



# The Commons in the Tonle Sap Flood Plain Insights from community fisheries management

CTFD workshop on the 'Commons'  
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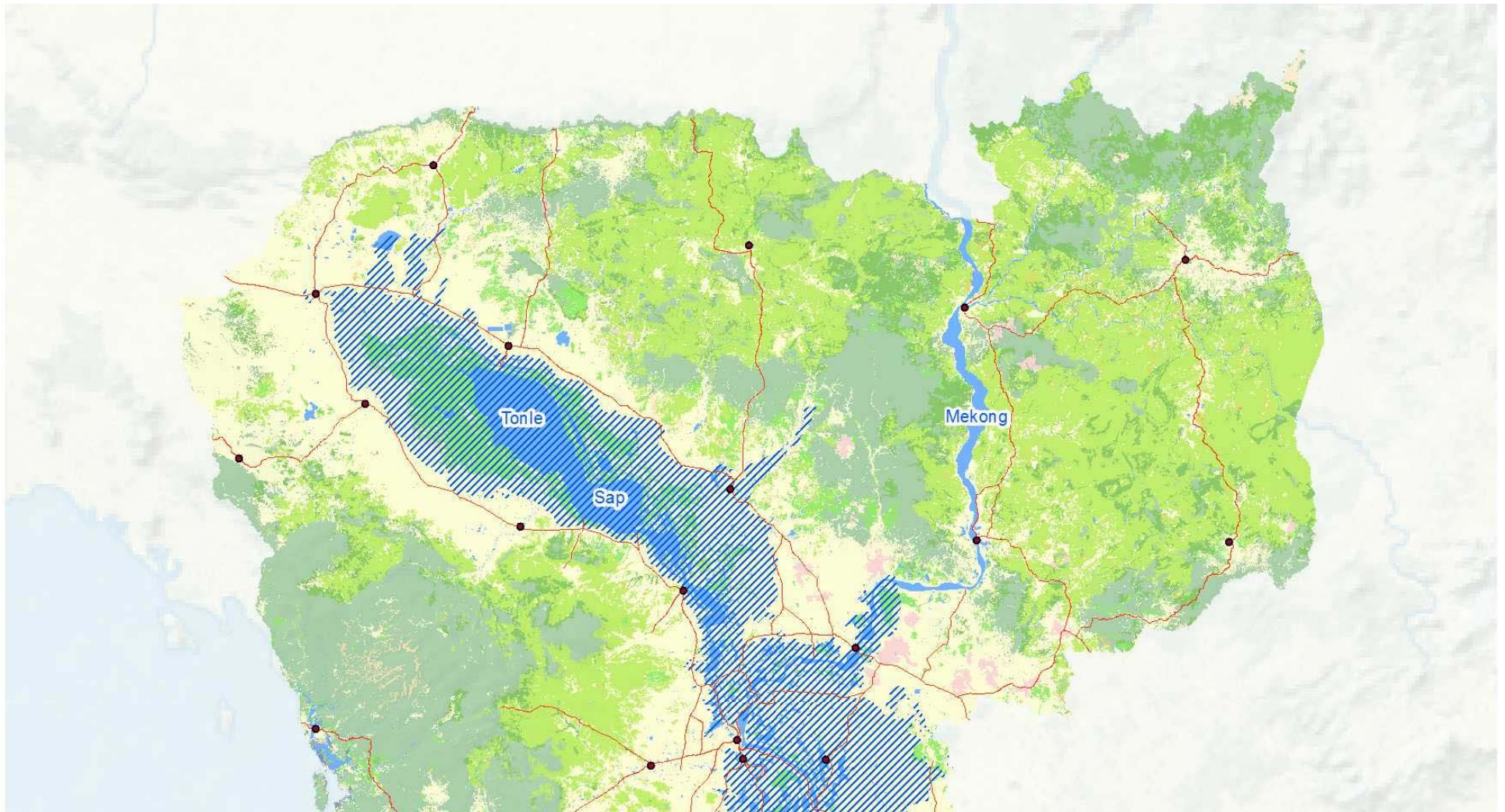
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## Outline

- Commons in Tonle Sap Flood Plain
- Community Fisheries of Andoung Trach
- Towards supporting the common

