

Research Proposal  
**Water Resources Management in the Mekong Delta of Viet Nam**

Globalization Research Center, University of Hawai'i  
and the Southern Institute of Social Sciences, Ho Chi Minh City

**Impacts of Globalization and Urbanization on Water Management in the Mekong Delta**

The purpose of this project is to explore issues of water management in the Mekong Delta, and particularly to examine local “civil-society” initiatives that deal with various tensions between different uses and users of water that are emerging under conditions of rapid urbanization and transition to a market economy. The project adopts a case-study approach to examine conflict and cooperation over water quality between the needs of productive activities and household consumption, between competing productive uses of fresh water, and with water as a resource for drinking, bathing/laundry, and waste disposal.

To date, the global water agenda has been driven by international institutions promoting the privatization and market allocation of water, albeit with appropriate government regulation and enforcement, and upon systems that either maximize productive use of water as a resource *or* upon consumption and the optimal provision of water for the needs of poor households. Such macro structures, however useful as guidelines for multilateral and national investment and management, stimulate reactions, co-optation and institutions at the local level. These local processes, in turn, are driven by the fact that water is basic to livelihoods and household needs, especially in poorer communities. An examination of these local processes is an overlooked way to explore gradations of market, state, and alternative forms of social organization that interact to best utilize water resources in such communities.

Vietnam is now entering an accelerated urban transition. Ho Chi Minh City is now a rapidly growing urban region, and its development includes an inter-urban corridor to Can Tho in the heart of the Mekong Delta. Demand for water is increasing, whether for intensive agriculture, recently expanding aquaculture, residential development, or for newly developed commercial and industrial enterprises. Anecdotal reports suggest that serious tensions have already developed between different uses over quality of water. For example: run-off of pesticides from intensive rice agriculture has affected farming of fish in the Mekong River; fertilizers and pesticides used in intensive rice agriculture potentially threatens contamination of aquifer used by the bottled water industry; and the development of lucrative shrimp aquaculture has created an adverse impact as frequent tidal water exchange to maximize recruitment of wild prawn stock led to the loss of productive lands originally destined for rice production (Preston and Clayton 2003). In these cases, different solutions have been offered combining private/market, public/state, and popular institutions. The purpose of this research project is to examine the relative efficacy and replicability of the solutions in these and other cases that we identify in the region.

More specifically, we wish to examine the processes and outcomes of local initiatives and collective action at the grassroots level, dimensions that are often missing in macro-level agenda-setting discussions of water scarcity, which typically promote privatization of supply with public

management of external impacts such as pollution. When the problem is the cumulative result of the activities of numerous *users* and numerous *uses* of a common resource, such as the case of water in the Mekong Delta, an improved understanding of the decentralized management approach that weaves the various tools of markets, states and alternative forms of organization into highly specific management regimes can help national and multilateral policy makers better understand the range of outcomes resulting from the implementation of macro-level privatisation market allocation programs.

In this project, we plan to document some of the local processes and outcomes resulting from the pressures of globalization and urbanization, and in particular within the context of the transition to a market economy. Such an investigation requires an inter-disciplinary perspective applied at the local level, albeit nested within national or global scales. For this reason, we take a case study approach using in-depth interviews and focus-group discussions.

### **Activities:**

1) *Collection of documents, including government reports, academic papers, and media accounts in both Vietnamese and English), and the development of annotated bibliographies, on the subject of water management issues in the following areas:*

- a) water as resource for production activities
- b) water for consumption purposes
- c) water in terms of flood control waste management

The SISS team will identify and collect documents, and write their annotated bibliography, on issues of conflict and management in the Mekong Delta.

The UH/GRC team will identify and collect documents, and write their annotated bibliography, on the global water agenda, as well as their alternatives in other regions/countries.

2) *Background research.*

The SISS team will gather background information on five cases in the Mekong Delta on **conflict or cooperation on water management issue**, along the following possible themes:

- a) Conflict and cooperation between two types of water users regarding the management of water quality. For example, conflict between rice farmers and fish farmers in the rice-snail-fish controversy; the development of integrate, cooperative and collaborative rice-fish farming systems (such as the OXFAM-Can Tho University project of Dr. Chiem).
- b) Conflict and cooperation between two types of water users regarding the management of water quality. For example, cooperation between the bottling company in Long An with local farmers.

- c) Conflict and cooperation among water users, such as construction and maintenance of cooperative wells to provide drinking water.
- d) Conflict and cooperation regarding the management of urban sanitation and any other themes that are deemed suitable along the main topic identified above.

