

How influential are strategic delta plans in innovating land and water development, and improving local livelihoods?

Report of Research Synthesis meeting

NWO UDW Strengthening Strategic Delta Planning (2014-2019)

12-14 November 2018,

IHE Delft, the Netherlands



Objectives of the workshop

- Scientific reflection on the project: on concepts and approaches used, outcomes, and societal relevance.
- Cross-case understanding of strategic delta planning and implementation
- Discussion remaining / new research questions, and possibilities follow-up

Programme

12 Nov: Reflection and Discussion	13 Nov: Looking ahead	14 Nov: Excursion Markerwadden
1. Welcome and introduction	1. Feed-back external review NWO UDW	
2. Actor coalitions	2. Positioning strategic delta planning	
3. Innovations	3. Lessons learned planning tools	
4. MOTA		
5. Planning tools		
6. Reflection and wrap-up		

Participants

Over 50 participants from Bangladesh, Vietnam, and the Netherlands attended the workshop. The participants worked in different institutions, ranging from consultancy firms to NGOs and press, different levels of government, academia and applied research. A list of participants cannot be disclosed due to EU privacy regulations.

Presentations

Can be downloaded from our project website, project results section:

<https://strategic-delta-planning.un-ihe.org/project-results>



November 12 (Day 1): Reflection and Discussion

Session 1: Welcome and introduction

- **Welcome**

Wim Douven, Project leader and Eddy Moors, Rector, IHE Delft welcomed the workshop participants who are involved in and / or interested in delta planning in Bangladesh, the Netherlands and Vietnam. A special welcome is given to the international guests:

- Sadiq Ahmed, Policy Research Institute Bangladesh, lead author of the final Delta Plan document approved by the Prime Minister, member implementation team with the Planning Commission.
- Dang Kim Son, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development (MARD), Vietnam, former DG of the Research and Strategy Department, member of the MDP Focal Group
- Laurent Umans, Water sector specialist of the Dutch Embassy in Vietnam
- Prof. Coleen Vogel, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (external reviewer NWO UDW)
- Prof. András Bárdossy, Institute for Modelling Hydraulic and Environmental Systems, Germany (external reviewer NWO UDW)

Wim shared the motivations behind developing this project. That is, to reflect on and assess influence of strategic planning in preparing the deltas for future and also lessons learned for the practitioners. Eddy emphasized on the importance of research on deltas in a changing environment and learning lessons from one another.

- **Strategic delta planning**

Chris Seijger, a Postdoc researcher of the project introduced the three core project components: research, societal impact, and capacity building. The components are mainly addressed through enhancing understandings of the dynamics of strategic delta planning process, strengthening role of participatory tools in creation of consent among actors, and in translation of consent into innovative solutions; and capacity development

Chris presented the concept of strategic delta planning as a potential solution to think about strategic choices in deltas for alternative directions. He defined strategic delta planning as a public sector led process through which a long-term vision (the delta plan), and actions and means for implementation can develop to shape and frame what a sustainable delta is and may become. He emphasized that the planning form is initiated not only for making strategic choices to address development challenges and/or policy-planning response, but also for attracting investments to implementation of the plan.

He discussed about the *hourglass framework* developed in the project to create understanding of the strategic delta planning process. The framework helps to study actor coalitions: the people in the planning and the coalitions they form (or not). Its use helps to understand the role of participatory tools in creating consent among the actors. Also, to identify innovative solutions for delta development and to assess if the innovations become a part of the planning and implementation or not.



Q & A: Coleen Vogel, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg suggested for scope in the hourglass framework to study the transfer of strategic delta planning also in terms of exchanging ideas and lessons learned between deltas.

Catharien Terwisscha van Scheltinga, Wageningen University and research, asked whether also the ideas of people who are actively involved in delta planning including the non-Dutch experts are reflected in the framework or not.

