

REPORT ON THE MASTER THESIS

IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Environmental Refugees, The XXI Century Imperative Challenge
Author of the thesis:	Marisa Alves Pereira
Referee (incl. titles):	Dr Janusz Salamon, Ph.D.

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED:

CATEGORY	POINTS
<i>Theoretical background</i>	16
<i>Contribution</i>	16
<i>Methods</i>	15
<i>Literature</i>	19
<i>Manuscript form</i>	15
TOTAL POINTS	81
The proposed grade (1-2-3-4)	1

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings.

1) Theoretical background.

The Author of the thesis addresses the problem of the millions of displaced persons who are forced to leave their natural habitat by negative natural disasters (apparently resulting from the climatic changes, such as floods, droughts, soil erosion, etc.), or are ousted from their natural habitat by governments attempting realization of environmental development programmes aimed at countering the climate change and some other negative environmental tendencies.

The Author addresses all the relevant issues in a convincing way and with a sufficient awareness of the broader theoretical background. All the relevant theoretical concepts that need to be taken into account while discussing the environmental challenges seem to be in place and the theoretical framework of the thesis matches the objectives of the thesis as formulated by the Author.

The Author is well aware of the distinctions which need to be kept in mind when analysing the challenges of the domestic policies on one hand (relevant to the case of the displacement resulting from governmental development programmes) and the challenges of transnational policies on the other (relevant to the case of displacement resulting from global climate changes).

What I missed while reading the initial sections of the thesis was defining clearly right from the start these two kinds of displacement (mentioned above), because their nature is significantly different, although in the final analysis environmental factors are at the root of both of these social ills. For one thing, the term “refugee” seems less appropriate when referring to persons displaced as a result of a decision of a government which attempts to build a dam. Reading the initial sections of the thesis a reader waits impatiently for acknowledgment of both the similarities and differences in the situation of these two kinds of displaced persons and ultimately this distinctions are made by the Author, though perhaps not sufficiently explicitly and at a latter stage.

2) Contribution.

The task of addressing the problem of the “environmental refugees” was an ambitious one, not just because the urgency of the problem has been recognized only recently, but also because of the practical nature of the problem which calls for evaluation of concrete policy solutions. It seems to me that the evaluation of various policy solutions – made, for example, in the context of two well contrasted case studies analysing relevant policies of Bangladesh and Eritrea – constitutes the main distinct added value of the thesis relative to knowledge of a university-educated person familiar with the topic. In the process of analysis of the policy solutions the Author makes a number of original observations and comments demonstrating her ability of critical thinking and her conclusions regarding policy implications are well founded.

3) Methods.

The methodological aspect of the thesis does not leave too much to be desired. As the Author puts it, “the methodology used is based on statistical data analysis and two case studies.” Perhaps the methods employed might be described in somewhat greater detail showing greater methodological self-awareness of the Author. Having said that, the main working hypothesis are clearly stated and then convincingly tested. The main thesis of the work is comprehensively analysed and argued. The defence of the main thesis takes a form of a sustained cumulative argument and the thesis is free of trivial or irrelevant detours off the main line of reasoning, so that the argumentative strategy is effective leaving the reader convinced that the problem of environmental refugees calls for significant changes in the way governments and international organizations approach the problem of environmental refugees and other negative consequences of climate change and environmental development programmes.

4) Literature.

The thesis demonstrates the Author’s adequate understanding and command of the recent literature. In fact, the good grasp and the effective use of the most important publications devoted to this relatively new subject of scholarly debate constitutes one of the chief strengths of the thesis. Also the effective way the Author uses various statistical data related to the issues under consideration is satisfactory. While using many relevant sources available in an electronic form, the Author refrains from making references to unscholarly or substandard Internet resources. It may also be said that the bibliography is an extensive one for a master thesis, especially given that the Author uses the bibliographical resources effectively.

5) Manuscript form.

The structure of the thesis is clear, logical and matches well its objectives.
The style of references and the format of quotations, graphs and tables is consistent.
The thesis is well written and easily readable, though not free of occasional stylistic lapses.

To sum up, I’m happy to confirm that the Author achieved sufficient number of the objectives to allow me to recommend the thesis for defence.

DATE OF EVALUATION: 23-01-2013

Referee Signature