



Flood related risk governance in Vietnam and particularly the Mekong Delta

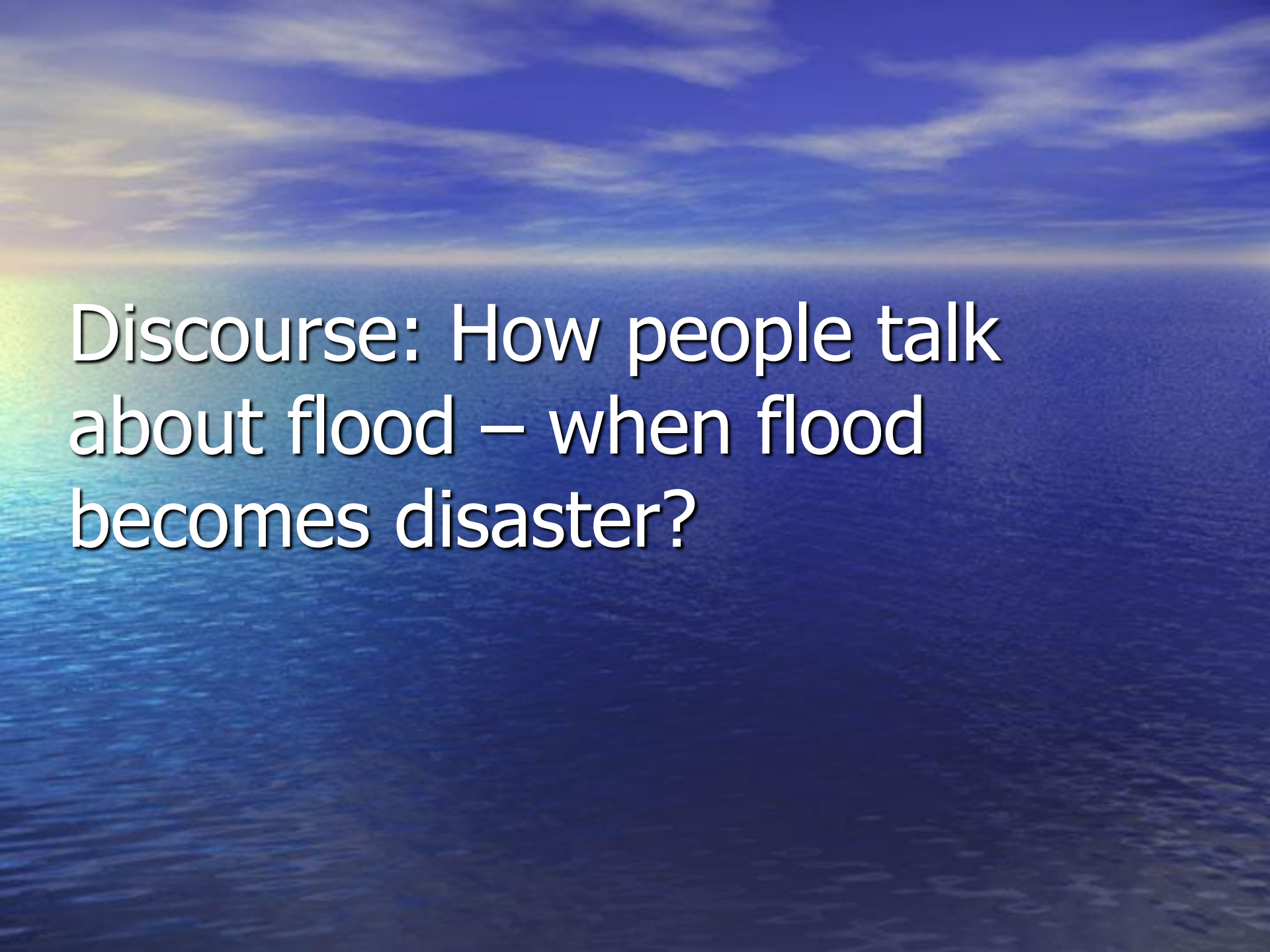
WISDOM 5th PhD Scientific Seminars, Can Tho City, Vietnam
21-23 February 2012

Bach Tan Sinh

National Institute for S&T Policy and Strategy Studies

Concept and Practice on flood related risk governance

- Discourse: How people talk about flood – when flood becomes disaster?
- Practice:
 - ways societies make choice about who and what should be at risk
 - ways societies respond to the risk
- Can better governance reduce vulnerability and flood related disaster risk?



Discourse: How people talk
about flood – when flood
becomes disaster?

How people talk about flood?

