

**The Necessity and Challenges of Taking a Climate Adaptation Approach to Global Development: A
Literature Analysis**

Hannah Axtell

College of Science, Northeastern University

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Prof. Nichola Minott

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Introduction

Climate change has become one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today, with impacts ranging from environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, to the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, and to the displacement of entire nations of people. The ramifications of human-induced climate destabilization are vast, widespread, and a threat to people of all walks of life. Nonetheless, there are groups of people that are currently and will continue to disproportionately bear the climate burden as the problem progresses. These more vulnerable demographics of people include but are not limited to countries of the Global South, Pacific Island Nations, coastal communities, elderly people, women, children, low-income people, as well as racial minorities.

Additionally due to the devastating impacts of climate change events like sea level rise, ocean acidification, and desertification, more frequently than ever, people in communities around the globe are being forced to abandon their livelihoods and uproot their families as a result of climatic conditions that threaten the persistence of human and ecosystem life. Taking a climate adaptation approach to global development is essential to the greater protection and preservation of specific at-risk communities and requires a greater investment in early warning systems, disaster risk reduction measures, nature-based solutions, and other forms of climate adaptation infrastructure. This literature analysis seeks to explore how a collection of three climate readings have influenced my perspective on the challenges of pursuing adaptation and development on an international stage and critique the author's respective ability to accurately evaluate the future with theoretical or policy alternatives to address the greater climate issue.

Naomi Klein and a Romanticized Approach to Global Governance

Unfortunately, climate change doesn't follow a political timeline. Because of this, global political collaborative measures to address the threats of impending climate disasters in vulnerable communities are often not fast-moving or ambitious enough. Naomi Klein, in her book "This Changes Everything:

Capitalism vs. The Climate,” argues that the current model of development and growth is unsustainable, and that a new approach is needed to address the challenges of climate change. She suggests that the current economic system, which prioritizes growth and profits over environmental protection and social justice, is incompatible with the needs of the planet. Instead, Klein advocates for a new economic system that prioritizes sustainability and resilience, and that takes into account the needs of communities affected by climate change: “we once again have the chance to advance policies that dramatically improve lives, close the gap between rich and poor, create huge numbers of good jobs, and reinvigorate democracy from the ground up” (Klein 2014, 10).

While the Klein piece has opened my eyes to the importance of looking at the climate crisis through an equity and justice lens, I found that it eventually transported me to a utopian land where achieving climate justice and restructuring the entire priority framework utilized by international decision-making authorities are realistic solutions to be implemented in a magnitude of different political, social, economic, and cultural landscapes. These, unfortunately, are achievements that I do not believe to be feasible as aggressive, short-term resolutions to the impacts of climate change. Similarly, the theoretical basis to Klein’s determinations about next steps developmentally are profound, inspiring, and should serve as grounding principles to strive for as an international community. However, I found the limitations of her piece to be founded in the slow-moving and corrupt nature of global governance. Meaning, the dynamic in which the nations who have the most economic and political bargaining power to enact meaningful change on a global scale are doing the very most to exacerbate the climate problem, and simultaneously, doing the very least to provide aid for the nations who currently bear the brunt of impact from their polluting behaviors is the overarching flaw I find in Klein’s approach to adaptation and development.

W. Neil Adger and a Lack of Emancipatory Climate Consideration

The topic of addressing the impacts of climate change in human societies around the globe raises a need for intentional, cooperative adaptation-centered efforts on an international scale. W. Neil Adger, in his article “Vulnerability,” argues that human societies are vulnerable to environmental changes, such as

climate change, and that this vulnerability varies across different regions and populations. And in order to address this issue, Adger suggests that adaptation and development efforts should be integrated to where new plans for development would be centered in reducing such vulnerability. Adger additionally asserts that addressing vulnerability requires a global approach as environmental changes are global in nature and their impacts are felt across borders.

