




Trapped in the city: communities, insecurity and urban life in fragile states

Policy brief



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Introduction

In less than 40 years, a third of the global population will live in cities and 90 percent of urban growth will be concentrated in the Global South.¹ This rapid and seemingly unavoidable transformation could in principle make a great contribution to economic and human development, matching the role played by Western cities throughout the 20th century in advancing opportunity, independence, mobility and public health.² But this growth is also likely to pose serious threats for human security, especially in countries ruled by weak governance structures or affected by conflict. As cities expand, economic development generates new axes of exclusion. While cities are thus becoming the undoubted hubs of global economic growth,³ violence and conflict are also becoming ever more urban.⁴ Disordered urban expansion, the rise of property prices, overcrowded spaces and inadequate services are becoming issues on the agenda of global institutions for the security dilemmas they propagate as much as they are for many municipal governments, which are often unable to cope with increasing demand.

Economic liberalization, incomplete democratization and intensifying globalization are among the causes that undermine the traditional authority of central states and their ability to control the allocation and use of force, especially over vast and densely populated areas such as contemporary metropolises. Although urbanization is a global trend, in conflict-affected and fragile states the transformation has proved particularly stark and disorderly, giving rise to complex social dynamics, violent group competition and heightened levels of insecurity. Beyond the mere size of cities, or the number in inhabitants, “turbo urbanization” appears to account for the most acute insecurity. In cities such as Karachi, Pakistan, which has swelled from roughly five hundred thousand inhabitants in 1947 to over twenty-one million today, the rate and variety of violence has also increased sharply.⁵

The lack of state control or of traditional communal sanctions, combined with an urgent public need for services and goods, has led in these contexts to the emergence of informal networks (often based on political patronage) and self-organized responses. In many urban contexts, clientelist ties and new types of social connectivity have shaped informal systems of resource distribution, while state institutions and traditional forms of state power are increasingly regarded as distant, negligent or inept.⁶ These dynamics pose new threats to peace and security, especially since sovereign states are

¹ Recent estimations calculate that the world population will grow from 7.2 billion people today to 9.6 billion in 2050, with countries such as India, China, Indonesia and Nigeria on top. By the same time, 70% of the world population will also live in cities. 'The Size of It,' *The Economist*, June 18, 2013, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2013/06/daily-chart-10>

² Jerram, Leif, *Streetlife. The Untold History of Europe's Twentieth Century*, Oxford University Press, 2011.

³ According to the New Global Economy Report, 500 cities will account for over 60% of global income growth between now and 2030. See The Global Commission on Economy and Climate, *Better Growth, Better Climate: The New Climate Economy Report*, September 2014.

⁴ Kilcullen, David, *Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

⁵ Muggah, Robert. 'Fixing Fragile Cities,' *Foreign Affairs*, January 15, 2015, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/142760/robert-muggah/fixing-fragile-cities>.

⁶ Cities can be compared to societal laboratories, where human behavior and relationships can be observed and understood at their roots. See Brinkerhoff, Derick W., 'Introduction – Governance Challenges in Fragile States: Re-establishing Security, Rebuilding Effectiveness, and Reconstituting Legitimacy', in: Brinkerhoff (ed.), *Governance in Post-Conflict Societies. Rebuilding fragile states*, Routledge, 2007. London and New York, 1-21.

commonly seen as the lynchpins of stability. Most of all, they confront policy makers with new sets of relations that need to be studied and understood.

The need to explore these issues led the Secretariat of The Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law to organize an expert discussion in November 2014 in The Hague. A number of sessions brought together experts from different countries in the Global South, in order to discuss violence and insecurity in their urban dimension on the basis of concrete experiences. Furthermore, the discussion also sought to assess the value and impact of possible responses. Discussions benefited from the presentation of case studies from cities located in diverse geographical and cultural contexts, including Caracas, Karachi, Lagos, Nairobi and San Salvador – different in many ways, yet sharing similar social traumas and security concerns.

