirino bridge
9. Presence of informal settlers
10. High incidence of respiratory diseases
11. Seasonal unpleasant odor
12. Absence of sanitary facilities and water supply for majority of the informal settlers
13. Some barangays are not keen on protecting territorial boundaries
14. Lack of data/information on the economic valuation of the different industrial and commercial activities and business along Iloilo river
15. Illegal fishing practices
16. Absence of proper administrative boundaries and legal easement (pg. 3 to 6)

## Network of Partners



■ **Figure 2.** National Government Agencies, Local Government Units, Private Sector, and Academic Community as part of the Networks and Partners of the Iloilo Batiano River Development Council (IBRDC 2023)

In 2006, Iloilo City was one of the urban centers in the country which joined Project Linaw, or Local Initiative for Affordable Wastewater Treatment in the Philippines. Wastewater discharge to the river and the lack of treatment facilities for major institutional users, such as schools and hospitals, surrounding the river were considered as major factors affecting water quality. This initiative was therefore seen as a vital step to curbing the sources of pollution adversely affecting the river.

In 2010, the IRDC was renamed as Iloilo-Batiano River Development Council (IBRDC) to reflect the fact the river system covers both the Batiano and Iloilo rivers under the territorial jurisdiction of both Iloilo City and the municipality of Oton. However, since a large part of the river and the main activities and projects are within Iloilo City, the chairmanship of the council was still under the city mayor of Iloilo. Figure 2 shows the national government agencies, LGUs, private sector, and academic community as part of the networks and partners of the Iloilo Batiano River Development Council.

In 2011, a river summit gathering academics, policy makers, and various stakeholders was organized in the city. The summit served as venue for sharing of ideas, development of consensus, identification of objectives, and crafting of strategies that can help the IRDC's goal of reviving and managing the Iloilo-Batiano river.

*Iloilo River Esplanade as Center of Urban Renewal Project*

The Iloilo River Esplanade is the main infrastructure project anchoring the urban renewal objectives of decision-makers and other stakeholder in the city. From the inception of the river revitalization up until today the LGU focuses on the Iloilo Esplanade as a commercial, tourism, and public park area. Between 2012 and 2020, ten sections of the Iloilo River Esplanade were opened (Secs. 1,2,4, and 9). From 2021-2024 two sections were opened (Secs. 3 and 10). In 2025 another section was also added (Sec. 11). Table 1 shows the development of the Iloilo River Esplanade from 2012 to 2015, Esplanade number, Length, Location of Start and end of the Section, District, and Date Opened. (IBRDP 2023)

As part of the revitalization of the Iloilo-Batiano River, the IBRDC identified eight major problems that needed urgent attention. These are (1) water pollution, (2) siltation and flooding, (3) reduction of mangrove areas, (4) presence of informal settlements, (5) encroachment on the easement of the river, (6) congestion of waterways, (7) livelihood and economic problems, and (8) the lack of baseline data.

To deal with the above-mentioned challenges, the IBRDC, working with various national government agencies, private sector, the academe and civil society actors, conducted a series of dredging activities, relocation of informal settlers, replanting of mangrove trees, and removal of fish pens to improve the flow of water in the Iloilo-Batiano river.

**Table 1. The Development of the Iloilo River Esplanade from 2012 to 2015, Esplanade number, Length, Location of Start and end of the Section, District and Date Opened**

|             | LENGTH                  | LOCATION<br>SECTION<br>START | SECTION END         | DISTRICT   | DATE OPENED        |
|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|------------|--------------------|
| Esplanade 1 | 1.26 km<br>(0.78 miles) | Carpenter<br>Bridge          | Iloilo Bridge       | Mandurriao | August 18,<br>2012 |
| Esplanade 1 | 0.27 km<br>(0.17 miles) | Iloilo<br>Bridge             | Nabitanan<br>Bridge | Mandurriao | August 26,<br>2017 |
| Esplanade 2 | 1.27 km<br>(0.79 miles) | Carpenter<br>Bridge          | Iloilo Bridge       | Molo       | August 2015        |
| Esplanade 3 | 0.88 km<br>(0.55 miles) | Nabitanan<br>Bridge          | Jalandoni<br>Bridge | La Paz     | 2021               |

