

## Inserting rights and justice into urban resilience

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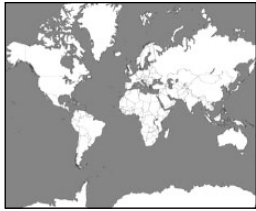
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# Inserting rights and justice into urban resilience: a focus on everyday risk

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**ABSTRACT** Resilience building has become a growing policy agenda, particularly for urban risk management. While much of the resilience agenda has been shaped by policies and discourses from the global North, its applicability for cities of the global South, particularly African cities, has not been sufficiently assessed. Focusing on rights of urban citizens as the object to be made resilient, rather than physical and ecological infrastructures, may help to address many of the root causes that characterize the unacceptable risks that urban residents face on a daily basis. Linked to this idea, we discuss four entry points for grounding a rights and justice orientation for urban resilience. First, notions of resilience must move away from narrow, financially oriented risk analyses. Second, opportunities must be created for “negotiated resilience”, to allow for attention to processes that support these goals, as well as for the integration of diverse interests. Third, achieving resilience in ways that do justice to the local realities of diverse urban contexts necessitates taking into account endogenous, locally situated processes, knowledges and norms. And finally, urban resilience needs to be placed within the context of global systems, providing an opportunity for African contributions to help reimagine the role that cities might play in these global financial, political and science processes.

**KEYWORDS** African cities / rights and entitlements / risk / social justice / urban resilience

## I. INTRODUCTION

Urban risk management is increasingly couched in the language and attendant policy tools of resilience. Yet resilience itself is an uncomfortable idea.<sup>(1)</sup> Derived from multiple epistemologies and traditions – from psychology to engineering and ecology – the concept of resilience is intuitively attractive, yet is messy and at times regressive, particularly in its implementation and policy articulation.<sup>(2)</sup> To date, ideas of urban resilience have been largely conceptualized based on the experience and practices of cities in the global North. We ask what it means to bring a resilience lens to urban risk management in the context of African cities, or cities in the global South more generally, and what role normative concepts such as rights and justice should play in such management.

We find that in making this transition there is a need for greater clarity on both the goals and vehicles for resilience planning and practice. If the goal of resilience planning is to support risk management as well as just processes and outcomes of development, then it is not the pipes and roads of city infrastructure that need to be resilient. Rather, it is the rights and entitlements of urban citizens. At times, realizing and extending rights and entitlements will be dependent on those infrastructures, but they are not one and the same. Making this distinction places emphasis on urban governance, and suggests that a revisioning of governance is required for resilience, not simply a layering of new projects onto existing institutions, practices and mandates.

Our focus on justice does not diminish the critical role of hard infrastructure, technical engineering and ecosystem services as pathways for building resilience. Indeed, the pursuit of resilience is highly dependent on maintaining, building and innovating with various forms of physical and ecological infrastructure.<sup>(3)</sup> However, as we detail through several discussions below, a justice orientation considers resilience interventions – hard and soft, social and engineered – primarily as vehicles for achieving resilience, not as ends in themselves. This orientation draws on theories that conceptualize justice as the fair distribution of social and material advantages; meaningful participation in decision-making processes; acknowledgement of social, cultural and political differences; and the right to minimum levels of capabilities and opportunities to achieve livelihood and wellbeing goals.<sup>(4)</sup> When applied to cities in the global South, where levels of inequality are often high, a justice orientation invites us to critically consider the “what” and “for whom” of resilience interventions.<sup>(5)</sup> Assuming a Southern perspective, as this paper does, provides a distinctive viewpoint. This paper, dominated by authors based in the South and others writing across the North and South, contributes to a global dialogue of importance to both the North and South in places where urban inequality is high and both social and ecological resilience is under threat.

The following discussion opens up some key considerations of resilience, rights, entitlements and risk management in urban areas. We do so in a way that is informed by lived realities and conceptual innovations in urban contexts, with particular interest in the contexts of Africa and the global South more broadly.<sup>(6)</sup> To enliven a discussion of the questions posed above, we provide several specific lenses for engagement: finance, decision-making, scale and global systems. These are starting points providing a way into discussing the logic for a rights orientation, rather than being aimed at definitive conclusions for appraising the utility of such an approach. We find that in developing our arguments, each lens converges on the importance of rights, entitlements and justice. This commonality builds a consistent argument for the reframing of resilience from a Southern perspective, and indicates the strength of this logic.

## II. BALANCING CRITIQUE WITH OPPORTUNITY

### a. The growing urban resilience agenda

Global policy narratives around resilience building often focus on expert-driven input and externally defined forms of and pathways to achieving resilience.<sup>(7)</sup> Ideas of resilience are then applied to cities, globally, including

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those in the global South,<sup>(8)</sup> leading to important questions in terms of the relevance of these constructs, as well as the potential for engagement with local understandings and innovations. Urban resilience narratives are strongly influenced by engineering-based understandings, focusing on critical infrastructure needs and risk reduction as main points of intervention.<sup>(9)</sup> In addition, there is often a strong focus on urban systems, government-led planning and technocratically driven resilience-building interventions.<sup>(10)</sup> The global narrative of urban resilience building also largely assumes that there are relevant and inclusive planning processes in place, irrespective of local decision-making cultures and capability to plan at city level.

