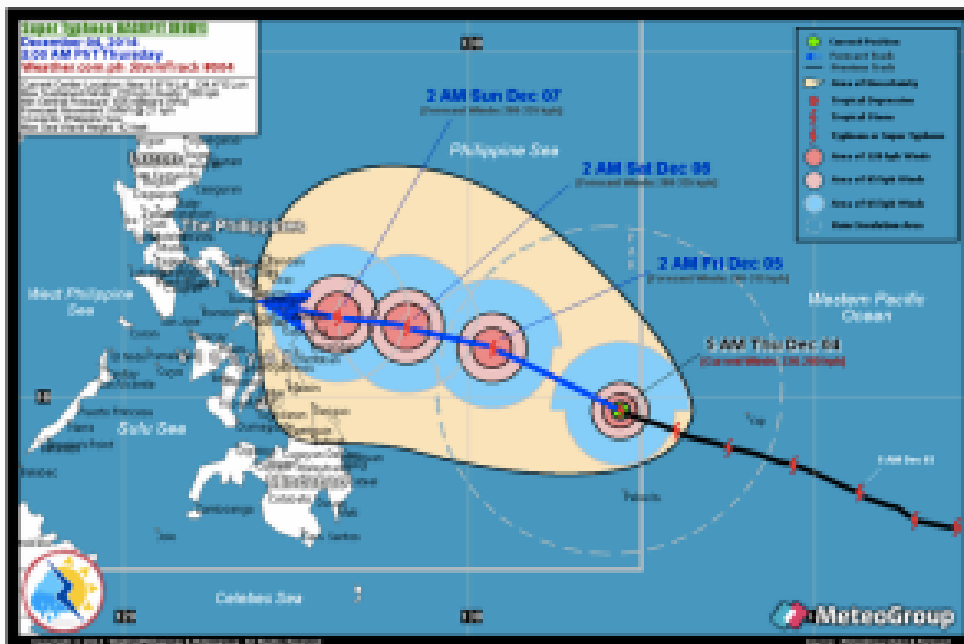


Typhoon Ruby



When I came to the Philippines, my sister begged me to write a diary like the Tanzania one - a log of what I was doing and seeing that she could compare her own experiences in the area with. But the past few days I've stayed with friends and worked with colleagues, and it somehow seemed wrong and less interesting to focus a diary on that.

But all the talks and sessions (and talk and session preparation) are over, and it occurred to me that people might just be interested in a diary about what it's like to wait for and be here after a supertyphoon (I know. D'oh).

When I left for the Philippines, I checked the weather forecasts. It's the anniversary of super typhoon Yolanda, but there weren't any big warnings out about typhoon season, and it all felt pretty quiet. I googled "typhoon" in the news, and saw a small piece about the Yolanda anniversary with a little note at the bottom that there was a storm tracking in that probably wouldn't amount to much but would become Typhoon Ruby when it hit the Philippines Area of Responsibility (this seems to be a uniquely Filipino thing, this renaming of storms when they cross over their borders - my friends joked last night that it's because they have so many storms they've run out of names). I liked the name, so I put a note in my work's chat area, joking about the irony (I've just finished teaching a Ruby on Rails class) and that I must have missed typhoons Php and Python already.

Then forgot about it and did the 30-hour trip from New York to Manila via a night out in Tokyo and

some yummy food that I will never be able to identify.

It's Friday now, and I've been here since Monday. In that time, I've geeked out with the crisis mapping friend that I'd promised to come visit here (and gave in after she kept posting me flight prices, and scheduled an OpenStreetMap event at the same time as an Ushahidi-related one). Been to 2 massage spas (\$10 for an hour of back-pounding that I still managed to fall asleep through). Eaten piles of filipino food (filipinos eat.. and eat... but never seem to get fat). Spent lots of time in Manila's crazy traffic jams. Taken an Uber car out to Tagataya on the coast, for the eCamp education communities unconference. Clung onto my wheelie suitcase as it tried to roll out of the tricycle (motorcycle sidecar taxi) I was in. Promised to fly out and visit (airfares are really cheap) some crisis mapping friends on other islands. Mistaken the volcanic lake we're staying next to (volcano inside volcano inside volcano: active) for a sea.

And kept quietly checking in on Ruby, possibly hoping that I might see a big storm over here. She looked like she was dying out for a while - moderating. One article I looked at had 6-7 predicted different tracks for the storm which looked odd until I spoke to people about it. Apparently, that's the way this storm is: unpredictable, moving, might track into here, might veer away at the last minute (although people are expecting this less, hour by hour). It looked like storm Hagupit ("whip") might never become "Ruby". And then she started to pick up strength. Now she's a cat 5 - the same strength as Yolanda, the typhoon that devastated huge areas of the Philippines last year. And she's heading straight for our hotel.