



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

Climate Risk Management

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/crm

Review

Making sense of climate change risks and responses at the community level: A cultural-political lens



Ainka A. Granderson*

University of Melbourne, Department of Resource Management and Geography, 221 Bouverie Street, Parkville, Victoria 3010, Australia
CSIRO Climate Adaptation Flagship, Graham Road, Highett, Victoria 3190, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 2 June 2014

Keywords:

Climate change
Risk
Response
Culture
Politics
Community level

ABSTRACT

How to better assess, communicate and respond to risks from climate change at the community level have emerged as key questions within climate risk management. Recent research to address these questions centres largely on psychological factors, exploring how cognition and emotion lead to biases in risk assessment. Yet, making sense of climate change and its responses at the community level demands attention to the cultural and political processes that shape how risk is conceived, prioritized and managed. I review the emergent literature on risk perceptions and responses to climate change using a cultural-political lens. This lens highlights how knowledge, meaning and power are produced and negotiated across multiple stakeholders at the community level. It draws attention to the different ways of constructing climate change risks and suggests an array of responses at the community level. It further illustrates how different constructions of risk intersect with agency and power to shape the capacity for response and collective action. What matters are whose constructions of risk, and whose responses, count in decision-making. I argue for greater engagement with the interpretive social sciences in research, practice and policy. The interpretive social sciences offer theories and tools for capturing and problematising the ways of knowing, sense-making and mobilising around risks from climate change. I also highlight the importance of participatory approaches in incorporating the multiplicity of interests at the community level into climate risk management in fair, transparent and culturally appropriate ways.

© 2014 The Author. Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 56 |
| (De)constructing climate change risks at the community level | 56 |
| Lived experiences of risk | 57 |
| Meanings of risk | 58 |
| Enabling community-level responses to climate change risks | 60 |
| Capacity for response | 60 |
| Towards collective action | 61 |

* Address: University of Melbourne, Department of Resource Management and Geography, 221 Bouverie Street, Parkville, Victoria 3010, Australia. Tel.: +61 3 8344 9308.

E-mail address: ainkag@student.unimelb.edu.au

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.crm.2014.05.003>

2212-0963/© 2014 The Author. Published by Elsevier B.V.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>).

| | |
|------------------------|----|
| Conclusion | 61 |
| Acknowledgements | 62 |
| References | 62 |

Introduction

“Climate change is at once a reality, an agenda, a problem, a context, a narrative and a discourse. . . This shifts the attention of scholarly enquiry from the ontology of climate change, in which proof of its existence is the goal, to epistemologies of climate change which prioritise not only what is known but how it is known, remembered, experienced, embodied and practiced” (Geoghegan and Leyson, 2012, p. 57)

In this quote Geoghegan and Leyson (2012), p. 57 argue that analysing the social dimensions of climate change matters as much as scientific analysis. This recognition raises key questions about how we understand, communicate and respond to risks from climate change at the community level within climate risk management. Particularly as policy makers, donors and practitioners show increasing interest in community-oriented approaches recognising that climate impacts are locally experienced, implementation must be tailored to context, and that top-down approaches are unlikely to succeed (Ayers and Forsyth, 2009; Dodman and Mitlin, 2011). Recent research to address these questions centres largely on psychological factors, exploring how cognition and emotion lead to systematic biases in individuals' and groups' appraisals of risks, self-efficacy, and the benefits and costs of action (Grothmann and Patt, 2005; Breakwell, 2010; Reser and Swim, 2011; Swim et al., 2011). This provides only part of the answer however. Cultural and political factors are also critical in understanding why communities perceive and respond to climate change risks in particular ways but remain relatively unexamined (Pidgeon and Butler, 2009; Adger et al., 2012).

I review the growing literature on risk perceptions and responses to climate change at the community level and argue for greater critical engagement with its cultural and political dimensions. I draw on work in the interpretive social sciences, including anthropology, critical geography, political ecology and sociology. The interpretive social sciences offer valuable insights and tools for capturing and problematising the ways of knowing, sense-making and mobilising around the risks posed by climate change (Batterbury, 2008; Brace and Geoghegan, 2011; Jasanoff, 2010; Crate, 2011). I draw especially on social theories of risk (e.g. Douglas and Wildavsky, 1982; Beck, 1992; O'Malley, 2004; Dean, 1999) and environmental change (e.g. Hewitt, 1983; Hannigan, 1995; Castree and Braun, 2001) that illustrate risk as a collective construct. Risk is not just a ‘thing’ to be calculated based on the likelihood and consequences associated with a future event. As Horlick-Jones (1998), p. 80 argues, “the identification and assessment of risk is both a human and a social activity and, as such, is concerned with the production of meaning and a shared understanding of reality”. This conceptualisation necessitates a focus on culture (how shared meanings and boundaries of difference are defined) and politics (how particular actors, ideas and practices gain traction) in understanding how risk is conceived, prioritized and managed.

Applying a cultural-political lens magnifies the need to examine how knowledge, meaning and power are produced and negotiated in relation to climate change risks. Attention must be paid to the ways in which communities define their shared experience, identity, values, and their way of life. The plurality and politics of knowledge involved is also key. There are different ways of knowing and interpreting climate change risks that suggest an array of responses and policies. Different interpretations implicitly empower some as experts while excluding other knowledges and practices (Pidgeon and Butler, 2009; Jasanoff, 2010; Hulme, 2008). What particular knowledge claims, values and strategies dominate risk decisions, why and how these are linked to powerful interests must be taken into account.

Recognising this plurality of meanings and politics of knowledge is particularly crucial in addressing climate change risks at the community level. Climate science and model projections can only offer a rough guide for localised actions at present (Desai et al., 2009; Ensor, 2011). While climate modelling can predict average changes in temperature and sea level rise with reasonable confidence, there is much uncertainty around projections in rainfall, ocean acidification and extreme weather events at specific localities (Desai et al., 2009; Stainforth et al., 2007; Wilby et al., 2009). Different downscaled projections for a locality may even be contradictory. For example, where rainfall is projected to increase in one climate model and to decrease in another. How climate change might impact on the weather and environment, and the best ways of knowing and responding to these risks, is potentially open to greater debate at the community scale than at larger scales where model projections are more robust.

(De)constructing climate change risks at the community level

I explore firstly how climate change risks are constructed through lived experience and symbolic/discursive means at the community level using a cultural-political lens. This approach builds on recent work highlighting climate change and its risks as material and symbolic phenomena (e.g. Adger et al., 2011; Farbotko and Lazrus, 2012; Rebotier, 2012). Climate change presents an opportunity and challenge for communities and their livelihoods through its very real and tangible effects on rainfall, temperature, the timing of seasons, and distribution of biodiversity and ecosystem services. Equally important

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1051282>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1051282>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)