One example that centres considerable effort and resources on the resilience agenda is the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities project – describing urban resilience as: "*the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and grow no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience*".<sup>(11)</sup> This approach recognizes that resilience is conditioned by everyday chronic stress as well as acute or extreme shocks. When considered alongside other similar efforts, whether the Making Cities Resilient campaign of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)<sup>(12)</sup> or the City Resilience Action Planning Tool of the UN-Habitat City Resilience Profiling Programme (CRPP),<sup>(13)</sup> we see that governance is a primary target for these efforts.

Taken together, programmes of this type seem to indicate that, while multiple actors are involved, it is city government that occupies the primary position to deliver urban resilience at the city scale. While city government is clearly important, we need to ask how actors and institutions within city governments are able to change priorities and processes in pursuit of "resilience", particularly in ways that overcome the capacity challenges and pathways that have contributed to those same risks and vulnerabilities. Contemporary resilience planning for cities has a tendency to push responsibility for risk management from central agencies to individuals and households at risk. This results in a shift in burden from government to citizen, and encourages a mentality of coping with, rather than resolving, the social structures, legal apparatus and administrative practices that produce and distribute vulnerability and risk. Yet the voices of urban residents, and their capacity to visualize and contribute to more collective and more just resilience building, are often missing, with clear implications for procedural justice.

The language of resilience is strongly present in overarching development frameworks, including the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2015), the UNISDR Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015), and most notably the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These frameworks offer a logic for integrated development approaches,<sup>(14)</sup> but also call for a critical revision of some of our key assumptions and approaches to what is meant by resilience, and how it might be pursued. The SDGs deploy the language of resilience in multiple ways, alongside that of wellbeing and poverty alleviation. For instance, Goal 1 (No Poverty), Target 5 states:<sup>(15)</sup>

"By 2030 build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters."

Goal 11 (Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable) includes Target 11b:

“Substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.”<sup>(16)</sup>

How these goals and targets are to be operationalized globally is under discussion, and much rests on the choice of indicators.<sup>(17)</sup> Current rounds of consultation emphasize the need for pragmatic indicators built on data that are available or can be collected without major expense. The ambition of the SDGs and the related global UN agenda clearly opens a wider framing of resilience – one that accepts and moves past a focus on extreme events, highlights the centrality of resilience of the poor and vulnerable, and allows for multiple readings of what resilience is, or should be. Governance that can support this type of resilience is placed centre stage, but with little guidance on how new financial, decision-making or information systems might serve this end.

## b. Questioning resilience and the need for critical engagement

While momentum related to the resilience agenda has clearly picked up, so too has the range and scope of critique. Among the most prominent critiques are those that focus on the ontological and epistemological ambiguities of the term<sup>(18)</sup> as well as the tendency not to account for the political – and inherently power-laden – structures that shape decision-making in local contexts.<sup>(19)</sup> Others warn that the ambiguity of the concept makes it liable to capture by vested interests – at times the very same interests that have been instrumental in undermining resilience by creating unsustainable and unjust development.<sup>(20)</sup> Furthermore, the questions of resilience for whom, under what circumstances, and through what processes remain largely unaddressed despite the concept’s proliferation and application in emerging global, regional and local risk management policies.<sup>(21)</sup> In addition to not equitably or inclusively accounting for differential interests, at times interventions produce outcomes that further entrench vulnerabilities and socioeconomic impoverishment.<sup>(22)</sup> It is clear as well that consideration of lived realities on the ground suggests that resilience is not only a goal or target for the future. People have to be resilient on a daily basis out of necessity, forced to encounter and respond to multiple threats and relentless challenges.<sup>(23)</sup> What are the implications of these critiques and realities for a reconsideration of resilience from a justice and rights orientation?

Some might take these critiques to suggest that we should abandon resilience as a useful concept. This is not our position. The increasing use of the word in urban planning and visioning documents requires that we understand and take seriously the ongoing engagement with the term and related efforts to implement it in practice.<sup>(24)</sup> Despite the multiple tensions and application challenges, we also maintain that the concept continues

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to hold value because of its systems orientation and multi-scalar approach to addressing complex, everyday stressors in socio-ecological contexts. In particular, we find considerable value in the focus on ecosystem resilience, as well as the focus on interlinked systems (social–ecological–infrastructural), rather than remaining in the siloed approach that often dominates urban adaptation and planning.<sup>(25)</sup> Finally, as Biermann et al.<sup>(26)</sup> have argued, resilience provides an opportunity for critical engagement and radical redefining of objects, processes and pathways for achieving resilience, including a revisioning of more inclusive governance processes and a focus on potentially vulnerable sites or populations. A focus on rights, justice and entitlements is one such revision that we find to be particularly pertinent and timely at present.<sup>(27)</sup>

### III. RIGHTS AND JUSTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF RESILIENCE

Why are rights and justice important to resilience? Broadly, we can identify two types of reasons why they might be so. First, rights and justice have *intrinsic* value – which is to say that they are valuable in themselves – and ought therefore to play a central role in shaping the *goals* of resilience planning. Second, rights and justice can have *instrumental* value – that is, they can be valuable as a means to achieving further goals, whether or not they have value in themselves. This second source of value is also central to resilience, insofar as having a right, or a justice-based entitlement, can increase the formal and informal social protection that can be claimed by the rights-bearer.

