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CONCEPTS AND RESEARCH AGENDA

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Crisis States Programme

Concepts and Research Agenda

An institutional approach to Studying Crisis and Breakdown

This project will seek to investigate the causes of crisis and breakdown in the "fragile states" of the developing world and the processes of avoiding or overcoming them. We will investigate why, when challenged by crises, some political, economic and social systems have been able to survive and reform while others have experienced a radical escalation of conflict and violence and whether processes of globalisation have precipitated or helped to avoid crisis and social breakdown.

What do we mean by crisis and breakdown?

In this project we define crisis and breakdown along a wide economic, political and social spectrum.

We use the term 'crisis' to signify a situation where the political or economic system is confronted with challenges with which existing institutions and organisations are potentially unable to cope. We include here situations of sharp and deep disruption in economic life, a sharp rise in crime and violence in society, or deep turbulence in political life where organisations of governance lose their authority and legitimacy. The economic, political and social dimensions of crisis are inevitably linked together. Crisis in this sense is a condition of disruption severe enough to threaten the continued existence of established systems. We are concerned in part with understanding the causes of crises and in part with explaining what determines their outcomes.

> **Box 1. Why are some "fragile states" more vulnerable than others?**
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> Late developing countries, where processes of economic development have lagged behind the richest countries are generally "fragile states", in the sense that institutional arrangements are vulnerable to crisis and breakdown. Yet some countries and some "sub-national" regions have proven to be more vulnerable than others and we aim to understand why.
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> For example, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have significant features in common (historic levels of poverty, little sense of sub-national identity, upper caste domination), but the former has achieved only very low rates of growth and experienced fragmentation into decentralised fiefdoms often controlled by local warlords, while the latter has enjoyed robust growth and effective and progressive government.
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> Burkina Faso and Niger shared many characteristics, yet institutional arrangements in Burkina at both national and local levels on the whole have proven more resilient in the face of internal and external pressures than those in Niger, where institutional breakdown and violence has been much more extensive.

We are particularly interested in understanding the conditions that lead some systems to engage in processes of *reform, restructuring, reshaping* or *'mutation',* whereby aspects of the system are modified to enable it to adapt to the new conditions and deal with the challenge, while others experience *breakdown*, where the system is incapable of adapting and dealing with such challenges and begins to disintegrate, such that the conflicts which it previously succeeded in containing and regulating cease to be contained and assume an unregulated and correspondingly disorderly form permeated by an *aggravation of uncertainty and insecurity* .[1] We are also interested in

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[1] In some cases crises may precipitate *revolution*, whereby the system is replaced by a different one better equipped to deal with the challenge, or *regression/reaction/restoration*, where the system is replaced by the system which preceded it. In practice, of course, it may be difficult to observe this distinction between reform, breakdown, revolution or regression in a given case, since actual cases are liable to combine aspects of more than one possibility suggested by this typology. An inability to reform (or the failure of an attempt to reform) may lead to breakdown, but this may in turn be the prelude to an effective revolution (France 1789-92, Russia February-October 1917); here 'breakdown' may be conceptualised as a phase in the process whereby movement occurs from crisis to resolution of crisis. Regression to the

understanding the social and political processes and shape of institutions in situations where crises may endure over relatively long periods of time without clear moments of resolution.

What is our concern with violence, crime and war?

We are concerned with violence and crime to the extent that they are indicative of the development of conflicts beyond the point where they are contained and regulated by previously established institutional systems. In short, it is our primary concern with 'crisis' and 'breakdown' (and our associated concern with institutional reform) that furnishes us with the criteria by which we will determine the relevance of both particular instances of conflict and particular instances of violence to our proposed research. The uncertainty that characterises situations of breakdown is particularly salient in relation to violence, a characteristic of human behaviour that is intrinsically unpredictable,[2] and in some of the proposed research we will seek to understand the dynamics of situations where violence has become, in a sense, "a way of life".

