Understanding the tipping point of urban conflict: global policy report

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Understanding the tipping point of urban conflict:
violence, cities and poverty reduction in the developing world

Working Paper Series

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2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this Global Policy Report is to provide general policy recommendations from the four city studies undertaken for the research project **Understanding the Tipping Point of Urban Conflict: Violence, Cities, and Poverty Reduction in the Development World (UTP),** carried out by the University of Manchester in collaboration with partner institutions in Kenya, India, Chile and Switzerland**.** The project, which runs from 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2012, is funded by an award from the ESRC/DFID Joint Scheme for Research on International Development (Poverty Alleviation). This report starts by briefly summarising the background to the project, its objectives, conceptual framework, rationale for case study selection, and methodology. It then discusses the key findings by city, before turning to comparative policy recommendations. The report draws on documents produced during the course of the research project, including city profiles, sub-city findings, and city-level policy briefs. For further details, and to download the project documents, see the UTP website: http://www.urbantippingpoint.org.

3.0 Project background

With urban violence increasingly recognised as a significant global phenomenon, the UTP project was grounded in recent debates relating to conflict and violence, arguing that while cities are inherently conflictual spaces, this conflict is generally managed peacefully through a range of social, cultural and political mechanisms. However, these can sometimes break down and lead to outbreaks of large-scale, chronic violence. The reasons as to why and when conflict tips over into generalised, overt violence in some cities and not in others are poorly understood. Globally increasing levels of violence in cities, whether based on endemic gang, crime or drug-related violence, gender-based attacks, ethnic strife, terrorism, or outright warfare, make this a critical issue to consider, particularly as it is recognised that violence has implications not only for country and metropolitan level economic development, but also for the livelihoods and well-being of those poor households and communities who are often at the frontline of urban conflict.

Over the past few years, a conventional wisdom has emerged within development policy and research circles concerning urban violence, associating it with four key factors. First and foremost poverty – and declining income in particular – has been identified as a critical driver of violent conflict, predominantly at country level. Similarly, the demographic emergence of large youth cohorts has been described as increasing the risk that societies will experience outbreak of internal armed violence. The failure to consider women's security and safety as a specific city concern has also been blamed for the persistence of gendered violence. Finally, socio-spatial exclusion has been pointed to as a key factor to understand the logic of outbreaks of political violence, particularly in slums and poor areas of cities. Despite a wide range of applied policy initiatives to address these issues, urban violence, fear, and insecurity continue to proliferate globally, suggesting that the conventional wisdom underlying current violence-reduction interventions is flawed, and that new insights and understandings are necessary.

3.1 Conceptual framework

Cities are inherently conflictual spaces, in that they concentrate large numbers of diverse people with incongruent interests within contained spaces. This conflict is more often than not managed and/or resolved in a peaceful manner through a range of social, cultural and political mechanisms, but can sometimes lead to violence when such mechanisms cannot cope. In the context of the UTP project, then, "conflict" refers to situations where individuals and groups have incongruent

interests that are contradictory and potentially mutually exclusive but contained, while "violence" refers to the actualisation of conflict through the forcible imposition by an individual or group of their own interests to the disfavour or exclusion of other individuals or groups' interests.

The UTP project introduced two concepts that to date have not been included in violence-related research, in order to comprehend the dynamics of urban conflict and violence in an innovative way. The first was the conception of the potential transition from conflict to violence in terms of a **"tipping point".** This notion goes back to the 1950s, and refers to the moment a given social process becomes generalised rather than specific in a rapid rather than gradual manner. This is usually seen to occur due to a social process acquiring a certain critical mass and crossing a particular threshold, but ultimately it is "the possibility of sudden change [that] is at the centre of the idea of the Tipping Point" (Gladwell, 2000: 12).

At best, transitions from conflict to violence identifiable as tipping points have generally been understood in quantitative terms, with increases in poverty, the number of youth, levels of political exclusion, or gender-based insecurity beyond a certain threshold seen to lead to a sudden change in social conditions, for example. While recognising that the quantitative accumulation of particular factors can be important, the UTP project focused principally on more qualitative factors. These included general systemic transformations, the occurrence of paradigmatic events, the evolution of perceptions (for example due to media reporting), as well as the existence of particular networks of social agents, all as potential causal factors leading to a tipping point. In addition, the UTP project was concerned with the temporal dimension of the notion of a tipping point, emphasising that it is not a static concept, but an inherently dynamic one, that can apply to both increases as well as reductions in violence. As such, the project aimed to holistically apprehend whether specific forms of conflict are more or less likely to lead to violence, what types of violence emerge as a result of the presence of particular conflicts, and under what conditions this occurs, both locally and more structurally.

