

Elective Title: VULNERABILITY, ADAPTATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Hillary Term

Elective leader: Dr Kamal Kapadia

Teaching staff: Dr Kamal Kapadia

Host MSc: ECM

Elective rationale

In recent years, adaptation to climate change has emerged as a key policy option in international climate negotiations, yet there is little consensus on what adaptation really means, on how vulnerability can be understood, and on the nature of the relationship between development, vulnerability and adaptation. What really makes people more or less vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change? How do environmental changes (like increased frequency of hurricanes, for e.g.) and socio-economic transformations (like growth in industrial agriculture around the world) interact and shape vulnerability? Is vulnerability a zero-sum game (i.e. does reducing the vulnerability of one group increase that of another?)? What precisely should vulnerable populations be adapting to and how? What is, and what should be our role as policy makers, activists and practitioners in reducing vulnerability? We will explore answers to these and other questions in this elective. This elective is aimed at those interested in the areas of disaster and climate risk reduction, and adaptation to climate change.

Teaching approach

This course will be lecture and discussion-based. It will be taught over 6 weeks in 1.5 hour sessions. All readings will be uploaded to WebLearn well in advance. It is expected that students will have carefully read the assigned texts, and will come to class prepared to discuss them. Students will also be expected to submit 3 essays and give 2 short group presentations, as indicated below. These assignments will not be graded, but feedback will be provided. If you wish to be assessed (for a grade) on this elective, you must be prepared to submit the topic for your essay by the 7th week of Hillary Term.

Lecture 1: Understanding vulnerability: an exploration of case studies

Goal

To evaluate different approaches to defining and assessing vulnerability through analysis of actual case studies; to develop, through inference, a conceptual picture of what vulnerability is, and to identify the factors that produce it.

Readings

- Eakin, H. et al. 2009. Nested vulnerability: exploring cross-scale linkages and vulnerability teleconnections in Mexican and Vietnamese coffee systems. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 12, 398 – 412.
- Eriksen, S. and Silva, J. 2009. The vulnerability context of a savanna area in Mozambique: household drought coping strategies and responses to economic change. *Environmental Science and Policy*, 12, 33-52.
- O'Brien, K. et al. 2004. Mapping vulnerability to multiple stressors: climate change and globalization in India. *Global Environmental Change*, 14: 303–313.
- Klein, R. and Hinkel, J. 2008. Global assessment of coastal vulnerability to sea-level rise: experience from DINAS-COAST. In Patt, A. et al (eds.), *Assessing vulnerability to global environmental change: making research useful for adaptation decision-making and policy*. pp. 79-96. Earthscan: London.

Assignment and preparation for lecture

In groups of 2 or 3, please come to class prepared to make a 10-minute presentation on ONE of the readings (groups and readings assigned via email). Please note that you all still have to do ALL the readings, but only present on one in class. Please prepare your presentation to address the following:

- What is the implicit or explicit meaning of vulnerability used or developed by the authors? What creates or produces vulnerability in their assessment?
- What method or approach have they used to assess vulnerability?
- What are the practical and policy implications of the study?
- Any critiques or other comments?

Lecture 2: Understanding vulnerability: theoretical frameworks

Goal

This session will place the case studies from the previous week in a broader theoretical context, with a view to understanding how and why different conceptual and analytical approaches to understanding vulnerability lead to different prescriptive positions.

Readings

- Eakin, H. and Luers, A. 2006. Assessing the vulnerability of social-environmental systems. *Annual Review of Environmental and Resources*, 31: 365–94.
- O'Brien, K. et al. 2007. Why different interpretations of vulnerability matter in climate change discourses. *Climate Policy*, 7, 73-38.
- Ribot, Jesse C. [Forthcoming]. Vulnerability does not just fall from the sky: toward multi-scale pro-poor climate policy. In Mearns, R. and Norton, A. (eds.), *Social dimensions of climate change: equity and vulnerability in a warming world*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

Assignment and preparation for lecture

Write an essay in which you discuss and critically evaluate different methods and approaches for assessing vulnerability. The essay should be no more than 2000 words (with a 15% margin). Essays longer than this will NOT be read. Feel free to draw on material from lectures 1 and 2, and any other material you want. In class discussion, we will discuss the essay topic, and focus especially on the significance and use of different approaches for informing practice.

