



**Public lecture
Research project on**

Understanding the Tipping Point of Urban Conflict:

***Violence, Cities and Poverty Reduction in the Developing
World***

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Introduction:

The project and the event

- ❑ Project rationale**
- ❑ Search for new paradigms and concepts**
- ❑ Significance of primary field research**
- ❑ Importance of Southern research partners**
- ❑ Different research methods - different findings**
- ❑ Policy related results from four cities**
- ❑ The challenges of identifying new solutions**

The project rationale

1. Causes of violence: conventional wisdom associated with four factors:

- Poverty;*
- youth bulges;*
- political exclusion;*
- gender-based insecurity*

2. Conflict versus violence: cities are inherently conflictual spaces:

- Conflict is understood as a situation where individuals or groups have incongruent, or differing, interests that are contradictory and potentially mutually exclusive*

The project rationale

2. Conflict generally 'managed' peacefully by a range of mechanisms:

❑ Sometimes these cannot cope and different forms of violence can emerge

❑ *Violence is understood as the forcible imposition, by individual or group, of their interests to the disfavour/exclusion of others*

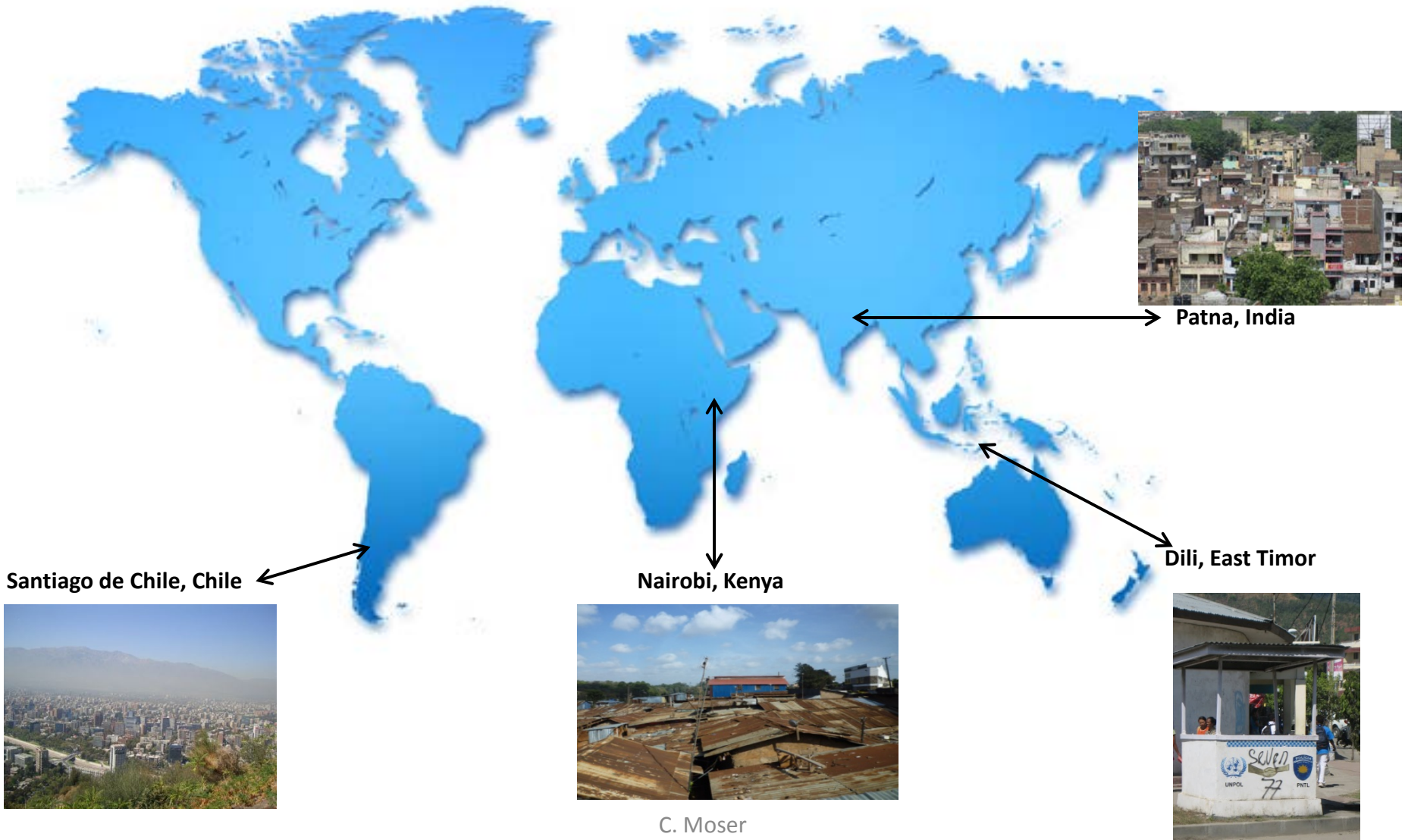
Search for new concepts: *Tipping points*