Rights are often understood as claims that rights-bearers may press against each other.<sup>(28)</sup> The answer to the central question, "What rights do we have?", is contested – partly because views about the intrinsic value of rights depend on ongoing arguments about fundamental moral judgements and how diverse moral commitments can best be brought into coherence with each other,<sup>(29)</sup> and partly because views about the instrumental value of rights depend themselves on contested empirical questions. But we can facilitate clearer thinking about this central question by focusing on some key distinctions, such as that between negative and positive rights – rights against interference versus rights to particular things<sup>(30)</sup> – and between basic rights, which are indispensable to the enjoyment of all other rights, and non-basic rights.<sup>(31)</sup> This paper makes the assumption that – as is widely thought to be plausible and indeed is enshrined in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>(32)</sup> – people do have some basic rights to core entitlements such as personal safety, health, water, shelter, energy, transport and communications, food, education and sanitation.<sup>(33)</sup>

Likewise, in the case of justice, there is no one settled view about what a just state of affairs would look like, and indeed whether justice is exhausted by rights or whether there are other types of justice-based claims that extend beyond rights.<sup>(34)</sup> But this does not mean that all possible views are equally plausible – some views are clearly implausible, and among those with some *prima facie* plausibility we can assess the arguments for and against each view, drawing in particular on the extensive literature on justice in political philosophy. One key distinction is that between conceptions of justice that emphasize the importance of recognition and of treating everyone as social equals and equal

participants in a democracy, versus conceptions of justice that emphasize the importance of distributions of something.<sup>(35)</sup> Among accounts of distributive justice, we can further distinguish between accounts that place equality at their core, or which insist that the interests of the worst off in society be prioritized over the interests of the better off (so-called “prioritarianism”),<sup>(36)</sup> and those that reject equality or priority in favour of the less demanding view that as long as everyone has enough to meet their basic needs, to protect central capabilities,<sup>(37)</sup> or to achieve a sufficiently good life, we need not worry about inequality above that point.<sup>(38)</sup> Further questions arise concerning the importance of the distribution of risk in distributive justice,<sup>(39)</sup> and the role of people’s own risky choices in making them responsible for disadvantages that they may suffer as a result of chosen risks, in ways that might diminish the claims that they have on others for assistance.<sup>(40)</sup>

Rights- and justice-based claims describe an ideal to be aimed at. Entitlements, on the other hand, can be understood as the reality of “*the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command in a society using the totality of rights and opportunities that he or she faces*”,<sup>(41)</sup> shaped by a combination of formal administrative and technological systems and informal arrangements and strategies. The central claim of this paper is that resilience requires that people’s lived entitlements be brought into closer alignment with their ideal rights- and justice-based claims.<sup>(42)</sup> To achieve this aim it is necessary to do the following:

- 1) Develop a justice- and rights-based framework for vulnerability, based on plausible (even if contested) views about each;
- 2) Identify the underlying causes of poor alignment between, on the one hand, ideal justice and rights, and on the other hand, people’s actual lived entitlements; and
- 3) Understand how a resilience approach to governance, and a focus on rights- and justice- based local empowerment of vulnerable communities, can facilitate the alignment of rights, justice and entitlements. The aim here is to ensure that revised and properly conceived entitlements are more secure in the face of everyday violence, disease risks and persistent impoverishment, as well as extreme events.

A focus on health helps to illustrate the everyday risks that some people face. In African cities there are growing numbers of people living in informal settlements. Within these areas there is a lack of risk-reducing infrastructure such as piped water, provision for sanitation and drains, as well as limited access to services because of barriers to utilization by virtue of distance and cost.<sup>(43)</sup> These conditions increase the risk of premature death, serious illness and injury. In doing so, they lead to further inequality and undermine the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.<sup>(44)</sup>

This is not to lose sight of the importance to the resilience agenda of preparing for catastrophic events that can overwhelm existing urban systems. But alongside this, we recognize the slow and ongoing catastrophe of the failings of everyday development, perhaps especially the case for the relatively impoverished in Southern cities.<sup>(45)</sup> Persistent and common failings in administrative, organizational, budgetary and human resource

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49. IPCC (2012), "Glossary of terms", in C B Field, Barros, V, T F Stocker, D Qin, D J Dokken, K L Ebi, M D Mastrandrea, K J Mach, G-K Plattner, S K Allen, M Tignor and P M Midgley (editors), *Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters*

agendas provide the conditions for undermining people's rights and entitlements. These entitlement failures, in turn, are the root causes of increased vulnerability to shocks.<sup>(46)</sup> They are what make a storm event a disaster, rather than something that a locale or community can resist and respond to, without suffering undue harm. This is the case for everyday stresses as well as more rare extreme events.<sup>(47)</sup>

