



Spotlight

Interview with Cecilia Tortajada, Professor in Environmental Innovation at the University of Glasgow, Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at IWP

PUB: Please tell us about yourself and your company / organisation.

Cecilia: I was working as a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Water Policy, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, from July 2014. I have just been appointed as a professor in environmental innovation at the University of Glasgow, but I shall remain as an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at IWP.

PUB: Today, we are facing unprecedented challenges due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 globally. How has COVID-19 impacted the demand for cleaner, safer water and more reliable and effective wastewater treatment?

Cecilia: Covid-19 has made members of the public all over the world to be more aware of the importance of having access to clean water for drinking and for personal hygiene. For most people in the developed world, this has become routine (if they consider it important) but not for people who cannot afford it in the developed world, as well as for people in the developing world who do not have access to it.

Covid-19 and lack of clean water has also been proven to be a serious problem in healthcare facilities. According to UN, two out of five health care facilities globally do not have soap or water, and more than 1/3 of the people lack basic handwashing facilities at home.

Members of the public are normally not aware of the importance of effective wastewater treatment. However, WHO has given this topic so much visibility that people have been educated on the topic.

In fact, Covid-19 and its relation to clean water has made the world realise of the importance of having access to it.



PUB: As a Senior Research Fellow of Institute of Water Policy, National University of Singapore, what are some of the key water management challenges that you faced during the course of your work?

Cecilia: In research, a main challenge for researchers to produce more valuable information for the water managers, is the lack of communication between academia and policy makers. Better communication and interaction would allow the academia to be more supportive in terms of policy and practice-oriented research.

PUB: You attended the Singapore Water Management Series organised by PUB in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The Singapore Water Academy not only provides training for the industry but also for international participants. It now has a broad alumni network, comprising management executives and technical staff. What possible collaborations do you see between your organisation and other alumni?

Cecilia: People working in the academia should attend the Singapore Water Management Series. They are excellent courses and would help the researchers to understand much better the situations in the real world.