|                 | LENGTH                   | LOCATION<br>SECTION<br>START | SECTION END                 | DISTRICT         | DATE OPENED                    |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Esplanade 4     | 0.83 km<br>(0.52 miles)  | Iloilo<br>Bridge             | Jalandoni<br>Bridge         | City Proper      | 2018                           |
| Esplanade 5     | 0.9 km<br>(0.56 miles)   | Jalandoni<br>Bridge          | Jalandoni<br>Bridge         | City Proper      | 2018                           |
| Esplanade 6     | 0.85 km<br>(0.53 miles)  | Jalandoni<br>Bridge          | Forbes<br>Bridge            | City Proper      | July 27, 2019                  |
| Esplanade 7     | 0.2 km<br>(0.12 miles)   | Forbes<br>Bridge             | Forbes<br>Bridge            | La Paz           | July 27, 2019                  |
| Esplanade 8     | 1.41 km<br>(0.88 miles)  | Rizal<br>Bridge              | Freedom<br>Grandstand       | City Proper      | July 27, 2019                  |
| Esplanade 9     | 0.62 km<br>(0.39 miles)  | Rizal<br>Bridge              | Quirino-<br>Lopez<br>Bridge | La Paz,<br>Lapuz | December<br>2020               |
| Esplanade<br>10 | 0.1 km<br>(0.062 miles)  | Forbes<br>Bridge             | Rizal Bridge                | City Proper      | July 2022                      |
| Esplanade<br>11 | 0.54 km<br>(0.34 miles)  | Quirino-<br>Lopez<br>Bridge  | Drilon<br>Bridge            | Lapuz            | 2025 (ongoing<br>construction) |
| Esplanade<br>12 | 0.16 km<br>(0.099 miles) | Drilon<br>Bridge             | Fastcraft<br>Terminal       | Lapuz            | February<br>2016               |

■ Source: IBRDP 2023

## PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

### *LGU and NGA Coordination*

Years of coordination between national government agencies, local government authorities, private sector actors, and community stakeholders centered on the revitalization of the Iloilo-Batiano river. The establishment of a series of Esplanade Projects from 2012 up to today allowed for various regime participants to have a central focus. Funding proposals coordinated the actions of local politicians with national authorities. Local government actors sustained coordination with national government agencies like the DPWH and DENR to build the infrastructure and monitor river water quality. On top of this, communities surrounding the river, business establishments, and private property owners need to adjust with the infrastructure development.

Today, however, problems of coordination surfaced during the series of focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews conducted as part of the study. In one case, the use of DENR reports and the expectation of what local government bureaucracy will do to implement it was mentioned. Particularly, local government and community actors questioned how the problems revealed in DENR reports (e.g., violation of waste disposal regulations and poor water quality) can be useful in their own specific contexts. It was also revealed in the interviews that the Technical Working

Group (TWG) of the Iloilo River Development Council has been inactive for a couple of years and needed an Executive Order from the local chief executive to be reactivated.

There are also problems identified in the 2002 IRM that persists today. Based on initial consultation with Iloilo City stakeholders, the major problem of the Iloilo river is still low water quality and the major factor affecting water quality are still waste water disposed by stakeholders in the riverine area, primarily from commercial and institutional users. In other words, more than two decades after the crafting of the Iloilo River Master Plan in 2002, major actors with central roles in the function of the urban river renewal regime and some coordination functions have either faded or still remain unclear.

### ***Water Quality and Septage Regulation***

To address the continuing concerns of water quality, the Iloilo City government, in coordination the DENR and barangay authorities are looking at two main policy directions. First, they are studying the use of modular waste water treatment facilities that will intercept and treat the water flowing from some communities near to river. Second, the Iloilo City LGU is implementing a regulation on household septage disposal. Under this regulation, the LGU intends to regulate household septage disposal and enforce a permitting system for independent septage dislodging operators. In the implementation process, the regulation also identified the crucial role of barangay level LGUs to help monitor and enforce compliance of households under their jurisdiction.