- ❑ **Project hypothesis:** The transition from conflict to violence happens when a **tipping point** is reached
 - ❑ *Notion originated in 1950s, and refers to the moment a given social process becomes generalised rather than specific in a rapid rather than gradual manner.*
 - ❑ *Usually seen to occur as a result a social process acquiring a certain critical mass and crossing a particular threshold, but ultimately it is the possibility that:*
- ❑ ‘Small events and actions that produce big changes’
(Gladwell)

Search for new concepts: *Violence chains*

- ❑ Builds on concept of 'commodity chains' to identify processes that increase the scale and inter-connectedness of different types of violence
 - ❑ The '*knock on*' effects of different tipping points
- ❑ **Research focus on qualitative process factors**
 - ❑ Includes systemic transformations, paradigmatic events, evolution of perceptions, and existence of particular networks of social agents as possible causal factors.
- ❑ **Concern with temporal dimension of tipping points and value chains:**
 - ❑ These are not static concepts, but inherently dynamic
 - ❑ The notion of a tipping point can apply to both increases as well as reductions in violence.

The primary fieldwork sites



The importance of Southern research partners

<i>Research Centre</i>	<i>Researchers</i>	<i>City and Country</i>	<i>Paradigmatic factor</i>
GURC/BWPI, U. of Manchester	Caroline Moser Dennis Rodgers	(PI) (CI)	
Eco-Build Africa	Alfred Omenya Grace Lubaale	Nairobi, Kenya,	Political exclusion
Corporacion SUR	Alfredo Rodriguez Marisol Saborido Olga Segovia	Santiago, Chile	Gender-based insecurity
CCDP , Geneva	Oliver Jütersonke Jovana Carapic	Dili, East Timor	Youth
Institute for Human Dev.	Alakh Sharma Dennis Rodgers Shivani Satija	Patna, India	Poverty

- ❑ *Each city paradigmatically associated with one factor, but displaying different levels of overall violence:*
- ❑ *City case studies chosen on basis of four factors conventionally identified as causing urban violence*

Combined research components

1. City profile

- ❑ City-level data to contextualize the study as well as urban violence trends based on **quantitative secondary data**

2. Sub-city study

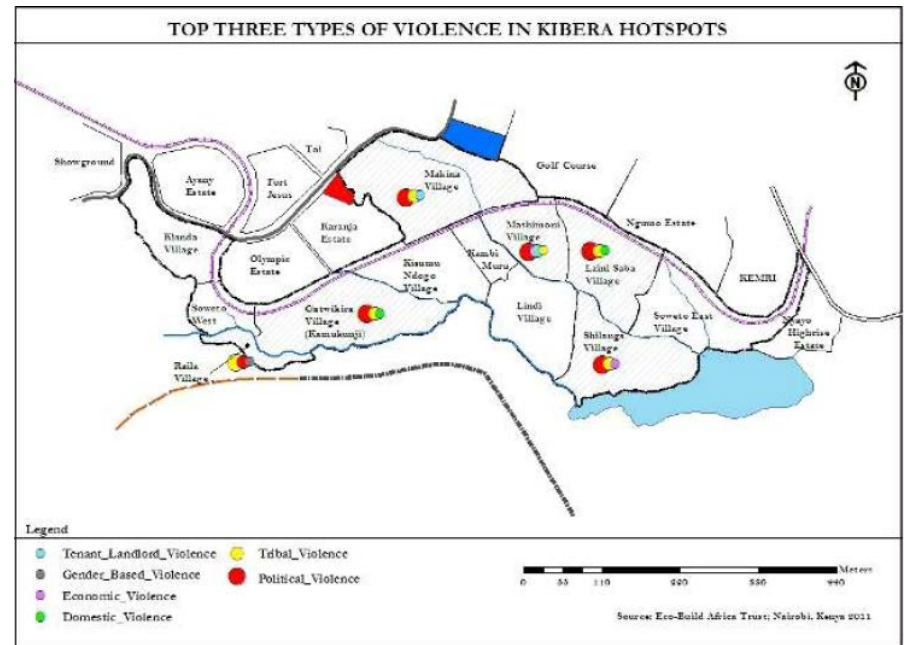
- ❑ Perceptions within informal settlements of types of conflict and violence, tipping point factors that result in violence, and chains linking different types of violence
- ❑ Based on **qualitative and quantitative primary data** using different methods, include participatory violence appraisal (PVA), interviews, FGDs, surveying
- ❑ Primary research undertaken in low-income areas in Nairobi and Patna
 - ❑ **Santiago: 3-fold study in low, medium, and high-income areas,**
 - ❑ **Dili: particular focus on broader institutional context in Timor Leste**

