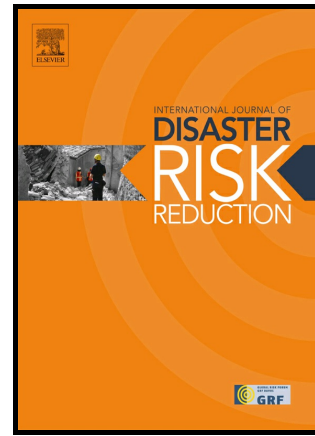


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The politics of risk policies in Dakar, Senegal

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Abstract

Over the last 20 years, floods have become a major issue for a number of Sahelian cities leading each year to considerable human and material damage. This relatively new phenomenon is usually attributed to uncontrolled urbanization and climate variability, although local manifestations vary.

In the suburbs of Dakar, Senegal, this situation has led to the introduction of State risk management programs in partnership with the World Bank, as well as new mobilizations by urban dwellers engaged in risk mitigation. These two “types” of intervention in response to risk, one conducted by the public authorities according to a technical approach, and the other by groups of urban dwellers seeking a holistic and political solution, are giving rise to new risk management patterns at the urban scale.

The paper presents research on the flood mitigation strategies of urban dwellers and the State in the same locality in the suburbs of Dakar. Through an Actor Network Theory approach based on a “translocal” ethnography of risk, the paper explores the risk narratives and their commensurate logics of action that are shaping emergent paradigms of risk management in the capital city of Senegal. Conceiving of risk policies as controversial fields, the paper thus highlights the political meanings of risk management in West African cities.

Keywords: politics; risks; floods; narratives; Dakar; mobilization

1. Introduction²

Risk and the forms of risk management associated with it are the subject of many studies which attempt to typify different approaches. Recent papers emphasise the possibilities offered by community based approaches (Dodman *et al.* 2016, Dobson *et al.*, 2014), the creative potential of urban citizens (Cástan Broto, 2014), and the need to link urban governments, local institutions and

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