Session 2: Role of actor coalitions in plan formulation and implementation

- **Transfer of Dutch delta planning**

Shahnoor Hasan, a PhD Fellow of the project presented some of her research findings that she draws on from her research on transfer of Dutch delta planning expertise to Bangladesh and Vietnam. She illustrated that a large part of the transfer – how it moves and unfolds - is contingent and requires specific types of work. In her research, she shows that much of the work that the actors involved in the transfer do has little to do with technical contents of the expertise. The transfer requires work of lobbying, brokerage, prime-moving, bricolage, and power-play (among others). Shahnoor emphasized that it is neither the intrinsic qualities nor the technical contents of Dutch delta expertise that explains its mobility. A little is about deltas and planning expertise; a lot is about diplomacy, political manoeuvring and nurturing the historical bilateral relations that are at stake. In the process of transfer, the expertise is not fixed: multiple versions of something that can be broadly referred to as delta planning expertise emerge.



Q&A: Laurent Umans, the Embassy of the Netherlands in Vietnam, asked if the role of non-human actors, for example, calamity, is considered in the research.

- **Actor Coalition**

Dorien Korbee, a Postdoc researcher of the project discussed her research on actor coalitions. The importance of her research lies in the fact that actors are central in supporting agenda setting, planning and implementation in the different phases of strategic delta planning. In her research, Dorien focused on actor coalitions in the opening of the Haringvliet sluices and spatial adaptation in the Netherlands, and the implementation of the Mekong Delta Plan in Ben Tre, Vietnam. She identified discourse, resources, beliefs, rules and knowledge as influencing factors in formation and change of actor coalitions. Sharing a key finding of her research in Vietnam, she talked about a pluralistic setting as salinity intrusion was on the one hand seen as a threat, whereas agro-business –forming agro businesses that in coastal area thrive on salinity - was regarded as an opportunity. She further reflected on the pragmatic coalitions that



she identified in the stage leading towards implementation in the Haringvliet case, in which consent on common goals bind the actors together.

Q&A: Coleen Vogel, University of the Witwatersrand, inquired about the presence of 'shadow networks' in actor coalitions in strategic delta planning.

Peter van der Zaag, IHE Delft, was curious about why the case of Haringvliet is considered as it is not directly linked to the delta planning in the Netherlands.

- **Improving international cooperation projects**

Juan David Patino Guerra presented results of his Master thesis research at TU Delft, focusing on how to improve the way in which international cooperation is done. His case studies were on the Tidal River Management (TRM) initiative and the Bangladesh Delta Plan (BDP2100), as they have different degrees of influence from international donors on it. In his findings, he portrayed that the weak points of TRM are the strength of the BDP2100 and vice versa, as where TRM was strong, BDP2100 was weak. From this general overview of the Bangladeshi case, he proposed a Cooperative Development Framework, which is an approach to international cooperation which could take advantage of the strong elements of donor solution-driven approach and a local problem-driven one into a cooperative work from both sides.

Sadiq Ahmed, Policy Research Institute, commented that the lack of decentralization in institutional levels (in Bangladesh), not the idea of developing a delta plan, can cause conflicts in the planning process. Another fundamental challenge he pointed out is to have good engagement of representations from local beneficiaries in the planning process.

- **Reflection of the session by Catharien Terwisscha van Scheltinga**

Drawing on the research work presented, Catharien pointed towards the significance of mutual interests in delta planning at international, national and local levels. She quoted one of her Bangladeshi colleagues from delta planning in Bangladesh in reflecting on the introduction of the TRM as a local solution: to bring something new, one needs to work on what he/she already has, and then work a way out. She mentioned that an important finding of the research on improving international cooperation is that 'what is a local solution is not necessarily a national solution'.

Catharien mentioned an interesting research finding from the transfer of delta planning that is that the delta itself constitutes a relatively lesser part of what is being transferred; yet a part of the focus remains about water. She supports the idea of developing a symmetrical conversation – an idea proposed in the research on the transfer of Dutch delta planning. In addition, she emphasized on the importance of developing a symmetrical conversation between local and national levels. The research works on actor coalitions brings out the need for discussions to create final agreements in strategic delta planning, and also how to organize the planning process. She concluded that the research works show that there is no one easy, clear-cut, straightforward recipe available for development of deltas, and this is essential to keep in mind when talking about deltas.



