

MEKONG LAND RESEARCH FORUM

The Mekong Land Research Forum is the primary resource for informed research, education, and advocacy around land relations in the Mekong region. Together with Chiang Mai University and partners, it nurtures the next generation of researchers on land.



Background

Land governance is a critical concern for the Mekong region, and there is hence a need for policy and practice to be supported by sound research, education, informed debate and networked knowledge production. To address this matter, the Mekong Land Research Forum online site was developed at the University of Sydney, as part of an exercise carried out with the Mekong Region Land Governance program. Since 2015, it has been housed at RCSD (the Regional Centre for Social Sciences and Sustainable Development), Chiang Mai University. As a leading regional research and training institution on sustainable development, RCSD together with the Mekong Land Research Forum have developed training on land governance, and become an active hub of land research for Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam. Through the forum a regional academic network interacts with civil society organizations, and where possible policy-makers, improving connections between professionals and students. There are three main areas of work for the forum (online resource, educational outreach, research network), which are detailed in the following pages.

(photo credits: left- IWA; above-Philip Hirsch)

Online Resource

www.mekonglandforum.org



(photo credit – Jimmy Su)

The online resource offers access to both published and unpublished research, and is consulted by students, educational institutions, and land experts from around the world. The collection is not intended to be exhaustive but instead represents peer-reviewed research of a high quality. There are a number of features where the resource acts as an educational tool, and becomes more than a mere repository:

- **Basic search function**
There are over 650 articles available through the online resource, including academic articles, (I)NGO & CSO reports, books, conference proceedings, media stories, and statutes. 70% of the entries are open access. The basic resource search function allows the user to source specific titles, or refine the collection by author, country and year.
- **Key themes**
Articles have been tagged under 14 key themes, including the two recent additions of ‘gender and land’ and ‘urban land governance’. In this way, the resource offers a conceptual framework to deepen an understanding of land relations in the Mekong Region. [Extended synopses](#) are offered for an in-depth analysis of each key theme, using articles within the resource.
- **Annotations**
To highlight the relevance of articles to key themes, users can consult annotations. A simple summary for an article is given along with its linkage to each relevant theme, and research basis. An example of an annotation can be found [here](#).
- **Our own research and reports**
As well as providing access to selected research outputs, the Mekong Land Research Forum also produces its own body of work. These include the documentation of events and seminars through briefs and video registrations, new research, and key critical perspectives that synthesise and analyse existing work.

Educational Outreach



(Summer school participants 2017)

The Mekong Land Research Forum provides a variety of long- and short-form training programs and events to boost knowledge and skills on land. As well as helping to create a new generation of land practitioners, the aim is also to support existing expertise, including those working in public, private or civil society institutions. The online resource is a key tool in providing training. Forms of instruction include:

- **Summer school**
Since 2016, a week-long summer school has been held for academics, government officials and NGO/CSO workers from around the region. Class- and field-based work is used to build knowledge, develop research ideas, and create a strong cross-border network of land experts. Specialist programs are also held, for example in Thai language for Thai and Lao participants.

- **Master's training, Chiang Mai University**
The two-year MA Social Science (Development Studies) now includes a focus on land relations. First year coursework is followed by second year thesis research and writing. Scholarships are available to support new students. For a report from the first cohort please click [here](#).
- **Seminar Series**
Regular seminars are held, streamed, and recorded for both students and the wider land-related community. Recent topics include comparing the agricultural transition in Vietnam and Thailand, and approaches to land justice and food sovereignty.
- **Compendium of Academic Courses Related to Land in Southeast Asia**
The compendium identifies training programs on land relations taking place throughout Southeast Asia. Short- and long-form programs are included from undergraduate to postgraduate level, and also for practitioners. An easy-to-access table allows users to explore multiple details such as length of program, language, land-related modules, and provisions for foreign students.



(MA students following a focus on land relations at Chiang Mai University, cohort starting 2019)

Research Network

To join please click [here](#)



The Mekong Land Research Forum is implemented by:



The Mekong Land Research Forum and RCSD seek to *encourage* research on land governance, *connect* researchers, and *utilise* their skills and knowledge to disseminate key messages on land relations in the Mekong Region. A Google Group has been set up to house a research network of over 200 members, allowing exchange of important information (news, courses, funding, publications). Key features of the network are:

- **Annual Country Reviews**
Each year, land specialists from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam are selected to provide personal reflections on the most pressing developments in land relations, and the most important issues for the researcher on land. The results serve to inform and inspire discussion on land-related topics in the Mekong Region.
- **Identify and Review new articles for the online resource**
Researchers are the key source to supply their own work and suggest those of others for inclusion in the online resource. The network is used to peer-review new articles to ensure they have the necessary quality for inclusion.
- **Self-connection**
The network is a fantastic resource in its own right, and members can use each other's expertise for their own work, discuss and debate current ideas, and thereby enhance capacities to conduct and apply research.

The Mekong Land Research Forum is funded by:



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