MEMBER PROFILE

SAVITRI JETOO

Postdoctoral Scholar and Adjunct Professor, Åbo Akademi University, Turku, Finland

I am most interested in what "good governance" is in the contexts of water protection and wicked problems such as eutrophication and climate change. My research has focused on multilevel systems of water governance in which different stakeholders exercise different levels of power and authority to determine who gets to participate in the decision making and problem solving for complex challenges. I have taken this research further by focusing on comparative water governance studies among the Baltic Sea, Chesapeake Bay, and now, other regions of the world.



What inspired you to enter this work?
My natural curiosity and passion for science led me into this field. My motivations have been strictly personal as I am most myself when I am in nature. As such, I want to understand it better and be able to leave a positive footprint. I am also inspired by experts in this field such as Gail Krantzberg, Isobel Heathcote, Marko Joas, Nina Tynkkyen, Erik Bonsdorff, Paul Sibley, Chandra Madramootoo, Velma Grover, Dustin Garrick, and Carolyn Johns, all of whom exhibit great passion for science and scholarship.

What body of knowledge would you like to build on?
Effective water governance will continue to be one of the key challenges of the 21st century. In the past, water governance focused on the decision-making processes and actors involved in the delivery of water-related services and the protection of water resources. However, the field needs to expand to include connections with, for example, climate change and energy governance. Therefore, I would like to expand my research beyond its focus on water to engage in multidisciplinary investigations about broader natural resources governance and the many societal issues linked to that wide-scale governance. This expanded breadth includes climate change concerns, multilevel energy governance, sustainability issues, and the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. I would also like to work more closely with the wider community on these issues.

If you could change something about how science is done, what would it be?
Because scientific questions are so complex and interconnected, our strict disciplinary walls need to be demolished. We also need to re-examine the policies that guide science and change the way we communicate science to make it more accessible to the public. A lot of research funding decisions are based on academic articles that only a limited number of academics read. Quality academic research is important, but it is equally important to disseminate these findings beyond academia to the wider society.

What might be surprising about research or lakes in your area?
The governance of the Baltic Sea was evolving around the same period as that of the North American Great Lakes but there were key differences. The Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement (GLWQA) was signed in 1972 after public outcry and scientific investigations into the pollution of the waters of the Great Lakes. However, the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (the Helsinki Convention) was signed in 1974 and arose from diplomacy during the Cold War period. The International Joint Commission was given oversight for the GLWQA, and, similarly, the Helsinki Commission became the governing body for the Helsinki Convention. However, there is a further layer of governance for the Helsinki Convention—that of the European Union (EU). Eight out of the nine Baltic Sea coastal countries (all but Russia) are members of the EU and hence are subject to EU environmental frameworks and directives. This has led to a network-based governance for the Baltic Sea with high degrees of coordination, but it has also led to difficulties in vertical collaboration across governance levels, particularly on the subnational level.

How long have you been an IAGLR member and why did you join?
I joined IAGLR as a doctoral student about five years ago to attend an IAGLR conference and meet like-minded researchers, scientists, and practitioners. I remember that meeting well. I was excited and stimulated by all the scientific sessions on multiple stressors to the Great Lakes ecosystem. It was inspiring for me as an early career researcher to be among some of the greatest experts in the field, listening to their presentations and interacting with them in person. These conferences are important in helping us to step outside of our subject silos to examine problems through different disciplinary lenses.