Strategic River Basin and Delta Planning Principles

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Wim Douven, IHE Delft.
Delta challenges: example Mekong

Declining climate, economic, social resilience:

- Between 3 and 11 million USD in additional flood damages in Can Tho City (ICEM, 2015)
- Lost fisheries value approximately $1,000 USD/ha/yr (Tong, 2015)
- US$15 million/yr free fertilisation lost (Chapman and Tri, 2016)
- Subsidence of 10 mm/yr (Chapman and Tri, 2016)
- Increasing accumulation of POPs (USGS, 2013)
- Increasing social inequality

Source: IUCN Vietnam
Objectives of Lecture

At the end of the lecture, you will be able to:

- Explain what strategic delta planning is, and the difference from regular planning
- Describe the 3 phases of decision-making in strategic planning and implementation
- Explain the importance of strong and stable consent to change directions
- Explain why influencing people’s minds is a key element in achieving this
- Reflect on the influence of strategic delta plans in altering delta management, and how future delta changes can be best achieved
Project “Strengthening strategic delta planning processes in Bangladesh, the Netherlands, Vietnam and beyond“ (2014-2019)
**Definition:** “Strategic delta planning is a public-sector led process through which a long-term vision (the strategic delta plan), and actions and means for implementation are produced that shape and frame what a sustainable delta is and may become.

**Why is it initiated?**

Make strategic choices at delta level to resolve development challenges of a delta

Adequate policy-planning response to act on climate change and sustainable development
Key characteristics conventional and strategic planning

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<th>Strategic delta planning</th>
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<td>Soft influence, indirect influencing more detailed plans and policies.</td>
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<td>Multiple policy domains and incorporating social and financial issues.</td>
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<td>Planning horizon of 50-100 years, strategies focus on the short- and long-term.</td>
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<td><strong>Frequency</strong></td>
<td>Planning cycles ~5-10 years</td>
<td>~20-50 years, reflecting strategic priorities of ‘that time’</td>
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Scope: flood protection and sustainability

Strategic choices:
1) increase flood protection levels with factor 10
2) increase fresh water storage by raising Lake Ijsselmeer water level 1.5 m.

Policy response:
1) Delta Act – Delta Program
2) Delta Commissioner
3) Delta Fund
Plan’s ambitions:

‘Change the individual sector approach of project planning and implementation into a **multi-lateral coordinated approach** and related program management.

Integrate climate change adaptation into a more **strategic, knowledge based and consistent way**, making more efficient use of natural and economic resources.

Enhances **good governance**, more effective, efficient, transparent’
Vietnam: the Mekong Delta Plan (MDP) of 2013
Examples of strategic delta planning worldwide

Another reason to initiate strategic delta planning processes could be their potential to attract investments.

- ~1 billion USD
- ~50 billion USD
- ~15 billion EUR
- ~70 billion USD
- ~50 billion USD

Legend:
- Red: Scale: (coastal) delta plan
- Blue: Scale: coastal urban master plan
Discussion

- Do you know situations e.g. in your own country, where a strategic delta plan would be needed?

- What do you think about plan implementation? Are plans easily implemented? What are strategies for strategic plan implementation?
3 (ideal) phases of decision-making in strategic delta planning

- **Agenda setting**: decision to develop an strategic delta plan. Which actors are involved, and how? Struggles between actor (coalitions) over initial problem formulations ‘framings’, which issues are important, and should be included?

- **Strategic delta plan formulation**: decision to formulate a strategic delta plan, plan should describe strategic priorities, developments needed to come to envisioned future, means for implementation. Has to be backed by political support, serve as frame of reference for future project plans. Decision to accept the plan.

- **Implementation**: decisions on policies, programs, project proposals in line with envisioned long-term development of the delta, or on reformulation when they existed prior to the formulated plan.
Convergence and divergence of ideas and strategies

Convergence: actors strive to have their issues on the agenda.

Divergence: vested interests, new issues emerge, new actors having other interests
Consent negotiations is both about seeking ways how the interests of different actors can be accommodated so they are prepared to go ‘along with’

- A variety of actors, problem frames, strategies have to be accommodated to gain support for initiating, formulating, implementing a strategic delta plan

- There is not one optimal/ideal outcome for strategic delta planning as many options/perspectives exist how a delta should be developed ‘best’.