The UTP project also introduced the concept of **"violence chains"** to explore how different forms of violence that are generated by tipping points processes interact with each other in a knock-on effect. The concept of a "violence chain" was inspired by that of a commodity chain, and used to highlight the way that violence operates systemically, and involves a range of interconnected processes. A violence chain involves three levels of analysis: the components of the chain (different types of violence), the way these articulate together (processes), and the way they are embedded within a broader institutional setting (context).

The ultimate aim of the UTP project was to identify entry points in both tipping point processes and violence chains that might allow the implementation of policy initiatives to reduce the risk of violence, or break strategic linkages within violence chains. Although such changes might be modest, this also means that they are potentially both more easily and efficiently put in place within poor urban communities and at the metropolitan level. Such initiatives contrast with efforts to address "macro-level" structural issues such as poverty or demographic bulges.

4.0 Rationale for case studies

The study focused on four cities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, chosen because they were all paradigmatically associated with one of the factors conventionally identified as causing urban violence, although they did not all display high levels of violence (see table 1).

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Table 1: UTP project field sites

City	Country	Paradigmatic issue	Level of violence
Dili	Timor Leste	Youth	High
Patna	India	Poverty	Low
Nairobi	Kenya	Political exclusion	High
Santiago	Chile	Gender-based insecurity	Low

For instance, Dili suffered high levels of crime throughout the 2000s, as well as widespread civil strife in 2006, that are both widely attributed to a society characterised by widespread poverty and a youth bulge. Nairobi suffered violent post-election political strife in 2008 that was widely attributed to its youthful population, as well as the lack of government control in certain urban areas. Despite the fact that Santiago was a successful middle-income capital city with a prudent state financial policy, violence against women has increased radically over the past decade. Finally, Patna, displayed almost all of the characteristics putatively associated with the tipping of urban conflict into violence – it is the poorest city in India, it has a very young population, and is located in a broader context of regional lawlessness (Bihar) – yet it is widely perceived as having undergone a significant decline in violence during the past decades, and as such constituted an interesting case against which to compare the other cities.

The fact that a city was chosen because of its association with a particular factor did not preclude the likelihood that other factors were possibly relevant to understanding the dynamics of its urban conflict and violence. Paradigmatic factors were starting points, all the more so as each city displayed more than one factor. Moreover, not all the cities displayed high levels of general violence; two do, while two did not. This choice enabled the research project to explore not only the reasons why urban conflict tips into violence as a result of particular factors, but also the potential reasons why it does not.

5.0 Research partners

The UTP project Principal Investigator (PI) was Professor Caroline Moser, Director of the Global Urban Research Centre at the University of Manchester. The project Co-Investigator (Co-I) was Dr. Dennis Rodgers, Senior Research Fellow in the Brooks World Poverty Institute (BWPI) at the University of Manchester. Research was carried out in collaboration with partner teams in three of the respective cities and a fourth international collaborator in Switzerland. In Nairobi, the partner was Eco-Build Africa, a civil society research trust that undertakes research with the government, the private sector, and civil society. In Patna, the collaborating institution was the Institute for Human Development (IHD), a non-profit autonomous research institution with offices in New Delhi, Patna, and Ranchi. In Santiago, the UTP collaborating institution was Corporación SUR, a civil society research institution with an extensive experience researching urban development, gender-based violence, housing, and participation. Finally, the fourth UTP research partner was the Centre for Conflict, Development, and Peacebuilding (CCDP) at the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland, which has an impressive track-record of empirical research on urban violence in Timor Leste, and more specifically in Dili.

6.0 Research methodology

The UTP research project was based on comparative case study research. Each case study combined two components, namely a city profile and a sub-city study,

integrating both quantitative and qualitative research. From the outset the project also included constant dialogue with various project stake-holders in order to maximise the potential impact of findings. This included consultative forums within the research communities and with city-level policy-makers, as well as local, national, and global-level policy dissemination meetings.

City profiles were based on secondary data sources, both qualitative and quantitative, while the sub-city studies were principally based on primary qualitative data collected by the city research teams. In all the cities, primary research focused on low-income areas, except in Santiago, which carried out research in low, medium, and high-income areas, and Dili, which also focused significantly on the particular broader institutional context of post-independence Timor Leste.

The four case studies were carried out in a twin-track manner. The Santiago and Nairobi studies were both undertaken using a common conceptual framework (Moser and Horn, 2011). Fieldwork was implemented using the same participatory research methodology in a number of local communities in both cities, explicitly focusing on the type of violence preliminarily associated with these cities (Moser, 2012). This provided a clear focus for the studies and was designed to ensure comparability. The studies were implemented by in-country Southern research teams with capacity-building, close guidance, and review by the PI (for further details, see Omenya and Lubaale, 2012, and Rodríguez *et al.*, 2012).