These policies, however, also confront a couple of challenges. Four issues require closer attention. The first issue was related to the cost of adopting the technology, such as if the LGU will shoulder the cost of the acquisition

and maintenance of the modular treatment facility, and if the operation and maintenance will be shouldered by the barangays, the contractors, or the city LGU.

The second issue is affordability of household septage dislodging to ensure compliance for a large number of low-income households in the city. Cross subsidy was floated as an option to lower the cost for some households, but it is still unclear where the subsidy will originate.

The third concerns the expectation that the barangay-level LGU will play a major role in implementation, by monitoring and enforcing household requirements related to separate clean up. In the interviews and FGD, it was mentioned that barangay officials are not too keen on having additional responsibilities without additional resources and especially not one that will inevitably create tensions between them and their own constituency.

Fourth and, the last, is related to the entry of private sector water service provider in Iloilo City. Currently, there is a private water service provider covering Iloilo City and neighboring municipalities. Under their contract, and in compliance with national law, the private contractor is also responsible for the sewage treatment services of the communities under the coverage of their concession. In other words, the problem of sewage treatment, laying down of pipes or providing septage dislodging services for households not connected to the sewage networks, should primarily be a contractual obligation of the private concessionaire. However, based on FGD and interview data, it appears that many of the existing pipes are too old to operate properly. Connecting more households may also be difficult due to issues of cost and right of way. It is also unclear if the LGU or the private contractor has a definite timeline on how to assess the progress of compliance to this contractual obligation.

### ***Inter-local coordination***

The municipality of Oton is also part of the IBDRRC. Part of the Iloilo-Batiano river is under the jurisdiction of the municipality. Most of the resources and infrastructure projects, such as the River Esplanade, are concentrated in Iloilo City and the participants of the IBDRRC (Figure 2) are mostly under Iloilo City. Since most of the activities and projects of the IBDRRC is Iloilo-centric, Oton is often excluded, making the smaller LGU note that they have

not actually been receiving the necessary invitation to join many activities related to the Iloilo-Batiano river.

Oton is smaller and less urbanized than Iloilo City and they have different concerns related to urban river management. For the barangays near the Batiano river, the most urgent concern is the periodic flooding that submerges many households during rainy season. During the FGD with stakeholders in the municipality of Oton, they attribute this problem to the following factors:

1. Siltation due to agricultural activities in upland areas outside the municipality of Oton
2. River bank erosion
3. Growth of vegetation, such as mangroves, grasses, and bamboos, affecting the flow of river
4. Real estate development, primarily housing, that inevitably includes the developers filling up properties to increase the ground level and prepare it for construction

The municipality, in cooperation with the DPWH, conducted a series of dredging operations in the past couple of years to increase the depth of the river and improve water flow. This activity is considered to be effective by the stakeholders in Oton. However, the cost of operation is too prohibitive for the municipality alone to shoulder. While the stakeholders recognized need to conduct dredging regularly, the budget needed is too large for the municipality to pay and only the DPWH possess the equipment needed for the operation.

From the point of view Oton LGU, there is also a need to clarify the basis for measuring easement to improve how they can manage the river. This is because the barangays around the river can be covered under various classifications, such as agricultural, forest land, and residential areas. In effect the basis for measuring river easement can differ from barangay to barangay.

## ***Summary of Findings and the Current State of the Urban Renewal Regime***

For more than two decades, the experience of the Iloilo-Batiano River rehabilitation shows how regimes can shape environmental policies in the local level. National legislations and local ordinances identify the legal and administrative framework that shapes the regime governing urban rivers in the country.