Discourse	Main argument
Living with	Floods are natural events that arise from high rainfall. Living things are adapted to flood regimes and it is difficult to do much constructive about them. Therefore, we should learn to live with floods.
Control	Floods are natural events that can and should be controlled with properly constructed and operated dams, embankments and spillways.
Adjust	Floods are caused by people, from how they use watersheds and floodplains, and how they regulate and modify river channels. We need to adjust land- and river-use in ways that don't cause floods.

Table 1. Talking about floods.

How people talk about flood?

Discourse	Main argument and <i>favoured responses</i>
Injustice	Flood disasters are caused by social and political factors that result in disadvantaged groups having to live in high risk areas with poor emergency relief and recovery support. <i>Reduce inequities and poverty.</i>
Incompetence	Flood disasters are caused by the incompetence of state agencies to effectively warn about, respond to and rebuild after natural events. <i>Re-design coordination mechanisms; train officials.</i>
Ignorance	Flood disasters are caused by the forgetfulness or ignorance of people about potential risks. <i>Educate the public.</i>

Table 2. Talking about flood disasters



Ho Chi Minh



Mekong

When does flood become disaster?

Floods disasters are natural
disasters that are not natural
They are also social products



Laos



Indonesia



Vietnam

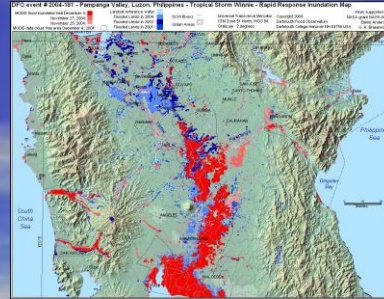
Floods become disasters
when lots of valuable
property is damaged.



Practice: ways societies respond
to disaster



Philippines



Vietnam

For flood disasters risk reduction often
means risk redistribution

or the Politics of Flood Risk Reduction

Who is going to be worse-off from the flood
protection measures or new institutional
arrangements?

“New” risks

- Expansion into flood-prone areas is making some urban communities increasingly vulnerable
- The way flood are perceived also changes with urbanization and varies among groups
- But, flood management remains a technical exercise of:
 - control with infrastructure
 - Institutional or software support
- The issues of why some groups are more vulnerable than others is avoided

Risk re-distribution

- A **redistribution of risks** is said to occur when interventions have the effect of reducing risks for one group while increasing them for another.
- Shifts in risk may be produced by physical changes as well as institutional or individual behavioral changes.

Hanoi flood diversion in 1971

- the best examples of re-distribution of risks come from efforts to protect major cities (but also smaller ones)
 - Protecting Central business districts (at whose expense?)
 - Relocations of flood-prone settlements (with compensation?)
 - Managing future risks (what about social vulnerabilities now?)
- Flood diversion management for Hanoi in 1971 was successful but leading to building in “high-risk areas”