 **Annual flooding**

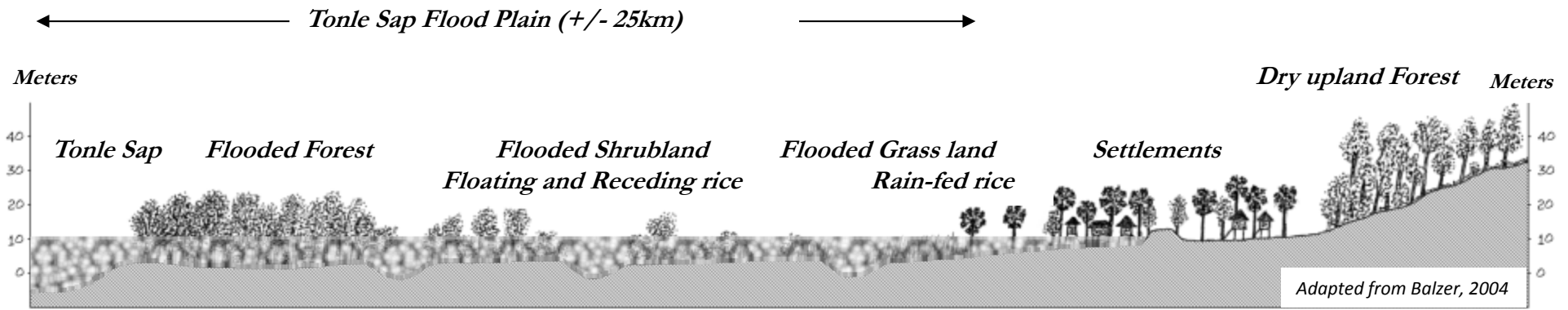
0 50 100 200 km

# Endogenous practices in the flood plain

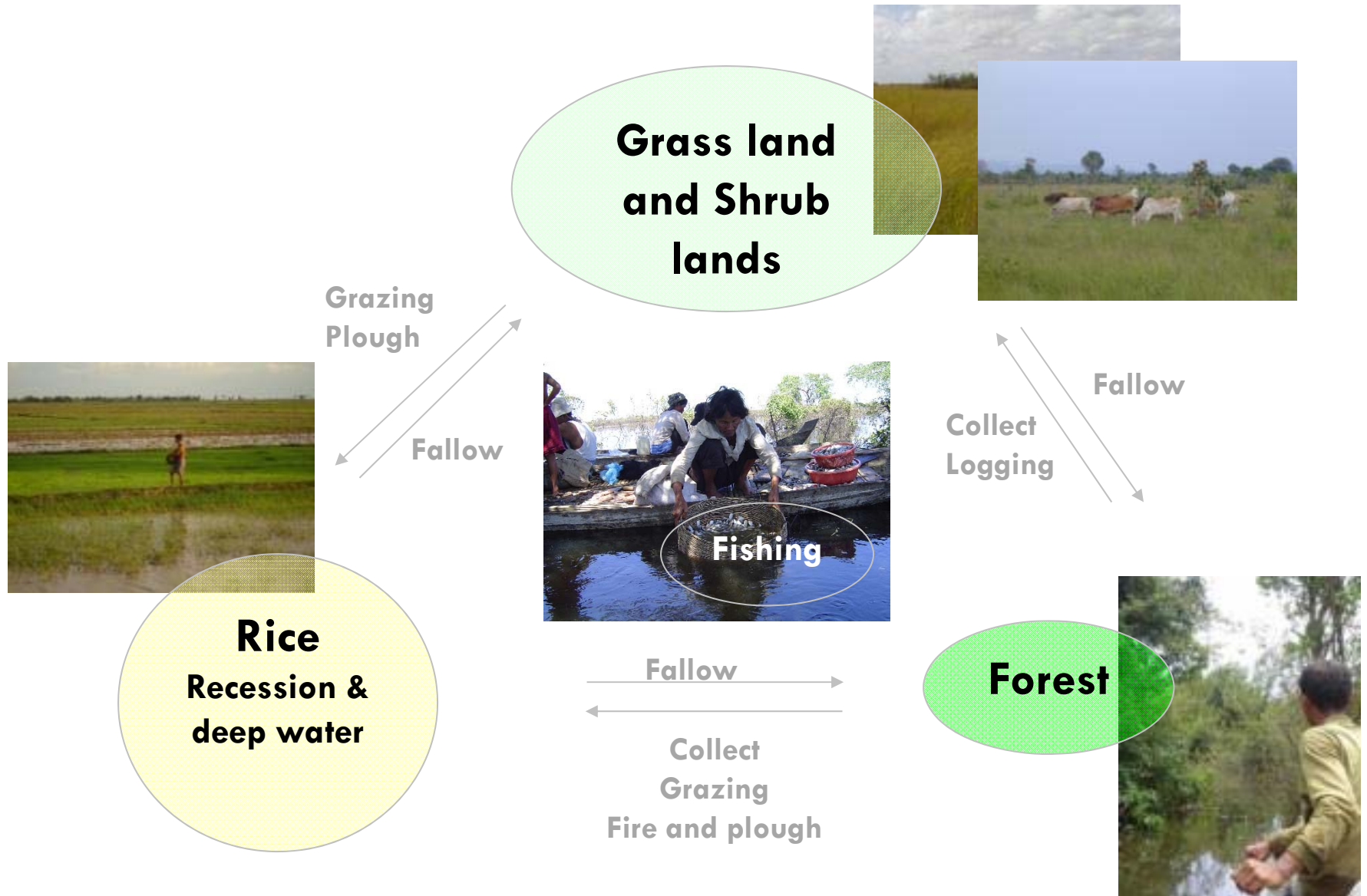


Credit: Pulitzer

# Transect across the Tonle Sap Plain



# Multi-functionality



# Endogenous resources management

- Users: agri-fishers+ seasonal migrants
- Fishing in recessions ponds or open water (mostly in the plain)
- Family small-scale fishing
- Individual fishing but people go in group
- Shared interest but little community-based organization
- Recognition of an internal authority



