

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: 21 January 2016

Many thanks to Matt MacDonald for reviewing our paper. Our responses to his questions are presented below.

Uche Okpara (on behalf of co-authors)

Referee: With an increasing focus among UN agencies, the G7 and European governments in particular on addressing questions of state fragility in the context of climate change, what implications does this analysis have for the ways in which key institutions/actors should engage either climate policy or the 'needs-based agenda' endorsed in the paper as associated with climate conflict? And how would the conclusions fit with recent high-profile accounts of the relationship between climate, conflict, 'fragility' and

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vulnerability and responses to them (such as the G7 commissioned report A New Climate for Peace, eg)?

Response: The implications of this analysis point to contextual vulnerability as a useful tool/concept for constructing/portraying the true nature of climate conflict (such as that playing out in specific fragile locations in Africa as illustrated in Busby et al. (2014)) and for anchoring climate conflict policies/interventions upon a needs-based framework (e.g. to prevent unintended consequences). A needs-based agenda in this frame suggests a nexus between the development agenda, the climate agenda and the security agenda, the nuances of which require further context-based research in order to determine which actors are best placed to collaborate and interplay in order to address questions of fragile states and climate change.

Given that fragility creates a vicious cycle of vulnerability for areas affected by climate conflict, and that vulnerability increases climate conflict opportunities in fragile states, engagements require multi-actor and multi-level participation to: understand climate conflict transmission mechanisms, design solutions that are context-specific (e.g. climate adaptation, humanitarian aids/support and peacebuilding goals), and implement them while maintaining a continuous needs identification process using contextual vulnerability perspectives (page 2561, lines 20 – 25 and page 2562, lines 20 - 25 point to the policy direction for a needs-based agenda associated with climate conflict – although issues around implications for policy responses that are not directly the interest/focus of our article).

In response to the second question raised, we contend that recent high-profile accounts of the relationship between climate, conflict, 'fragility' and vulnerability point to a context centrism discourse in which contextual vulnerability is a central component. Our study shows that how vulnerability is portrayed matters (e.g. contextual vulnerability defines the range of underlying mechanisms that keep an area in a perpetual fragile state under climate conflict). Indeed, a strong articulation of policy responses that are needs-driven and socially-focused may not be feasible without a proper rep-

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resentation of vulnerability in discourses of climate conflict. Popular voices/responses advocate for an integrated agenda. However, such an agenda must align with specific vulnerability reduction needs to realise significant co-benefits in fragile environments. Our conclusions therefore highlight the need to cast the climate conflict storyline as a vulnerability-based question to better communicate how we should make sense of climate conflict relationships and to guide discussions/decision-making for any area affected by climate conflict.

Note: In the context of our paper, a needs-based agenda seeks to mobilise needs-driven, socially-focused initiatives (such as those grounded on 'views from the vulnerable in fragile states') to address issues of climate adaptation, humanitarian support systems and peacebuilding, alongside any unintended/unplanned consequences of climate conflict policies.

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