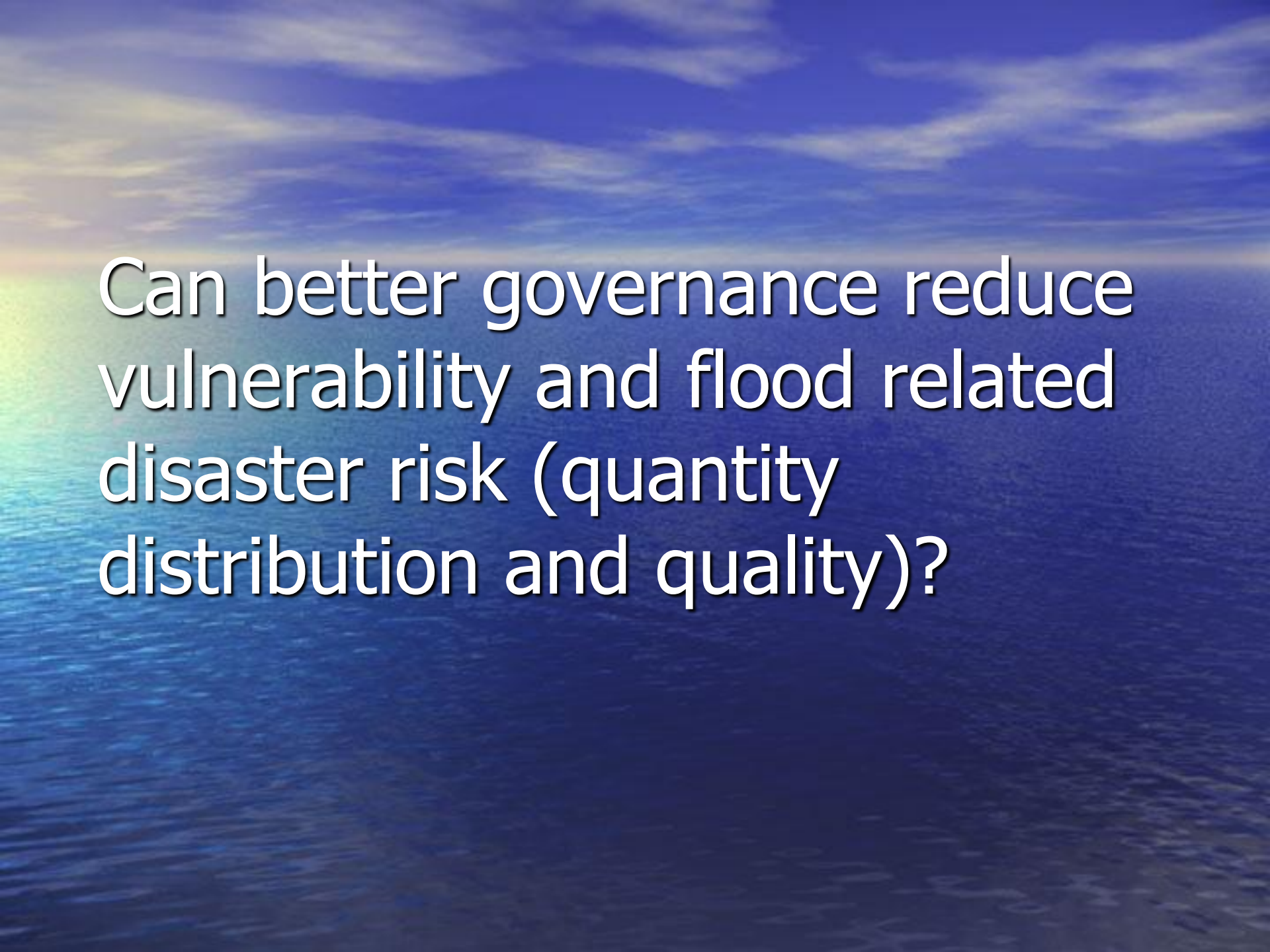


CARE



China

Some of the biggest risks of disaster come from poor water quality rather than volumes

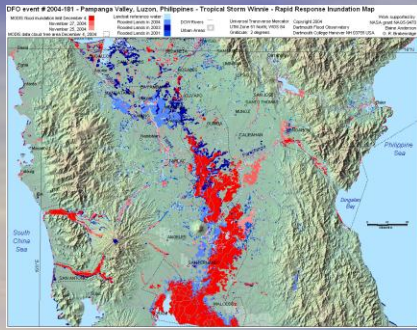


Can better governance reduce vulnerability and flood related disaster risk (quantity distribution and quality)?

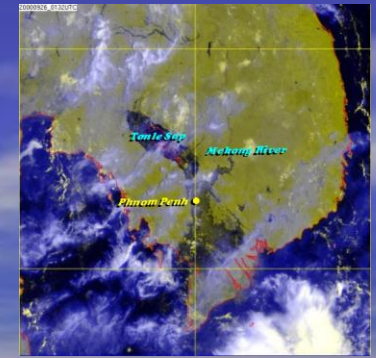
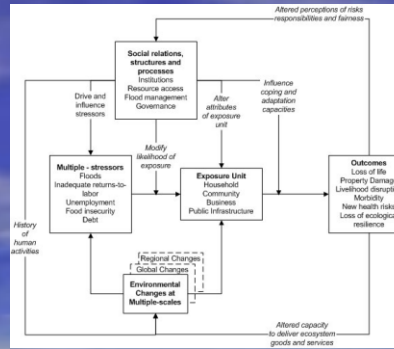


Disaster risk governance is intentionally framed as a technical problem, and thus, one not requiring public deliberation or negotiation

If the sharing of involuntary risks of flood disasters were negotiated fairly how would they be distributed?



NASA



Hong Kong Observatory

What is needed is better governance and useful knowledge not just more information

What would an effective knowledge system for flood disaster risk reduction look like? Who would access it? What role would there be for research in it?

References

- Lebel, L., and B. Sinh. 2009. Risk reduction or redistribution? Flood management in the Mekong region. *Asian Journal of Environment and Disaster Management* **1**:23-39
- Louis Lebel and Bach Tan Sinh at al. Dykes and dams, drains and diversions: the promise of flood protection. In Book *Contested Waterscapes in the Mekong Region: Hydropower, Livelihoods and Governance* edited by François Molle, Tira Foran and Mira Käkönen. EathScan. 2009
- Bach Tan Sinh, Louis Lebel, Nguyen Thanh Tung. Indigenous knowledge and decision making in Vietnam: Living with Floods in An Giang Province, Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Kyoto University Press. 2008.
- Label Louis and Bach Tan Sinh. Politics of Floods and Disaster, in the Book "Democratizing water governance in the Mekong region". Mekong Press/Silkworm Books in Chiang Mai, Thailand. 2006.