A vital lesson that emerged from the discussion and participants' experiences is that understanding the real nature of urban insecurity requires stepping beyond the traditional analytical framework based on concepts such as legal and illegal, formal or informal, legitimate or illegitimate, and instead digging into the nuances and social adaptations undertaken in contexts of urban survival. In many urban contexts, the concept of crime is vague and difficult to define, since public institutions can be the main perpetrators of violence and gangs are relied upon to provide stability and security. The same ambiguity characterizes the most recent innovations to social problems that rapid urbanization has generated: while traditional governance approaches are often inadequate, high-tech solutions for urban dilemmas – often dependent on private sector involvement – pose new ethical and social challenges, and demand careful consideration of possible risks for the public interest.

This brief will build on the insights from the seminar, and point to some of the more critical and controversial aspects of urban insecurity, above all in fragile and conflict-affected states. It explores some of the relations between violence, power and society in urban contexts, and aims to provide policy-relevant insights for the design of new approaches to urban governance.

Rethinking the boundaries of crime

One of the most significant insights from the expert discussion revolved around the concept of crime, and the way it is contested in numerous fragile cities. Constant interaction and imbrication between political and criminal actors, state and gangs, is found in most of the cities covered, while efforts to distinguish between *good* and *bad* actors was treated by speakers as a futile enterprise.

Public institutions, both at the national and local level, are traditionally considered the main guarantors of peace and stability: they ensure respect for the rule of law, respond to violence, and provide safety and protection. However, in big cities like Nairobi and Lagos - where approximately two-thirds of the population live in slums – social marginalization is marked, and the role of institutions much less hegemonic. A lack of resources and the general unpreparedness of public officials for rapid urban expansion have led communities into cooperation with informal or even criminal actors, who enjoy far more effective and durable control of urban territory and are often the main providers of essential services like jobs, security and protection. As these expanding communities' voting power grows, close ties between local politicians and gangs and/or criminal organizations are established. In low-income districts of Karachi like Lyari, for instance, ethnically-

oriented political parties are often represented by local gangsters.⁷ Likewise, in Nairobi, rivalry between the city's gangs usually runs along the lines of affiliation with certain political parties – although some gangs may be more oriented towards pure coercion.⁸ This interdependence between politicians and gangsters is particularly visible during elections: gangs and other informal coercive groups are deeply embedded in their societies; they control votes and sometimes even represent the connection between institutions and local demands and grievances. According to Yusuf Hassan, member of the Kenyan Parliament, it is impossible to run a successful political campaign in Kenya without cooperating with local gangs given the territorial control they exert. Yet this does not represent a major ethical issue for many politicians: according to Hassan, one third of Nairobi's council members were themselves former gang members.⁹

These cases suggest that defining crime and demarcating the boundaries between criminals and the supposed guarantors of public order is difficult and, in most cases pointless. In megacities, atypical systems of governance rely upon informal networks of power and adapt to a system where public authorities and informal actors come to compete for and share resources. The expert in military affairs, Richard Norton, famously called this the *feral city*, which can be defined as “a metropolis the government of which has lost the ability to maintain the rule of law, but yet remains a functioning actor in the greater international system.”¹⁰ In these contexts, the lack of rule of law and fear of punishment coupled with the fragmentation of the state have caused violence to become a commonly used tool to maintain order and achieve material goals, whether by state and non-state actors.¹¹

State institutions, and especially police, often behave like gangs, and adopt similar postures toward citizens. For example, Rivke Jaffe reported that in Jamaica police have copied various tactics of local dons: while they try to win community support with mural drawings and communal dance parties, at the same time they spread fear through extrajudicial killings.¹² In many metropolises, police forces have come to create their own systems of values and behavioural codes, often guided by racist approaches, brutality and impunity. In South Africa, reports of police brutality have increased by 313 percent in the last decade.¹³ A recent study found that in the past five years, Brazilian police forces killed more than 11,000 people, mostly young black males in the slums of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.¹⁴ In conflict-affected states, security forces tend to be highly politicised and ethnic and religious

⁷ Nida Kirmani, Lahore University of Management Sciences, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

⁸ Naomi van Stapele, University of Amsterdam, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

⁹ Yusuf Hasan, MP for the National Alliance in Kenya, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

¹⁰ Norton, Richard J., 'Feral Cities,' *Naval War College Review*, 2003:98.