SISS will write a report briefly on these examples of conflict and cooperation, providing some descriptive secondary commune level data, describing the origins and outcomes, and identifying the stakeholders involved.<sup>1</sup> The researchers will consult with the UH/GRC team before proceeding to step 3.

The UH/GRC team will conduct research in secondary sources to prepare background papers on the global water agenda, with particular reference to Viet Nam's urbanization and transition to the market economy, and the state of the art in water management, with a special focus on Southeast Asia and Vietnam.

### *3) Fieldwork*

The SISS team will conduct more detailed case-study research to further understand the dynamic of the conflict or cooperation, the potential for escalation and/or de-escalation of conflicts, or replication of cooperation. After consultation between SISS and UH/GRC, two cases will be chosen from the five cases identified and described in step 2. Some guiding questions for these case studies are attached. The methods will include in-depth interviews with key informants selected from the various stakeholders and/or focus group interviews with representatives of the stakeholders.

The result of these case studies should be written up and prepared for presentation at the Water Management Workshop. Preliminary reports and drafts should be completed by December 8 (and emailed to UH/GRC team), and final drafts should be submitted by February 27, 2005. Final papers should be between 15-20 (single spaced) pages long for each case study (?).

### *4) Making connections*

The SISS team will also approach institutional actors in Southern Vietnam, including funding agencies, government agencies, universities, and other projects to begin developing a network of people on the issues that will be discussed in the workshop.

### *5) Progress reports and meeting*

The UH/GRC will visit SISS, December 13-15, 2004, and the teams will review progress on research and report writing. Data and drafts of papers will be presented for review.

### *6) Workshop/conference*

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the case study is the unit of analysis, not the commune, and we do not want a full-scale commune-level survey of households.

The SISS team will organize a workshop on water management issues in the Mekong Delta, March 21-25, 2005. Full drafts of workshop/conference papers will be due to organizers by February 27, 2005.

UH/GRC team will work on editing papers received by February 27, for submission for publication to a journal for consideration as a special issue or section. UH/GRC team will also prepare a draft of a full-scale research proposal for consideration at the workshop/conference.

## Schedule of activities

- June 30 - July 5, 2004. Launching of the project by consultation in HCMC with the Southern Institute of Social Science and the GRC team. A tentative work plan is agreed upon at this meeting.
- August 2004. Finalizing the contract between GRC and SISS, with a detailed work plan.
- October 1 2004. First report on annotated bibliography.
- November 1 2004. Completed profiles of water management issues/events (4-5 pages each).
- November 15 2004. SISS and GRC have completed the draft of a brief “rationale paper” for selecting the two in-depth case studies.
- November 15 – December 13 2004. SISS contacts 2 case study sites, prepares study tour itinerary in collaboration with GRC researchers.
- December 13-16, 2004. Collaborative field visit with researchers from SISS and GRC:
  - December 13 (early AM) Two teams of researchers leave HCMC for the two different field sites
  - 2.5 days of interviews with community members (afternoon of the 13<sup>th</sup>, all day 14<sup>th</sup>, all day 15<sup>th</sup>). Back to HCMC (or Can Tho) by the night of the 15<sup>th</sup>.
  - 1 full day of debriefing (either in HCMC or Can Tho) among all members of the two teams. Purpose is to share preliminary findings, useful research questions and interview process issues, and develop a strategy for completing the studies of the 2 cases. This debriefing should result in a set of guidelines for SISS researchers to finish the case studies over the following 2-3 weeks.
- February 1, 2005. SISS provides preliminary drafts of papers describing the two case studies, shares with GRC researchers for comments and suggestions. GRC researchers provide drafts of papers on global and regional water issues, privatisation, and management to SISS for comments and suggestions.
- February 27, 2005. Final drafts of research papers from SISS and GRC researchers for presentation at the Water Management Workshop.
- March 21-15, 2005. Water Management Workshop in HCMC.
- May 2005. Publication of papers in special issue of journal (International Development Planning Review? Environment and Urbanization?).
- June 2005. Completion of Project: submission of proposal for larger project to a funding agency.





## **APPENDIX 1. Some questions to guide reconnaissance study on conflict or cooperation**

### *Conflict assessment:*

- \* What is the nature of the issue?
- \* Who are the main stakeholders? How many people/households are involved in each party?
- \* What characteristics define the various stakeholder groups (for example, ethnicity, occupation, economic class, etc.)
- \* What their material and symbolic interests: why is the issue important to them?
- \* Are there any other sources of tension?  
(for example, cultural differences, inequality, competition for resources, political alliance, etc.)
- \* What is the extent of the issue: where is it occurring? How does its character differ in different places?
- \* When and how did it begin? How has it changed over time?
- \* What role are commune leaders, local government officials, and other local leaders playing?
- \* What role does the media, government or other external actors play?
- \* Have tensions been escalating or diminishing?