In contrast, the studies in Patna and Dili were developed more inductively, adopting the initial project theoretical premise as a starting point, and then constructing a framework iteratively on the basis of primary research, and modifying the theoretical parameters of the studies in a grounded manner. The work in Dili was carried out by a team from the Geneva-based CCDP, supervised by the Co-I, while the work in Patna was conducted by a team made up of the Co-I and three Institute for Human Development researchers (for specific details about the research methods deployed in Dili and Patna, see the respective city case study working papers, Carapic and Jütersonke, 2012; Rodgers and Satija, 2012).

7.0 Key findings by city

7.1 Dili

In April 2006, Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste, experienced a major episode of collective violence which led to the death of dozens, the destruction of around 2,000 houses, and the displacement of 150,000 people. Most analyses point to the presence of large numbers of unemployed youths as the main reason for the violence. The research conducted for the UTP project sought to develop a more context-sensitive account of the 2006 Crisis, tracing the fault lines, conflict drivers, and multiple actors involved, and then situating them within the city's broader complexities.

Ostensibly, the 2006 Crisis related to a group of army petitioners voicing their discontent to their superiors, the argument being that personnel from the western part of the country were being discriminated against vis-à-vis personnel from the eastern part. The dismissal of the petitioners from the Timorese armed forces (F-FDTL) led to protests in front of the Governmental Palace in April 2006, which rapidly became violent. The spread of violence was made possible by the presence and involvement of a range of social "connectors", who were able to draw on traditional kinship (*lisan*) and sacred house (*uma lulik*) relations to

mobilise a greater mass of people, including independence movement "veterans", as well as martial and ritual arts groups, and street-corner youth gangs.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, our research suggests that martial and ritual arts groups and street-corner gangs were not directly involved in the organisation of violence. Rather, their involvement was instrumental, and a function of rivalry within the East Timorese political elite, including between certain charismatic personalities enjoying a cult-like following among the population. These revived a traditional but forgotten discourse about putative differences between *lorosae* and *loromonu* (easterners and westerners), in order to foster a context of polarisation within which different actors could be more easily mobilised and roused to violence.

This process was facilitated by a number of important features that make Dili different from the rest of Timor-Leste. The city has a highly heterogeneous population which intensified existing everyday conflicts, and is also characterised by various forms of institutional multiplicity, including the co-existence of various clashing authority structures, as well as a fragmented security sector, not just in the formal sector but also the informal. Finally, Dili is also characterised by high levels of land insecurity due to the existence of competing land tenure regimes.

Taken together, these particular aspects of Dili's urbanity constitute it as a "disembedded" space within East Timorese society, a situation that is further exacerbated by the fact that it is both a primate and an "over-determined" city, due to the presence of the United Nations and other development agencies. This allowed for what was initially a relatively minor and specific conflict to spread out and tip into a situation of overt, generalised violence, with dramatic consequences for local communities and the city as a whole.

> ***Key policy insights:***
>
> - Urban spaces have particular dynamics that can exacerbate both conflict and violence, and furthermore facilitate local-level instances of the former tipping over into broader, city-level expressions of the latter.
> - The co-existence of multiple authority and security systems – described here as a situation of "institutional multiplicity" – can be both a driver of conflict and violence, as well as an entry-point for keeping conflict and violence in check through the maintenance of a "balance of power".

7.2 Nairobi

Kenya, the capital city of Nairobi hit the international headlines with the brutal 2008 post-presidential election political violence in which more than 1,000 people were killed. This tipping point, closely associated with the contestation of power amongst the dominant elites as described in the city profile, occurred in a city where violence has more commonly been associated with the economic and social exclusion of the majority of the population living in the peripheral city informal settlement. The sub-city participatory violence appraisal, undertaken in three such settlements, overall confirmed this finding relating to political violence as their primary concern, but also showed that local people perceived a range of other types of violence, including domestic violence, tribal, economic and tenant landlord violence as critical, even if of secondary importance.

Interesting differences between communities were also identified. In Kibera politicians used local youth as a cheap method to unleash violence on competitors – with the Office of the President identified as often playing a critical role in

causing and fuelling political violence. In Mukuru, tenants had to move to areas perceived as safe for different ethnic groups, while in Kawangware, tenants from the Luo and Luhyia ethnic groups were subjected to 400 percent rent increases by their Kikuyu landlords. In both cases landlord-tenant conflicts tipped into violence as a result of evictions, rent boycotts, and rent increments, thus demonstrating the links between ethnic violence on the one hand, and economic and political gain, on the other. A further finding related to the importance of local organisations in both generating and preventing violence. Faith-based Organisations (FBOs) were the only type of local association solely associated with violence prevention.

Spatial manifestations of violence were visually represented by focus groups through the identification and mapping of "hotspots". In many of these there were multiple manifestations of violence. In the community dissemination events local chiefs found such maps of immediate value to assist them in identifying practical spatial solutions to some aspects of violence, particularly economic crime-related violence that occurred in unsafe areas such as bridges and unlit open areas. Finally, in Nairobi the concept of violence chains was recognised as a particularly useful tool for identifying linkages between different types of violence. In Kawangware such chains showed that politics often tipped into tribalism, political fights, and loss of property. Another example was the way in which landlord-tenant violence was transformed into ethnic violence by political leaders and criminal gangs – thus representing economic violence as political and ethnic in nature. Chains varied in strength; where they were stronger or multiple, communities were perceived as more violent. In such cases ethnic violence was frequently the driver, determining the linkage from political to land lord violence.

