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Dealing with Hurricanes: Coastal Community Adaptation to Socioeconomic and Environmental pressures in Yaguajay, Central Cuba

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MONTCLAIR STATE
UNIVERSITY

The Doctoral Program in Environmental Science & Management
and MSU Sustainability Seminar Series Present:

Dealing with Hurricanes: Coastal Community Adaptation to Socioeconomic and Environmental pressures in Yaguajay, Central Cuba.

WHEN: September 17, 4:00 pm WHERE: CELS 120 lecture hall

Victoria Ramenzoni
Rutgers University



Assistant Professor in Marine Policy, Rutgers University, New Brunswick. Environmental anthropologist (Ph.D.) specialized in human behavioral ecology, decision-making, coastal adaptation, and mixed methods approaches. Fieldwork in Eastern Indonesia, Latin America, Cuba and in the US. Focus on the study of how socio-ecological factors shape human adaptation, including the impact of environmental uncertainty on decisions about resource use and household nutrition. Current work in ecosystem services, indicator development, and ABM modeling. Strong commitment to applied science, co-participatory methods, and policy development.

Hurricanes can cause extensive long-term damage to small-scale fisheries. Yet, information is scarce on how these communities are impacted by extreme events in the Caribbean as in other parts of the world. Focusing on an artisanal fishery in Yaguajay, Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, this presentation discusses how local fishermen have perceived and responded to the different damages brought about by Hurricane Irma in September 2017 and inundations associated with Storm Alberto in May 2018. Combining discussions and short interviews carried out pre and post-hurricane, this study identifies major environmental impacts and matching responses. In addition, the article sheds light on the evolution of small-scale fishing communities in Cuba and their current organization. Results show that extensive biodiversity loss in terms of mangrove coverage, changes in salinity, and the quality of coastal environments has affected capture composition and sizes. As a consequence of these changes, fishermen are adjusting their effort and fishing intensity to match perturbations. Findings underscore the need to identify the synergistic relations that may exist between prior environmental degradation and different extreme events such as drought, hurricanes, and excessive precipitation. The interrelation of these factors may result in compounded aggravated impacts that may unfold over longer temporal scales and not just as a one-time event. Authors conclude by underscoring the importance of including the study of extreme events in fishery management plans to develop efficient restoration and mitigation options that can foster the development of hurricane resistant communities.

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