

Political Ecology of Community-Based Adaptation

Social and Political Aspects in Measuring Adaptive Capacity of Community to Climate Change in the Ethiopian Highlands

Jin-ho CHUNG (PhD Candidate, University College London)
jinho.chung.10@ucl.ac.uk



Introduction

My research sets out to analyse how two different areas in the Ethiopian highlands are responding to the need for adaptation to climate change by studying the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP). Impacts of climate change in the highlands are non-linear and multidimensional in terms of both social and ecological aspects. Adaptation measures therefore need to be devised in a way to build adaptive capacity of community in a holistic sense through examining various components of socio-ecological systems rather than reviewing impacts that have not yet come. In both locations, CBA projects have been prioritised, but it is argued that this approach has not been effectively theorised, relying instead on field experience to develop their ideas.

Research Questions

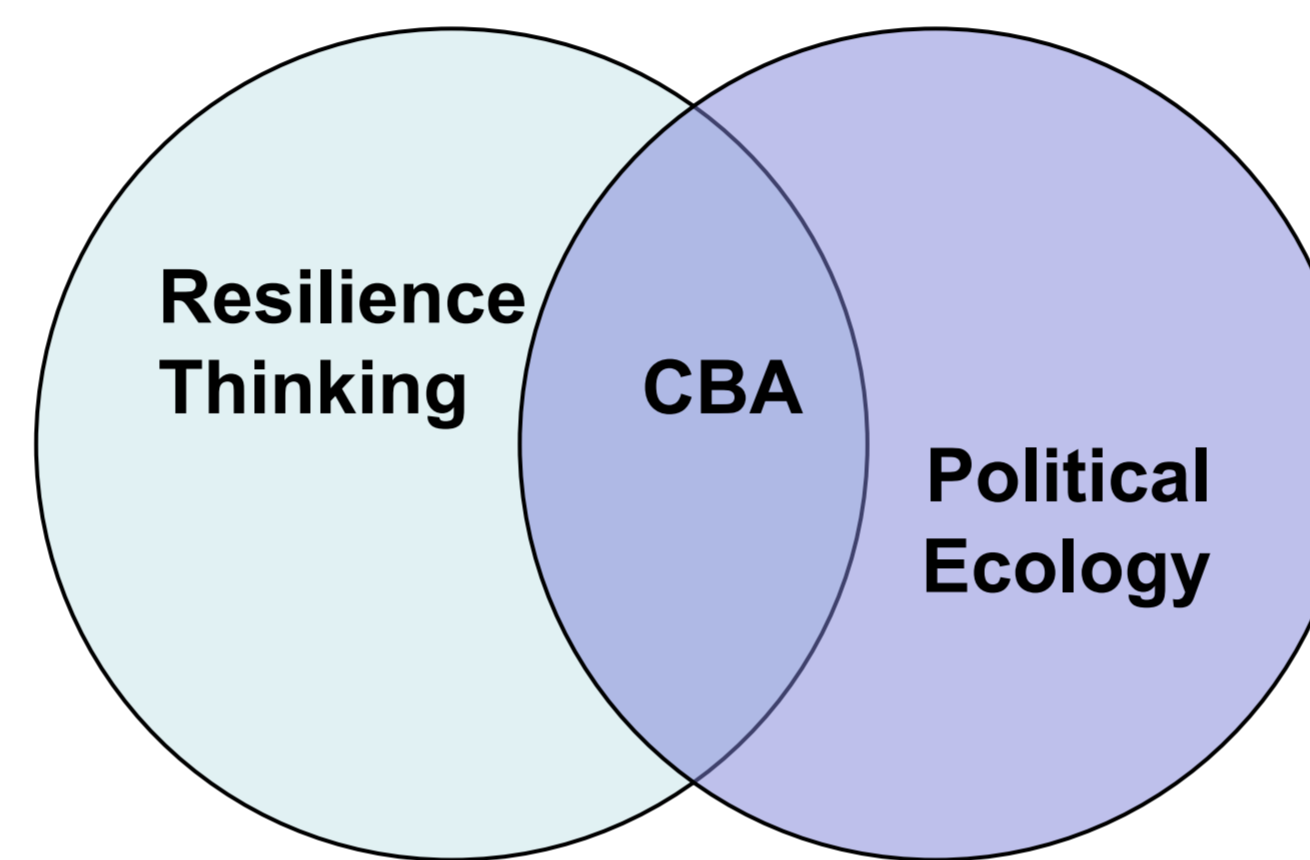
The overarching question that frames this research is,

To what extent do social and political structures of community shape the building of adaptive capacity in CBA projects?

Through scrutinising this question, it aims to answer the central questions of CBA:

To what extent does the current practice of CBA empower local communities? Do all members of communities benefit equally?

Theory



Map of Ethiopia



Methodology

- Fieldwork Period: September 2013 – June 2014
- Participant Observation, In-Depth (Semi-structured) Interview and the collection of written materials

Research Findings

- The Politics of Knowledge, Scale and Representation: Understanding of climate change is discursively constructed; The definition of community, in particular with regard to scale, is diverse; Gender, wealth, education level, age and social status play a great role in decision-making process of CBA.
- A sheer autonomy of the village from the local government is often difficult to achieve during the implementation of CBA. Ethiopia has complex and layered socio-political structures in society. These structures have been constructed throughout a history of village and are still dynamically transforming. The particular characteristics that are deeply embedded in the society affect the implementation process of CBA (e.g. neo-patrimonialism, long-standing authoritarian governance systems, nepotism, top-down and centralised administrative bureaucracy).
- The Relevance of Politics: CBA projects redefine the power geometry of actors and institutions within and outside communities (and often vice versa) simultaneously.

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