# Fisheries management in historical perspective



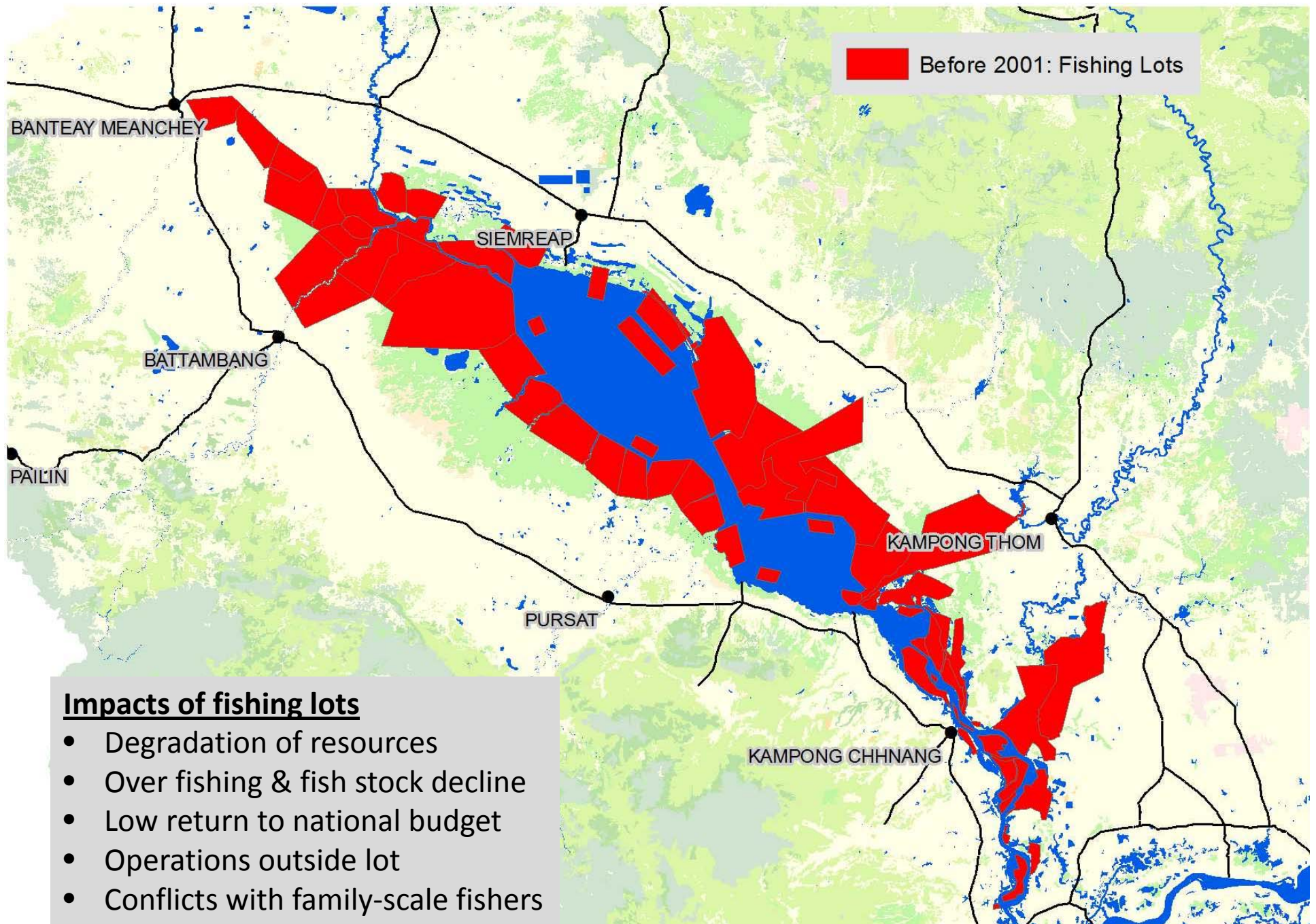
Credit: Pulitzer

# Political economy of commercial fishing

- Fishing lots (enclosures): concession model established during the French protectorate
- ‘Public-Private’ partnership to manage large-scale commercial fishing
- 90s onwards: fishing lot an instrument of political domination by ruling party
- Leases and sub-leases with highly militarized control and monitoring



