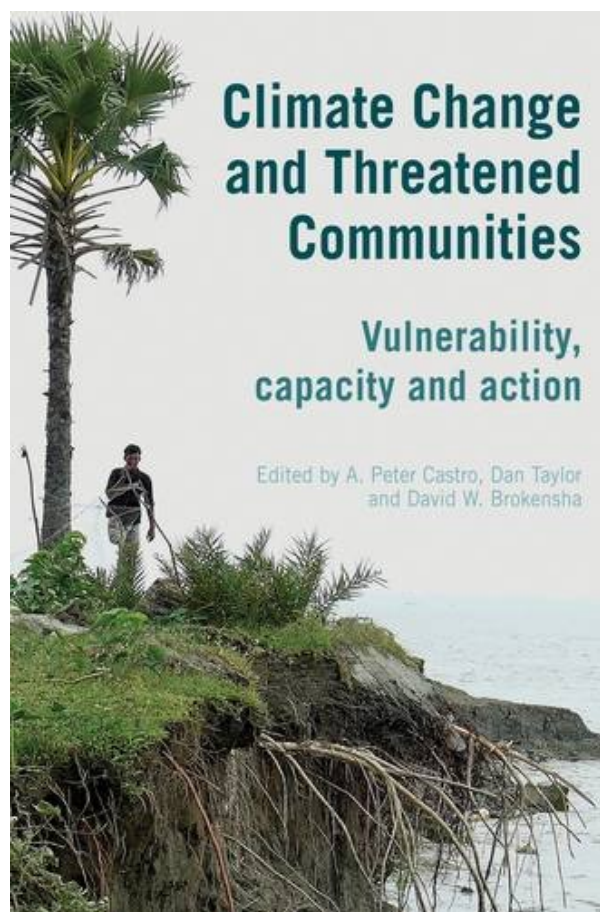
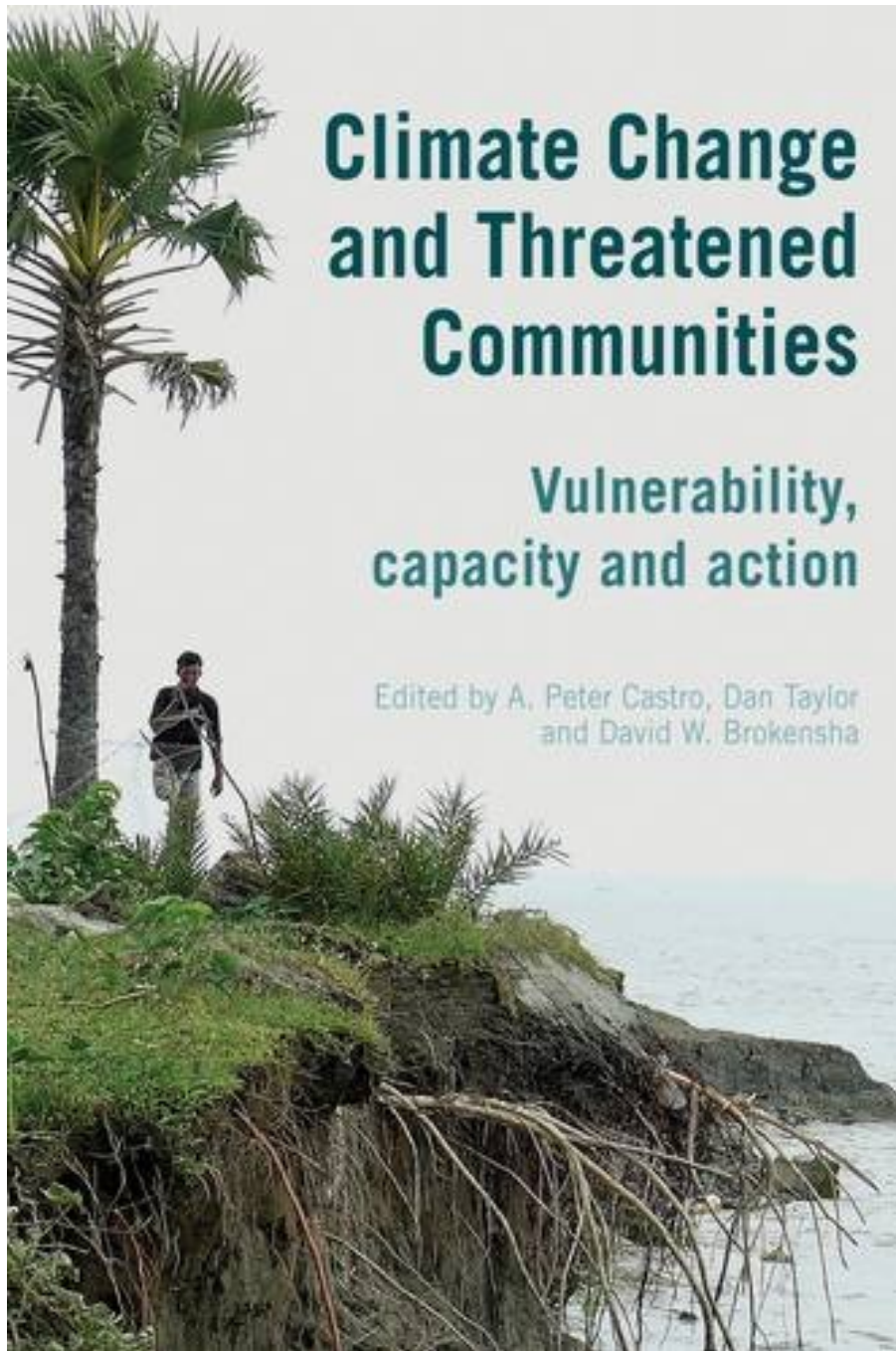