Participatory methodology (PVA): Nairobi and Santiago

- ❑ **Origins:** Includes work of Chambers, Freire, Indian Environmental NGOs, and Moser & McIlwaine on violence in Colombia and Central America
- ❑ **Principles:** Reversal of power - learning from local people rather than extracting: shift from verbal to visual, individual to group
- ❑ **Robustness:** Purposive focus group sampling: *representative of community members, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, culture*

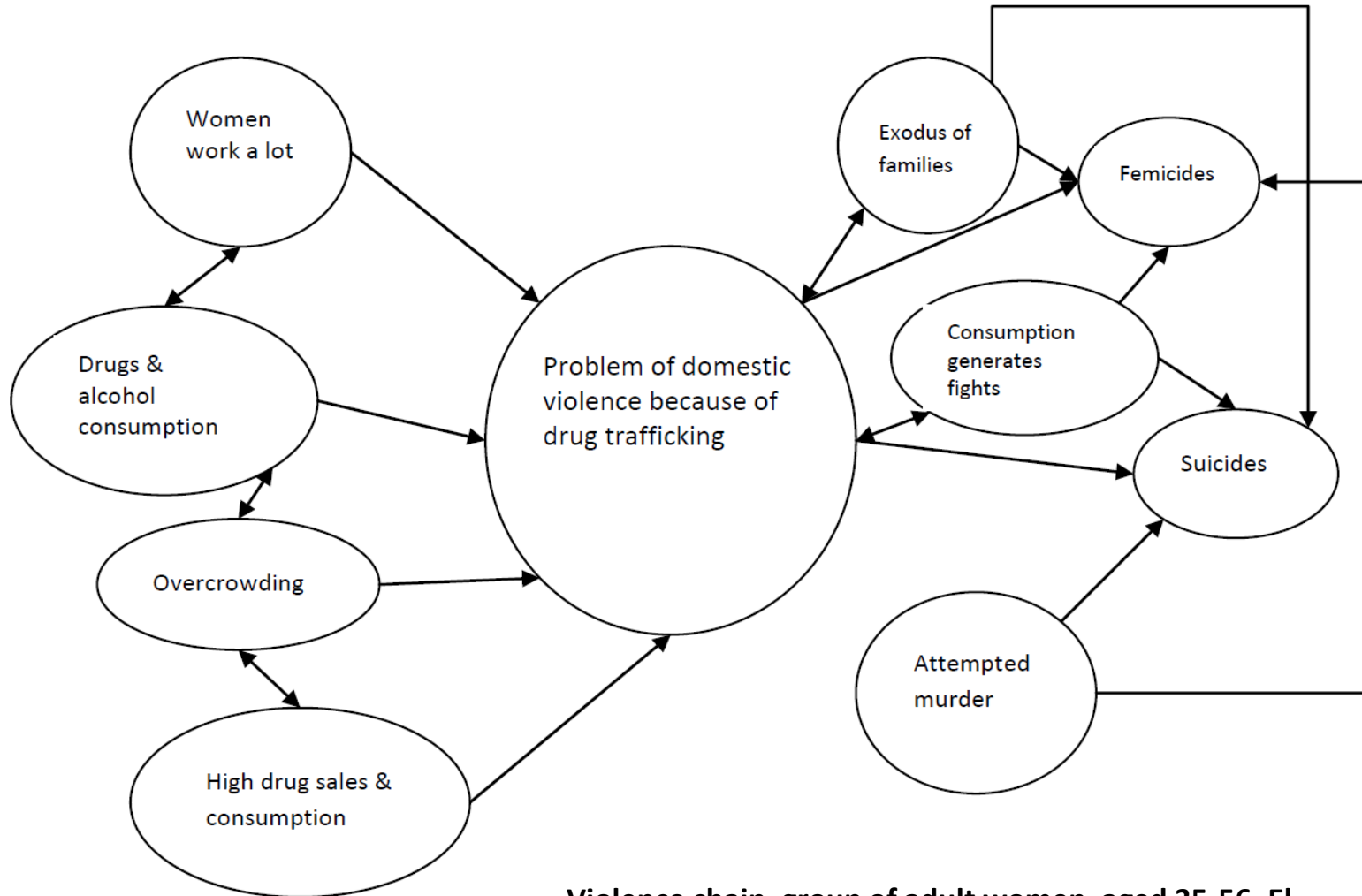


Mapping hotspots in Kibera, Nairobi



Visual representation of violence hotspots in Kibera, Nairobi showing multiple forms of violence

Participatory methodology (PVA): Nairobi and Santiago



**Violence chain, group of adult women, aged 35-56, El
Castillo**

Key policy insights from Dili

❑ **Urban spaces have particular dynamics that can exacerbate both conflict and violence**

❑ *These can facilitate local-level instances of conflict tipping over into broader, city-level expressions of violence*

❑ **The co-existence of multiple authority and security systems leads to a situation of “institutional multiplicity”**

❑ *This can be both a driver of conflict and violence*

❑ *It can also be an entry-point for keeping conflict and violence in check through a balance between traditional beliefs and liberal democratic values*



Lack of meaningful public space in Dili



Remnants of war

Patna: Key policy insights



Deficient infrastructure in Mansoorganj Musahartoli



- ❑ The spatial distribution of both conflict and violence is critical:
 - ❑ Conflict can tip into violence; but also can contain violence.
 - ❑ Conflict both aggravates and mitigates violence
- ❑ Mundane, everyday forms of conflicts and violence can link to more extreme and wide-ranging instances,
 - ❑ It forms chains that are a consequence of violence, 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.

Nairobi: Key policy insights

- ❑ Policy makers need to recognise the importance of **political violence** as an ongoing phenomenon violence
 - ❑ *Use of PVA to identify different categories of violence beyond crime statistics – as well as tipping points.*
- ❑ Local government priority 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 include**
 - ❑ *Addressing youth unemployment*
 - ❑ *Regularising informal settlements*