We will differentiate between different instances of breakdown (including those which manifest themselves in similar degrees of violence) in terms of our analysis of their dynamics and thus too our evaluation of their significance. For instance, the onset of civil war may be considered to be an instance of breakdown, in that the previous political system has clearly failed to contain and regulate the conflict in question. Yet a civil war may itself turn out to be a crucial moment in the forging of a new order.[3]

We are interested in understanding the patterns of violence that appear to have flourished despite (or even because of) the subsidence of ideologically based armed movements, the removal of authoritarian regimes and the introduction of formal democratic organisations. Crime and delinquency are not new phenomena in the developing countries and political violence and repression are by no means extinct. The boundaries between these two "types of violence" have never been entirely clear. However, while it is important not to underestimate the continuities between past and present forms of violence, it can be argued that in contrast to the generally organised nature of the political and ideological violence of the past, the defining features of the new forms of violence, which have become so prevalent in many parts of the world, is that they are more "diffuse" and "disordered". There has occurred a process of what could be seen as the "democratization of violence", whereby "it [has] ceased to be the resource of only the traditionally powerful or of the grim uniformed guardians of the nation ...[but] increasingly appears as an option for a multitude of actors in pursuit of all kinds of goals".[4] This has important consequences for any effort to circumscribe violence, and to organise social life around the minimisation of risk.

Challenging Assumptions about Institutional Reform

Most approaches to the study of crisis assume that these events are aberrations, or departures from a norm of stability, social peace and security – in

> **Box 2. Combining Institutional Analysis and the Political Economy of Conflict.**
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> We will combine the approach pioneered by Douglas North and the new institutional theorists (who focus on incentive and accountability systems) with the comparative historical approach of Barrington Moore and others (focusing on class and other forms of conflict) and the emerging political economy of conflict approach (focussing on who gains from conflict). This should allow us to develop an understanding of the rationality of individuals and groups in conflict. It should provide a better guide to policy than observations generated by cross-country surveys and economic testing that take little account of context.

status quo ante may be the same thing as breakdown if there w political status quo. An apparently successful revolution may t prelude to breakdown (Afghanistan; USSR ?).
[2] Rodgers, 1999, p.92 citing Arendt, 1969, p.5.
[3] Civil war may lead directly to the establishment of what we w as more effective form of government (e.g. USA 1865, Uganda democracy in part the beneficiary of the economic modernisati profoundly establish a new line of political cleavage in a socie development of party-political pluralism and thus a stable dem other hand, a civil war may result in an intensification of chron by civil war, and whether it is possible to employ the term in re breakdown (Lebanon, Algeria, Somalia, Bosnia for example.)
[4] Kruijt & Koonings, 1999, p.11.

short, departures from a normal state of equilibrium. Policy interventions are often designed to "restore" stability and peace and are based on assumptions that the reasons for economic, social and political breakdown are local and due to the absence of an ideal set of political and economic institutions and organisations.

Programmes of "institutional reform" – a change in the rules by which economic and political systems and their organisations function - are ostensibly promoted by international agencies to get countries on to a "normal track" of growth, improved economic and social welfare, freedom and security. Interventions in extreme situations of violent conflict and war are based on notions of "conflict resolution". Political reforms, notably those based on introducing systems of electoral politics, based on constitutional models of the developed democracies, and anti-corruption campaigns are universally seen as means of achieving stability, peace and progress.

Our programme of research seeks to question these assumptions in several different ways. First, we recognise that conflict, broadly defined, is inherent in all social, economic and political relations. Second, we see institutions - or the rules that govern behaviour in economic, social and political systems and organisations (whether at the local, national or international levels) – in part as the means that emerge in these systems to "contain and regulate conflict".[5] Third, we suggest that any change in reigning institutional arrangements therefore can have both costs and benefits – there is no costless reform – and will affect conflicting interests and the balance of power between them in ways that are often unintended by those who promote institutional reform. Fourth, the causes of crisis can be both endogenous and exogenous and understanding their origins, dynamics and the means to get beyond them requires an historical approach and study at *local, national and international levels*.

Existing research on institutional reform and on violent conflict has tended to take the individual as the basic unit of analysis. This cannot explain how and why a polity collapses into the kind of large-scale and persistent violence we have seen in Colombia, Algeria and parts of India, how some polities have resisted collapse, or how order can be reestablished once it breaks down. We will examine the new political, economic and moral systems emerging from apparent collapse. We need to look at the dynamics of 'communities/collectivities' to understand issues of 'morality/immorality' of violence (Allen and Heald) and the livelihood strategies that people adopt to cope with crisis (Beall and Francis). Our concern with *historical analysis* will transcend the limitations of much of the new institutional literature on problems of governance and economic reform and the micro-level work on livelihoods.