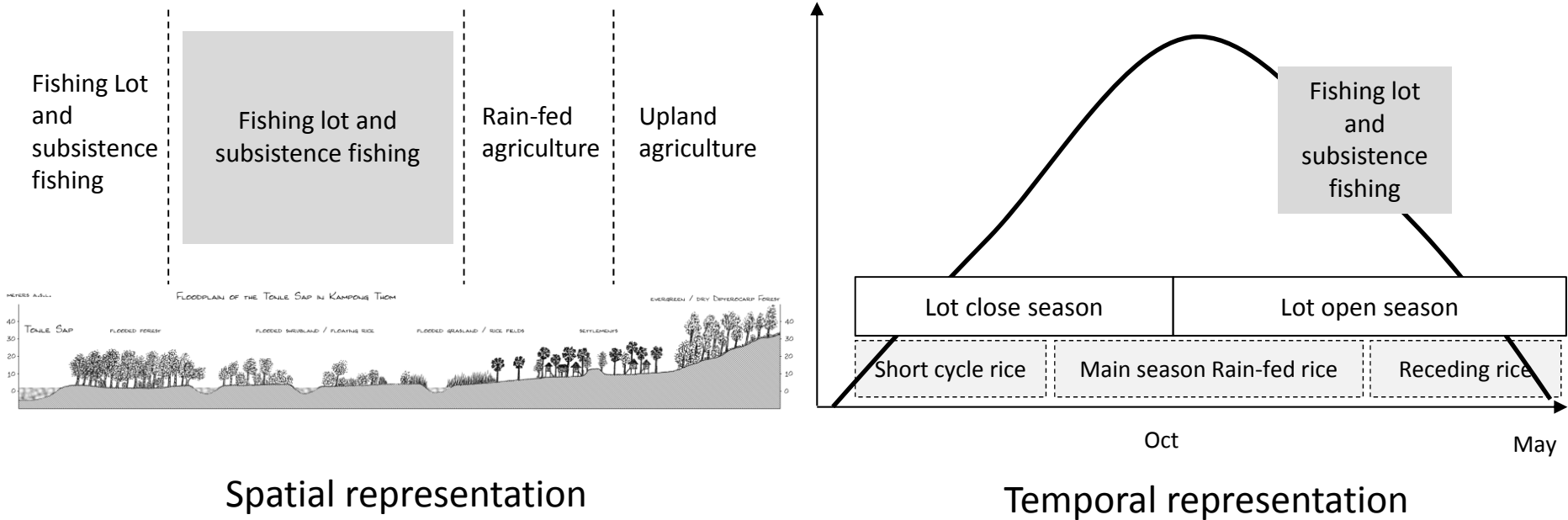




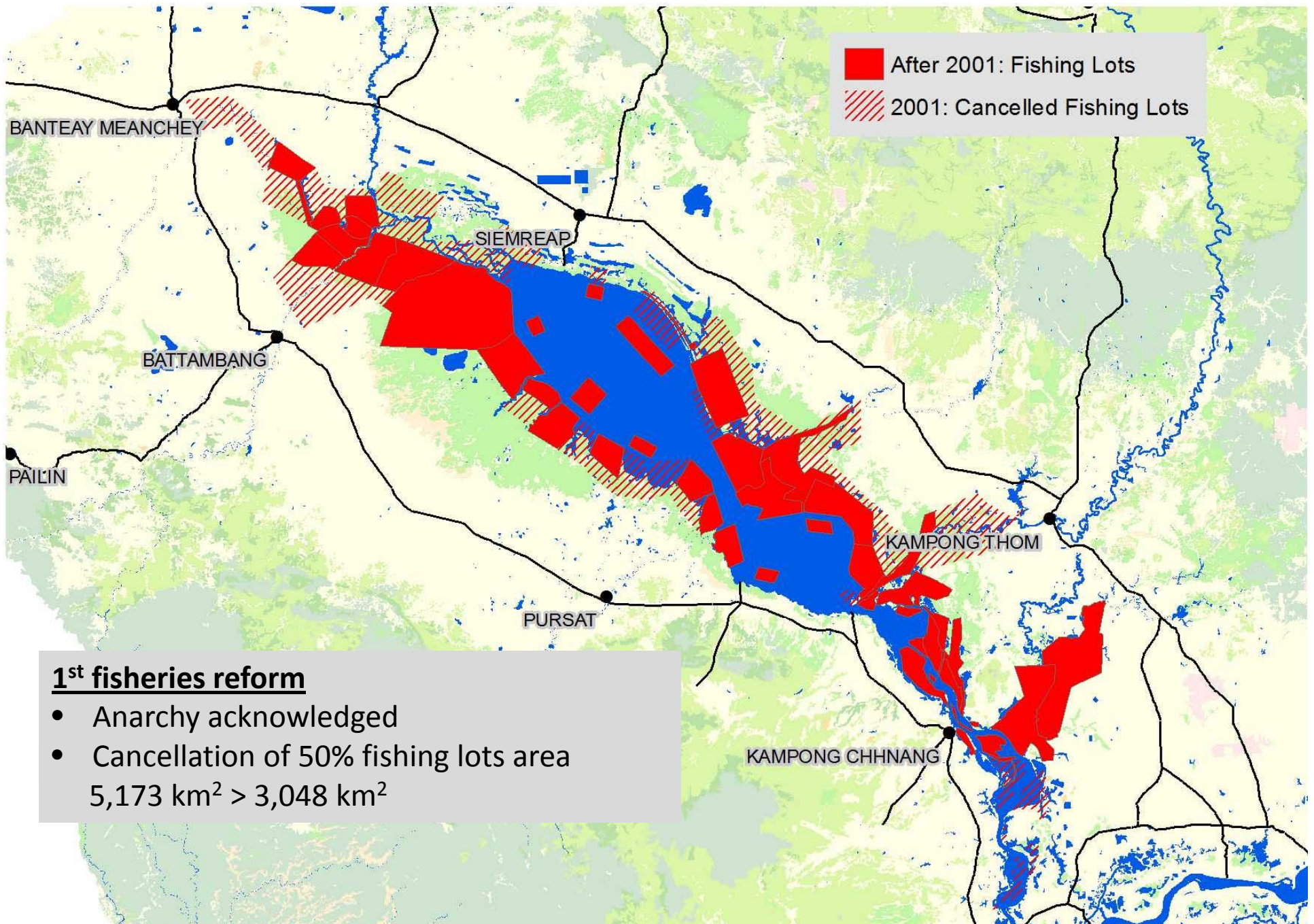
### Impacts of fishing lots

- Degradation of resources
- Over fishing & fish stock decline
- Low return to national budget
- Operations outside lot
- Conflicts with family-scale fishers