 - ❑ *Recognition of the importance of ethnic intermarriage to alter tribal organisation of space in local settlements.*



Solo's 7's graffiti: A vote for the constitution is a vote for peace

Santiago: Key policy insights

- ❑ Comparative results from different income groups showed that:
 - ❑ **By defining urban violence only as a problem of poor areas, other existing manifestations of violence become invisible.**
- ❑ Policy that focuses on direct violence, particularly as it affects the poor, ignores structural indirect violence
 - ❑ **such policies have limited impacts. Social cohesion, and citizen participation must be incorporated as crosscutting urban policy themes,**
- ❑ Public policy responses should be violence instead of security.
 - ❑ **Interventions focused on families, schools and communities are necessary to break the violence chains**



Comparative findings: 1. Conceptual insights

❑ ***Tipping points:***

- ❑ In all 4 cities grounded local-level findings in broader city-level processes
- ❑ Showed importance of moving beyond static measures of violence – aggregated crime statistics – to processes
- ❑ Documented how tipping points can be reversed

❑ ***Violence Chains:***

- ❑ Showed interconnectedness between different forms of violence
- ❑ Focusing on one type of violence in isolation from others offers incomplete reality and obscures causality

Comparative findings:

2. Challenging conventional wisdoms in all cities

- ❑ **Poverty:** A contextual factor; while lack of access to scarce resources can generate violence: **Nairobi; Patna**
- ❑ Poverty linked to violence when the non-poor perceive poverty as a problem and menace—inter-class hostility; **Santiago, Patna**
- ❑ **Youth:** No natural correlation between youth bulges and violence
- ❑ Young men become instrumentally involved in violence when manipulated by others, including political parties: **Nairobi. Dili**

Comparative findings:

2. Challenging conventional wisdoms in all cities

- ❑ ***Political exclusion:*** Violence less related to exclusion and more to the elite obtaining or maintain power : **Nairobi, Dili**
 - ❑ Includes adverse integration into segregated urban spatial regimes: **Santiago. Patna**
- ❑ ***Inadequate consideration of gender-based insecurity:***
 - ❑ Entry point for **Santiago** study, emerged as major concern in all **4 cities**
 - ❑ Clear interconnections between private and public spheres