The stronger the consent, the more likely actions in implementation phase are in line with earlier defined strategic directions.

Is this also what we see in practice?
Influence of strategic delta plans in altering management of deltas: The case of the Mekong Delta Plan (MDP)
Vietnam Mekong: previous planning efforts and delta developments

- From the 17th century onwards the Mekong Delta was developed through large-scale human interventions (e.g. reclaiming land, constructing extensive water grid, relocating people) (Huu Nguyen et al., 2016)
- Much of the development efforts deteriorated during the Vietnam War in 1950-1975
- Subsequent master plan reflected objectives of that time:
  - eradicating hunger (70s and 90s)
  - spurring social economic growth (90s and 00s)
- Implementation of master plans contributed to economic growth success story of Vietnam!
On the other hand, implementation of master plans not always successful and planning system is criticised

Master plans provide justifications to construct large-scale water regulating infrastructure (high dikes, sluices, drainage canals).

Limited coordination between ministries, between provinces, and between ministries and provinces. Jungle of plans and policies.

Wish list planning as each province and ministry pursues their own interest. As a result short-term interests prevail, often at the expense of the environment and interests of local livelihoods.

Corruption politicians, planners, and engineers.
Most recent: the Mekong Delta Plan (2013)

Analysis: **social-economic prospects are not achieved** with current policies

Modernisation of **agricultural sector** (incl. supply chains) needed

Three key strategic choices:
- **Dynamic land use**, instead of full flood control and salinity protection, shifts are made to living with floods and brackish aquaculture.
- **Diversification and specialisation** across agricultural products and regions to increase economic value per hectare.
- **Collaboration and coordination**
Mekong delta and challenges for planning and implementation of the MDP

• Political support
• Knowledge gaps
• Alternative solutions
• Farmer support
• Capacity to implement
• Regional coordination

Consensus for change

Source: IUCN Vietnam
Role of strategic plans: influencing people’s minds

First a change in minds has to happen before hard implementation may take place through more detailed plans, policies, projects.

- People have to learn that a continuation of strategic priorities, policies and related human interventions threaten the sustainability of delta areas.

- Implementation of strategic options is reliant upon people in the same planning system that produces and implements regular plans. People thus have to learn about a strategic delta plan, and how it could be embedded.

- Hard ‘plan conformance’ criteria are not applicable for strategic delta plans because they are indicative and attempt to sketch alternative futures.

- Influence of a strategic plan is mostly soft, strategic choices have to find their way indirectly into more detailed plans, policies and project proposals.
In Vietnam: which minds are influenced, which not? A multilevel perspective

Impact of Mekong Delta Plan (so far):

Significant influence, but implementation is fragile, not sunk deep into Vietnamese planning system, limited on-the-ground changes, like farmer systems

Implementation is a **piecemeal and incremental process**. For instance through new research programs, modifications in policies, initial projects, accumulating consent.
Discussion points

- What role do you see for strategic delta plans as a guidance to do things different?

- When so major mind changes are needed as discussed for the MDP, do you think strategic delta plans can alter delta management?

- What would according to you be a ‘good’ strategic delta plan (recognizing multiple options, competing claims and interests)? Or, what would be important elements to come to a ‘good’ strategic delta plan?
Further reading

Strategic Delta Planning
Strengthening strategic delta planning processes in Bangladesh, the Netherlands, Vietnam and beyond

Online repository

- Research: publications
- Research: reports
- Research: conferences
- Practice: outreach
- Practice: support to delta planning
- Capacity building: training
- Capacity building: curriculum
- Project log
- Project team
- Project events
- Project results
- Video gallery
- Contact details

https://strategic-delta-planning.un-ihe.org/

Here you find all different sorts of outputs that were generated by our project for research, societal impact and capacity building. The repository will be filled and updated during 2019. The repository is structured as follows:

- Research: peer-reviewed publications
- Research: scientific reports
- Research: conferences
- Planning practice: outreach (our research in easy words)
- Planning practice: approaches to support Strategic Delta Planning
- Capacity building: training
- Capacity building: curriculum
- Project log

For further questions, please contact project leader Wim Deven (w.deven@un-ihe.org) or Chris Nijjar (c.nijjar@un-ihe.org).
What have you learned today?
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Are you able to:

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Thank you

Wim Douven

w.douven@un-ihe.org