In an eye-witness account of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, Jack London poignantly noted: ‘[a]ll the shrewd contrivances and safeguards of men had been thrown out of gear by thirty seconds’ twitching of the earth-crust’ ([1906] 2003: 108). London’s observation reverberates a general truism that has increasingly come into sharp relief as today’s ‘shrewd contrivances’ augment transnational vulnerabilities in an interdependent environment. Regional DRM is a modern attempt to counter such disruptions of society. The last two decades have witnessed a substantial increase in regional activity on DRM, such as the formation of ASEAN’s agreement on disaster management and emergency response, the EU’s community mechanism on civil protection and the AU’s Africa regional strategy for disaster risk reduction. Over 30 regional organizations now cooperate on DRM with the aim of increasing the resilience of their member states and communities from natural hazards. But what role do these regional organizations play as disaster managers?

The short answer is that their current role is limited and their potential role in reducing risk from natural hazards is promising. Member states need to first increase their political commitment and financial support to DRM if the ambitious goals of their regional organizations are to be realized. The international community has been highly influential in supporting regional organizations to adopt a standardized set of principles on DRM and provide financial and technical support. This has been important for raising awareness on the need for regional responses to regional problems. Yet, until member states translate these global principles into a manageable and localized context a capability-expectations gap will continue to hinder efforts to increase the resilience of communities. On a more global scale, states will also need to get serious about funding long-term...
risk reduction initiatives instead of concentrating on short-term disaster relief operations. The 0.4 per cent of global aid that is earmarked for DRR is unacceptably low (Kellett and Caravani, 2013). States and international organizations need to increase their commitment and coordination in order to secure a more resilient future.

According to the aims and goals of regional DRM agreements, the anticipated role for regional organizations is particularly ambitious. Out of the ten regional organizations examined in this book, a majority have not only acknowledged the functional need to cooperate on reducing vulnerability to natural hazards but have also agreed to increase preparedness and prevention measures as well as facilitate regional responses to member states that are overwhelmed by a disaster. Some organizations, such as CARICOM and ASEAN have even agreed to produce and maintain collective stockpiles of emergency supplies and aim to standardize DRM knowledge and practices between their member states.

The anticipated role of regional organizations has been assessed through two classical lines of thought in international relations theory that explain why states choose to cooperate. This, in turn, provides a useful gateway for understanding the role of regional organizations in DRM. The first, informed through neoliberal institutional theory, argues that regional DRM is informed through a 'bottom-up' process: functional demand-driven conditions, such as rising levels of intra-regional interdependence, provide a rational basis for motivating states to cooperate on regional DRM. In this case, the role of regional organizations in DRM is to provide an additional tool of the state that will reduce the economic risk of future disasters. A second explanation, informed through world society theory, argues that the role of regional DRM is constructed and constituted through a ‘top-down’ process: from the global to the local. The main instrument used to motivate states to cooperate on regional DRM is a complex international community of DRM organizations. The role of the regional organization is to act as a legitimate conduit of ideas, which reflects and reifies the world cultural script.

**A ‘bottom-up’ perspective**

A ‘bottom-up’ perspective is carved out in Chapter 3 which argues that member states are motivated to cooperate on regional DRM when the perceived benefits outweigh the costs. Four explanations are consequently explored: that high interdependencies, asymmetrical risk, expectations of future disasters and intra-regional power disparities will influence the preference structure of states to cooperate on regional