

A Missed Opportunity for Transformation? – An Analysis of Official Climate Change Discourse and Adaptation Strategy in Nepal

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Despite the highly political process of international climate change negotiations, most efforts in climate change adaptation assume an apolitical, technical policy process (Tanner and Alloche, 2011). The paper examines the different climate justice discourses as well as critical approaches to climate change adaptation, followed by a case study of Nepal, to examine their translation into its national and sub-national policy framework. I conducted qualitative analysis on eight major climate-change related documents by the country, chosen based on availability online, language, and their broader scope of applicability. The result shows that Nepal has adhered to the ‘vulnerability’ and ‘transition’ discourses, which serve as important tools to advocate for support from the international climate change regime. Driven primarily by international processes and guidelines, the climate change policies and documents in Nepal project a heavily technocratic approach with little socio-cultural considerations. Vulnerability is understood as a static property and assessed based on sectors and geographic area, while adaptation is understood as series of actions to be implemented. Overall, the policies demonstrate an apparent lack of political ecology and anthropological perspectives, with the risk of perpetuating the existing systemic ills, as well as impeding imaginaries to pursue more radical socio-political and cultural change as effective adaptation measures.

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