For instance, to be prepared for, and resilient to, a Hurricane Katrina type of catastrophic event, urban systems – including both the infrastructural and social elements – need to be designed and governed to maintain and secure their weakest points. Infrastructure gaps often exist in neighbourhoods that have experienced historic marginalization, economic trauma and low community cohesion.<sup>(48)</sup> It is at these vulnerable points that critical functions and entitlements, even for the most apparently robust systems, can fail.<sup>(49)</sup> This lesson was clearly evident following the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami in Japan in 2011, Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013, and a host of other environmental catastrophes. In these cases, because cities and regions often produce and reflect both spatial and economic disparities, the degree to which communities are resilient is related to the distribution of employment opportunities, infrastructure, adequate housing and other daily needs.<sup>(50)</sup> Conversely, to be well prepared for extreme events, attention to individual and community-level vulnerabilities demands a justice orientation that recognizes both the procedural and distributive implications of resilience actions. Perhaps the biggest challenge and opportunity for cities, presented by the resilience framing, is to bring together efforts that can protect processes and systems attempting to deliver basic needs while simultaneously managing extreme events. While they are not entirely overlapping, they are often mutually enabling.

This brings us back to our point on the centrality of a focus on rights and entitlements for resilience to meet its potential as a progressive social agenda. Early efforts at securing resilience in cities and elsewhere show clearly that there is an uncritical assumption that infrastructure is the object to be made resilient. Governance, and its underlying rights claims and struggles for entitlements, is adjusted to meet the aim of a more resilient infrastructure. Under this framing, the implications for progressive development are ambiguous at best.

We propose an inversion in this relationship – making the object of resilience the investments and procedures through which progressive rights claims can be made, with infrastructure an important enabling factor to support this goal. Such a reorientation quickly situates resilience as a component of ongoing struggles for pro-poor and progressive development. Without the explicit prioritization of rights claims as the lens through which infrastructure and land-use policy are to be evaluated, other, less egalitarian, logics will likely prevail when judgements have to be made. In the context of the SDGs, competing goals may need to be traded off. Being explicit about priorities – and, we argue, making rights claims primary – can enable resilience to realize its grand opportunity as an accelerator of progressive development by bringing risk management into struggles for progressive development.

Rights are enshrined in international and national legislation – although, as discussed above, rights may not be routinely delivered in practice, particularly in African cities. If the resilience agenda can become a mechanism to assert and make real the rights of women, children and the



poor, this will allow considerable movement towards the transformation of development.

#### IV. ENTRY POINTS FOR A JUSTICE- AND RIGHTS- BASED RESILIENCE AGENDA

Following from this overview, we now turn to four entry points for further critical engagement on possibilities to ground resilience debates more meaningfully within the framework of justice and rights.

##### a. Move away from financial understandings of risk

Risk is an intuitive concept, a social construct aimed at capturing what people fear as well as the material implications associated with the types of challenges they face.<sup>(51)</sup> As such, risk analyses should provide a template for an urban governance that convenes the diverse set of stakeholders required to tackle “wicked problems”<sup>(52)</sup> such as climate change and urban poverty. This, however, has not been the general experience. Instead, the risk discourse has tended to adopt the analysis of financiers and insurance companies and focus on the economic loss related to discrete events. As a result, potential loss to high-value physical assets is often privileged above the relatively small but critical losses to poor households or broader human impacts that are less easily quantifiable.<sup>(53)</sup> Again, by considering a set of criteria that extends beyond financial metrics, a justice focus invites a critical reorientation away from such a narrow definition of risk, and a rethinking of what would be required to build resilience. In particular, a justice focus orients us towards considering more carefully what types of risk we ought to seek to mitigate – or at least to prioritize – and, related to this, what types of outcomes we ought to seek to avoid.

The disconnect between financial resilience and the resilience of progressive development in African cities produces a set of “successful” finance projects that aggregate to form dysfunctional and inherently risky cities, complete with mutually enforcing poverty, spatial sprawl, and lock-in to ecological degradation.<sup>(54)</sup>

The emerging resilience discourse presents the potential for improving on existing risk analysis by providing a sense of the systemic that is largely missing from urban governance. If it is to fulfil this potential, notions of resilience must not only learn from the failings of narrow risk analyses, but also advance understanding of both the structural causes and trade-offs realized when addressing risk through a financial lens. To do this, resilience approaches should:

- Understand the requirements of global capital and present a compelling case, grounded in accepted normative commitments for the reallocation of this capital towards poverty-alleviating public goods.
- Engage the social justice perspective and make legible hidden sources of power that currently influence urban governance.<sup>(55)</sup> This requires conventional risk analyses to be more specific about resilience for who, against what, where and when.<sup>(56)</sup>

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50. Vale, L J (2014), “The politics of resilient cities: whose resilience and whose city?”, *Building Research & Information* Vol 42, No 2, pages 37–41.