Session 3: Innovations to steer deltas into a more sustainable direction



- **Innovations in the Mekong Delta** Thi Minh Hoang Vo, Wageningen University and Research, presented her PhD research framework and some of the key findings. In her recently submitted research article, she studies the Mekong Delta Plan in Vietnam as an agenda setting process in which the MDP aligns planning agendas influenced and set by political actors. She further analysed soft implementation aspects of the Mekong Delta Plan. A major finding of the analysis is the influencing role of the plan contents in changing the mind-set of political actors at local, national and international levels as the plan introduces new ways of thinking on development in deltas. She also observed that the implementation of the plan remains limited at the local level.

Q&A: Andrew Wyatt, IUCN Vietnam, reflects on the connections of the proposed innovations in the Mekong Delta Plan with the ideas and needs of the community in the delta.

- **Tidal river management in Bangladesh**

Dilip Datta, Khulna University, presented tidal river management (TRM) as a local solution and its current states in some *beels* in the deltaic region. He emphasized that the short-term benefits of polders and people's perceptions toward construction of embankments and dredging are short-lived as efforts and investments will have limited effect due to high sediment loads in the rivers. Rivers quickly silt up and flood problems increase when polder areas become water logged. TRM is an approach to restore natural flows of water and sediment in the southwest part of Bangladesh. A significant number of local people support TRM. However, challenges of implementation remain in the form of building societal consciousness towards TRM, its operational development, demarcation of land ownership within the operational site, compensation package etc. A short documentary further helped the audience to visualize Dilip's words on TRM in Bangladesh.

Chris Seijger (IHE Delft) shared his research on the TRM as a strategic innovation for the lower Bengal delta as because the concepts of TRM can help re-conceptualize ideas for restoration water-sediment flows, and to generate leaps in livelihood value. He further identified what needs to be considered when moving ahead with the TRM as a strategic planning choice.

- **Reflection of the session by Dang Kim Son**



Dang Kim Son, MARD Vietnam, pointed out that innovations in the delta came from the farmers and grassroots stakeholders both in the cases of Vietnam and Bangladesh. Nonetheless, there remains a gap in influencing the political agenda and investments with the innovations. He posed a question to the researches on how to bridge that gap. He suggested for the creation of a policy advocacy and dialogue platform. He also emphasized the need for the value added of such platform.

Synthesis by Robert Morree, Coordinator Vietnam, Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment

The real delta world is often different than how they are perceived. The Netherlands has the delta management approach that is best for the Netherlands, and the Dutch government is working on how to make that approach suitable in 'governmental culture' as well as local culture in other deltas. Adequate time and support in translating the innovations in the different cultural setups is crucial.

Session 4: Planning and implementation (MOTA)

- **Application of MOTA**

Ho Long Phi, who developed the MOTA framework discussed its method. In his presentation, he highlighted the three MOTA sets which can be used to assess performance of a plan (professional's MOTA), implementation feasibility (authority's MOTA) and societal adoptability (community's MOTA) in terms of motivation, perceived opportunity and threat, ability, actions and plan outcomes.

- **Mekong Delta Plan Implementation**

Dorien Korbee (TUD) talked about her research on societal MOTA to understand willingness and capability of farmers to adopt alternative livelihood strategies in Thanh Phu and Ba Tri in Vietnam. She also carried out research on strategic MOTA to understand possibilities and constraints for the implementation of the Mekong Delta Plan at local government level with focus on salinity adaptation and shifts in agriculture based livelihoods.

Andrew Wyatt, IUCN Vietnam, explained how MOTA was applied in the World Bank project "Integrated Climate Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods" in 2016. Motivations and Abilities of farmers were mapped in response to different livelihood options such as double rice to rice-lotus, or intensive rice to rice-shrimp. A major reason why the World Bank was so pleased with the MOTA studies was that it gave good insight in farmer preferences across districts in the province. The high number of MOTA surveys (500-1000 respondents) was thus a clear advantage, as it gave much stronger evidence than the (usual) set of Focus Group Discussions.



