

### **Brief summary of the articles**

*Assessing urban vulnerability and social adaptation to risk* by Pelling introduces the concept of 'adaptive potential' which offers a framework of broadening the analysis of risk to include the examination of local social assets. Through presenting this concept, the author aims to examine the way in which social and political power in the city shapes access to the resources with which local actors can enhance their resilience to environmental risk. The case study of Santo Domingo illustrates that local actors possess the capacity of responding to marginalizing-social structures that put them in environmental risk.

Pelling reveals the social dimensions of vulnerability in *The Vulnerability of Cities, Social Vulnerability in the City* to figure out what makes individuals more or less prone to the negative impacts of environmental shocks and what shapes their resilience for the future environmental risks. According to an asset livelihood approach, the access to economic, social, political, physical and environmental assets would determine the susceptibility of individuals to environmental risk. In this context, the asset profile as well as their coping capacities shape the likelihood of their being exposed to negative impacts of environmental disasters. In the case of economic poverty where financial and physical assets are limited, social and political assets may provide critical levers for at-risk people to mitigate their vulnerability, and the concept of adaptive potential can describe actions that utilize social and political assets to enhance local resilience.

Urban populations face a wide range of risks: however, neither urban specialist nor disaster agencies have worked enough to identify and act on the urban processes that cause the accumulation of disaster risks in urban areas. *From everyday hazards to disasters: the accumulation of risk in urban areas* highlights the underestimation of the number and scale of urban disasters and the lack of attention to the role of urban governance. It stresses the need for understanding of risk that encompasses events ranging from daily hazards to disasters and the linkage between them. Particularly, identifying and acting on risks from small disasters can actually reduce risks from larger ones.

### **My reactions to these articles**

I agree with Pelling about the idea of adaptive potential. As the author points out, one of key challenges in building it up is the use of external agents to facilitate linkages and partnership between different actors. The introduction of outsiders into local contexts, however, may create dependency and a shift in support from local organizations, therefore the next step is to set up priority in short and long term for these external agents and to develop an exit-strategy to minimize negative impacts.

Also, I believe that it is crucial to direct donors' attention to the importance of risk-reducing projects. As Bull-Kamananga et al point out, donors like clear-cut, quantifiable projects which they can demonstrate the effectiveness of their funding. The reorientation of aid flow entails challenges to justify it but it is necessary to develop strategies in order to motivate them toward funding these projects.