In the case of the Iloilo-Batiano river, the constellation of local actors and factors animated this regime with a goal of urban renewal which centers on river rehabilitation. While urban renewal was not originally set as the goal, it became the incremental effect of the project based on assessment of stakeholders present during the initial part of the plans. Added to the layers of administrative jurisdictions is the geographic reality of the river itself.

In the context of local democracy, it is clear that there is a problem of local autonomy and the outsized role of national authorities. This is largely due to the fact the Philippines is a unitary system, with national agencies and the executive and legislative branches of the government having supervisory and fiscal power over many local activities. The nature of crucial projects and activities identified by stakeholders, the River Esplanade for Iloilo City, and the importance of regular dredging operations for the municipality of Oton, means that the local authorities are reliant on national budget allocations. Therefore, the urban regimes' access to national coffers and the receptiveness of national authorities to local interests are important factors for regime dynamics.

The role of major private actors is also a crucial part of how the urban renewal regime operates. The formation of the IBRDC gathered major local businesses and other private and community actors. However, in terms of water quality problem in Iloilo City, and the flooding problem in Oton, large real estate developers and a major water service concessionaire have outsized effects to how local authorities manage their jurisdictions. It is not enough that the local regime actors gather local private players in river management, attention should be given to differentiating the distribution of roles and obligations to these actors.

Local private property owners, large business contractors, and low-income households all contribute to damaging or enhancing the quality of river water, but the power and capacity local authorities over them can vary

widely. City authorities can use barangay officials to improve community compliance, even if community officials may hesitate to be the enforcer of the city to avoid causing tensions with their constituency. At the same time, local authorities may also refrain from pushing large business and contractors too hard to deliver on their contractual obligations or comply with waste disposal regulations.

Throughout the more than two decades of urban renewal project surrounding the Iloilo river, key local and national figures have always been given credit for coordinating the many actors and bringing the resources to the locality. In particular, the role of Frankin Drilon looms large. From conceptualization of the Esplanade, to coordinating with local actors, and accessing fiscal resources from the national government, Drilon's long tenure as a senator and senate president has always been a big part of the local urban regime's dynamics. Considering that the Esplanade is treated the centerpiece of this project, the 12 or so sections constructed from 2012 to 2025 require sustained resource allocation. But it is inevitable that political careers have lifespans of their own, and it is difficult for large infrastructure and urban renewal projects to be anchored in one or two local or national leaders.

It is the case that during the initial part a sustained leadership of political leaders are important, however, relying on them can also have drawbacks. In the case of Iloilo-Batiano River Urban Renewal Regime, one concern is that the outsized role of local leaders can stunt the growth of local civil service bureaucracy. As a highly urbanized city, Iloilo for instance, can benefit from a more autonomous civil service bureaucracy with full attention, expertise, and resources devoted to management and revitalization of the river. Currently, this function is lodged under the City Environment and Natural resources Office (CENRO), and this is an additional task on top of other routine concerns of the office.

## **POLICY OPTIONS AND CONCLUSION**

More than two decades after the inception of IBDRC as the focal forum for assembling stakeholders and planning for the revitalization of the river, there is a need to revisit the original thrust of the IBDRC. There also is a need to reevaluate the actors, resources, and roles based on the original plan and update to adjust to current realities. More specifically the following steps can be adopted:

1. Clarify the protocols guiding LGU and NGA coordination. While national and local legislation identified the role of these two sets of actors, there are a number of cases where the expectations are unclear, preventing the effective implementation of certain policies. An example is regarding how LGUs and community actors can use NGA reports and information in enforcement of ordinances.
2. Revisit the role of private actors given that new large players with outsized contributions. This may include the private water concessionaire and large real estate developers, which are now part of the realities of urban river management.
3. Specify the local government resource. This must be done in terms of personnel, fiscal allocation, and organization assignment to focus on river revitalization given that this responsibility is currently undertaken by offices as part of their other routine concerns. If the LGU considers river revitalization as major part urban renewal, this should be reflected in the resources and expertise of the city bureaucracy.