Quan Hong, VNU WACC, shared the recently started research activities around MOTA that include developing a MOTA manual and others sets of MOTA for multi-stakeholders. The work on improving the robustness of its use is also going on in terms of integrating a scoring system for objective versus subjective measures. Also, the MOTA will be used in a World Bank funded project to determine resilient livelihoods in the Mekong delta that the World Bank will recommend to Vietnamese government.

- **Reflection by Sadiq Ahmed**

Application of MOTA helps to explore and identify what are the constraints of plan implementation. The possible constraints can be a lack of involvement of local government and farmers' group, motivation at the highest level of government or feasibility of technical solutions. The ideas that can be gained from the use of MOTA, for example, lack of motivation or resource, may not solve the identified constraints. But its use will provide additional information for making strategic choices to proceed with the implementation or not.



Session 5: Participatory planning tools

Like Bijlsma explained the set-up of the participatory planning tool workshop, and how it was held in Tra Vinh (Vietnam) and Khulna (Bangladesh). Each workshop started with an introducing day to get a first understanding of the main issues in the planning area. Then a fieldtrip was undertaken. Next scenarios were developed and the participants would conduct an actor mapping analysis. Participants would then sketch their own local-regional plan in a “design charrette”, and conduct a Motivation Assessment analysis for (virtual) plan implementation.



Jaap Evers then explained the assessment framework that was used to obtain participant's perceptions upon what they expect to learn, how they assess the tool workshop, and more long term learning effects 8-12 months after the workshop. The framework consists of 6 dimensions, which sparked the following discussions with the audience:

1. **Facilitating communication:** what worked well in which context? Maaïke van Aalst explained that she realised that in the application of scenarios there are different scenarios to be used, and scenarios can be very strategic when they show extreme alternatives.
2. **Social learning:** Clim Sorée observed learning as participants from different disciplines met and discussed key issues in the Tra Vinh case, they come to a joint new understanding.
3. **Power differences:** the workshop organisers removed chairs from the meeting room, so that everybody was equal and standing. In Vietnam there were more senior participants who were sometimes dominant, whereas in Khulna on purpose young professionals were invited to the workshop.
4. **Integration:** by drawing a local-regional plan in the design-charrette, integration was stimulated as people had to explain to each other what they mean (where to draw a dike, how long, etc.), and find out how it relates with the ideas of other participants (for instance where to plan wetlands or salinity intrusion).

5. **Level of consent:** Consent was generally quite strong within the groups as they developed their own plan first and in a second round participants could vote what they considered to be the best plan.
6. **Work product:** the work product (content outcome) of the workshop was rated as the most important part by all participants. So they were less interested in the process elements (dimension 1-5). Instead they considered a work product as most relevant to take home from a participatory planning activity. This led to the conclusion that tool developers / facilitators care about the process part of a planning activity, while participants are interested in the result of a planning activity.



Session 6: Reflection on framework, lessons learned, recommendations

Fida Khan and Leon Hermans start the reflection session. From the sessions we have obtained a lot of information. Fida asks the panellists what did they learn, what do you take home, and what are interesting follow-up activities?



Sadiq Ahmed: I am impressed on the involvement of the research project with the local beneficiaries. Normally much research and funding does not really focus on the needs of local people, but you achieved a lot with research in Khulna and the Mekong Delta. For innovative solutions in the Mekong Delta I enjoyed it that you are not talking about theory but about results from the ground. The travel of delta planning expertise shows it is transferable, and important to question it critically, and see what can be transferred back. A mutual travel of planning expertise is important. Further research could be conducted on implementation of the BDP and conflict management. How to involve people, how to solve conflict, what can be learned from implementing the MDP?