W. Neil Adger's perspective on a global approach to adaptation and development has effectively expanded my view on the need to strategically target the interconnectedness of the social, economic, and political systems present around the globe. Even so, I fear that Adger's arguments for a reduction in vulnerability may be too focused on technical solutions while not placing enough emphasis on addressing the root causes of environmental problems, such as unsustainable consumption patterns and inadequate governance systems. I maintain that Adger's approach may perpetuate existing power dynamics and fail to address systemic issues of inequality and justice which are often the central determinants of whether vulnerable communities can be uplifted and empowered out of their existing disenfranchised and marginalized states. Because of this, I believe Adger's proposed motions for heightened accessibility to instruments of adaptation technology do not account for all members of the vulnerable populations. They would likely fail to provide avenues for minorities and the least powerful groups of people to be better connected to the newfound climate adaptation resources and protections, resulting in even worsened socioeconomic divides in global communities.

Roger Pielke, et al. and a Dismissal of a Sustainable Model for Transition

The need for widespread adaptation infrastructure is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted approach, utilizing the most recent and reliable scientific climate change projections to promote ambitious global cooperation. "Lifting the taboo on adaptation" by Roger Pielke, Jr, Gwyn Prins, Steve Rayner, and Daniel Sarewitz emphasizes that climate mitigation efforts are not able to keep up with the rate of carbon dioxide emissions and there is a need for far more aggressive adaptation to tackle this: "there is a timescale mismatch. Whatever actions ultimately lead to the decarbonization of the global energy system, it will be many decades before they have a discernible effect on the climate" (Pielke et al 2017, 597). The

authors argue that the impacts of climate change are already being felt and that adaptation should be given more attention and resources. Pelke et al also suggest that an elaborate network of policies should be put in place to facilitate and support the success of each adaptation effort.

The provided argument from the authors adequately addresses the requirement for a prioritization of large-scale adaptation infrastructure when tackling development projects. While, on the other hand, the proposed focus on adaptation alone has the potential to distract from efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and limit the extent of future climate change. Additionally, their efforts of adaptation may lead to a false sense of security and societies that have failed to sufficiently transition to more sustainable and resilient methods of resource consumption. This could lead to concerns of the effects of climate change worsening behind the scenes, all the while communities work on preparing for extreme weather events that, effectively, would be continuously growing in severity in the establishment of a somewhat never-ending cycle.

Conclusion

Through a global development lens, the countries of the Global North, i.e United States, Canada, Australia, etc., are considered ‘wealthier’ and ‘more developed’ nations. In addition, these countries are major contributing actors in the greenhouse gas emissions landscape and notorious for externalizing their role in exacerbating the climate crisis onto the ‘less developed’ and more vulnerable nations of the Global South. This dynamic of inequity places the weight of the climate crisis onto nations that do not have the proper political and economic resources in which to have an adequately protective response regarding the health of their ecosystems and people. Therefore, there is a demand to address their vulnerability on an international stage and coordinate the funding and development policy change that will allow affected nations to properly adapt to the climate dangers that lie ahead.

My newfound understanding on the hurdles to overcome when pursuing adaptation and development measures has largely been impacted by the strong arguments of Naomi Klein in her book “This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate,” W. Neil Adger in his “Vulnerability” piece, as well as the arguments proposed in Roger Pielke et al.’s “Lifting the taboo on adaptation.” I appreciate the

reframing of perspective the Klein work provided for me on the greater topic of adaptation, regardless of my criticism that they would appear to be entirely too optimistic to what would be possible given the historical precedence of a seeming international inability to achieve large-scale meaningful change. I found Adger's proposal not entirely comprehensive yet enlightening to the importance of integrated adaptation and development efforts on a global scale. And lastly, I considered the Pielke et al piece to be impactful in its expression of the ferocity of the climate issue and the urgency to accelerate its ability to be confronted despite it lacking the scope to properly define the factors of implementation that would entirely eradicate the, so to speak, climate change "pandemic."

The critiques present in this literature analysis work to expose the ways in which the three works each ultimately fall short in their respective abilities to effectively provide solutions for the climate impacts of the future. The authors differ in their unique approach to supporting the confrontation of the impacts of climate change and increased prioritization of climate adaptation measures in global development. Nonetheless, they each acknowledge that there is a need for greater political will and commitment to addressing the challenges of climate change, as well as increased collaboration between governments, civil society, and the private sector.

Works Cited

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