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Social Dimensions of Risk and Vulnerability: State of Research

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Constant production of scientific and practical knowledge as well as long-lasting attempts to mitigate and reduce the damages due to natural hazards have not reversed the upward trend in disaster losses. By reviewing the last decades of social scientific research on natural hazards, the paper first outlines theoretical perspectives, practical approaches, empirical findings, and policy-relevant insights. Consequently, the central question is addressed: How can we enhance the capacities of individuals, communities and organisations to prepare for, cope with and recover from the negative impacts of a natural hazard? This is done by giving an overview about issues and factors that are of relevance for answering this question as well as by critically focusing on barriers and bridges that need to be considered in such an effort.