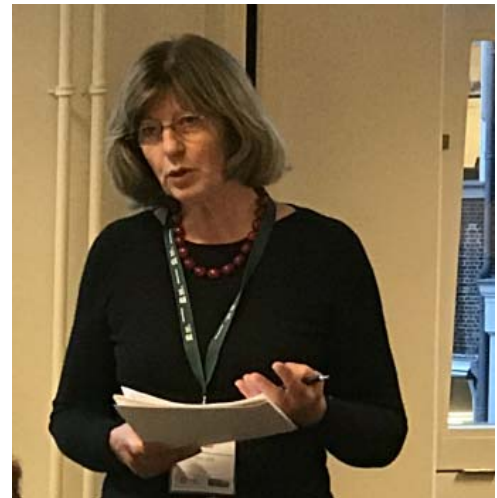
Dang Kim Son: I learned from this workshop deeply. I will bring home the MOTA concept, with is of use for future strategic plans. I am really impressed by MOTA and we need more research how to apply MOTA as a planning tool, to create technical and economic evidence for policy and planning. Can MOTA become a good tool for policy research or not? We see gaps between governments and stakeholders. How to fulfil the gaps? What tools needed? How to bring grassroots stakeholders to higher levels. What are the most serious problems?

Margreet Zwarteveen: what is the difference between terms of “strategic” and “adaptive”? How to best do it “technically possible”? How to bridge the gaps for implementation of a good plan. This also goes back to the question what is good? What is a problem, for whom?, and what is technically possible? And who are “we”? The Dutch we, or expert we? Or... This “we” is very problematic and need to be clearly defined. Similarly I heard the term “local” a lot, but what is “local”? Local farmers? Dutch? Bangladesh and Vietnam? Why only local in Bangladesh and Vietnam, why not Dutch? A last remark on what is not covered a lot, the people in the room travelled a lot, they form a “shadow network” which is usually not mentioned in research or policy making, but do have an important role in enabling and supporting strategic delta planning.

Laurent Umans: I am not delta profession. The Dutchness of delta involvement, a socio-ontological perspective. The Hourglass: should make complex things more simplified. A lot of distinctions between the deltas in the Netherlands, Vietnam and Bangladesh came up in the presentations. For further research he proposed analysis of social practices that reflects contingency, assemblages and fluidity in deltaic process; and traveling of the tools to assess if their use destabilize (both in positive and negative connotations) the planning process.

Wrapping up of the day by Isa Baud, Chair, UDW

Isa Baud complimented the project members to reaching a final year in their research project. The strategic delta planning project is one of the first UDW projects to reach their final year. She was initially sceptical towards the project, but this scepticism gradually developed into a very positive impression. Her wrap-up contained three points. First, she identified several valuable contributions the project content-wise achieved: 1) towards water governance instead of the well-known terrain of water management, 2) towards policy translation as opposed to policy diffusion or mobility, 3) with the MOTA framework a much more in-depth, measurable understanding is obtained on motivations- abilities of different groups in society, 4) and towards adapted participatory planning tools that can be used in decision-making processes.



Second, research was conducted in teams with a diversity of backgrounds (disciplinary, culturally, professionally). This is really strategic in terms of cross-country and cross-disciplinary knowledge generation and learning, which is something that academics frequently talk about as important means to strengthen research and research outcomes. The transdisciplinary approach adopted by the project moved beyond her expectations, in a positive way. Third, she mentioned the importance of a comparative perspective. Comparing narratives and contrasting situations is highly insightful. The project contributed to comparisons across contrasting deltas, and built capacities of especially young researchers. The latter also being a key objective of the UDW research programme.

November 13 (Day 2): Look ahead – implications for strategic delta planning and participatory planning tools

After the review by NWO UDW we split up in two groups and spent the day working on two topics:

1. a position paper on strategic delta planning (led by Gerardo van Halsema and Leon Hermans)
2. what package to offer on participatory planning tools? (led by Jaap Evers).

What follows are summaries that each working group presented at the end of the day.