¹¹ In the case of Latin America, see Arias, Enrique D. and Goldstein, Daniel M. (eds), *Violent Democracies in Latin America*, Duke University Press, 2010

¹² Rivke Jaffe, University of Amsterdam, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

¹³ Smith, David, "South Africa Reports of Police Brutality More than Tripled in the Last Decade," *The Guardian*, accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/22/south-africa-police-brutality-increase>.

¹⁴ See 'Study: Brazilian Police Kill Average of 6 people a day,' *Huffington Post*, 11 January 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/11/11/brazil-police_n_6140752.html; 'Police Violence in Brazil: Serial Killing,' *Economist*, 20 March 2014, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/americasview/2014/03/police-violence-brazil>

divisions are often drivers of brutal and targeted attacks against civilians. Research by Naomi van Stapele showed that, for many Nairobi citizens, “the police is considered the most dangerous and powerful gang.”¹⁵

Violence perpetuates violence. In Caracas, now one of the most violent cities in the Americas (although the government and NGOs disagree over crime statistics), the rise in violent activities by criminal organisations has been matched by similar trends in the security forces. In December 2009, the Interior and Justice Minister of Venezuela admitted that the police was involved in 15 to 20 per cent of all criminal acts.¹⁶ Also, between January 2000 and November 2007, the public prosecutor registered 7,243 victims of extrajudicial executions by the security forces, which have been rising steadily since 2008.¹⁷ Before his death, former President Hugo Chávez often stated that “the revolution is peaceful but armed.”¹⁸ According to Manuel Llorens, this ambivalent government approach towards the use and discourse of violence continues to this day.¹⁹

The apparent symbiosis between institutions in certain urban contexts and crime has led to a system of violent pluralism, as it was defined during the discussion, in which antagonistic actors start to behave in similar ways. In this scenario, some authors have argued that “violence is an integral part of the current model of development itself”, and as such, cannot be solved or avoided but solely managed.²⁰ The first step in this direction is to recognize the need to deal with complex and deeply intertwined networks of power that consist of both state institutions and non-state constituencies.

Gang governance and the narrative of fear

The history of gangs, and the reasons they have come to exert control over certain territories, differs from country to country. One outstanding cause is the rapid expansion of urban areas, where formal institutions have often been unable to ensure an adequate provision of services and goods for growing, and often impoverished populations, many of whom may be displaced people. According to Max Manwaring, a military expert in gang behaviour in Latin America networked street gangs risk becoming a locus of socio-political authority and insurgent resistance against national states that exert patchy control over their territories.²¹

At the very least, gangs seek wherever possible to dictate the political agenda and promote their factional interests. Chris van der Borgh, who has conducted extensive research in Central America,

¹⁵ Naomi van Stapele, University of Amsterdam, presentation at expert discussion, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

¹⁶ International Crisis Group, *Violence and Politics in Venezuela*, Bogotá-Brussels, 2011 accessed March 13, 2015, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/latin-america-caribbean/andes/venezuela/038-violence-and-politics-in-venezuela.aspx>.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ See for example Hugo Chavez, ‘la revolucion es pacifica pero armada,’ *Globovisión*, 15 September 2010, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xida5b_la-revolucion-es-pacifica-pero-armada-advier-te-pdte-chave_news.

¹⁹ Manuel Llorens, Andrés Bello Catholic University in Caracas, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

²⁰ Caroline O. N. Moser and Cathy McIlwaine, ‘New Frontiers in Twenty-First Century Urban Conflict and Violence,’ *Environment and Urbanization* 26, no. 2 (October 1, 2014): p. 332, doi:10.1177/0956247814546283.

²¹ Max Manwaring, *Street Gangs: The New Urban Insurgency*, Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, March 2005.

suggested that in Honduras and El Salvador gangs often mobilised protests against anti-gang legislation, and support their own concerns as a legitimate set of rights and requests; they even placed advertisements in newspapers in support of the 2012 truce between the two main gangs, which has since collapsed.²² The use or rejection of certain terms is emblematic to understanding how they seek to build legitimacy and defend it against formal institutions. Van Stapele, for instance, stressed how heroin dealers in Kenya label themselves as *businessmen*.²³ In Venezuela, the so-called *colectivos* reject any criminal affiliation, and strive to be recognised as a revolutionary organisation in support of President Nicolás Maduro.

