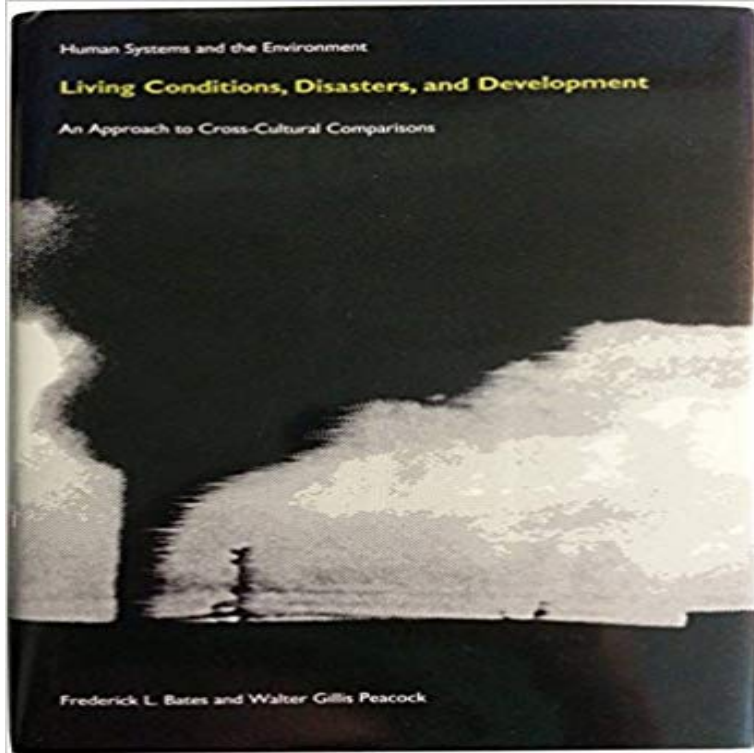


Living Conditions, Disasters, and Development: An Approach to Cross-Cultural Comparisons (Human Systems and the Environment)



Because most environmental problems result from human intervention in the ecosystem, ecological research in the social sciences is now joining research in the biological and physical sciences as a means of addressing long-range problems. Within this type of social science research, this book claims, no problem is more important than the investigation of disaster. To assess the impact of sudden cataclysms on the living conditions of families or communities, scientists need a set of pretested, standardised measures that can be used cross-culturally. Once a disaster strikes, investigators are often faced with insufficient tools for assessing its impact and for evaluating whether aid programmes have enabled households to recover or improve their conditions. In this book, the authors introduce and describe a measure - the Domestic Assets Scale - that they have developed to deal with these research problems. They first present theoretical arguments that relate conditions to the concepts of disaster and development; they then show how the measure was constructed with the use of data collected in sample communities in Italy, Mexico, Peru, Turkey, the United States and Yugoslavia. Throughout these discussions, they emphasise the practical application of their theoretical arguments and address the research problems and constraints faced by investigators using the procedure. Finally, they assess the validity and reliability of the Domestic Assets Scale and show how it can be used to measure long-term change, especially in the wake of catastrophic events.

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