### *Cooperation assessment:*

- \* What is the nature and circumstance of the cooperation?
- \* Which individuals, groups and/or institutions are involved and what is their motivation?
- \* When and how did the cooperation begin, and how has it evolved?
- \* What is the extent the cooperation: where is it taking place?
- \* What are the common objectives/goals as outlined by different stakeholders?
- \* What characteristics define the cooperating groups (for example, ethnicity, occupation, economic class, etc.)
- \* How satisfied are the various stakeholders with the cooperative arrangements? How sustainable and replicable are they?
- \* What roles do commune leaders, governmental officials, and other external actors play?

## **APPENDIX 2: Organizational Information**

### **Globalization Research Center**

Established in 1998, the Globalization Research Center (GRC) is located at the University of Hawaii-Manoa in Honolulu, Hawaii. It is a member of the Globalization Research Network (GRN), a consortium of centers, including the University of South Florida, the University of California, Los Angeles, and George Washington University.

The GRC-Hawaii has a special focus on globalization and the Asia-Pacific region, while each of the other centers has its own special area of interest (UCLA - Africa; USF - the Caribbean and Latin America; GWU - Europe and the Middle East). Together, the consortium is pursuing joint research projects including global public health, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and prevention, global human security, a globalization database for researchers (DPP), and publications including a journal entitled *Globalization* and a book series entitled *Rethinking Globalizations*. We seek to promote interdisciplinary, international and global studies of pressing problems faced by humanity and investigate causes, arguments and alternatives to present trends and relationships within the phenomenon of globalization.

The GRC and the GRN therefore seek to develop useful and innovative educational material to help students and researchers, as well as the public, better understand the complex processes of globalization affecting us all. The goal is to identify and analyze the social, political, economic and cultural transformations that characterize globalization, with particular attention to their impact on Asia and the Pacific.

The GRC collaborates with sites of globalization research throughout the world to create a network of globalization scholars. These collaborative efforts range from developing research capabilities in our own students to associating with the premiere scholars in the field.

The GRC also supports distinguished visiting scholars, lecturers, and sponsors panel discussions and conferences, which are open to the public.

**Southern            Institute            for            Social            Sciences**

### APPENDIX 3: Detailed Budget of SISS Local Cost Estimates (1/ 8 - 31/ 12/ 2004)

A. Collection of records ( English &VN) on water issues in MK ( water production, consumption, management & set up the bibliography & introductions) + Communication + materials’ payment + administrators <a href="#">\$350@4months</a>	1,450
B. Community level & focuss group studies on water supply & consumption ( collecting the information from 5 communes and indepth interview two communes) in Can Tho ( Transportation+housing+meals+honorarium) <a href="#">\$942.1@7</a> 1. Lisence + community level study ( 2 days) food, housing <a href="#">perdem@350</a> 2. Collecting communes’ information + selecting samples + designing <a href="#">questionair@250</a> 3. Focuss group study: 5persons x 30\$/day@10 days ( housing+food) 4. Honorarium Head of 5 communes+ households @150 5. Honorarium 5 <a href="#">researchers@15</a> ( 10 days) 6. Transportation + communication + stationery+ <a href="#">equipment@500</a> 7. In-depth interview 2 communes @10 days ( housing+food+transportation + questionair design+ honorarium households @750 8. Tape <a href="#">transcription 7@35</a> 9. Management, organization + training + coffeebreak+ <a href="#">service@750</a>	6,595
C. Workshop on water issues in MK ( 3 days in December 2004) 1. Writing 10 <a href="#">papers</a> + reading & <a href="#">editing@50</a> 2. Translation papers + editing @10 (200p) + workshop Translation 3. Stationery+ books+ communication, invitations 4 Transportation from local provinces <a href="#">15@50</a> 5.Food & accomodation <a href="#">35 –50guests@50</a> 6. Conf. hall+ coffeebreak + service 7. Administration +management +organization	500 2,900 650 750 1,750 500 <u>450</u>

TOTAL: \$7,500

SUBTOTAL ( A +B +C): \$ 15,545

Contingency : 455

( If the budget is wired through the bank, the cost will be higher as we have to pay for the :  
Overhead 10% = \$1,600 & Bank charge = \$65

FINAL SUBTOTAL WILL BE : 17,665 USD