Key policy insights:

- Policy makers need to recognise the importance of political violence as an ongoing phenomenon by identifying the different categories of violence beyond crime statistics.
- The high priority given by local government to spatial slum improvement programmes provides an opportunity to "mainstream" security and violence reduction into interventions to build physical and human capital through the provision of water, sanitation, housing and roads.
- Initiatives to break the links within violence chains including strengthening governance structures, addressing youth unemployment, regularising informal settlements and even increased recognition of the importance of ethnic intermarriage as a means of altering the tribal organisation of space in local settlements.

7.3 Patna

Patna, the capital of the Indian state of Bihar, potentially offers insight into the way a situation of chronic urban violence can return to one of managed conflict. Known as the "crime capital" of India during the 1990s and early 2000s, Patna is generally considered to have become peaceful and secure since the accession to power of the reformer politician Nitish Kumar in 2005.

Research carried out in Patna between April and July 2011 suggests that the perception of increased security is linked to a decline in violent crimes, such as murder, kidnapping or robbery, rather than a decrease in overall crime rates, which have actually increased since 2005. This particular trend means that the predominant forms of violence in the city have become less visible. At the same time, there has also been a shift in the geography of violence, and this is now

concentrated in Patna's slums. This transformation has been the result of a strategy since 2005 of more targeted policing, in particular vis-à-vis organised crime. Measures have included increasing police resources, "fast-track trials", cracking down on illegal gambling rings, and liberalising alcohol production and sales to undermine so-called "liquor mafias".

Research found that this latter measure significantly increased alcohol sales and consumption in slums, and levels of violence, particularly domestic violence against women, also increased as a result of alcohol-fuelled conflicts. Domestic violence is less visible than organised crime and tends to be spatially less spread out. The police were also reported as persistently failing to intervene in cases of alcohol-fuelled domestic violence in slums, unless this spilled over into public spaces beyond the slums.

This selective policing and its logic of containment were also evident in the police's contrasting reactions to two other major forms of conflict in Patna's slums – over land tenure, and access to water and toilets. The former often led to violence by landowners or developers against slum-dwellers, in which the police rarely intervened. Conversely, the police generally acted rapidly in relation to antagonisms over water and toilets, which frequently polarised along caste and communal lines, and thus had the potential to spill out beyond the slums.

Although Patna is now much safer for the middle and upper classes, this is principally due to a transformation, rather than a reduction, in patterns of violence in the city. Major forms of violence that spread across the city have been eliminated, and police patrolling since 2005 aims at containing conflicts that might spill beyond the slums. This has led to an intensification of violence in the city's slums, with over three quarters of slum-dwellers surveyed contending that violence was still an overwhelming feature of their everyday lives. This raises the question as to how sustainable the current situation is, with an obvious issue to consider the fact that although many of the conflicts and the violence affecting contemporary Patna have been contained, most of their underlying causes have not been tackled.

> *Key policy insights:*
>
> - The spatial distribution of both conflict and violence is critical to take into account, both with regard to the way in which the former can tip to the latter, but also in relation to the containment of violence. It is a factor that can both aggravate and mitigate conflict and violence, however.
> - Mundane, everyday forms of conflicts and violence can link to more extreme and wide-ranging instances, forming chains that are both a consequence of, but can also contribute to, conflict tipping into violence. Attempting to break a violence chains is potentially an ideal entry point for violence-reduction initiatives.

7.4 Santiago

Santiago provided an interesting example of a successful middle-income capital city with low overall levels of violence, but one in which the largely invisible problem of gender-based violence is not only widespread but has increased. The study was grounded in an analysis of the city's adoption of a neoliberal economic model over the past 30 years, as well as two critical city-level tipping points associated with the 1973 military coup d'état and 1990 transition to democracy.

Unlike the other studies, the sub-city participatory violence appraisals were undertaken in three different communities that were representative of three

income groups, El Castillo, a popular social housing settlement, Contraloría, a middle income neighbourhood, and La Dehesa, an elite area of the city. With most gender-based violence studies concerned with the issue as located in the private domain, the sub-city study focused on "*violencia en la calle y la casa*" ("violence in the street and the home").

