Background

The Vietnamese Mekong Delta (VMD) is currently experiencing negative impacts from climate change, from upstream developments and the economic activities inside the delta. These challenges need to be addressed in a strategic and holistic way. The Mekong Delta plan sets out a strategic agenda of policy choices for the development of the VMD that is economically attractive, climate adaptive and environmentally sustainable. This agenda at times consciously departs from historic trends and current practices and explicitly explores the options and opportunities available within the delta to confront the challenges imposed by climate change and economic uncertainty. This article tries to explore if the agendas set by MDP (as a new political actor) have been shared, convergent or divergent with other agendas set by other actors and what the degree are.

Objectives

• The aim of this paper is to explore, via the lens of ‘agenda setting’, the degree of convergence/divergence occurring in the development agendas for the Mekong Delta as prevalent among key stakeholder groups and as embedded within the recent developed Mekong Delta Plan (MDP).

Conceptual framework

• Agenda setting, as perceived by Kingdon 1984 is a list of problems to which political actors are paying attention.
• Variety of actors compete with interest groups and experts to try to get their preferred topic on the agenda, and some actors even hold “multiple agendas” that are almost irrelevant from each other.
• Agenda setting as an “input” side of a policy-making process

Methods

• Literature review: relied mainly on David Biggs’ series of works, Klaus Vormoor and some others to trace the historical agendas set in the past.
• In-depth interview: with a diverse pool of actors who involve in the MD planning process (fig. 2). Interviews are recorded and transcribed and afterwards are analysed by “Content analysis” via coding method applied in Atlas-ti software

Discussion and conclusion

• The MDP (as one of political actor in this study) sets out a new agenda more concerning economic development and the adaptability of the MD as the three dominant key agendas: “economically attractive development”, “environmental sustainable” and “adaptive capacity to climate change”.

Main References


