

When Amartya Sen's seminal writing on entitlements in the book *Poverty and Famines* was released in 1981, it challenged the long accepted notion that hunger and famine is brought about by drought. Sen argued that "the rapid devaluing of individual or household productive capacities, relative to the cost of staple foods, resulted in the denial of access to food and so increased the vulnerability to malnutrition and famine" rather than a result of production failure due to drought. Sen's entitlement theory broke the well-accepted notion of causality between drought (being the disaster or the causative agent) and famine and hunger by brining forth the concept that some people are more vulnerable than others.

Mark Pelling in his work expands Sen's notion of entitlement to disasters as he examines the underlying causes of vulnerability to them. In this regard, he brings forward the notion of an adaptive potential that broadens the framework in analyzing risk to include social assets, particularly local and indigenous ones. His description here of social assets can be likened in some way to Sen's entitlements but expands it to not only a relationship between people and goods or products but also the connection of people with other people hence social assets. In this regard, Pelling makes a case that indeed, as exemplified by the case of Santo Domingo, local and non-state actors have the capacity to address the different social structures that make them vulnerable to disasters. He then clarifies that these responses may take different forms and at times may not even be conscious or direct actions to reduce vulnerability. Nevertheless, these actions maintain or create local social capital that in turn adds to the adoptive potential of the community. He, thus, agrees with current trend in policy that prioritizes the participation of local actors in disaster responses but reiterates that formal institutions such as the government/state should still be part of the whole process. Pelling's and Sen's work underscores the need to be very critical of current approaches to disaster response and mitigation that often only focus on and address the symptoms/effects and proximate causes and lose sight of the underlying causes and problems. Also, they emphasize the need to be sensitive to existing and latent local capacities and assets so as to be able to encourage their use either by preventing the factors that weaken or undermine them or creating the environment by which they are strengthened and potentiated.

In another work, Pelling asks the question of whether or not natural disasters are indeed natural. Here, he shows through varied examples the human and social dimensions of disasters and how something that occurs naturally becomes "unnatural" due to human factors and social structures. Also, he traces the roots of the physicalist view of disasters from the human ecology approach that defined disasters as "those elements of the physical environment harmful to man and caused by forces extraneous to him." Today, this attribution of the physicalist view to human ecology may not necessarily hold true. Human ecology has expanded and grown a lot through the years and has seen man as merely a small component of a bigger ecology of both living and non-living creatures and also social, economic cultural and political institutions and structures (as such the fields of social, political, anthropological ecology, etc.). Thus, an ecological approach would actually encompass a lot of the human aspects of disasters as well as the social, economic, cultural and political dimensions. Pelling's work and also the ecological approach to disasters emphasize one thing: that to fully be able to understand and address disasters, a holistic and broad framework is needed to be able to capture in full the interconnections and the underlying factors that cause, perpetuate and mitigate them.