Lecture 3: Disasters and disaster response

Goal

Having developed, in the last two lectures, an understanding of what creates vulnerability, we will now examine what actually happens during and after natural disasters, with a view to understanding the opportunities and limits of humanitarian aid. NOTE: The readings for this week are a suggested list – you don't have to read every word of every article and book, and you should feel free to draw on other readings not on the list. Use the readings as needed for answering the essay question below. Those marked with a star (*) are available on Weblearn, the others you will have to find in the libraries around Oxford.

Readings

Bello, W. 2006. The rise of the relief and reconstruction complex. *Journal of International Affairs* 59 (2):281-296.*

Blaikie, P., T. Cannon, I. Davis, and B. Wisner. 1994. *At risk: natural hazards, people's vulnerability, and disasters*. London and New York: Routledge.

DeSilva, M. 2009. Ethnicity, politics and inequality: post-tsunami humanitarian aid delivery in Ampara District, Sri Lanka. *Disasters*, 33(2): 253–273. *

Drury, C., R. Olson, and D. vanBelle. 2005. The politics of humanitarian aid: U.S. foreign disaster assistance, 1964–1995. *The Journal of Politics* 67 (2):454-473. *

Hewitt, K. 1998. Excluded perspectives in the social construction of disaster. In *What is a disaster? Perspectives on the question*, ed. E. Quarantelli, 75-92. Routledge: London.

Klein, N. 2007. *The shock doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism*. New York: Metropolitan Books. Especially chapters 19 and 20.*

Mustafa, D. 2005. The production of an urban hazardscape in Pakistan: modernity, vulnerability, and the range of choice. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95 (3):566-586. *

Nelson, M., R. Ehrenfeucht, and S. Laska. 2007. Planning, plans, and people: professional expertise, local knowledge, and governmental action in post-Hurricane Katrina. *New Orleans Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research* 9(3): 23-52. *

Pelling, M. ed. 2003. *Natural disasters and development in a globalizing world*. London and New York: Routledge.

Rodríguez, H., J. Trainor and E. Quarantelli. 2006. Rising to the challenges of a catastrophe: the emergent and prosocial behavior following Hurricane Katrina. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 604: 82-101. *

Telford, J. and Cosgrove, J. 2007. The international humanitarian system and the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunamis. *Disasters*, 31(1): 1–28. *

Tierney, K., C. Bevc and E. Kuligowski. 2006. Metaphors matter: disaster myths, media frames, and their consequences in Hurricane Katrina. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 604: 57-81. *

UNDP. 2004. *Reducing disaster risk: a challenge for development*. New York: United Nations Development Programme. *

Wisner, B. 2001. Risk and the neoliberal state: why post-Mitch lessons didn't reduce El Salvador's earthquake losses. *Disasters* 25 (3):251-268. *

Assignment and preparation for lecture

While the reading list for this week is longer than usual, you will not be expected to discuss the readings in class this week. The class this week will be lecture-based, focusing on rural livelihoods, vulnerability and disaster response. Please use the readings as sources for an essay that you should submit on the following topic:

Writers like Klein (2007) and Bello (2006) see disaster aid and disaster response as largely exploitative, while the UNDP (2004) and Telford and Cosgrove (2007) see aid as benign and reformable. Critically evaluate these two positions. Make sure your essay offers a specific argument, and then provide evidence from the readings to support your argument. The essay should be no more than 2000 words (with a 15% margin). Essays longer than this will NOT be read.