# Fisheries conflicts in the Tonle Sap plain

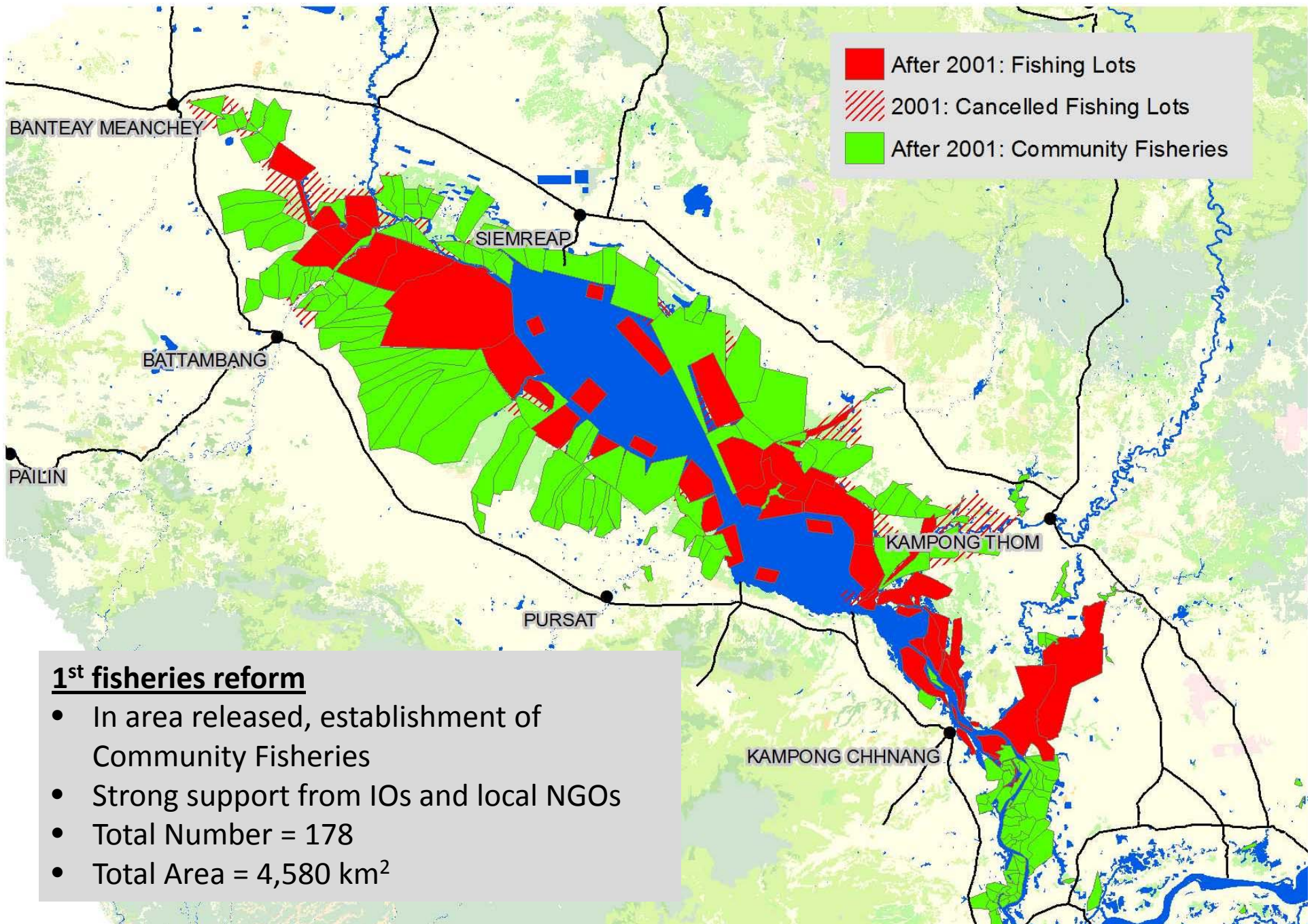


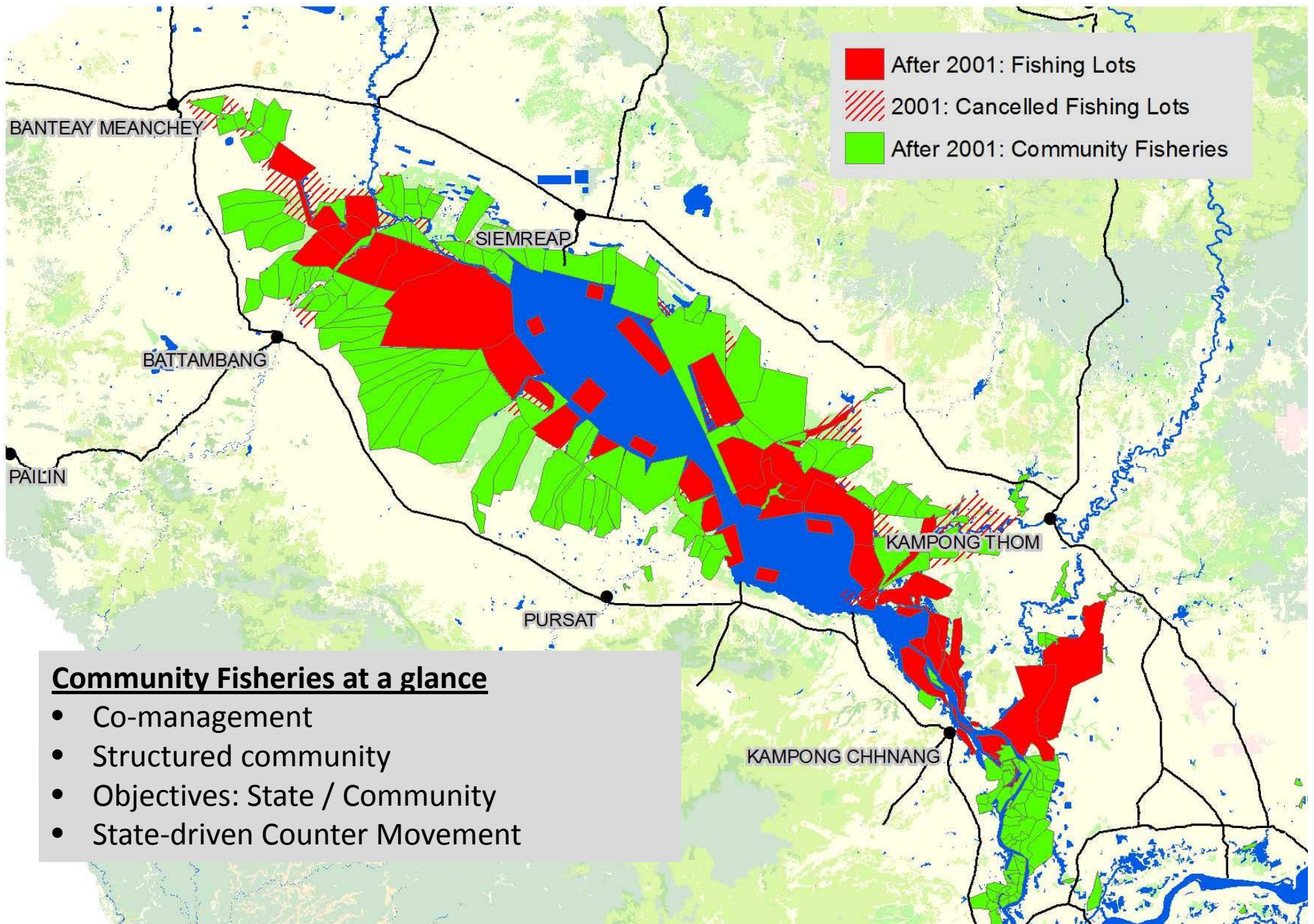
Conflicts

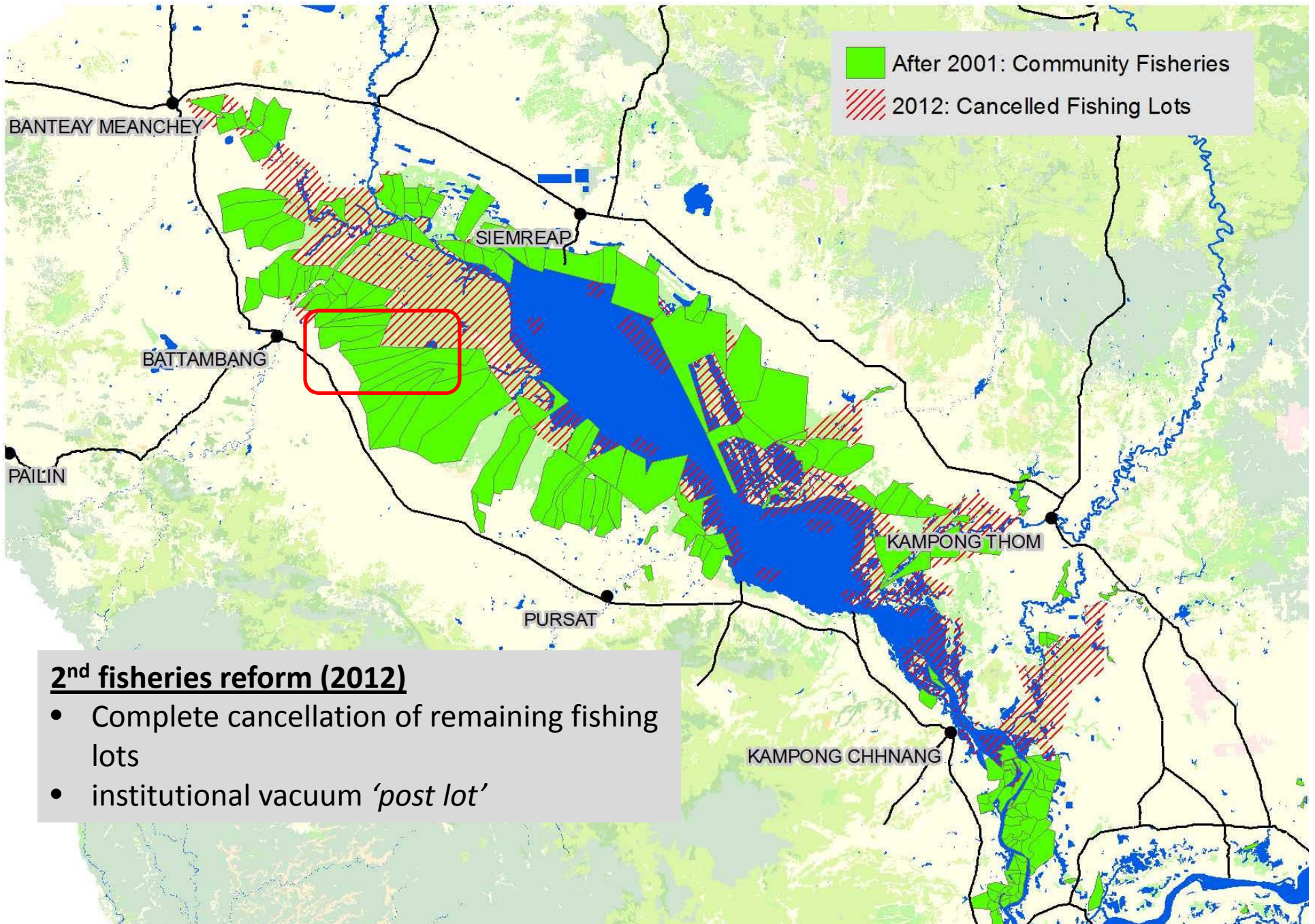


### 1<sup>st</sup> fisheries reform

- Anarchy acknowledged
- Cancellation of 50% fishing lots area  
 $5,173 \text{ km}^2 > 3,048 \text{ km}^2$







