ISLANDS OF RISK, ISLANDS OF HOPE

An increasing number of researchers, policy makers, and practitioners are dealing with and highlighting the vulnerabilities, risks and disasters for island cultures and in island contexts (eg CHOGM, 2005; Lewis, 1999; Haynes et al, 2005; Méheux et al, 2007; Pelling and Uitto, 2001; *Natural Resources Forum* v31 n2, May 2007; UNISDR, 2005). A website has also been dedicated to island vulnerability, accepting broad definitions and approaches to both 'island' and 'vulnerability' (www.islandvulnerability.org). This connotes the growing interest of a wide range of professionals, most importantly, the islanders themselves, in examining the intersection of islands, risks and vulnerabilities - as well as countering the concerns identified. Such work complements the exciting, innovative, and expanding world of island studies (www.islandstudies.ca, www.sicri.org and www.geol.utas.edu.au/isisa, for example). This special issue of *Shima* contributes to advancing knowledge in this realm by collecting theoretical discussions and case studies pertaining to island risk and vulnerability - and how to improve the situation. The issue begins with **James Lewis** exploring the "island characteristic" of vulnerability, trying to determine how engrained ideas of vulnerability are within islandness - and vice versa. That paper sets the stage for specific case studies.

Vicky Hards details her 2004 visit to Tristan da Cunha, often regarded as the remotest inhabited island in the world, to assess the possibility of volcanic activity, after volcanic rocks were sighted in the sea. She dealt with not only physical volcanology but also social volcanology related to perception and communication of volcanic risks and vulnerabilities and how to address them. **Julie Morin et al** follow with a pair of papers exploring their personal experience with what needlessly became "crisis management" on Comoros during recent volcanic rumblings. The first paper analyses the May 2006 events in the context of the island culture while the second paper explores the deep-rooted vulnerabilities that can create a disaster, irrespective of volcanic behaviour. **Emmanuel A. Maceda et al** present the final case study, an innovative participatory approach to island vulnerability reduction by applying three-dimensional models (although a better description might be 'maps') to engage the community in disaster risk reduction in Divinubo, the Philippines. **John Campbell** closes this issue by looking more widely than staid views of vulnerability, to incorporate traditional knowledge in Pacific island communities dealing with vulnerability and building resilience. This work independently collates many aspects raised by the case studies and complements the introductory paper (**Lewis**) in identifying similar challenges and opportunities from a different starting point. The recurring themes and the matching of theory and practice across all these papers are a powerful indicator of commonalities across island cultures when identifying and redressing risk and vulnerability concerns.

In fact, the authors represent an impressive variety of cultures, countries, continents, languages and (of course) islands. They also represent a diversity of disciplines, from architects to geographers, again highlighting the importance of *Shima*'s mission of focusing on aspects of local and inter-local culture, development and politics and how these relate to island and maritime environments and societies. The combination of research, policy and action, exemplified by authors using a research format to describe their operational work, is an important contribution to this mission. Yet when we set out to explore this topic through this special issue of *Shima*, we had envisioned not only a

wide range of islands and authors, but also a wide range of subjects to be addressed by considering vulnerability. The end result covers plenty about volcanoes, although balanced with explorations beyond volcanoes, especially the essential placing of the volcanic and non-volcanic discussions within wider vulnerability contexts. That framing is enhanced by the first (**Lewis**) and last (**Campbell**) articles of this issue, each providing a useful theoretical basis for the case studies presented and for exploring other case studies. After all, past decades of research and experience demonstrate unambiguously that creating and redressing vulnerability is culturally contextual. Different degrees of islandness and non-islandness make a difference. Islands shape cultures and cultures shape islands, just as vulnerability acts similarly. The result is continual interplay amongst the meaning and implications of vulnerability, culture and islandness for each other. We hope that this volume provides an innovative and useful contribution to these continual discussions along with supporting positive action and justifying the hope of reducing vulnerability.

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