Qeios

Peer Review

Review of: "The Bearing of the Less: Fulfilling Carbon Neutrality and the National Political Economy in Virachey National Park, Cambodia"

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The manuscript addresses an important and timely topic with value for cases outside Cambodia. However, there need to be major revisions to make this ready for scholarly audiences. My comments are as follows:

1) The thesis/argument is given in the abstract but not in the Introduction. There needs to be a clear statement of 1-2 sentences of the thesis/argument in the Introduction so that the purpose of the analysis is clear to readers.

2) The Introduction is much too long and would be better if it were 2-3 pages that A) explains to readers that there are problems at Virachey National Park affecting Indigenous communities; B) states the thesis/argument; and C) gives a brief outline of the sections in the paper and the steps in logic they fulfill in support of the thesis/argument. The rest of what is in the Introduction is better moved to a "Background" section.

3) There is a need for a Background section for readers unfamiliar with Cambodia, Indigenous peoples in Cambodia, or Virachey National Park. The Background section should be 2-4 pages covering 2 subsections: A) a 1st subsection that provides a summary historical overview of the origins of national parks in Cambodia and turns to a historical overview of Virachey National Park; and B) a 2nd subsection that provides a concise review of the historical evolution of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous rights in Cambodia, and turns to a summary of the status of Indigenous peoples at Virachey National Park.

4) The Research Methodology section should come after the Background.

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5) The section currently entitled “Local Governance on Conservation versus the Culture of Growth” needs to be reorganized into a clearer literature review and theoretical framework statement. I would suggest organizing the section into 2 subsections: A) a 1st subsection that focuses on the existing literature that studies the displacement of Indigenous peoples caused by conservation programs, which highlights the portion of the aforementioned literature related to Cambodia, and also explains how the current paper adds to/complements such literature; and B) a 2nd subsection that directs attention to the concept of “Bearing the Less,” with a summary of literature that presents the cases that would fall under that concept, finishing with a distillation of the aforementioned literature into a working definition that will then be applied to the Indigenous communities at Virachey National Park.

6) Following the above, it becomes a much clearer logical step to go to the section currently entitled “The Agonised Reality: the VNP as Space of Struggle for Indigenous Peoples?” While the section heading can remain the same, it would help to have a more clear direction for the analysis--currently, it meanders (roams) as a descriptive summary of factual information with no clear purpose of analysis. It is possible to provide such purpose by rewriting the section so that all of the current information is more clearly presented as illustrating/fulfilling the particular definition of “Bearing the Less.” The section could then proceed to provide analysis by explaining how the particular form of “Bearing the Less” by Indigenous communities at VNP provides lessons for the literature review/theoretical framework proposed in 5) above.

7) The title mentions carbon neutrality and national political economy, but the analysis seems to be more about the displacement of Indigenous peoples caused by the expansion of VNP. I would suggest changing the title for greater consistency with the analysis (i.e., remove the words “carbon neutrality” and “national political economy”).

8) There are awkward grammatical parts throughout the paper text. I would suggest having it reviewed by a native English speaker.

Declarations

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.