MASTER THESIS REVIEW

Author: Semhal Tsegaye
Thesis: Evaluating the Integration of Conflict Sensitive Approaches in Climate Change Response: Bangladesh and Nepal
Reviewer: Pascale Combes Motel

Content

Please comment on: aims, structure, methods; depth and quality of analysis.

The author studies the effect of climate change on the risk of conflict relying on 2 case studies. A core concept is Conflict Sensitivity (CS). CS characterizes the ability of an organization to downsize the negative (or enhance the positive effects) it can generate where this organization operates. The author also defines conflict mainly as structural violence. The author wonders whether Conflict Sensitivity is taken into account in the definition and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies in Nepal and Bangladesh. The methodology relies on a qualitative assessment of official documents related to climate change responses in both countries, on a review of dedicated academic literature and, eventually on documents issued by NGOs. The main finding of the study is that both countries are unsuccessful in integrating conflict sensitivity in their mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The thesis is structured into 5 sections. The introduction thoroughly presents the concepts and materials used in the thesis (e.g. conflict sensitivity, conflict, climate change plans). The second section presents the methodology of the study. The third section reviews the literature and mainly discusses how institutions matter in how CC is addressed by national governments). The fourth and fifth sections resp. focus on Nepal and Bangladesh. The author presents how both countries are vulnerability to climate, and then conducts an in-depth discussion of national action plans (BBCSAP in Bangladesh and NAPA and LAPA in Nepal) and strategies regarding conflict sensitivity.

Strengths. The literature review is carefully done and the author shows she has a good knowledge of CC strategies in both countries. She also shows a very good ability to derive a fine analysis and make recommendations.

Weaknesses.

- The focus of the thesis is on conflicts and CC. Qualitative stylized facts are given for both countries. It would have been interesting to provide quantified stylized facts. Of course, several are given in the text. But it would have been interesting to gather data on conflicts from similar sources (ACLED - Armed Conflict Location & Event Data available at https://acleddata.com/#/dashboard). It would have been useful to make a difference on the nb of violent events and their intensities.

- Definition of conflict. Relatedly, my view is that 'conflict' is too loosely defined in section 1.6. A critical assessment of Galtung's definition would have been welcome. A non-specialized reader would surely welcome a discussion on what conflict is. One issue is that when the author writes and quotes on p. 9 "[t]he manifestation of violence, in Galtung's understanding, is not necessarily direct physical harm, but is also 'unequal power and consequently…unequal life chances' " is that we can be confused between the outcomes and the drivers of violence. For instance, economic inequalities might be conducive to violence. In that respect, there is a huge literature on the economic determinants of conflicts that would have been worth taking into account.
- Climate change. Similarly, quantified stylized facts on CC in both countries would have been welcome. CC is a LR phenomenon. How to define it?
- The authors provides us with a sequential discussion of both case studies, which does not help having a synthetic view of the subject taking advantage of having two case studies. It is not so easy understand how both case studies enrich each other, or how representative are those countries in this part of the world.

Literature and references

Please comment on: literature used and references.
The author relies on different types of materials. She has gone through a substantial amount of journal articles, reports which is impressive.

Formal requirements

Please comment on: language style, consistency, graphic layout, tables and figures etc.
The presentation of the thesis follows the usual academic rules.

Topics for discussion

Mention questions that may be discussed during the defense. Delete the whole section if you do not have any questions.
The thesis was written while Semhal was an intern in Thailand. It would have been interesting to more closely link the professional experience and the analysis conducted in the thesis. More precisely, on p. 5, the author writes "the author conducted a series of focus group discussions with refugee communities in Bangkok and used these findings to develop a training curriculum for refugee advocates". Did she meet climate refugees, with refugees who have fled areas of conflict? How could the thesis be enriched from this field experience?

Overall evaluation and proposed grade

Please comment on your overall evaluation of the thesis. This section should end with a separate sentence (if you do not recommend the thesis for defense, add "not" in the sentence; then the proposed grade must be F):

I do recommend the thesis for defense with grade 14 (B).

Date: 12 june 2020 **Signature:**

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GLODEP CONSORTIUM
PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY OLOMOUC | FACULTY OF SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES
17. LISTOPADU 12, 771 46 OLOMOUC, CZECH REPUBLIC
WWW.GLODEP.EU | STUDY@GLODEP.EU

Palacký University
Olomouc

UNIVERSITÉ
Clermont
Auvergne

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