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Meeting the Challenge of Risk-Sensitive and Resilient Urban Development in sub-Saharan Africa: Directions for Future Research and Practice

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## Meeting the Challenge of Risk-Sensitive and Resilient Urban Development in sub-Saharan Africa: Directions for Future Research and Practice

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### Abstract:

*At the heart of the papers in this Special Issue is the call for research and practice to move to understand and act on the direct and indirect interlinkages between urban development and risk accumulation processes; a broader conception of risk on a continuum from everyday to extreme events and a critical view of urban risk governance as a project that implicates multiple formal and informal actors at difference scales. Out of this focus emerges a research frontier that demands sustained, detailed studies of the links between multi-faceted and multi-scalar development processes and risk but also the re-thinking of scale and jurisdiction as ordering concepts; a stronger understanding of the linkages between environmental / public health risks and small and extreme disasters, and relative changes in manifestations of these forms of risk and in their social differentiation; and better theorisation of governance innovations. For practice, the issue stresses the over-riding need to move beyond a narrow focus on hazard or disaster events and the immediate actors involved to engage a much wider set of actors in integrated planning processes; to develop data to enable holistic policy-making and to build on the emergence of demand-led planning to re-frame the practices of risk-sensitive and resilient urban development.*

### Introduction

As the Introduction to this Special Issue outlined, the relationship between urbanisation and urban growth, urban governance, poverty and inequality, and ecological degradation in sub-Saharan Africa is transforming in complex ways. The nexus this creates is altering the landscape of urban disaster and climate change risk in the region. At the same time, new external policy agendas, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR) and the UNFCCC Paris Agreement, as well as new resilience framings and initiatives, are shifting expectations of what urban risk management and adaptation can and should do, towards more integrative approaches that link policy domains across scale, sector and time. However, the extent and depth of this shift in practice, including the extent to which multiple actors share a common narrative and vision about the concepts and challenges of urban risk, resilience and development, is inevitably contested both in the present and into the future. Building a scientific evidence base that can draw on lived and professional experience to highlight the long-term and indirect linkages and consequences of development decision-making on risk and its management is needed. This does not override the importance of addressing the pressing needs of human security and inclusive economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa, but does call for a joined-up agenda, a message at the heart of many of the papers presented in this Special Issue.

### The elements of an emerging research and policy domain

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