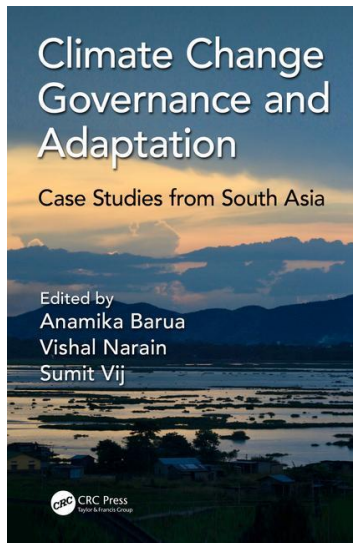BOOK REVIEW

Climate Change Adaptation in the Global South

Chandni Singh *

Anamika Barua, Vishal Narain and Sumit Vij, eds. 2019. *Climate Change Governance and Adaptation: Case studies from South Asia.* Boca Raton: CRC Press, ISBN: 9781138054509, pp. 187, GBP 110 (Hardbound).

In 2019, South Asia experienced severe floods, record-breaking heatwaves, increasing rainfall variability, and the rapid melting of glaciers. Climate change is undoubtedly exacerbating these extreme events and there are clear signals that such impacts will intensify in the future (IPCC 2018), especially in parts of South Asia. As the poor and most vulnerable cope with and prepare for such a heightened risk regime, climate change adaptation becomes a critical tool in the suite of actions that governments and exposed populations can undertake. In *Climate Change Governance and Adaptation: Case Studies from South Asia* editors Anamika Barua, Vishal Narain, and Sumit Vij offer us a rich set of case studies examining how climate adaptation is implemented and governed across South Asian countries. They draw on knowledge of researchers and practitioners working across a spectrum of sectors to highlight how climate change is not only "redefining the roles of

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different actors in governance processes" (p. ix) but also necessitating "adaptive governance to deal with increased uncertainty and risk associated with future impacts" (p. 93).

The book is divided into three sections: 1) climate change governance and societal challenges, 2) adaptation through effective governance, and 3) climate change governance at national/regional scales. Under each section, individual chapters present case studies, and I will discuss a few illustrative ones to give a sense of the depth and breadth of the topics that are covered in the book.

The literature on perceptions of climate change and variability has burgeoned since 2010 but often stops at recording perceptions of changes in temperature, rainfall, and extreme events. The more challenging question that seems to be left out is — how these everyday lived perceptions and experiences can enable adaptation for decision-making? Chapters 2 and 3, in fact, address this gap by drawing on data from Uttarakhand and Nepal respectively, to explore how meanings that people associate with environmental change[1] can then turn such bottom-up meaning-making into improved local participation and inclusive adaptation action.

In Chapter 3, Floriane Clement focuses on forms of natural governance in the *terai* (lowland plains) of Nepal and discusses to what extent deliberative governance can open spaces where local concerns and national priorities around resource governance, risk management, and adaptation can come together. Using the lenses of 'fairness' and 'competence' to gauge the quality of deliberative processes, Clement examines how and why different actors across scales form coalitions as a way to represent their needs and aspirations. The initial results from this essay suggest promise, as she finds that 'even within an unequal public sphere, deliberation can support the opening up of discourses towards…shared understandings of farmers…vulnerabilities' (p. 46). Importantly, the case study demonstrates how current national climate change policies fail to recognise local experiences of climate change and that creating spaces to allow for different 'storylines' of adaptation are critical to inclusive action.

It is posited that a significant outcome of climate change in South Asia will be increased migration (Rigaud et al. 2018). In an exceptionally well-argued chapter, Anne Wesselink et al. (Chapter 5) discuss the critical and often contentious issue of climate-induced migration with empirical examples from Bangladesh. They chart the conceptual development of climate-

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[1] Broader term which encapsulates natural resource degradation and climate variability.

induced migration and highlight the place of Bangladesh in this literature as 'a laboratory of sorts, in which a series of national-level strategic plans, projects, programmes, trust funds and financing schemes are being designed and tested…' (p. 78). Synthesising the burgeoning empirical literature on climate and migration from Bangladesh, they demonstrate how discourses on migration within the national government and international donor community tend to remain simplistic and blind to the non-climatic drivers of migration such as land grabs and unequal power. Recognising the multiple drivers of migration is the first step to inclusive adaptation planning and implementation; and the authors end with the concept of 'phronesis' (p. 83) to act as a guiding principle for effective adaptation. Phronesis, an Aristotelian term, is defined as practical wisdom, can help reorient climate migration discussions from 'what is true' to 'what is good' (p. 83). Perhaps, this discussion on what good or effective adaptation might look like is an important normative shift for adaptation researchers and practitioners alike.

While the book focuses on climate adaptation, in Chapter 8, Joyashree Roy et al. turn to governing climate mitigation actions. A sort of misfit at first glance, the chapter is an important reading for climate researchers examining mitigation and adaptation synergies. Using the concept of 'vertical integration' (p. 139), the authors explore how national governments are interpreting global mitigation targets (e.g. reducing global average temperature to well below 2°C) and how interpretations percolate to inform state action plans, industrial emissions norms, and finally, individual behaviours. Citing examples from India such as incentivising solar e-rickshaws and diversifying the energy mix to include bioenergy, they find that India's strong fiscal federalism does not always translate into effective vertical alignment of climate mitigation actions. Beyond technology transfer, they argue, transformative changes are required that encompass scientific, social, economic, and institutional realities that national and state governments are often compelled to operate within.

Overall, *Climate Change Governance and Adaptation: Case Studies from South Asia* is an important book with rich empirical examples of adaptation governance. I, however, think that an opportunity to provide a concluding chapter has been missed. A chapter that the authors could have used for tying the different cases together and synthesising the key findings that could then inform a transformative agenda for climate governance. However, by showing the importance of local dynamics and realities in shaping adaptation processes and outcomes, the book makes an important contribution and will be a valuable reading for students and researchers in

natural resource management, climate change adaptation, and development studies.

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