One of the main findings was that, contrary perceived wisdom, violence was not confined to poor areas, but exists across all three sectors with victims as well as perpetrators found in all socioeconomic groups. Causes were identified as relating to the consequences of the city's neoliberal model, in which severe economic and social inequalities have unleashed diverse forms of violence and associated violence chains. These differ by income group; thus in low-income El Castillo violence results from exclusion and a lack of opportunities; among the elites in La Dehesa it relates to accumulating and maintaining wealth and "a fear of the have-nots"; finally in the intermediate sector of Contraloría violence occurs in a context where households struggle to improve their lot, dedicating a great amount of time to work, and suffering high stress levels and family breakdown.

A second finding was the fact that the type of violence varies according to place, income and gender. In El Castillo, drug use, micro trafficking networks, fights and shootings, and power struggles that generate high levels of fear, all constrained men, women and children in the free use of public spaces. Nor were houses considered safe places, with their small size resulting in stress and frustration that lead to violence in family relationships, child abuse and violence against women. While men were more affected by violence associated with fights, weapon-use (linked to drugs), and conflicts between gangs, violence against women was more prevalent within the home and related not only to patriarchal gender relations but also to drugs – both conflict associated with illicit drug dealing, as well as violence between drug users and other household members.

In contrast, in Contraloría violence against women within couples was explained in structural terms as resulting from the "pressure of the capitalist system" and the "stress that we live as a society", while in La Dehesa the priority concern was direct forms of economic violence such as assaults, house burglaries and theft of and from cars. Further examination revealed that intolerance towards diversity and a fear of the "other" as different, poor, and violent, created powerful feelings of insecurity, and a perception that the community was unsafe.

Key policy insights:

- All violence must be made visible. By defining urban violence only as a problem of poor areas, other existing manifestations of violence become invisible.
- Social cohesion, inclusion and citizen participation must be incorporated as crosscutting urban policy themes, particularly those associated with violence reduction.
- The focus of public policy responses should be violence instead of security. By making this charge interventions focused on families, schools and communities are necessary to break the violence chains.

8.0 Comparative policy recommendations

While each city study generated a range of city-specific policy recommendations, which are detailed in the individual city policy briefs, a range of comparative policy recommendations can also be identified. Although the UTP project was not designed as a conventional comparative investigation, insofar as each city study adopted a different violence-related issue as its entry point, with two methodological approaches used across the study, a number of important cross-

cutting themes nevertheless emerged. These can be divided into four broad categories. The first concerns the common conceptual underpinnings of the project, and more specifically the conceptual validity of tipping points and violence chains. The second relates to the project's findings concerning the four conventional wisdoms regarding the dynamics of urban violence that guided the initial city case study selection. The third regards a number of important specific cross-cutting thematic insights. The final category pertains to more general recommendations that synthesise the project's findings about the dynamics of urban conflict and violence in a generic manner.

8.1 Conceptual insights

As described above, a principal objective of the UTP project was to explore the potential added value of two specific concepts for the study of urban violence: "tipping points" and "violence chains". Neither of these concepts has been systematically applied to the study of violence, and where used this has tended to be mainly in a descriptive manner.

8.1.1 Tipping points

All four city case studies illustrated the usefulness of the notion of "tipping points". In particular, the concept allowed project investigators to ground their local-level primary research within broader city-level frameworks – as identified in the city profiles – thereby promoting an awareness of broader structural issues, as well as the critical connections between macro and micro-level processes. Because by definition a tipping point signals the moment micro processes become generalised on a macro scale, the concept enabled researchers to identify which forms of conflict and violence were local in scope, and which had ramifications that went beyond the locality to city level. An important insight from the UTP project is that a tipping point generally is not a static event, as is frequently portrayed, but a process that needs to be understood relationally.

This has important methodological implications, as it means that to understand the dynamics of urban violence it is necessary to move beyond conventional static measures such as aggregated crime statistics, and to identify more contextualised and process-related data. Another important finding, particularly with regard to the way that tipping points are generally discussed, is the fact that tipping points can be reversed. While the Patna study was intended to explicitly study such a situation, results from both Nairobi and Dili showed how situations of chronic urban violence can be reversed, and identified the social actors responsible for this. This has important policy implications for the design of interventions aimed at reversing a tipping point. At the same time, as the Patna study highlighted, there are both positive and negative ways through which a tipping point reversal can be achieved, a factor that is critical to take into account.

8.1.2 Violence chains

The usefulness of the concept of "violence chains" was also demonstrated in all four case studies. It was explicitly investigated in the Nairobi, Patna, and Santiago studies, while the Dili case study focused more on the notion of tipping point, due to the particular nature of the episode of violence that this city suffered. The concept of violence chains illustrated the interconnectedness between different forms of violence, a finding that repeatedly emerged in all the city studies. This highlighted the importance of adopting a cross-sector rather than a sector approach, not only for the study of violence, but also for associated policy prescriptions. All the studies highlighted the fact that focusing on just one type of violence inevitably gives an incomplete picture of reality. It also

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suggested that the way in which the issue of causality is taken into account is critical, and how certain chains of violence are potentially more consequential than others.

