

# Review of: "The Political Ecologies of the Tonle Sap: Global, Regional and National Framework for Conservation and Development"

Ian Campbell

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I found this paper to be quite disappointing. It seems to add very little to our knowledge about Tonle Sap Lake and its management, and I was left wondering why it was written..

1. The abstract does not tell us what the conclusions of the analysis are, which seems to be because there were none other than "it's complicated".
2. The introduction is not well written. For example, line 3 states "the water from the Mekong River flows into TSL, estimated at 83.1 km<sup>3</sup>, of which the Mekong River contributes 53.5%". That is wrong. The Mekong River contributes 100% of the water which flows in from the Mekong River. I presume that what the author meant to say is that the volume of water in the lake increases by 83 km<sup>3</sup>, of which the river contributes about 54%. There are numerous similar errors.
3. In the introduction and discussion about the hydrology round the numbers. The numbers are usually averages of not especially precise measurements so citation of numbers such as 53.5% is ridiculously precise – just write "about 54%".
4. The 1995 Agreement was not really intended to protect the TSL, only Article 6B, a part of one of 42 articles refers to maintenance of flows in the Tonle Sap River, and nothing refers specifically to the Lake. Obviously that is not adequate and I think you should say so rather more stridently.
5. I found section 2, the conceptual framework of political ecology, to be turgid and confused. I could see no hint of a framework in it.
6. Section 3 has quite a few errors. "Fieldwork" is a collective noun which does not require a final "s" when referring to multiple trips.
7. Once the flood pulse concept has been explained as encompassing "timing, modality, speed, height and duration" those terms do not need to be repeated each time, although it may be useful to refer to a reference which explains why each of those factors is important.
8. The term "biodiversity species" is not correct. All species are part of biodiversity. Use just "species" or "species of conservation significance".
9. Section 4.5. Hydropower dams do not withhold water in the dry season, they retain water in the wet and release it in the dry season. This is a really basic concept. The impact of hydropower development on the hydrological regime of the TSL will be to lower the high levels and raise the low levels, thus reducing the amplitude of the flood pulse.

10. When I was last at TSL I saw large scale clearing of flooded forest areas which had been replaced by mechanised agro-industrial enterprises growing mung beans in the are around the northeast of the Lake, within “protected” areas. I notice that this paper makes no reference to the effectiveness or otherwise of the various protected designations. I think that is a pity.