Research Agenda and Questions

Our programme of research will investigate the sources of crisis and breakdown in some of the "fragile" political economies that make up the developing world through research at the global, national and local levels. Understanding both the causes of crisis and the processes of institutional change and reform in response to crises can only be deepened by examining the linkages between processes situated both within particular countries and those in wider regional and global systems, and the interrelationship between local, national and international systems. In what follows we outline the principal issues and questions that will be examined in the projects that make up this programme of work. Most of the research projects operate across the boundaries of local, national and global levels and we have tried to reflect that in the way we have organised the programme.

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[5] Of course institutions do not act only in relation to conflict in society. In fact, we reject the notion in Northian new institutional economics that institutions should be defined exclusively as "*constraints* that structure human interaction" (North, 1995, p.23), which is based on a Hobbesian characterisation of human behaviour, and instead would see institutions as both constraining and enabling human action (Putzel, 1997).

From the global to the national

There is virtually no community in the world that is not deeply affected by changes wrought beyond its boundaries, so the patterns of cooperation and conflict that can be observed at local, national and international levels are intimately related. Changes in the global economy, in patterns of geopolitics at the global level and in the richest nation states (members of the OECD), which set policy and international legal standards, and international organisations like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the agencies of the United Nations, have profound effects on local and national political, economic and social systems in the developing world.

This programme of work will look at the impact of global economic changes on patterns of conflict in a number of developing countries. We are interested in the impact of both the structural changes in the global economy and the policy prescriptions related to economic development that have gained authority at the international level. We are also interested in the impact of changes in the patterns of politics at the international level, of reigning ideas and policy prescriptions about political, legal and administrative reform, and of changes in international law on patterns of conflict in the developing countries.

Our work that stretches from the global to the national level is thus three-fold. First, we want to examine the extent to which changes at this level have offered new opportunities for growth, poverty reduction and the social and economic conditions to overcome crises or, conversely, the extent to which these have in fact precipitated crisis and breakdown in parts of the developing world. Of course, we expect to see both constructive and destructive trends and it will be our objective to analyse the conditions under which either trend is more likely to prevail.

This leads to two interrelated and rather sweeping questions that will be addressed by several of our research projects:

1) How have changes in the patterns of international trade and finance affected the structure of economic organisation and thus the patterns of wealth accumulation, income earning and social inclusion and exclusion?

2) What effect have these changes in the global economy and the structure of national economic organisation had on the institutional arrangements that govern the distribution of political power, coalition formation, community organisation and social cohesion (see box 3)? Specifically, what effect have they had on national governments' ability to contain and regulate social conflict.

Second, we hope to gain a better understanding of the extent to which *interventions of various kinds* by the international community and *the policy prescriptions* they have promoted contribute either to exacerbating breakdown or to creating the conditions to overcome crises and breakdown. This takes us onto the terrain of examining both the impact of reform policies advocating structural adjustment, economic liberalisation, democratisation and respect for human rights on patterns of conflict in developing countries, as well as the impact of interventions in situations of breakdown and violent conflict. This is a vast

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Box 3. The Political Consequences of the New Economic Order.

In the case of South Africa, labour emerged as a key actor in the transition to democracy in 1990-94. Part of the dividend for labour's support for its political ally, the ANC, was a very labour friendly legislative regime. This gave labour an institutionalised voice at enterprise, sectoral and national level. Under global pressure for greater labour flexibility, this framework is now under challenge. Large numbers of workers do not have much of a voice at work and trade union influence appears to be declining with little capacity to represent the growing number of casual workers and those earning a livelihood in the informal economy.

terrain, but a number of our projects will address the following related questions:

3) How have prescriptions of liberalisation, privatisation and fiscal reform promoted by international actors affected national governments' ability to contain and regulate social conflict?

4) What effect have internationally promoted prescriptions for political and administrative reform had on institutional reforms at the national and local levels and what impact have they had on patterns of conflict, as well as on the composition, support and strategies of opposition movements?