51. Kasperson, J X and R E Kasperson (2001), *Global Environmental Risk*, United Nations University Press.

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53. Vatn, A and D W Bromley (1994), “Choices without Prices without Apologies”, *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* Vol 26, No 2, pages 129–148; also Hallegatte, S, A Vogt-Schilb, M Bangalore and J Rozenberg (2017), *Unbreakable: Building the Resilience of the Poor in the Face of Natural Disasters*, World Bank, Washington, DC.

54. Turok, I (2013), “Securing the resurgence of African cities”, *Local Economy* Vol 28, No 2, pages 142–157; also AfDB/OECD/UNDP (2016), *African Economic Outlook: Sustainable cities and structural transformation*, Paris; and Epstein, G (2005), *Financialization and the World Economy*, Edward Elgar Press, Northampton, MA.

55. Pettit, J (2013), *Power Analysis: A Practical Guide*, Sida.

56. See reference 5.

57. Anguelovski, I, L Shi, E Chu, D Gallagher, K Goh, Z Lamb, K Reeve and H Teicher (2016), "Equity Impacts of Urban Land Use Planning for Climate Adaptation: Critical Perspectives from the Global North and South", *Journal of Planning Education and Research* Vol 36, No 3, pages 333–348.

58. Fainstein, S (2010), *The Just City*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

59. We deliberated on this concept in two successive workshops (Water equity and resilience in southern Africa, Stellenbosch, 24–26 August 2016 and Justice and resilience in African cities: Implications for adapting to climate change, Cape Town, 30 August–1 September 2016). The majority of the authors involved write from the South, and found the concept useful for making sense of, and responding to, some of the common critiques in work and literature on resilience, in relation to their work. We are developing the idea in a forthcoming publication, to be made available at <http://www.waterequity.pwias.ubc.ca>.

60. Satterthwaite, D, S Huq, M Pelling, H Reid and P R Lankao (2007), "Adapting to climate change in urban areas: the possibilities and constraints in low and middle income nations", *Human Settlements working paper*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London, 118 pages.

- Recognize the distribution of winners and losers when investing in services and infrastructure that have inevitable trade-offs,<sup>(57)</sup> and reorient investments to ensure that justice-based concerns are properly accommodated.
- Make legible the political and economic relationships shaping urban governance regimes that the risk community has previously neglected to fully consider. The pathways through which a more equal society leads to a more socially resilient city, for example, should feature more prominently in urban governance approaches.<sup>(58)</sup>
- Include a broader set of criteria in decision making so as to recognize and address negative externalities and prioritize actions that generate positive externalities, particularly those externalities (such as work creation) that enhance the livelihood strategies of the poorest.

Failure to redirect global pools of capital and enhance the prevailing risk analysis approach will see resilience become simply the latest idea in an acceleration of the status quo that does little to effect the transformation required to address the nexus of catastrophic poverty and climate change.

## **b. Create opportunities for negotiated resilience<sup>(59)</sup>**

Drawing on theories of ethics, policy processes, political ecology and interactive governance, we suggest that the concept of “negotiated resilience” might help to account for the situated power and political dynamics that commonly drive risk management and resilience-focused governance approaches. This is observable in contemporary deployments of the concept of resilience, and will be more important still if a rights- and justice-centred approach is adopted. We detail more fully what negotiated resilience might look like in a separate paper (in progress) and so only provide a few points to outline the concept here.

Unlike many of the current models and practices of resilience, the concept and process of negotiated resilience do not predefine what resilience could or should look like. Instead they suggest the need for an arena to discursively interrogate and negotiate the interests, values and experiences of diverse interests, including those of marginalized populations. The focus on “negotiated” as a verb puts particular accent on the procedural orientation of resilience – it is not something that “exists” and that one can uniformly define and work towards, rather it is a continuous process of engaging with diverse actors and interests in diverse locales and across scales to negotiate the meaning of what resilience is, or should be. Importantly, these negotiations will only be equitable and inclusive if people involved in these negotiations have equal access to relevant information.<sup>(60)</sup> It also requires processes to support meaningful involvement on an ongoing basis (again, highlighted here with the processual and active notions of “negotiation” rather than a discrete set of actions that are complete or understood a priori).

The process of negotiating resilience necessarily entails contestation, deliberation of trade-offs, prioritization of interests, and critical evaluation and redistribution of gains and losses, resulting in an iterative process of recalibrating positions. This processual orientation also serves to foreground the importance of normative goals. This can help to calibrate which decisions are made for whose benefits, and what practices and

interventions are pursued, for instance, to ensure equitable participation, representation and voice, and to recognize and support diverse social goals that might vary by context.