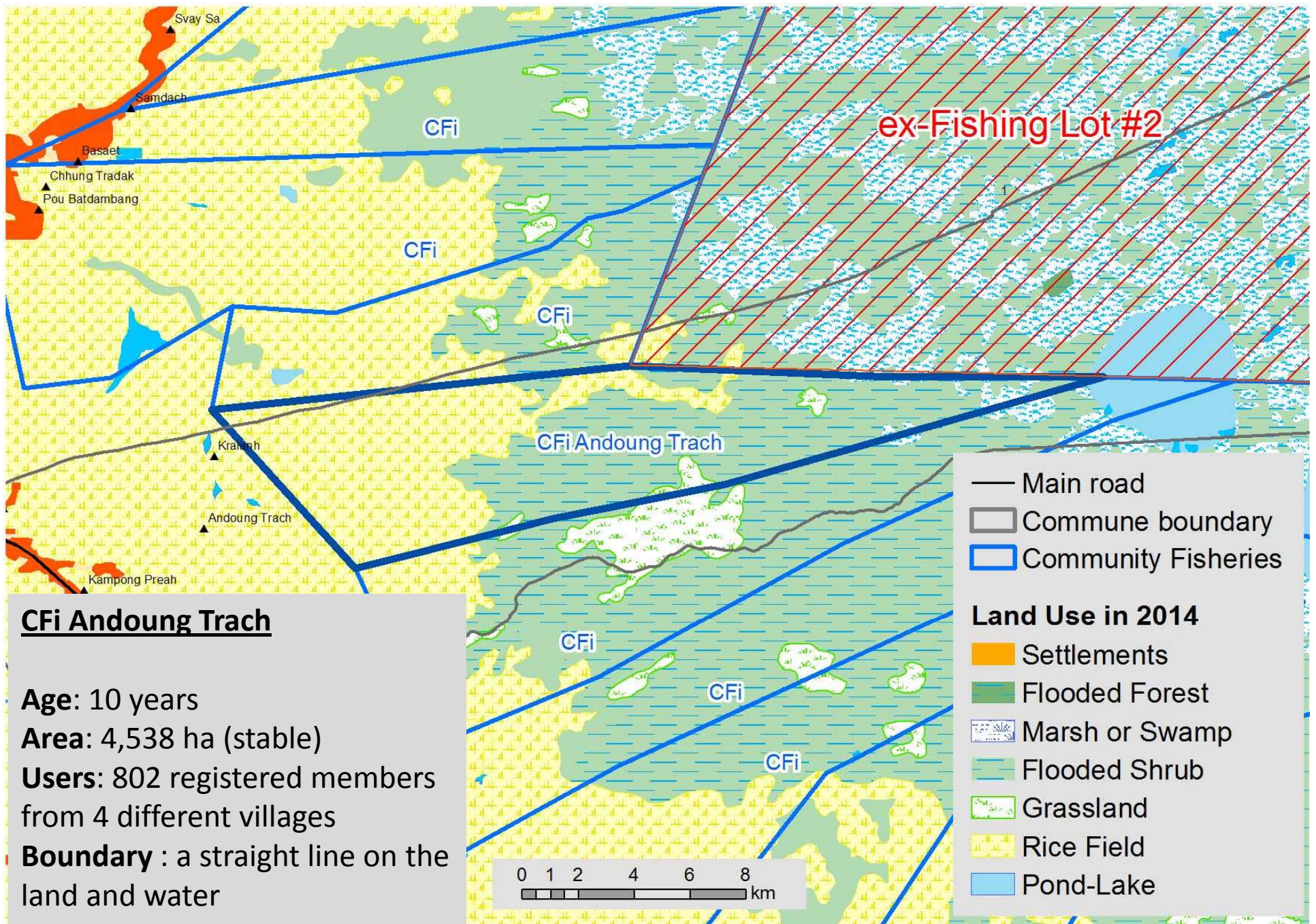
## 2<sup>nd</sup> fisheries reform (2012)

- Complete cancellation of remaining fishing lots
- institutional vacuum *'post lot'*