> **Box 4. Profiting from Sanctions.**
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> "In the former Yugoslavia, Slobodan Milosevic and his cabal defended themselves against democracy with a series of conflicts that reinforced a Serb 'siege mentality', deepened politically – and economically – advantageous sanctions, legitimised undemocratic rule, stigmatised political opposition as 'Western collaborators', and allowed various kinds of asset-transfer from ordinary people to this cabal (not least from ordinary Serbs through a variety of pyramid schemes, taxation and monopolistic pricing)." – David Keen

5) What has been the impact of international sanctions on the 'rogue' regimes and groups they have been designed to target? Who has benefited and who lost from the imposition of sanctions and under what circumstances have they achieved their objectives or alternatively served to consolidate the position and power of those who they were designed to undermine (see box 4)?

6) What are the main precepts of international law that may be relevant to the prevention of, or response to, situations of breakdown? How effective is this body of law? Specifically, as an example of the role of law in situations of breakdown, how relevant is the Convention on the Rights of the Child - as one of the more - comprehensive recent treaties (incorporating both human rights and humanitarian law) - to situations of breakdown as part of a strategy of prevention or response?

Third, rather than simply taking these structural and policy changes at the global level as given, our understanding of their impact must be informed by an analysis of the processes and constellations of power that have brought them about. In other words, we want to turn the lens around and ask where does the agenda for liberalisation that has been so influential in determining the parameters of national and local development come from in the first place. While the new policy agenda works on the assumption that trade and financial opening improves policy discipline and economic efficiency, this claim has been contested by many serious theorists on theoretical and empirical grounds.[6] These theorists claim that premature opening has caused, and intensified, financial crisis in many developing countries in the 1980s and 1990s, and these crises have often amplified the wider sorts of breakdown that are the focus of the Centre's work.

7) Why, given the problematic nature of these prescriptions have an increasing number of countries chosen this path, especially in the 1990s?

8) What has been the role of the IMF and the World Bank in setting this agenda, and what are the political forces that have driven their decision-making processes? What, in particular has been the role of the US Treasury in this regard?

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[6] Stiglitz, Wade.

We expect that our studies of the causes of crisis and breakdown at the national and local levels will raise other questions about these processes at the global level and therefore this part of our agenda will be tackled after considerable work at the local and national levels has been undertaken. It may well form the basis for the second phase of the Centre's work (setting the agenda for a further 5 years of research).

From the national to the local

While we are concerned with the impact of global processes on patterns of crisis at the national and local levels, the endogenous sources of crisis and breakdown remain in many ways fundamental and are of central importance to our programme of research. The countries where we plan to work are all late developers and understanding patterns of conflict, crisis, breakdown and institutional reform must take careful account of their: "stage of development" from an historical perspective; political organization; political strategies; economic strategies; and economic performance.

We need to understand what makes some countries or regions within countries more vulnerable to breakdown and violent conflict and crime, and less able to initiate reform and processes of peaceful conflict resolution, than others. To investigate this our programme will undertake research around four central issues that stretch from the national to the local level.

First, we want to look at how forms of political organisations and institutions have been related to the capacity to regulate and contain conflict, and deal with crises and whether some are more prone to breakdown than others. Related to this, we are concerned with exploring the extent to which violent conflict can be seen as rational – and interrogate the relationship between predictable and unpredictable violence and between "greed and grievance". This means exploring not only the way elites manipulate situations of violent conflict and disorder, but also the "shared goals" of those involved directly in violent conflict (see box 5). This should contribute to understanding the causes of breakdown and also to understanding the possibilities for the resolution of violent conflicts.

1) What has been the relationship of different frameworks of political representation to the capacity or incapacity of political systems to contain and regulate conflict generated by economic and social change? Specifically, we are interested in examining the record of various types of "participationist" forms of political organisation (based on allegiance to

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Box 5. War as a Political and Economic Instrument.