We offer negotiated resilience as a concept that has potential to contribute to both theory and practice, making explicit the rights and justice questions of “resilience for whom, to what, where, when and why”,<sup>(61)</sup> as well as making clear that dealing with risks implies unavoidable yet difficult choices. One of the pressing priorities is to uncover the hidden dynamics behind the distribution of the implications of these choices across differentially informed and capacitated populations, which so often lead to unjust and inequitable resilience outcomes of the type that have been observed to date in many African cities and elsewhere.<sup>(62)</sup> In this sense, the concept of negotiated resilience has the potential to insert the ethical consideration of equity, accountability and justice into often techno-centric, capital-driven resilience planning and interventions.<sup>(63)</sup> The necessary engagements, through negotiation, with local-level norms, priorities and capacities also supports the goal for future policies to harness and support existing sources of resilience, or facilitate discussions around recognition, redistribution and compensation in the face of difficult trade-offs and absorbed risks.<sup>(64)</sup>

Through capturing a negotiated space for resilience – especially one that encourages deliberation and contestation of rights and entitlements – future policies can harness existing sources of resilience or facilitate more critical discussions around recognition, retribution and compensation in the face of extreme or slow-onset risks.

### c. Strengthen endogenous forms of resilience<sup>(65)</sup>

In response to the emerging SDG-inspired agenda for resilience, we argue that there is a need to rethink and reimagine resilience through specific grounded urban contexts. While here we focus on African urban spaces, we argue that imagining resilience in ways that do justice to on-the-ground realities in diverse urban contexts would involve taking into account locally situated processes, knowledges and norms.<sup>(66)</sup> Our interest in African urban contexts stems from their unique challenges as well as undeniable opportunities for reimagining urban resilience with a focus on rights and justice. Further, we recognize that challenges in African cities indeed resonate with global realities, as urban experiences (including poverty and inequality) are global and universal.<sup>(67)</sup> Lessons from African urban contexts can lend insights into other contexts as well.

While the distinct specificities of African cities provide some unique challenges to achieving resilience, they also provide various locally embedded sources of resilience. It is well documented that African cities often display a lack of governance capacity, high levels of informality, and high levels of both planned and unplanned urbanization, combined with low levels of economic development.<sup>(68)</sup> African urban spaces are also highly diverse, characterized by a multiplicity of contextually situated capacities and governance cultures.<sup>(69)</sup> Furthermore, African urban spaces are shaped by colonial legacies, contested urbanization and urban development processes that have led to endemic poverty, inequality, and informalization of the city. For instance, Ernstson et al.<sup>(70)</sup> point to a common sense of crisis in African cities where “*conditions of violence,*

61. See reference 5.

62. See reference 57.

63. Boke, C (2015), “Resilience’s problem of the present: reconciling social justice and future-oriented resilience planning in the Transition Town movement”, *Resilience* Vol 3, No 3, pages 207–220.

64. Schlosberg, D (2007), *Defining environmental justice: theories, movements, and nature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

65. This will be further developed in a forthcoming publication, to be made available at <http://www.waterequity.pwias.ubc.ca>.

66. See reference 19, Cote and Nightingale (2012); also Walsh-Dillely, M and W Wolford (2015), “(Un) Defining resilience: subjective understandings of “resilience” from the field”, *Resilience* Vol 3, No 3, pages 173–182; and Ziervogel, G, A Cowen and J Ziniades (2016), “Moving from adaptive to transformative capacity: building foundations for inclusive, thriving and regenerative urban settlements”, *Sustainability* Vol 8, No 9, 20 pages.

67. Parnell, S and S Oldfield (2014), *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*, Routledge.

68. Pieterse, E (2011), “Grasping the unknowable: coming to grips with African urbanisms”, *Social Dynamics* Vol 37, No 1, pages 5–23; also Satterthwaite, D (2011), “How can urban centers adapt to

climate change with ineffective or unrepresentative local governments?", *WIREs Climate Change* Vol 2, No 5, pages 767–776.

69. Adelekan, I, C Johnson, M Manda, D Matyas, B Mberu, S Parnell, M Pelling, D Satterthwaite and J Vivekananda (2015), "Disaster risk and its reduction: an agenda for urban Africa", *International Development Planning Review* Vol 37, No 1, pages 33–43.

70. Ernstson, H, M Lawhon and J Duminy (2014), "Conceptual Vectors of African Urbanism: "Engaged Theory-Making" and "Platforms of Engagement"", *Regional Studies* Vol 48, No 9, pages 1563–1577, page 1567.

71. Myers, G A (2011), *African cities: alternative visions of urban theory and practice*, Zed Books; also Pieterse, E (2008), *City futures: Confronting the crisis of urban development*, Zed Books; and Taylor, B A and C Peter (2014), *Strengthening climate resilience in African cities: A framework for working with informality*, Climate and Development Knowledge Network, 18 pages.

72. Wilson, Geoff A (2015), "Community Resilience and Social Memory", *Environmental Values* Vol 24, No 2, pages 227–257.

73. Manda, Mtafu and Elijah Wanda (2017), "Understanding the nature and scale of risks in Karonga, Malawi", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 29, No 1, pages 15–32.

74. See reference 23.

75. Bulkeley, H, V C Broto and G A S Edwards (2015), *An Urban Politics of Climate Change: Experimentation and the Governing of Socio-Technical Transitions*, Routledge, New York.

