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Earth System Dynamics
Discussions

# *Interactive comment on* "Perspectives on contextual vulnerability in discourses of climate conflict" *by* U. T. Okpara et al.

**Anonymous Referee #3**

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Generel comments: This is an original, well-written and clearly structured paper that can (potentially) make an important contribution to the debate on climate change related conflict. In my view, the particular strength of the paper is its combination of an empirically-rich meta-study of the climate conflict literature with an attempt to advance the notion of vulnerability in the same literature. I very much sympathize with the proposal to advance the concept of contextual vulnerability and in general would strongly encourage such endeavors. While I found the author's empirical empirical findings very convincing I was less convinced of the way they got there, i.e. of their methodological and conceptual approach as I would like to elaborate in the following.

Specific comments: In my view Foucault's discourse analytical approach comes off badly in the conceptual part of the paper. Equally, mentioning Hajer and Foucault in the



same breath appears a bit odd to me because after all in his argumentative discourse analysis Hajer mainly draws on Foucault. Furthermore, there is no "singular Foucault" - other than suggested by the authors his earlier archeological works actually provides some analytical concepts for a text-based discourse analysis. The second conceptual point refers to the analytical categories that were deduced from different discourse analytical approaches (Adger, Dryzek, McDonald). It is not sufficient to simply list the heuristic categories in the appendix (as it is in the present version of the article). They need to be explained in the text. Here the author's should also make clear why they have selected exactly these categories and not others.

With regard to the methodological approach developed in the paper I was wondering about the added value of the "vulnerability interpretation diagnostic tool"... how is this related/linked to the discourse analytical approach developed by the authors? And why do we need a particular "tool" to analyze understandings of vulnerability? In my opinion, there are many discourse analytical approaches that would be suitable for such a task. Secondly, I was a bit confused by the author's claim that the "vulnerability interpretation diagnostic tool" would make the analysis "less subjective". Would that mean that it becomes more objective? I would honestly doubt that. Maybe one could say that the analysis becomes more structured and transparent, which might increase the replicability of the analysis (to stick with positivist terminology) , but that doesn't make the analytical choices to be made less subjective.

As mentioned before I really liked the empirical analysis presented in the paper. However, I see a couple of omissions here. A first one refers to the debate on climate-induced migration and conflict, as already mentioned by reviewer 2. Secondly, the recent rise of resilience is completely ignored. There is a growing body of literature arguing that resilience has become the dominant concept/storyline in climate security/conflict discourses and has actually replaced vulnerability as a nodal point in these very debates. So, the authors need at least to show that they have taken note of this debate and should also argue why it is in their view still important to focus on vulnerability.

Finally, some key literature on the emergence of climate change and security/conflict discourses is missing, e.g. the works of Brzoska (e.g. 2009), Oels (e.g. 2013) or Rothe (e.g. 2015).

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Interactive comment on Earth Syst. Dynam. Discuss., 6, 2543, 2015.