"Rather than simply being concerned with 'winning', many of those helping to shape violence during a conflict have other aims, aims which often foster a very enduring violence… In Sierra Leone, for example, government soldiers and rebels - who made a joint coup in May 1997 - shared important interests not just in preserving systems of economic exploitation that had flourished under the cover of war but also in preventing recriminations or prosecutions under a democratic government. Meanwhile, elements of the old one-party regime that dominated politics in the 1970s and 1980s have manipulated conflict, first, to prolong their hold on power (through failing to confront the rebel Revolutionary United Front), and then later to undermine successor regimes (through covert support for the rebels)."
– David Keen

Box 6. The New Face of Violence in Nicaragua.

"During the war of the 1980s, the streets of Nicaragua's cities were at peace. Now that peace has been declared, however, the city streets are the scenes of a warfare more violent than any of the past, as *pandillas*, or youth gangs, roam the streets of urban neighbourhoods, robbing, beating, terrorising, and killing. Neighbourhood turf or territorial conflicts transform the country's urban centres into quasi-war zones, as gangs escalate the weaponry of their semi-ritualized fighting from initial sticks, stones, and knives to AK-47s, fragmentation grenades, and mortars, with often obviously dramatic consequences. Urban neighbourhoods are pervaded by widespread fear and insecurity, as inhabitants virtually live in a state of siege." – Dennis Rodgers

populist leaders, organised around communal or ethnic identities, etc) versus the record of programmatic political parties.

2) Have competitive political systems, usually considered as "formally democratic" exacerbated or reduced the possibilities of breakdown and under what conditions?

3) What are the factors that have led to political fragmentation and the "criminalisation of politics" that are usually associated with breakdown and the increase of violent conflict? How important has the decline of ideologically inspired oppositional organisations been to the proliferation of the "criminalisation of politics" and the proliferation of "disordered violence" (see box 6)?

4) How do some courses of action come to seem - and how are they made by powerful people to seem - 'rational'? What are the 'shared goals' of those involved in violent confrontations and does identifying them contribute to the possibilities of securing peace?

Second, we are concerned with how changes in patterns of economic organisation have affected political and social organisation in ways more or less conducive to breakdown. In most developing countries there has been a move away from statist forms of economic management that shaped patterns of class and group power and bred forms of social organisation, mechanisms of bargaining between conflicting interests and patterns of conflict mediation. Increased informalisation of employment may have profound effects on the livelihood prospects of those without significant assets and their ability to organise as a class.

5) How have changes in economic organisation changed patterns of class power and class coalitions, as well as the basis of group organisation and the manner in which social groups participate in politics? Specifically, have they given rise to new class alliances or the organisation of politics on the basis of other identities (caste, ethnicity, etc) at the expense of , or in opposition to, former ruling coalitions and how has this affected political order?

6) How have forms of industrial restructuring, and the expansion of the informal sector as the site of income earning, affected associational patterns among poor groups and their ability to bargain over their interests and exercise voice within the political arena, and thus the possibilities for ordered and non-violent conflict resolution?

7) Is there a connection between the rise of populism and appeals to identity as a basis of organisation, with the informalisation of employment?

8) Has economic change led to an expansion of income earning opportunities or increased unemployment and the proliferation of destructive activities like the sex trade and crime, that could exacerbate other social problems like the AIDS crisis or create unsustainable demands for increased public spending on law and order and social welfare (see box 7)?

Third, we are concerned with the impact of policies of liberalisation, privatisation and fiscal austerity (whether or not they have been promoted by international actors) on the capacity of state

> **Box 7. Heads or Tails? Economic Change and Social Turmoil in the New South Africa.**
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> "Since 1994, with the collapse of apartheid, South Africa has boasted an impeccably democratic constitution, which confers a series of liberties, rights and opportunities on all its citizens…Yet at the same time, the threats to social, economic and political stability in post-apartheid South Africa remain serious. To name a few: crime rates have rocketed; income differentials have grown even starker as problems of unemployment have deepened; violence of various forms - particularly sexual violence - remains disturbingly prevalent, and the scourge of AIDs threatens to destroy a generation of economically active citizens and overwhelm an already ailing public health service."
> – Marks Chabedi & Debbie Posel

organisations and institutions to regulate and contain conflict and mediate between parties to conflict.

9) How have these policies affected the link between state organisations and powerful groups within society and the bargaining processes that existed previously?

