

Interactive comment on “Perspectives on contextual vulnerability in discourses of climate conflict” by U. T. Okpara et al.

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Received and published: 20 January 2016

Dear Editor,

We are pleased to send you the point-to-point answers to the issues raised by reviewer #2 on our manuscript entitled “Perspectives on contextual vulnerability in discourses of climate conflict” -ESD-2015-81.

We thank the referee for his time and effort towards the improvement of our manuscript.

- Uche Okpara (on behalf of co-authors)

Specific comments:

Referee #2: More specifically, it is not clear why the author(s) use the rather limited

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time period from 2007 to 2015 for its inquiry. Rather, the climate change security and conflict issues date back further. For instance, an important article by Miguel et alia on "Economic Shocks and Civil Conflict: An Instrumental Variables Approach" from 2004 marked the beginning of the, what the article calls "Climate determinism" body of the literature. The same applies to the other two discourses. Expanding the time period would also increase the number of observations of the 34 articles found.

Response: We disagree with the reviewer that we did not make clear the reasons we limited our search timeframe to 2007 - 2015. Please see our explanation again on page 2552 (lines 10 – 18). Our interest is not in when the climate conflict debate began, but the period it became 'markedly pronounced as a subject of growing international concern'. Recall that the concern about climate conflict and security reached high policy circles in 2007 following the UN Security Council debates on the security implications of climate change (see details in Adger, 2010, pg. 279 - 280). We observe a rapidly developing body of literature on the climate conflict subject within this timeframe that can allow for inclusion of more articles than the 34 we have used. However, the 34 articles (we selected) are the few that suitably met our criteria outlined in Table 4.

Referee #2: In addition, it would be also beneficial to consider books and book chapters if feasible for the analysis. The exclusive focus on scientific, peer-reviewed articles may give a skewed impression of the literature on climate conflict links that makes reference to vulnerability.

Response: We agree that books and book chapters can provide additional range of views, but most of these are difficult to assemble. And because majority are not critiqued before they are published, it is difficult to confidently establish their originality and scientific credibility. If you check our research question one (see page 2547), you will find that our interest is to use peer-reviewed articles – and the reasons are given on page 2552 (lines 4 – 5). We believe that insights from climate change and conflict refereed-articles convey a complete storyline on various climate conflict discourses (in agreement with e.g. McDonald, 2013), and especially in relation to representations of

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vulnerability. This does not suggest that future research should not engage these other sources – books etc. We consider this to be a difference of opinion in relation to the sampling strategy and feel that overall we already justified and explained our decisions.

Referee #2: Moreover, some of the causal explanations of climate security and conflict links are missing from the analysis. For instance, the "Climatic determinism" discourse also employs economic opportunity cost theories to explain the outbreak of violence, largely in sub-Saharan Africa. It has been argued in the literature that small-scale farmers that lose their income due to climate shocks join a rebellion against the established political order, leading to violent conflict within a state.

Response: The economic opportunity cost (i.e. opportunity cost of fighting) theories, including relative-deprivation theories, are all components of the neo-Malthusian perspectives on environmental/climate change and conflict narratives embedded within a context centrism discourse, and not climatic determinism.

Referee #2: Last, there is one discourse on climate change and conflict missing that also relates to vulnerability, the one on climate-induced migration and conflict. This discourse is rather new, and could be also included in the typology mentioned in the article.

Response: We disagree and think that the reviewer is identifying sub-categories of discourses. To clarify, statements pointing to migration and displacement are often embedded in a context centrism discourse (see Section 4.2). In other words, climate-induced migration does not constitute a stand-alone discourse, but represents one of MANY pathways from climate change/variability to conflict that is 'adequately' captured within a context centrism discourse frame.

Technical corrections: On page 2551, line 26, it should read "Füssel" instead of "Fussel".

Response: Correction taken.

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