

# Mapping with the Tap Open: The Key Importance of Land Management for Urban Flood Resilience in Houston (Texas) and Accra (Ghana)

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## SUMMARY

The recent pandemic of flood disasters has raised key questions about how to mitigate flood damages in cities across the globe. Anticipated extreme weather patterns and ongoing urbanization further exacerbate the problem, and have caused a frantic search for ways to activate cities' resilience from flooding. The focus on urban resilience, however, requires an integrated approach and streamlining of policies of sectoral institutions that manage different components of the urban built environment: rather than solely relying on large-scale protective infrastructure, the scope of pursued mitigation efforts is expanding to include disaster response and adaptation of the built environment. Based on five years of multidisciplinary research into flood risk mitigation in the 'US' Flood Capital', (Houston, Texas) and a recent World Bank-commissioned study into the flood resilience of Accra (Ghana), we argue that flood resilience is systematically undermined by the land management sector. Despite the different economic and institutional context in both case studies, the flood management and disaster response sectors find themselves to be 'mopping with the tap open': they are unable to keep pace with a land management sector that keeps producing new flood risks. Unless the performance of this key sector is improved – ranging from proper land registration to systematically imposed regulations and building codes at the regional scale – flood losses in these cities will continue to rise.

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