10) How have these changes in the role of the state affected patterns of patronage and the capacity to deliver social services that may have been the source of economic inefficiencies in the past but also acted to contain and regulate conflict?

Fourth, we are concerned with the impact of political reforms proposed within the 'governance agenda' of international organisations (including those related to democratisation, decentralisation, human rights, public-private partnership and the development of civil society) on patterns of conflict, violence and crime and the possibilities for containing them, increasing cooperation and participation, and overcoming breakdown.

11) Linked to the first question in this section, to what extent has the introduction of competitive politics under pressure from external intervention expanded or reduced processes of breakdown and violent conflict (see box 8)?

12) How has the international legal pressure on countries to comply with 'human rights norms' affected political and social organisation and has it had any significant impact in national law and policy?

13) To what extent have decentralisation measures precipitated breakdown, offered the means to respond constructively to crisis, or made no meaningful impact and what are the conditions that lead to these alternative outcomes?

> **Box 8. Democratisation and Violence in North Africa.**
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> "The introduction of formal party-political pluralism in Algeria in 1989 was perceived as going much further than any comparable development in the Arab world …[including] Egypt …Since January-February 1992, when Algerian army commanders forced the cancellation of the second round of national legislative elections which the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win, and then banned the FIS altogether, Algeria has been plunged into a situation of violence of dramatic proportions, with over 100,000 dead and no end in sight today. The Egyptian experience, on the other hand, offers a remarkable contrast. While Egypt also has faced a challenge from the Islamist movement, this has mainly been that of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has long eschewed violent methods; and while the radical Islamist fringe has engaged in violence, this has fallen a very long way short of the Algerian case." – adapted from Hugh Roberts

From the local to the national and the global

The assumption underpinning research that will begin at the local level is that the impact of war, conflict and rapid and disruptive social and economic change, while devastating on individual and collective lives, can be experienced as the everyday, constituting the backdrop against which people act out large periods of their lives. Aggregated and broad-brush analyses of political, economic and social upheaval tell us little about the complexity of people's problems, choices and possibilities under such circumstances. In other words, the events, activities, institutional interactions and social relationships associated with 'crisis and breakdown' are often of an on-going, long-term nature, which pre-date and out-live significant disordering political events and periods at the national level and beyond.

Much of what people think and do during periods of acute disruption or disorder is influenced by a multiplicity of factors and is experienced in very local ways. It is not possible to deduce what is happening at the local level just by observing the national and international levels, because they intersect with local processes and do not simply determine them. Work that begins at the local level will be carried out in a variety of settings including those emerging from periods of aggravated conflict, breakdown and war, as well as those where relatively stable and peaceful relations have prevailed despite conditions of crisis.

First, we want to understand why under similar economic and social conditions, in some regions violence has put down roots amongst the local people, while in others peace predominates. We will examine the workings of local institutions and political party systems and the action of local political authorities. The goal will be to determine what are the *systematic* political, institutional and economic differences between violent and non-violent regions. This research will be placed in the context of the local economy and economic actors, natural resource endowments, and the local distribution of income and wealth.

1) To what extent does local government represent local civic society and its demands and needs, and then respond effectively to the same?

2) What are the linkages between the inclusiveness of local politics, the effectiveness of local government, and civil violence and social breakdown?

3) How have measures of devolution or decentralisation affected the local matrix of conflict and cooperation?

Second, we want to identify the strategies poor people follow in rural and in urban areas, in constructing or reconstructing their livelihoods in situations of discord and upheaval, often where natural resources are fragile and the object of conflict. We want to understand ways in which livelihoods are maintained, reconstructed and created in the wake of violent conflicts.

4) What are the endowments and histories that people draw upon, which inform how they are able to respond to the challenges, both positive and negative, presented by fluid, unstable and uncertain social and economic environments?

5) What happens when formal market institutions (related to local, national and cross border commodity and labour markets) are eroded or break down in the absence of effective state regulation and what practices, relationships and informal institutions do people engage in to achieve or maintain a secure economic position?

6) How do people cope with the direct legacy of war and its impact on livelihood possibilities through the persistence of violence and banditry often perpetrated by former combatants (with ample access to weapons and the knowledge to use them) even beyond the geographical limits of war zones?