8.2 Challenging conventional wisdoms concerning urban violence

The starting point of the UTP project was dissatisfaction with certain mainstream assumptions relating to the causes of urban violence, including the consensus concerning violence causality relating to the four "conventional wisdoms" of poverty, youth, political exclusion, and the inadequate consideration of gender-based insecurity. On the basis of their earlier research on violence, Caroline Moser and Dennis Rodgers considered the importance and general interpretation of the link between these factors and violence as likely to be erroneous, and given their importance in policy debates, the project was intended to critically explore each of these "wisdoms". Specific cities were chosen as case studies due to their paradigmatic association with one of these factors. While this provided initial city level entry points, each case study inevitably broadened its focus to include a wide range of violence-related findings, many of which undermine or further challenge current policy assumptions, as the follow sub-sections outline.

8.2.1 Political exclusion

The policy community frequently contends that urban violence is linked to political exclusion. In fact, all four city case studies demonstrated that the way urban violence is linked to politics is less associated with exclusion, and more frequently related to the urban elite obtaining or maintaining power. In cases where the state system was captured by this elite, or where internecine conflict occurred between different factions of the elite, urban violence in fact more often related to political inclusion than exclusion, that is to say to inclusion into a violent state system. All the case studies highlighted this in different ways: in Nairobi and Dili, youth groups were recruited by the urban elite to be instrumentally involved in political violence, while in Patna and Santiago this related to adverse integration into a segregated urban spatial regime, whether related to the violence associated with the spatial containment of slum dwellers in Patna, or the broader structural violence associated with the historical construction of Santiago as a neo-liberal city. In terms of policy this finding has implications for way in which city political systems are recognised as part of the problem, and therefore the need to promote more participatory and positively inclusive forms of governance, as specifically identified in the Nairobi, Dili, and Patna studies.

8.2.2 Poverty

All the city studies challenged the common assumption that poverty is causally linked to violence. As highlighted in the cases of Patna and Santiago, poverty is a contextual factor. At the same time, the Patna and Nairobi studies also showed how access to scarce resources could be a factor in generating urban violence. Deficient infrastructure emerged as critical, with bad quality and limited access to toilets and water pumps a fundamental cause of violent incidents between local residents as well as with local authorities, a factor that has direct and straightforward policy implications. The Santiago study furthermore highlighted how violence was not only confined to poor areas, but also affected both public and private high-income areas.

Poverty can explicitly be linked to violence when the non-poor perceive the poor as a problem. This often leads to the former sanctioning or even taking direct violent action against the poor. In both Patna and Santiago the inter-class hostility identified in the studies led policy makers and other stakeholders in city-

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level consultations to identify the promotion of social cohesion and greater interaction between different classes in the city to mitigate negative social perceptions between social groups as a priority. In the case of Nairobi, where inter-ethnic conflict was a serious problem, local solutions included the establishment of multi-ethnic community centres. Despite such recommendations, it is important to recognise that poverty, like violence, is a systemic phenomenon. Indeed, following Mahatma Gandhi, it is possible to go even further, and argue that in many ways it is poverty itself that is the worst form of violence…

8.2.3 Youth

Although it has become commonplace in recent years to associate youth – and more specifically, the existence of so-called "youth bulges" – with violence, research findings from the different cities suggested that there is no "natural" correlation between the two phenomena. Dili, for instance, was specifically chosen as a case study city because the episode of acute urban violence that it suffered in 2006-07 was widely blamed on the large youth population. Yet the research results showed that the underlying causes of the 2006-07 violence were related to long-standing political issues rather than urban population dynamics. At the same time, both the Dili and Nairobi studies showed that young men – particularly those unemployed – often become instrumentally involved in violence as a consequence of being manipulated by other groups including political parties. This suggests that youth are generally not a driving force behind urban violence, and means that city-level policy recommendations aiming to minimize the potential involvement of youth in violence should focus on providing them with realistic occupational alternatives in order to avoid their falling prey to manipulation by external agents.

8.2.4 The inadequate consideration of gender-based insecurity

Although gender-based insecurity was the specific entry issue only for the Santiago city study, it emerged as a major concern in all four cities, highlighting its critical importance in any cross-sectoral research or policy relating to urban violence. One premise of the research project related to the fact that current violence-reduction policy often prioritises gender-based insecurity in public areas, while invisibilising such violence in the private domain. A second concern related to the tendency to identify gender-based violence in isolation rather than mainstreaming it into cross-sectoral violence reduction policy. The Santiago and Patna studies showed how gender-based violence can only be understood in relation to other forms of violence, with clear interconnections between violence in the public and private spheres emerging. The Santiago study furthermore highlighted how even within households, the relations governing male-female violence are far more complex than simply a reflection of patriarchy. All four city studies also pointed to the complexity of male-male violence in public sphere. Policy recommendations consequently include both women-specific interventions – such as the promotion of mobile Women Police Officer units in Patna – but also, more importantly, the need to mainstream interventions that recognise the broader socio-spatial interconnection that exist between gendered violence and other forms of violence.