Lecture 4: Adaptation to climate change: concepts and debates 1

Goal

We build on our analyses of vulnerability and disasters to critically assess the burgeoning field of adaptation to climate change over the next three sessions. In this week, we will cover some background and conceptual readings so as to effectively engage our guest speaker, Anju Sharma, who has over 15

years of work experience in the field of sustainable development, and has worked with a range of organizations such as the Centre for Science and the Environment in India, UNEP and Oxfam. In recent years, Anju's work has focused on adaptation to climate change, and she is currently a freelance consultant working with the Government of Nepal on adaptation strategy. Anju will talk about the practical issues and challenges involved in developing and implementing adaptation policy.

Readings

Adger, W.N., S. Agrawala, M.M.Q. Mirza, C. Conde, K. O'Brien, J. Pulhin, R. Pulwarty, B. Smit and K. Takahashi. 2007. Assessment of adaptation practices, options, constraints and capacity. In M.L. Parry, et al. *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. pp. 717-743

Eakin, H. et al. 2009. Hidden costs and disparate uncertainties: trade-offs in approaches to climate policy. In Patt, A. et al (eds.), *Assessing vulnerability to global environmental change: making research useful for adaptation decision-making and policy*. pp. 212-226. Earthscan: London.

Eriksen, S. et al. 2007. Climate Change Adaptation and Poverty Reduction: Key interactions and critical measures. Report prepared for the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). University of Oslo.

Assignment and preparation for lecture

There is no essay or presentation due this week. However, you must do the readings so you can engage effectively with our guest speaker. You will also need to draw on this (and next) week's readings for next week's essay.

Lecture 5: Adaptation to climate change: concepts and debates 2

Goal

We will build on the previous week's discussions and readings to analyze what adaptation really involves in theory and practice, and to make sense of all the challenges involved.

Readings

Vincent, K. 2007. Uncertainty in adaptive capacity and the importance of scale. *Global Environmental Change*, 17: 12–24

Eriksen, S. and Lind, J. 2009. Adaptation as a Political Process: Adjusting to Drought and Conflict in Kenya's Drylands. *Environmental Management* 43: 817–835.

Carr, E. 2008. Between structure and agency: Livelihoods and adaptation in Ghana's Central Region. *Global Environmental Change* 18: 689–699

Dessai, S. et al. 2009. Climate prediction: a limit to adaptation? In Patt, A. et al (eds.), *Assessing vulnerability to global environmental change: making research useful for adaptation decision-making and policy*. pp. 64-78. Earthscan: London.

Moser, S. 2009. Whether our levers are long enough and the fulcrum strong? Exploring the soft underbelly of adaptation decisions and actions. In Patt, A. et al (eds.), *Assessing vulnerability to global environmental change: making research useful for adaptation decision-making and policy*. pp. 313-334. Earthscan: London.

Assignment and preparation for lecture

Write an essay on the following question: can adaptation to climate change be practically achieved at multiple scales, given all the challenges? Discuss. The class discussion will be a deeper elaboration of the essay topic.

Lecture 6: Adaptation to climate change: evaluating NAPAs

Goal

Having discussed at length the challenges of developing adaptation policy, we will now evaluate existing National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) for various countries.

Readings

None assigned – you will have to do your own research (see below)

Assignment and preparation for lecture

You will carry out this assignment in groups of three. Each group will choose a different country that has a NAPA, available at:

http://unfccc.int/cooperation_support/least_developed_countries_portal/submitted_napas/items/4585.php

You will critically evaluate its design, with a view to improving it. To do this you must research your country thoroughly – please draw on other literature on poverty, justice, history, vulnerability, climate change, etc. in your country to inform your analysis. You can also look through the adaptation projects currently underway in your country:

http://unfccc.int/cooperation_support/least_developed_countries_portal/napa_project_database/items/4583.php.

Comment also on the limits and challenges you face in this exercise. In class, each group will give a 20 minute presentation on their country, followed by 10 minutes of questions and comments. I will try and organize a panel to give feedback.