7) How do household and family forms (relationships within households, both across gender and generation) affect people's strategies to secure livelihoods, recognising that 'families' themselves are often fragmenting and reforming under the strains of people's efforts to maintain social reproduction? Do people retreat into families or do wider forms of trust and networks and communities of reciprocity, mutuality and altruism persist?

Third, we want to understand what happens to associational life, local politics and public action in situations of violent conflict and post-conflict reconstruction (see box 9). The starting point for this

part of the investigation is that while generalised national level or international transition is essential for transformatory politics and policy, local arenas are crucial sites of struggle towards social change. It is at the local level that state support on the one hand, or oppression, neglect and breakdown on the other, is felt. It is here too that resistance is generated. The research will question dichotomised characterisations of people either as heroes of resistance or as passive and hopeless, absorbed by fatalism. We will analyse associational life at the local level and the widely divergent bases on which it may be organised and how these relate to political organisations and agencies of the central state. We want to understand the micro-politics of everyday life and the ways in which struggles become collective, publicly articulated and politically engaged in at different times.

8) How is social and political life 're-normalised' in the wake of violent conflict and war?

9) Do local people actually see the livelihood strategies they contrive as forms of resistance against the state?

10) How far do local people and local initiatives build upon older principles of authority and hierarchy, or alternatively do they construct new institutional forms (such as new cults and churches or vigilante groups and people's militia). Do these provide a basis for a central state to extend its legitimacy and operational capability, or, do they, alternatively, challenge state structures at the local level, either in overt defiance or by providing informal and relatively hidden structures for living?

> **Box 9. Business-led Peace Initiatives in Colombia.**
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> "Business involvement in the peace process in Colombia has been mixed, ranging from support to open opposition. While most of the business sector remains unengaged or favors a "strong hand" approach (which may include the funding of illegal paramilitary or self-defense groups, for example), growing evidence that a military solution is not viable and that the business community is one of the principal targets of the *guerrillas*—who "tax" businesses, kidnap business executives, and destroy the economic infrastructure—has increased the business sector's awareness of the cost of the ongoing war. As a result, there have been a growing number of business initiatives at the local level towards the building of peace. In Medellín, for example, local businesses supported the peace accords with the city's urban militias; in exchange for giving up their weapons, militia members were promised jobs in local companies and positions of communal authority." – adapted from Angelika Rettberg

11) Why do impoverished and defenseless people at some times risk arrest, torture and even death to fight regimes they seemed to have little chance of defeating and why do protests occur in some areas and not others? Under what conditions do people engage in collective and public action and what is the potential for the formation of social movements under conditions of conflict or post-conflict reconstruction?

12) To what extent have processes of breakdown provoked extreme marginalisation? Have measures of reconstruction actually *involved* marginalising and demobilising the majority? Has 'conflict management' at the local level systematically benefited some at the expense of others?

13) Does the return of democratically elected political parties to the forefront signal the demise of popular organisations and grass-roots activism and a return to 'politics as usual'?

We invite comments on the conceptual framework and research agenda laid out in this paper. We are interested in exploring the possibilities for collaborative work with individuals and organisations who share a concern with these issues and problems.

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The aim of the Crisis States Programme (CSP) at DESTIN's Development Research Centre is to provide new understanding of the causes of crisis and breakdown in the developing world and the processes of avoiding or overcoming them. We want to know why some political systems and communities, in what can be called the "fragile states" found in many of the poor and middle income countries, have broken down even to the point of violent conflict while others have not. Our work asks whether processes of globalisation have precipitated or helped to avoid crisis and social breakdown.

Crisis States Programme collaborators

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Research Objectives

• We will assess how constellations of power at local, national and global levels drive processes of institutional change, collapse and reconstruction and in doing so will challenge simplistic paradigms about the beneficial effects of economic and political liberalisation.

• We will examine the effects of international interventions promoting democratic reform, human rights and market competition on the 'conflict management capacity' and production and distributional systems of existing polities.

• We will analyse how communities have responded to crisis, and the incentives and moral frameworks that have led either toward violent or non-violent outcomes.

• We will examine what kinds of formal and informal institutional arrangements poor communities have constructed to deal with economic survival and local order.

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