8.3 Cross-cutting thematic issues

Each of the city studies highlighted specific issues as important determinants of certain forms of urban violence. These included the complexity of inter-ethnic relations within poor communities in Nairobi, as well as the salience of caste relations in Patna. Broader issues also emerged, including the implementation of a neo-liberal urban economic model in the case of Santiago, or the clash of

traditional Timorese and Western liberal democratic worldviews in Dili. At the same time, three issues emerged as key drivers of urban violence across the four cities, namely space, land, and the nature of urban governance. Despite differences in how such drivers manifested themselves in each city, there were also some remarkable similarities. Taken together, both the manner in which they were identified, as well as their particular importance within each city, points to their broad significance for both researchers and policy makers alike.

8.3.1 Space

Although urban space has long been recognised as generating particular social, cultural, political, and economic dynamics, this factor is often overlooked in national violence-reduction programmes. Such interventions generally fail to take into account the specificity of urban spaces, and as such often miss the fact that certain urban spatial configurations can increase the possibility of urban conflict tipping into violence. This was well illustrated in both Dili and Nairobi. In the former, the lack of public space where different social groups could interact in a meaningful manner frequently led to local conflicts rapidly becoming violent, due to misunderstandings relating to a lack of common ground. In the latter, the study mapped violence "hot spots" where multiple and overlapping categories of violence were spatially manifest, often conditioning social interactions in the slum, producing friction, and exacerbating social conflict. Both of these examples highlight the importance of moving beyond a static conception of space to design interventions that focus on the *quality* of space, and identify clearly for whom such space is intended. Mainstreaming an awareness of the spatial manifestations of violence, both in violence-reduction initiatives as well as broader development interventions such as slum upgrading is thus critical. At the same time, certain forms of spatial management can aggravate rather than improve situations of urban violence. In Patna, a deliberate strategy of spatial containment of violence by the Police led to a reduction in city-wide levels of violence, but intensified of conflicts and violence in city's slums, while in Santiago, the neo-liberal urban regime that has been in place since 1973 has fostered a similar process through market operations.

8.3.2 Land

The links between violence and land was a major finding in all the city case studies. In Patna, Dili, and Nairobi, this related to land tenure, while in Santiago, with a formal land tenure system in place, it was mainly a question of housing quality. While land redistribution was raised as an issue, especially in Patna and Dili, in all the studies – but most evident in Nairobi – dysfunctional land tenure systems were closely associated with violence. The regularisation of an unambiguous land tenure system, with clearly established rights and obligations of both owners and tenants, as well as the necessary documentation to both prove and claim rights to land were a frequent demand. Certainly, many of the reported conflicts in Nairobi and Patna related to competing land claims within the context of uncertain land tenure regimes. In the case of Dili, however, conflicts resulted from competing and contradictory (traditional vs. "modern") authority systems regulating land ownership in the city. While policy to address land tenure systems is not only highly politically complex but also context specific, it is less complicated than the issue of land redistribution, and may be an easier entry point for tackling the land-conflict-violence nexus. Certainly, an explicit recognition of the close interrelationship between land, conflict and violence – often discussed in relation to rural areas but less vis-à-vis the urban – would be an important step forward for policy makers and planners seeking to reduce or prevent violence in cities across the globe.

8.3.3 Governance

The nature of urban governance emerged as a major cross-cutting theme from the four city studies in three major ways. First, all the studies highlighted that urban governance is particularly complex because of multiple and competing forms of authority. In the case of Nairobi, for instance, this included the power and political domination of national political leaders at the capital city level. This had critical consequences for violence in the city, as different authority structures clashed over the imposition of what they believed to be their prerogatives. In Dili, clashes occurred as a result of the disjuncture between traditional forms of authority and the post-independence Western liberal democratic state, as well as between neighbourhood level formal and informal security providers. In Patna one reason for the city's dramatic decline in its violence levels was the Police's explicit targeting and neutralising of the organised crime that had constituted an alternative focus of power at the local level during the 1990s.

Secondly, all four studies highlighted in different ways the importance of the underlying nature of governance (and not just its efficiency). In Patna, violence was effectively reduced through an exclusionary form of governance in which the majority of the city's population living in slum areas arguably lost out. Similarly, the Santiago case study illustrated how neo-liberal governance created a city where particular social groups repeatedly lost out in terms of their economic well-being, with exposure to greater forms of violence being closely associated with socio-economic standing. This finding demonstrates the importance of promoting more inclusive and participatory forms of governance, both locally and at the wider city level. This requires bottom-up approaches that go beyond simply targeting violence but encompass a range of more generally integrative measures – including, as recommended in Nairobi and Patna respectively, more inclusive social amenities such as multi-ethnic or multi-caste toilets and the building of community halls.