Cross-cutting policy themes

1. Space:

- ❑ Lack of public space where different social groups can interact leads to 'hotspots'
- ❑ Generate integrative spaces of negotiation for greater social cohesion
- ❑ Mainstreaming awareness of spatial manifestations into violence reduction – such as slum upgrading



Hotspot bridge in Mukuru

2. Land:

- ❑ Dysfunctional land tenure systems and land sub-markets closely associated with violence
- ❑ Clearly establish rights & obligations of owners and tenants with necessary documentation
- ❑ Reduce land sub-market gaps



Buddha colony slum unilaterally fenced off by property developers

Cross cutting policy themes

3. Governance:

- ❑ Highly complex because of multiple and competing forms of authority within city
- ❑ Exclusionary forms of neo-liberal governance creates city where particular social groups lose out
- ❑ **Need to promote inclusive, participatory bottom-up integrative measures including social amenities**
- ❑ City level securitization of violence fails to provide permanent transformation of violence reduction
- ❑ **Directly tackle violence by interventions to break chains, reverse tipping points**



Gang frontiers are clearly marked in Dili

Overarching recommendations

- 1. Mainstream conflict and violence into development debates and policy**
 - Use non-violence entry points such as slum upgrading to recognize that violence is not a separate domain
- 2. Recognize that urban violence is urban: specificity of urban space with socio-economic and political processes intensified**
 - Use Participatory Violence Appraisal to identify violence that goes beyond crime and rapidly diagnose and monitor spatially different violence chains
- 3. Engage with the police as development partners**
 - Collaborate with police beyond narrow remit of criminal justice

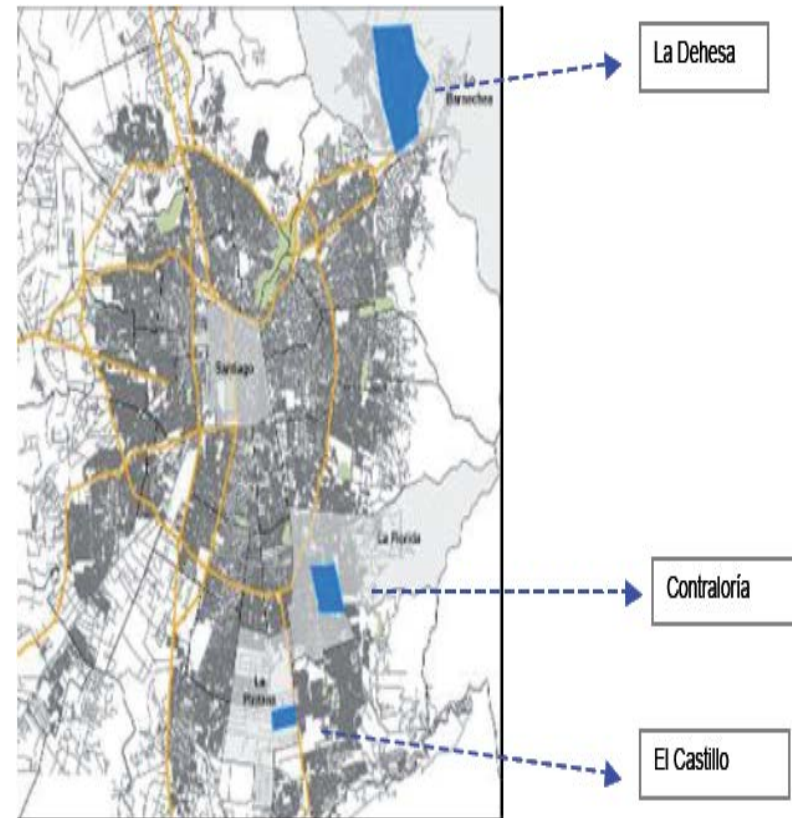
Overarching recommendations

4. Experiment with innovative ideas as means to prevent conflict tipping into violence

- ❑ After 50 years, small innovations rather than blueprints required

5. Addressing the political economy that underpins conflict and violence: as an end to the issue of distribution of power in society

- ❑ Public policy must shift from addressing specific problems to determining the kind of society urban citizens want
- ❑ *Are cities privileged spaces in which to reverse unequal power relations?*





www.urbantippingpoint.org

*“Tipping Points are a reaffirmation of **the potential for change** and the power of intelligent action. Look at the world around you. It may seem like an immovable, implacable place. It is not. With the slightest push – in just the right place – it can be tipped.” (Malcom Gladwell, 2000: 259)*