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Climate Change and Threatened Communities

Vulnerability,
capacity and action

Edited by A. Peter Castro, Dan Taylor
and David W. Brokensha

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Review

"This book demonstrates powerfully the dynamism of indigenous knowledge and of communities' capacities for adaptation." (Robert Chambers)

"These 15 excellent anthropological case studies (plus introduction and conclusion) on climate change and diverse responses from communities in Africa, and the Americas utilize a variety of methodologies, ranging from standard ethnographic approaches and ethno-ecological investigations of localized knowledge, perception, and innovation to an archaeological examination of Mayan farming practices. The researchers emphasize the knowledge, capacities, interests, rights, agency, and adaptability of threatened populations of farmers, herders, fishers, and foragers under conditions resulting from extreme and unpredictable weather, drought, floods, and population shifts. In addition to documenting environmental changes faced by communities at risk the authors point out that the people who are the most vulnerable are generally those least responsible for their present circumstances. Indeed environmental difficulties are not simply consequences of climate change, but also are exacerbated by policies that have favored market liberalization, technological determinism, and structural inequality, resulting in increased socioeconomic injustice and greater cultural marginalization. A more participatory approach, rather than top-down policies that have typified most efforts to integrate local populations into development efforts, may provide greater opportunities for recognizing local innovativeness and expanding the possibility that others may learn valuable lessons from threatened communities." (B. Tavakolian, Emeritus, Denison University Choice)

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Global climate change disproportionately affects rural people and indigenous groups, but their rights, knowledge, and interests concerning it are generally unacknowledged. Shifts in precipitation, cloud cover, temperature, and other climatic patterns alter their livelihood pursuits and cultural landscapes, accentuating their existing social and economic marginalization. This book argues that planners and researchers of climate change mitigation and adaptation must take into account the knowledge and capacity of rural people, and engage them as active participants in the design and governance of interventions, not as a matter of courtesy, but because it is their right. Furthermore, inclusion of local communities in genuine partnership will likely make climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts more effective.

Climate Change and Threatened Communities presents 15 case studies and a variety of approaches to document the capacities and constraints to be encountered among communities facing changing climates in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Canada, Ecuador, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Italy, Malawi, Mexico, Mozambique, Peru, South Africa, Sudan, United States, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe. It explores human interactions in environments ranging from subarctic tundra to equatorial rain forest, from oceanic lagoons to inland mountains. Chapters investigate issues such as social vulnerability to climatic uncertainty, shifts in livelihood practices, local perceptions of climatic change, and the potential and limitations of the United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries. Authors consider the potential of archaeology, phenomenology, controlled comparisons, historical analysis, gender analysis and other analytical approaches to shed light on the experiences of communities and their members.

This book is important reading for policy makers, academics, and students in the fields of climate change adaptation, anthropology and development studies, as well as more general readers.

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