Finally, all the studies identified that existing city level responses to violence, as well as those associated with elite social groups, focused more on increasing security rather than reducing violence *per se*. Consequently they failed to tackle the root causes of conflict and violence in the city. A security-oriented approach will rarely be sustainable, because it is based on ensuring a transient state of affairs rather than a permanent transformation of a violence-generating social situation. Indeed, a focus on securitisation over violence-reduction is often likely to both aggravate and generate new conflicts, leading to increased chances of urban conflict tipping into violence, as was highlighted in the cases of Dili in the run-up to the 2006-07 crisis, and Santiago after the 1973 coup.

9.0 Overarching recommendations

Insights from the four city case studies, as well as the cross-cutting themes identified above, point to the formulation of a number of critical overarching recommendations concerning violence reduction in cities world-wide:

9.1 Mainstreaming conflict and violence into development debates and policy

Violence needs to be mainstreamed into development initiatives, rather than remain a separate domain of intervention. Although conflict and violence have become increasingly a focus of interest within the development community during the past decade, it is rare for them to be considered in a properly contextualised manner. This is important not only because of the manner in which violence interacts with other social, economic, political, and cultural processes, but also because non-violent development issues can become entry points both for

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reducing and preventing violence. In Nairobi and Patna, for example, slum upgrading initiatives were clearly shown to have the potential to facilitate violence reduction and prevention if they mainstreamed an awareness of the potential spatial interactions between violence and space, as well as the way conflicts can be intimately related to infrastructural issues.

9.2 Recognising that urban violence is urban

Although violence is a global phenomenon that affects both rural and urban areas, it is increasingly concentrated in urban areas. This has critical consequences when national violence reduction and prevention programmes adopt a "one size fits all" approach across rural and urban contexts, overlooking the different dynamics in these spaces. In particular, cities concentrate social, economic, and political processes in ways that both intensify and magnify their effects, and both conflict and violence, therefore, play out very differently to the phenomenon than in rural areas. At the same time, this means that urban spaces can be ideal testing grounds for innovative violence reduction interventions, including more broad-based developmental initiatives that attempt to tackle conflict and violence in a more holistic manner.

9.3 Engaging with the Police

The Police are frequently overlooked as a partner in development, both in the formulation of general policies and strategies, but also more importantly in the specific design of violence reduction interventions. Although in some parts of the world the Police are frequently involved in brutal human rights violations, in others can they can be front-line institutions critically concerned with a range of conflict- and violence-related problems. In all the four cities studied, Police concern about conflict and violence was illustrated by the presence of senior police force representatives at the city-level dissemination events. This occurred despite the fact that in some of the cities local communities viewed the police negatively, arguing that they often aggravated situations of conflict and violence rather than improved them. Nevertheless, the Police are an important institution with which to engage collaboratively beyond a narrow criminal justice remit. This is particularly important in relation to breaking violence chains, as well as reverse tipping points of urban conflict. At the same time, in many cities around the world such engagement will also need to include private security providers, both formal and informal, who are often either working alongside or instead of the Police in ensuring order and security.

9.4 Experimenting with innovative ideas to prevent conflict tipping into violence

Ensuring that urban conflict does not tip into violence necessitates a willingness to experiment with innovative ideas. Despite more than 50 years of interventions designed to reduce violence, the phenomenon continues to grow, particularly in urban areas. This clearly suggests that a new generation of proposals is required. The four case studies highlighted a range of original violence reduction and prevention approaches. In Nairobi local slum inhabitants promoted inter-ethnic marriages as a means of fostering greater links across often segmented ethnic groups – a proposal that was hotly debated by other stakeholders in the city. In Patna, increased Police response to conflict flashpoints clearly led to a decline in overall violence, although the accompanying policy of containment also intensified violence in the city's slums. In Dili, the establishment of a joint command between the Army and the Police following the crisis of 2006 played a large part in ensuring that conflict did not tip into violence during the crisis of 2008, yet it has also meant a growing militarisation of security in the city. Finally, the Santiago case study highlighted the need to move beyond associating violence

with particular socio-economic groups. Finally, it is critical that the long term consequences of such new policies be assessed through longitudinal monitoring.

9.5 Addressing the political economy that underpins conflict and violence

Ultimately, the UTP project highlights how conflict and violence are, at the most fundamental level, linked to issues of political economy, with the question of power and its distribution within society the underlying concern. As was evident in all of the case studies, in the final analysis public policy is less about addressing specific problems, and more about determining the kind of society urban citizens and local communities want, how they consider they should live together, and how to develop mechanisms upon which to act on this. In this respect, cities are arguably privileged spaces within which to make transparent and potentially reverse the unequal power relations in society that manifest themselves as different types of conflict and violence. Equally important, however, is the realistic recognition that often it is pragmatic, implementable practical measures that may in the longer term lead to more strategic and deeper transformations.

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