76. Chu, E, I Anguelovski and J Carmin (2016), "Inclusive approaches to urban climate adaptation planning and implementation in the Global South", *Climate Policy* Vol 16, No 3, pages 372–392; also Archer, D, F Almansi, M DiGregorio, D Roberts, D Sharma and D Syam (2014), "Moving towards inclusive urban adaptation:

*informality, poverty and forced mobility tend to undermine urban security, stability and everyday predictability*".

At the same time, African urban spaces, through a mix of various formal and informal networks, diverse knowledges and practices, provide opportunities for building resilience from the bottom up.<sup>(71)</sup> In line with this, we argue for a focus on identifying and enabling existing locally appropriate and contextually embedded nascent opportunities, or potentialities, that contribute to resilience to African urban conditions and the various shocks experienced in these contexts. Other authors have also suggested that many endogenous forms of resilience emanate from within local communities themselves.<sup>(72)</sup> Manda and Wanda<sup>(73)</sup> further point to the endogenous capacity of communities to adapt to risk, which can lead to unwillingness to relocate despite the threat of disasters. However, we argue that local ties, networks and deep experiential knowledge should be seen as forms of resilience, rather than barriers to externally defined "resilience" building interventions, such as relocation. Indeed, resilience in many African urban contexts is limited and only partially protects already limited wellbeing. There is often a reactive resilience exhibited by those living with everyday risk and informal development structures.<sup>(74)</sup> Nonetheless, it is the bedrock of everyday innovation that needs to be enabled and empowered, rather than eroded by a focus on making critical infrastructure resilient<sup>(75)</sup> or by imposing external, donor-based, expert-driven notions of resilience.

In sum, we argue that in building resilience we should be careful not to impose externally defined pathways and approaches. Building resilience in African urban contexts requires a primary focus on physical and social complexities of urbanism in the global South and the related implications for critical infrastructure and governance systems needed to achieve this. Critical infrastructure should serve the locally identified needs of people and ecosystems, particularly those people most vulnerable. Such an approach cannot be achieved without placing justice, rights, and the lived realities of local people at the centre of identifying pathways to build resilience.<sup>(76)</sup> To do this, we need a deeper engagement with philosophical research on rights and justice, as well as a sociological understanding of how local actors can be empowered to take up their entitlements and ensure that they are properly respected and enforced, and how this interacts with governance practices. Lastly, we argue that resilience thinking should incorporate both systemic and more situated and endogenous notions of resilience, where systems create, or build on and enhance, people's own capacity and resilience.<sup>(77)</sup> Through the process of "building urban resilience", we should be careful not to override or erase locally driven or locally existing sources or forms of resilience, including, but not limited to, sources of innovation, various informal networks, and rich cultural and experiential knowledge.

#### d. Place urban resilience within global systems

Despite the importance of endogenous resilience, African cities need to be recognized as part of a neoliberal era of global finance, capital accumulation and global circuits of communication. While we recognize the possibilities for rights- and justice-based resilience approaches in cities, opportunities linked to these approaches sit within nested global, regional, and local political and financial institutions.<sup>(78)</sup>

Recent critics have highlighted that climate change itself is an outcome of global capital flows and market processes, raising critical questions about the degree to which these same processes might also be considered crucial to solutions and responses to climate change.<sup>(79)</sup> Similarly, work on neoliberalism and capital accumulation has highlighted inherent risks associated with a strong reliance on market approaches to govern natural resources, often with negative outcomes for social and ecological wellbeing.<sup>(80)</sup> Arguably, it is the systemic qualities of contemporary (late modern) capitalism that are most significant for urban places that are increasingly reliant on the functioning of globalized markets, food and finance systems, and so open to contagion from distant extreme events.<sup>(81)</sup> These include economic and political as well as physical and technological hazard events. In particular, as Mamdani argues,<sup>(82)</sup> African cities have in common “a shared experience of colonialism, relatively late decolonization and integration into a particularly peripheral place in the post-colonial world system”, resulting in an “African urban political economy” with little ability to connect to global systems.<sup>(83)</sup>

Many environmentalists, economists, scientists, business enterprises and policymakers are offering solutions to build resilience that rely on green consumption, growth of capital markets, and other technocratic and financial fixes. A closer examination indicates that most of these fixes reflect an implicit optimism about market mechanisms and fail to embed ecology in social life.<sup>(84)</sup> In the last two decades cities have increasingly become centres for reproduction and transformation of neoliberal ideologies, like the focus on individual agency and self-reliance, that collide with the concept of redistribution.<sup>(85)</sup> The focus on resilience initiatives in cities is at high risk of mirroring the current approaches to mainstreaming attention to climate change in cities, namely a symptomatic treatment of the issue that often fails to trace the structural causes of vulnerability.<sup>(86)</sup> These proposals have not been tested against their ability to foster and promote rights- and justice-based development and consequently rights- and justice-based goals for resilience.