## REFERENCES

- An Ordinance Establishing a Septage Management Program of Iloilo City*. 2017. (Office of the Sangguniang Panlungsod Iloilo City).
- Congress, Republic of the Philippines. 1991. *The Local Government Code of the Philippines*.
- Congress, Republic of the Philippines. 2024. *Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004*.
- Funtecha, Henry F. 1992. "The Making of a 'Queen City': The Case of Iloilo 1890s-1930s." *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 20(2/3): 107–32. doi:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/29792083.pdf>
- Iloilo City Business Club, Iloilo City Government, United States Asian Environmental Partnership Program (US-AEP), and Asia Foundation. 2002. *A Community River Lives! Iloilo River Development Master Plan*. Iloilo City
- Iloilo City Local Government. 2023. *Iloilo-Batiano River Development Program*. Iloilo City: Local Government of Iloilo City, Philippines.
- Gibbs, David, and Andrew E. G. Jonas. 2000. "Governance and Regulation in Local Environmental Policy: The Utility of a Regime Approach." *Geoforum* 31 (3): 299–313. doi:10.1016/S0016-7185(99)00052-4.
- Kitschelt, Herbert. 1992. "Political Regime Change: Structure and Process-Driven Explanations?" *American Political Science Review* 86 (4): 1028–34. doi:10.2307/1964354.

Presidential Decree No. 1067. 1976. *The Water Code of the Philippines*.

Stoker, G., and K Mossberger. "Urban Regime Theory in Comparative Perspective." *Environment and Plannning C: Government and Policy* 12: 195–212.

Stoker, Gerry, and Karen Mossberger. 1994. "Urban Regime Theory in Comparative Perspective." *Environment and Plannning C: Government and Policy* 12(2): 195–212. doi:doi.org/10.1068/c120195.

Rola, Agnes C., Francisco, Herminia, and Liguton Jennifer P.T. (eds) 2002. *Winning the Water Wars*. Makati City, Philippines: Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS), Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry, and Natural Resource Research (PCARRD).

Zhao, Yongqi, Ning An, Huiling Chen, and Wei Tao. 2021. "Politics of Urban Renewal: An Anatomy of the Conflicting Discourses on the Renovation of China's Urban Village." *Cities* 111 (2021): 103075. doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.103075.

Zheng, Helen Wei, Geoffrey Qiping Shen, and Hao Wang. 2014. "A Review of Recent Studies on Sustainable Urban Renewal." *Habitat International* 41 (January 2014): 272–79. doi:10.1016/j.habitatint.2013.08.006.



# THE UP CIDS DISCUSSION PAPER SERIES

The UP CIDS Discussion Paper Series features preliminary researches that may be subject to further revisions and is circulated to elicit comments and suggestions for enrichment and refinement. They contain findings on issues that are aligned with the core agenda of the research programs under the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS).

## CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Established in 1985 by University of the Philippines (UP) President Edgardo J. Angara, the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) is the policy research unit of the University that connects disciplines and scholars across the several units of the UP System. It is mandated to encourage collaborative and rigorous research addressing issues of national significance by supporting scholars and securing funding, enabling them to produce outputs and recommendations for public policy.

The UP CIDS currently has twelve research programs that are clustered under the areas of education and capacity building, development, and social, political, and cultural studies. It publishes policy briefs, monographs, webinar/conference/forum proceedings, and the Philippine Journal for Public Policy, all of which can be downloaded free from the UP CIDS website.

## THE PROGRAM

The thrust of the **Urban Studies Program** is to bring to the fore the critical issues around urbanization and urban humanity in the policy discourses for the country. It brings together studies on cities especially with acute vulnerabilities such as coastal cities across the Philippines that directly respond to emerging concerns on urbanism with a specific lens on inclusive and just resilience framework. It highlights the uneven impacts of disasters and adaptation mechanisms, and the often ignored tensions and fragmentations between technocratic infrastructure solutions and community deliberations and perspectives, especially in the strategic allocation of resources, infrastructure, and services to not only optimize space and reinforce infrastructures but also to ensure the well-being of residents and avoid displacements while rehabilitating and promoting the environment. It aims to revisit and take stock on the intersections between underdeveloped institutions and human resources for urban planning, the political dynamics anchored on territorial scales and jurisdictions of accountability in the context of metropolitanization and urban agglomeration, and the fundamental questions of cultural identity, citizenship, and solidarity in urban communities for resilience.

