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River Environment

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Research proposal from hostility to hospitality. what is the third side story and how we bring common (cultural) aspects to live among people along the Mekong basin?

The “Ambraham Path” in the Middle East, an initiative by renowned negotiator, mediator and peacebuilder William Ury, inspires me to explore possibilities for a social-economic peace project alike. It will stress on finding commonality among the people and cultures living along the Mekong Basin. Now, I don’t pretend to have an answer to the inter or intrastate conflict that can arise when a hydropower dam is built in the Upper-Mekong Basin or the impact, dredging, for example, has on the flora and fauna and communities generating revenue from “The Mother of Water”, the Mekong called in all the languages united by the river. With the research I will explore a first step; what can we do to unite instead of getting washed away in hostility? I think that finding the commonality between the people depending on water, food and energy is a strong start. Tourism, the need for electricity and i.a. Food the basin provides. In my qualitative research, supported by qualitative parts, I will explore the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of decision making among the respondent group. To so qualify an initiative with a common direction among the nationalities affected by environmental changes. Hypotheses can be: 1.) to create a catalyst for socioeconomic development and sustainable tourism or 2.) to create places of meeting and connection between people along the river (think ASEAN) and people around the world, or finally 3.) a creative space for stories that highlight the unique culture, heritage and hospitality of the Mekong region. The research should result in a game changer, a common identity and perhaps economy with a common (third) side as a pilot. The research requires semi-structured interviews and an online questionnaire (provided on a custom made website for the project) with public-private actors affected by conservation changes. Design, data collection, analysis and field research are done between April and July 2016 with one month for coding and data- analyses this leaves four months to pilot a project support by the research results.