In trying to insert justice into resilience, there is therefore a need to shift city development pathways away from contemporary market-driven foci towards more negotiated and contextually situated, or endogenous, forms of resilience that recognize local priorities, complexities and contestations. Without this shift, the dominant global neoliberal pathways that cities are currently embedded in are likely to result in continued cycles of economic dependency, entrenchment of ineffective political regimes, and lock-in to current unsustainable development, particularly in Africa. Resilience in this context will be in danger of shoring up regressive trajectories and even undermining the potential for shocks to catalyze transformative change. In contrast, a rights focus for resilience offers a basis to start shifting vision, administrative structures and on-the-ground investments in order to better address local challenges, whilst recognizing the imperative for reimagining Africa’s role in global systems, including finance, politics and science.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

Given that the concept of resilience is widely used and is increasingly gaining policy traction, we have argued for continued critical engagement

approaches to integrating community-based adaptation to climate change at city and national scale”, *Climate and Development* Vol 6, No 4, pages 345–356.

77. See reference 66, Ziervogel et al. (2016).

78. Magdoff, F and J B Foster (2011), *What every environmentalist needs to know about capitalism: A citizen's guide to capitalism and the environment*, NYU Press.

79. Klein, N (2014), *This changes everything: Capitalism v. the Climate*, Simon & Schuster; also Wainwright, J and G Mann (2013), “Climate Leviathan”, *Antipode* Vol 45, No 1, pages 1–22.

80. Heynen, N, J McCarthy, S Prudham and P Robbins (2007), *Neoliberal environments: false promises and unnatural consequences*, Routledge.

81. Harvey, D (1989), “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism”, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* Vol 71, No 1, pages 3–17.

82. See reference 70; also Mamdani, M (1996), *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, page 6.

83. See reference 70.

84. Laurent, E (2014), *Inequality as pollution, pollution as inequality: The social-ecological nexus*, Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality.

85. Filion, P (2013), “Fading Resilience? Creative Destruction, Neoliberalism and mounting risks”, *SAPIENS* Vol 6, No 1; also Brenner, N and N Theodore (2002), “Cities and the Geographies of “Actually Existing Neoliberalism””, *Antipode* Vol 34, No 3, pages 349–379.

86. See reference 42; also Pelling, M (2011), *Adaptation to Climate Change: From Resilience to Transformation*, Routledge, Abingdon.

with it. Indeed, the vast endorsement of this concept by global agreements and Northern development agencies means that the concept of resilience will be present – and likely dominant – in urban planning for some time. Yet resilience remains an uncomfortable idea because of the way it supports the status quo through notions of “bouncing back”, and its limited ability to address more progressive, emancipatory or transformational urban agendas. Resilience approaches often fail to account for lived realities and multiple experiences – or worse, they render marginalized communities even more vulnerable – and provide limited opportunities for broader participation in defining resilience priorities. Given the growing use of the concept, we find a strong need to open up spaces to re-conceptualize resilience with more emphasis on rights and justice. We particularly want to normalize the use of Southern cities as a reference point for debate about the concept of resilience in light of its origins in the North.<sup>(87)</sup>

87. See reference 67.

We suggest that placing rights and justice as the object to be made resilient can help to address many of the root causes that underlie unacceptable risks, and may help to bridge the gap between everyday and catastrophic risk management. Making rights and justice the target of resilience thinking and policy – rather than the functional persistence of existing infrastructure – can position resilience as central to pro-poor development. This shift in attention to supporting processes and systems that deliver basic needs and strengthen everyday rights is as important as managing extreme events.

This paper has suggested a number of entry points for a rights orientation to urban resilience, looking through the lenses of everyday risk, entitlements, finance, decision-making processes, cross-scale risk and global systems. Each of these motivations has revealed different ways in which current resilience responses tend to undermine justice, and ways in which these entry points could be engaged with to strengthen a focus on justice. Specifically they suggest the need to:

- Refocus financially driven urban risk reduction responses to address injustice and violations of rights
- Create opportunities to interrogate and integrate the priorities, values and experiences of diverse interest groups
- Strengthen and build on endogenous forms of resilience
- Understand the narratives and practices of urban resilience as products of global systems

The concepts of negotiated resilience and endogenous resilience help to bring discussions back to people and processes, and to include a focus on rights and everyday lived realities. The focus on justice in relation to finance and cross-scale risk helps to better reveal the trade-offs of focusing on the city or the livelihood scale, as both are situated within global systems. We argue that if a resilience approach can help to make real existing rights for vulnerable groups, it will help us to move towards transformation of development, which is a priority for African cities. In other words, uncovering and addressing the structural causes of everyday risk is central to adapting to extreme climatic, economic and other shocks.

The multiple rationales for a rights- and justice-based approach to resilience signal the need for research and policy to move rights claims more concretely onto the policy agenda for urban resilience. The current moment of establishing urban planning and policy – in response to

the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), the SDGs (particularly the urban SDG), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the burgeoning rhetoric around addressing inequality, poverty and justice in the context of resilience – suggests that the time is ripe to act.<sup>(88)</sup> The focus on rights and justice can help to ensure that the everyday risks experienced by growing numbers of urban dwellers are not forgotten.

88. Parnell, S (2016), "Defining a Global Urban Development Agenda", *World Development* Vol 78, pages 529–540.

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