---

# EDITORIAL BOARD

Rosalie Arcala Hall  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Honeylet L. Alerta  
DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

## PROGRAM EDITORS

### ■ EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING CLUSTER

Dina S. Ocampo  
Lorina Y. Calingasan  
EDUCATION RESEARCH PROGRAM

Rosalie B. Arcala Hall  
PROGRAM ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
RESEARCH AND POLICY REFORM

Romylyn Metila  
Marlene Ferido  
ASSESSMENT, CURRICULUM, AND  
TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH PROGRAM

Ebinezer R. Florano  
PROGRAM ON DATA SCIENCE FOR  
PUBLIC POLICY

### ■ SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL STUDIES CLUSTER

Rogelio Alicor L. Panao  
PROGRAM ON SOCIAL AND  
POLITICAL CHANGE

Darwin J. Absari  
ISLAMIC STUDIES PROGRAM

Herman Joseph S. Kraft  
Francis Rico C. Domingo  
STRATEGIC STUDIES PROGRAM

Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran  
Frances Antoinette C. Cruz  
DECOLONIAL STUDIES PROGRAM

### ■ DEVELOPMENT CLUSTER

Annette O. Balaoing-Pelkmans  
PROGRAM ON ESCAPING THE  
MIDDLE-INCOME TRAP: CHAINS FOR CHANGE

Antoinette R. Raquiza  
Julius Lustro  
POLITICAL ECONOMY PROGRAM

Eduardo C. Tadem  
Maria Dulce Natividad  
PROGRAM ON  
ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Iris Thiele Isip-Tan  
PROGRAM ON HEALTH  
SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

### ■ NEW PROGRAMS

Maria Angeles O. Catelo  
FOOD SECURITY PROGRAM

Weena S. Gera  
URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM

Benjamin M. Vallejo, Jr.  
CONSERVATION AND BIODIVERSITY

Rosalie B. Arcala Hall  
LOCAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES NETWORK

---

## EDITORIAL STAFF

Jheimeel P. Valencia  
COPYEDITOR

Alexa Samantha R. Hernandez  
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Jessie Feniquito  
Mikaela Anna Cheska D. Orlino  
LAYOUT ARTISTS

## Get your policy papers published. Download open-access articles.

The Philippine Journal of Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Development Perspectives (PJPP), the annual peer-reviewed journal of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), welcomes submissions in the form of full-length policy-oriented manuscripts, book reviews, essays, and commentaries. The PJPP provides a multidisciplinary forum for examining contemporary social, cultural, economic, and political issues in the Philippines and elsewhere. Submissions are welcome year-around.

For more information, visit [cids.up.edu.ph](http://cids.up.edu.ph). All issues/articles of the PJPP can be downloaded for free.

## Get news and the latest publications.

Join our mailing list: [bit.ly/signup\\_cids](http://bit.ly/signup_cids) to get our publications delivered straight to your inbox! Also, you'll receive news of upcoming webinars and other updates.

## We need your feedback.

Have our publications been useful? Tell us what you think: [bit.ly/dearcids](http://bit.ly/dearcids).



### UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Lower Ground Floor, Ang Bahay ng Alumni, Magsaysay Avenue  
University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City 1101

**Telephone** (02) 8981-8500 loc. 4266 to 4268  
(02) 8426-0955

**Email** [cids@up.edu.ph](mailto:cids@up.edu.ph)  
[cidspublications@up.edu.ph](mailto:cidspublications@up.edu.ph)

**Website** [cids.up.edu.ph](http://cids.up.edu.ph)