Positioning strategic delta planning

The aim of this workshop was to take stock of advances in Strategic Delta Planning as a field of scientific inquiry -- after completion of a five year research program, the coming together of a special issue, and the elaborations of numerous climate adaptation delta plans. In a group discussion, we have addressed the following questions: What characterizes strategic delta planning, what are its key components, its strengths and its shortcomings? And is the field mature and significant enough as a specific policy and planning framework and practice that merits (if not necessitates) its own dedicated disciplinary field to guide and inform its practitioners and enrich the scientific fields of policy making and planning, as well as resources management.

A lengthy and in-depth discussion resulted in some key features of strategic delta planning:

1. A strategic delta plan provides a vision, a strategy. While it seeks to develop a transparent framework for decision-making – which supports the strategic choices in society with expert knowledge, it also includes a clear political dimension, and serves a political objective.
2. Deltas are used as the physical anchoring point, focusing on the interactions between land and water, and their implications for societal goals and values.
3. Uncertainty is an important feature, resulting from a long-term planning horizon. Uncertainty in climate change and many others, to which strategic delta planning takes an open and adaptive approach, rather than a control-oriented approach.
4. Strategic delta planning is essentially part of a nested planning system, which combines top-down vision and bottom-up elaboration. Strategic delta planning provides a top-down vision, which provides the space for bottom up iterations and bottom up specifications.

One of the dimensions that is currently underrepresented in the thinking about strategic delta planning and its supporting methods and approaches, is the role of people, at the individual level, and their importance for the course of delta planning trajectories. At the same time, these are difficult to study; even if researchers in the workshop have observed clear actions by people and organizations to influence and shape delta planning processes, these are not easily reported on. Many of these influences cannot be mentioned in the open without disrupting planning processes. Reporting on these influences requires careful procedures to not violate standards of research ethics.

On the question of strategic delta planning merits its own field and its own methods and theories, the conclusion from the discussion was that strategic delta planning is for now mainly interesting as a social phenomenon to study, as an object of study. It is not necessarily a field of its own, and may not remain as a field after the current wave of delta planning initiatives. However, it does have important experiences and lessons to bring into other strategic planning debates, such as urban planning, regional planning and water resources planning more generally.

Planning tools in delta planning: what package to offer to delta planners?

During this session participants had two objectives. First, to establish what was the systematic approach of the use of tools in the two participatory planning workshops held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, in 2016 and in Khulna, Bangladesh, in 2017. The facilitators of the two tools workshops shared with the other participants the lessons learned. Lessons were learned in relation to the characteristics of the HCMC group (internationally diverse) and Khulna (local young professionals, diverse in disciplines), and in relation to the geographical scale. The Vietnamese case of Tra Vinh province had a larger scale and strategic options were to be developed by the participants (related to fresh water salt water interface). The Khulna case had a smaller geographical scale and the strategic options were more concrete: tidal river management versus traditional polder management. The changes in the Khulna workshop were a result from the lessons learned in Ho Chi Minh City and proved to be effective.

In the afternoon the group discussed what to communicate to other delta professionals involved in participatory delta planning activities on the use of tools to come to consent. The group will develop a brief brochure in which it sets out the elements of the co-design activity for evaluating strategic options to support the formulation of strategic delta plans. It will contain the elements of the tool approach used in the workshops, lessons learned and do's and don'ts. It can also be used to promote the approach developed to delta planning practitioners and donors.



November 14 (day 3) Excursion to Markerwadden “Because the Dutch never stop poldering in their delta”

The Excursion was organized by Maarten Hofstra and Dorien Korbee, and contained the following elements:

- Bus ride Delft – Schiphol – Almere – Lelystad
- A work floor tour through the Water Management Centre of the Netherlands, Lelystad
- Presentation about the construction of Markerwadden, in the construction office in the harbor, Lelystad
- Boat trip with the Abel Tasman to the Markerwadden,
- Hike on the Markerwadden
- Boat trip back to Lelystad, dinner, and bus ride back to Delft