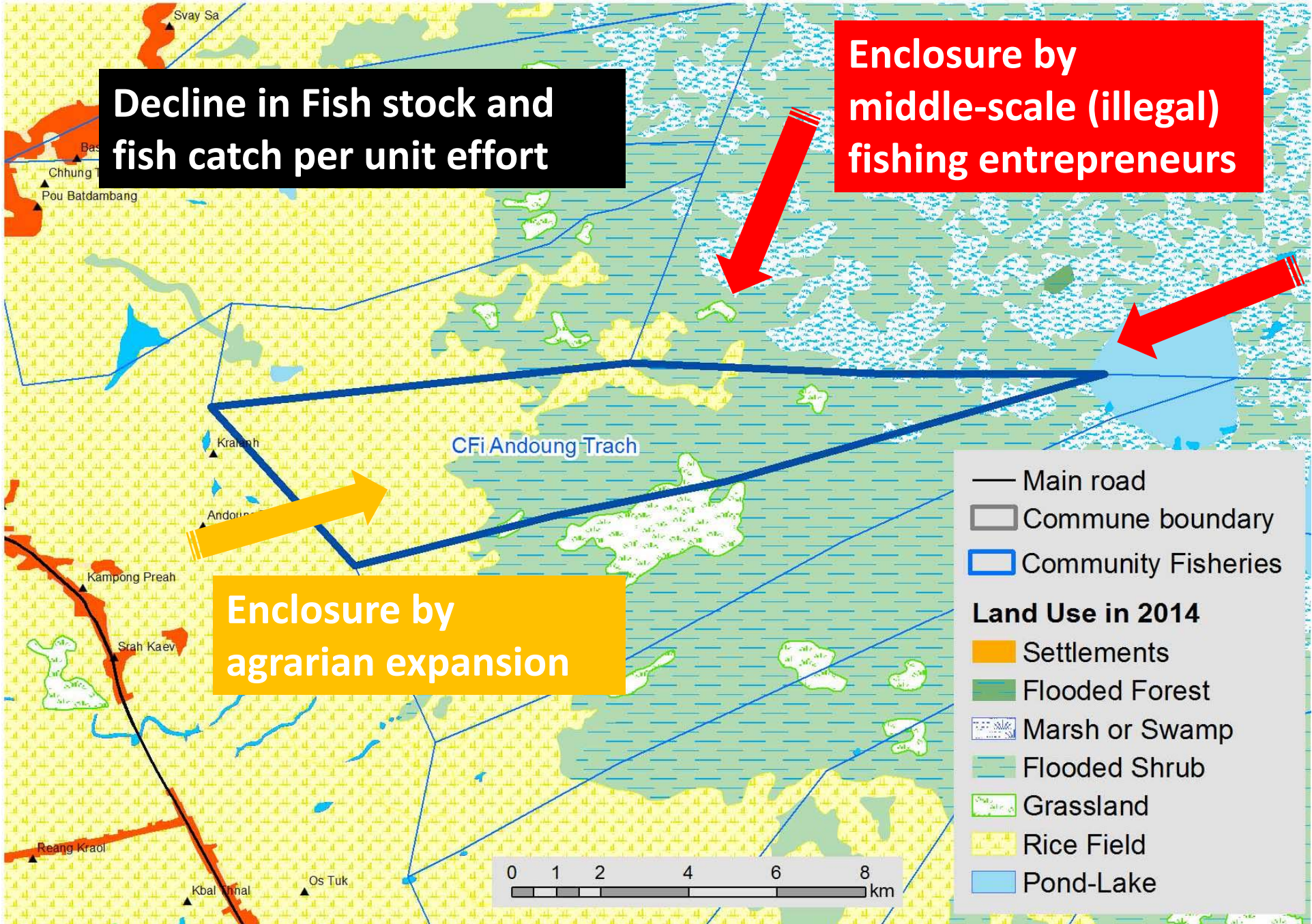
# Community Fisheries of Andoung Trach



Credit: Pulitzer







**Decline in Fish stock and fish catch per unit effort**

**Enclosure by middle-scale (illegal) fishing entrepreneurs**

**Enclosure by agrarian expansion**

- Main road
  - ▭ Commune boundary
  - ▭ Community Fisheries
- Land Use in 2014**
- ▭ Settlements
  - ▭ Flooded Forest
  - ▭ Marsh or Swamp
  - ▭ Flooded Shrub
  - ▭ Grassland
  - ▭ Rice Field
  - ▭ Pond-Lake



# Rules and practises of the common



Credit: Pulitzer

# Institutions of the common

- Common is formally institutionalized
- Through a co-management agreement between local community and with Fisheries Administration (provincial cantonment)
- Land and Resources originally part of a Public State Domain



# Arenas of actions

- Social-ecological diagnosis of resources
- Blueprint process externally supported
  - Registration of CFi members
  - Election of management committee
  - Internal regulation (small-scale fishing)
  - Area agreement
  - Management plan



# Internal regulations

- Access boundaries
  - Non-exclusionary
  - Social accountability and illegal fishing
- Rights to fish catch and fishing gears
  - Essentially framed by provisions on small-scale fishing in Fisheries Law
  - But no limit on amount of gears and volume of fish catch

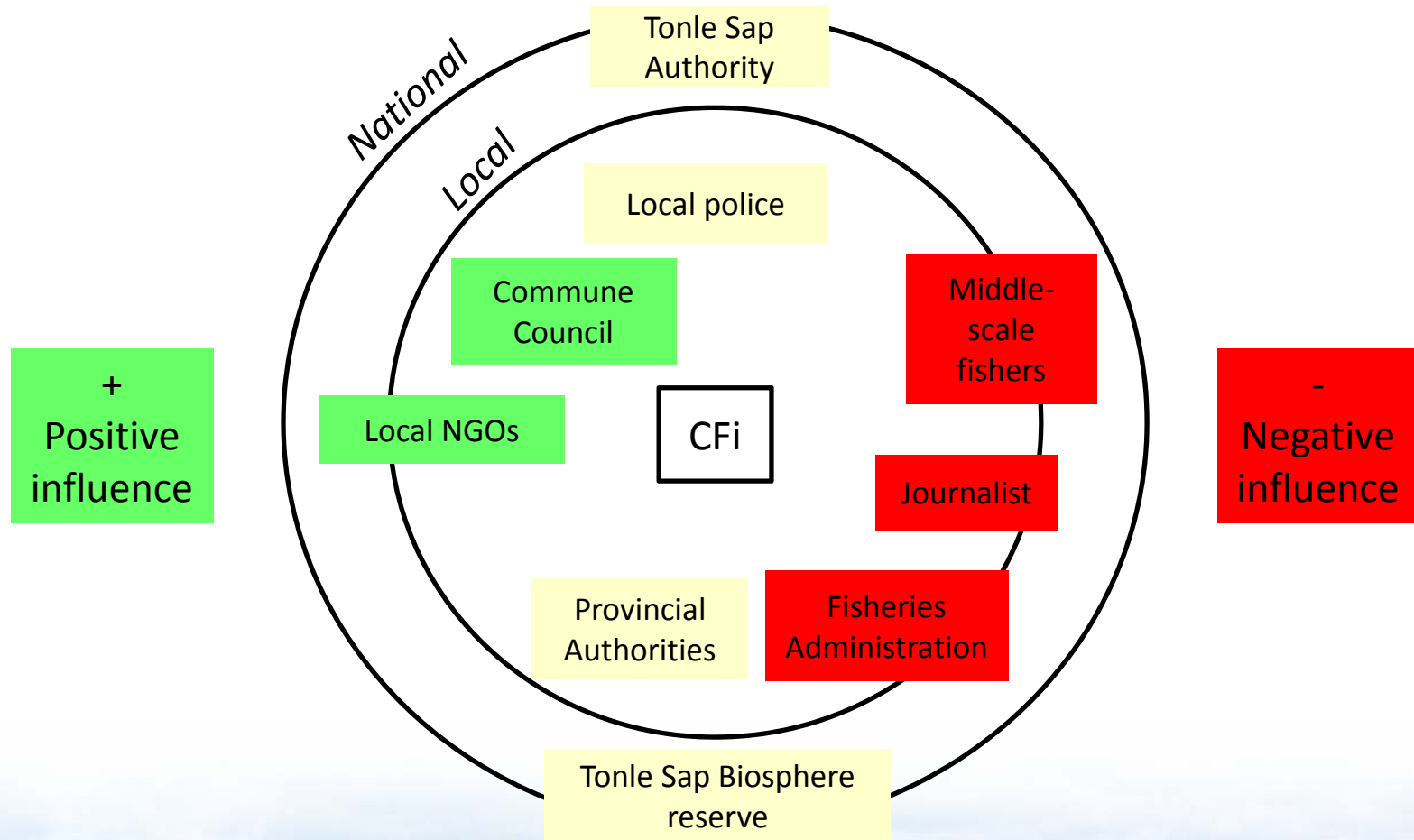


# Internal regulations

- Rights to commercial fisheries
  - Not granted > key bottleneck for sustainability
  - But occurs informally
- Right to participate in decision making process
  - No right to apply sanction without fisheries administration
  - CFi has a right to comply with FiA rules
- Dispute resolution: a question of power



