



Floating market on the Mekong River in Vietnam

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Northumbria University, Newcastle, academic shortlisted for prestigious Newton Prize

International Development academic Dr Oliver Hensengerth has been shortlisted for the 2017 Newton Prize for his study of flood management in Vietnam.

Dr Hensengerth's research aims to develop more effective flood knowledge by bridging local and scientific knowledge and integrating modelling and social data. His project, *Soft engineering approaches to disaster risks reduction*,

is based around a case study on flood management in the Mekong River Delta in Vietnam. Key Vietnamese partners are Thuyloi University, the Institute for the Management of Agriculture and Rural Development (IMARD), UNDP Vietnam and Cantho University.

The Newton Prize is an annual £1 million fund awarded for the best research or innovation that supports the economic development and social welfare of developing countries. If he is awarded the prize, Dr Hensengerth could receive up to £200,000 from the fund to advance or develop his work further.

He said: “This is a fantastic acknowledgement of the work we have done as a team. The prize would allow us to significantly advance this work and to further develop especially innovative methodologies developed by Vietnamese early career researchers. A big thank you also goes to the communities who kept supported us and who have made time available to participate in our research to make this a truly interdisciplinary process of co-learning and knowledge co-creation.”

The Newton Prize is part of the broader Newton Fund, which builds research and innovation partnerships with 18 partner countries to support their economic development and social welfare, and to develop their research and innovation capacity for long-term sustainable growth. It has a total UK Government investment of £735 million up until 2021, and each partner country provides matched funding and resources for every programme, making it an equitable partnership.

Dr Hensengerth’s project engaged with policy makers and communities to develop decision support in flood mitigation. Approaches developed by the project, and the issues it has identified, are having a significant impact on the reshaping and development of disaster management policies, practices and research in Vietnam and the wider Mekong region.

He added: “Responding to floods under uncertainty requires inclusive policy making, including bridging local/lay and scientific/professional knowledge in order to meet the complex needs of a diverse and pluralistic society.”

More than 150 Newton funded projects, fellowships, or other awards applied for the Newton Prize from this year’s eligible countries – **India, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam**. There are [25 shortlisted applications](#) in total and five Prizes of up to £200,000 will be awarded to each winner to be used to

advance or develop existing Newton funded work. There will be two winners in India and one in Malaysia, Thailand and in Vietnam.

The Newton Prize winners will be announced at celebratory award ceremonies held in each of the partner countries:

- India – 1 November
- Thailand – 8 November
- Malaysia – 14 November
- Vietnam – 16 November

The Minister for Universities, Science and Research Jo Johnson will also host a UK event in London in early December to celebrate the first year of the Prize and to announce the 2018 Newton Prize countries.

The Newton Prize aims to incentivise researchers to participate in the Newton Fund as partners with the UK, and to work on the most important challenges facing Newton countries. The concept for the Newton Prize has been developed to demonstrate how UK partnerships with Newton countries are solving global challenges. Further information on the [Newton Fund website](#). Follow their Twitter feed for regular updates about the Newton Prize: [@NewtonFund](#) and [#NewtonPrize](#).

Dr Hensengerth works in Northumbria's Department of Social Sciences and is part of the Centre for [International Development](#). To find out more about studying courses in Social Sciences, including MSc International Development and BSc (Hons) International Relations & Politics, come along to one of our upcoming Open Days to click [here](#) to find out more.

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