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Reaction Paper

In "Assessing urban vulnerability and social adaptation to risk", Pelling argues that promoting the adaptive potential of community as well as ensuring the risk-averse regulation by government can be critical to confront natural disasters. He draws a case study of Los Manguitos to elaborate how effectively they coped with their vulnerability as a low-income settlement by bridging and bonding capital, which consequently lead to promote their adaptive potential. Although there were several weaknesses such as lack of cooperation between each CBO and tension among Government, CBOs, and external NGOs, they successfully mitigated the damage mobilizing their social capital. However, I doubt whether they have an inherent advantage to bridge capital with regard to their ethnicity. It was not clearly argued that how the outcome would alter, if the disaster happened in more heterogeneous setting, where individualism of every dweller is highly valued rather than social cohesion, and then how the adaptive potential could be strengthened.

In "The Vulnerability of Cities", unlike the previous article Pelling spends more energy to observe economic factors that determine individual vulnerability rather than social capital that contributes to enhance the adaptive potential. In the two examples he clearly embodied the Asset livelihood Approach by showing how cruelly poverty deteriorates one's recovery and resilience throughout the sequential stresses. Though he was silent on the point, "How can we implement the adaptation potential in given miserable cases?". It might be true that no potential can be built up unless absolute poverty is ameliorated. This gives International community an incentive to provide appropriate support so that the underprivileged people can break their vicious circle of poverty and vulnerability. After this kick-off, every level of people, i.e. individual, community, municipality, and state could proceed to the comprehensive and cooperative hazard mitigation investments mentioned in the first article.

In "From everyday hazards to disasters: the accumulation of risk in urban areas", authors redefine "disaster" as a concept overarching from a catastrophe to daily hazardous incidents in the context of rapid urbanization in Africa to elaborate how effectively we can implement risk reduction strategies. This concept could represent actual damage that each community suffers, whereas international community tends to pour their resource more to a sharp and acute "disaster" than a dull and chronic but serious one. They also show the importance of locally driven "disaster" assessment and risk reduction. Regarding its ability to practice in a culturally sensitive manner and potential to enhance government's motivation for a risk-averse strategy, I don't have any disagreement; however, it should not render a government any excuses to avoid its accountability on the citizens.