# Partners of the community fisheries



# Risk management in the common



Credit: Pulitzer



# Risk 1: Decline in fish stock and fish catch

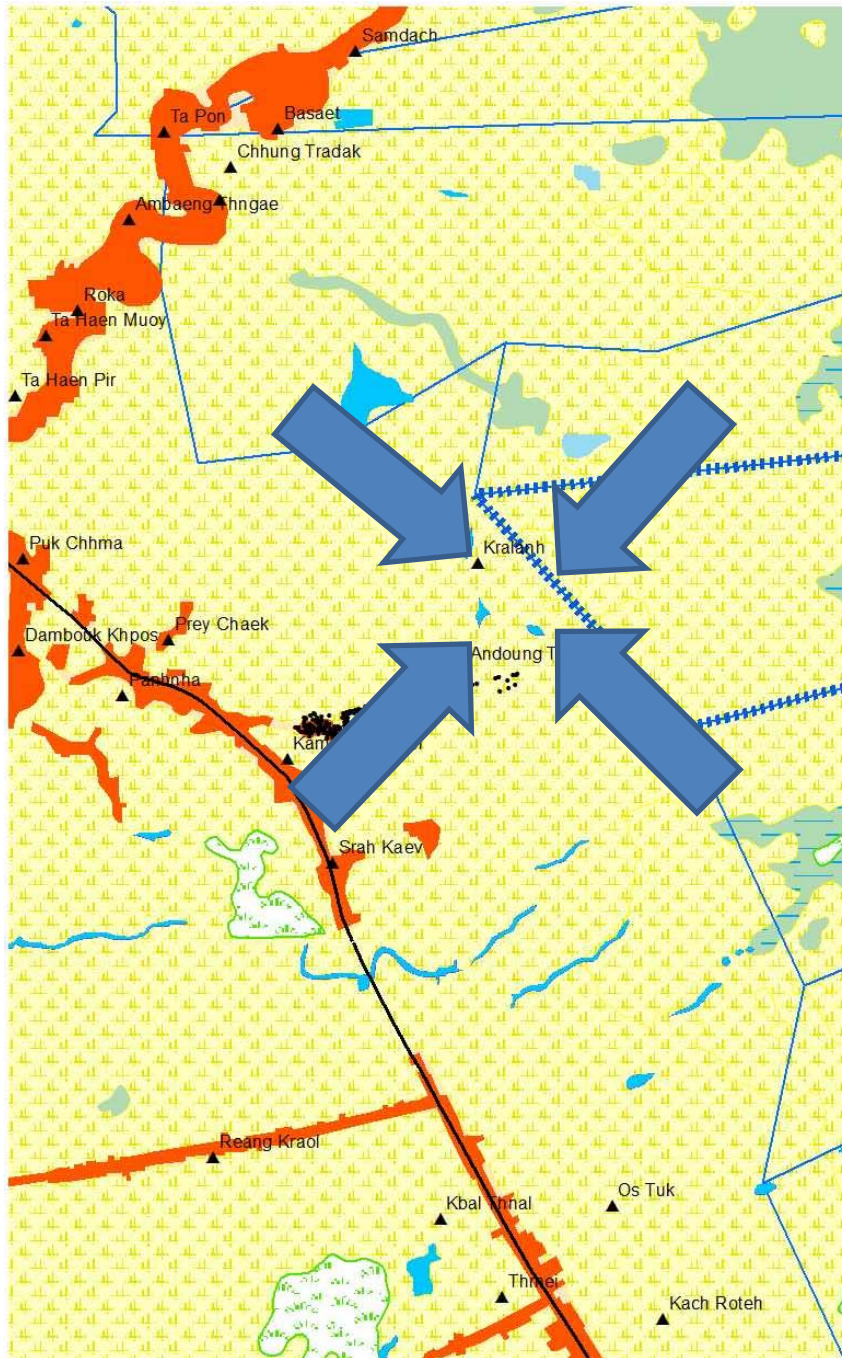
- Main response by local fishing folks
  - Discontinuing fisheries activities
  - Out-Migration, predominantly to Thailand
- Consequences
  - Dramatic change in livelihood and income formation mechanisms
  - Reconfiguration of social life in village around migration



# Risk 2: Illegal fishing is beyond control

- Main response by local fishing folks
  - Re-focus management onto protected pond (fish refuge + spawning habitat)
  - People-driven counter-movement
- Consequences
  - Protected ponds is under direct management and monitoring of CFi management Committee
  - Increased control of CFi affaires by local elite





# Risk 3: Inadequate co-management rules

- Main response by local fishing folks
  - Taylor local solutions with local actors to allow effective enforcement, commercial fishing (social enterprise)
- Consequences
  - Community Fisheries perform better outside current co-management rules



# Supporting the commons? Proposition and ways forward



Credit: Pulitzer

# International context

- Threats by hydropower dams upstream (Mekong) that might have important repercussion on the flood plain (water quantity and quality)
- Climate Change might have in impact impacts, i.e. changing flood patterns



# Local challenges

- Andoung Trach just one amongst many other CFis
- Ensure more effective CFi management as more credible alternative to migration and marginalization
- Supporting existing CFi management efforts
  - Protection and expansion of important conservation areas (fish refuge)
  - Support CFi Committee in tackling illegal fishing
  - Allow for community-based commercial fishing to generate resources



# National challenges

- Reposition family-scale fishing in the policy landscape by enlarging communities fisheries roles, rights and responsibilities
  - Reconsidering co-management approach
    - Revise the existing sub-decree and Fisheries Law (commercial fishing, enforcement,...)
    - Provide resources for more innovative institutional cooperation at sub-national level
  - Address institutional overlaps between agencies in Tonle Sap (Community Fisheries, Environmental Protection by UNESCO, Tonle Sap Authority)
  - Study opportunities for aquaculture, fish processing and livelihood diversification





Thank you !



Credit: Pulitzer