On the one hand, gangs can benefit from the recognition and acceptance of their communities. They often receive or claim historical legitimacy, especially in post-conflict contexts, and are perceived as the guarantors of security, and fair resource allocation.²⁴ Ranging from Latin America to Asia, gangs have become a social model, especially for young people, where being a member of a gang defines identity and status in the community. Yet talk of legitimacy when referring to gangs is extremely controversial. While their role is recognised and their authority respected by some, they consolidate their control over society through a narrative of fear and intimidation, where violence is the cornerstone of the new order. For instance, in the Lyari neighbourhood in Karachi, gangs are perceived to enjoy widespread public support. However, Kirmani asks, “what constitutes ‘support’ when you’re living in a climate of fear?”²⁵ Manuel Llorens likewise referred to traumatised societies, where social behaviour is deeply affected by emotions like fear, devotion or even revenge, each anchored in experiences of violent loss of friends and family.²⁶

Gangs are also instrumental in determining peace and conflict. In El Salvador, gangs showed their power most when exhibiting their ability to bring about a sharp drop in murder rates during the gang truce. Even though it is clear the truce has now failed – with murder rates reaching a high watermark in the country once again - this special power the gangs have in determining levels of violence marks out their extraordinary status today, and provides them with significant leverage in possible future negotiations.²⁷

Taking stock of the central role played by gangs in providing governance and even stability does not suggest that they are an alternative to traditional institutions, or that they offer a sustainable model for urban governance. They can bring about negative peace, and a temporary lack of violent conflict,

²² Chris van der Borgh, Utrecht University, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

²³ Naomi van Stapele, University of Amsterdam, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

²⁴ In Nairobi one of the most powerful gang, Mungiki, claims historical ties to the anti-colonial rebel movement Mau Mau.

²⁵ Nida Kirmani, Lahore University of Management Sciences, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

²⁶ Manuel Llorens, Andrés Bello Catholic University in Caracas, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

²⁷ After the truce ended, murder rates rose again by 57 percent. By the end of January 2015, gangs announced a new truce, which immediately resulted in a sharp drop of homicides. Unfortunately, this agreement also came to an end. March 2015 has since become the most violent month El Salvador has witnessed in decades. See: ‘The broken-truce theory: The end of an armistice between gangs has led to soaring murders,’ Economist, 31 January 2015, <http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21641289-end-armistice-between-gangs-has-led-soaring-murders-broken-truce-theory> and El Faro, ‘Con 481 asesinatos, marzo se convirtió en el más más violento del siglo’, 5 April 2015.

but so far there have been no examples of contemporary gangs ensuring a sustainable and stable peace as their very mode of operation undermines the economic and human development of communities. At the same time, the cases cited show that in many contexts their presence cannot be ignored, and that gangs need to be, not only part, but also protagonists in any sustainable approach tackling urban insecurity.

No peace without communities, no sustainability without the state

The deep interconnection between political parties and criminal organisations, the brutality of police and the very limited resources for and capacity of state institutions to tackle violent crime have not yet changed the responses used by the state, which largely depend on traditional mechanisms based on the use of force. The state remains the ultimate purveyor of law and order, while security forces and especially police continue to be massively deployed to repress increasing levels of violence. In Venezuela, since 2000, more than 20 national security plans have been unveiled. In many Latin American countries, *mano dura* (iron fist) responses have backfired and have only served to perpetuate the cycle of violence, illustrated by increased levels of violence, crime and corruption.²⁸ Moreover, repressive policies have led to the stigmatization of minorities, over-criminalization of minor offenses, and severe prison overcrowding. For example, in Venezuela the prison population has grown from 30,483 in 2009 to over 53,000 in 2013.²⁹ Especially in Latin America, overpopulated prisons serve as ‘schools of crime’ where criminal networks are made and deepened.³⁰ After leaving jail, young males and females are often indebted to gangs, fail to receive adequate welfare support and state protection, and face stigmatization from society, which often leads them back to criminality – and eventually prison.³¹

The truce of El Salvador shows that some governments are starting to consider more inclusive approaches to conflict resolution and mediation. In this case, however, the lack of long-term support by the government undermined the durability of the truce. The last national security plan deployed in Venezuela, *Plan Patria Segura*, was based on civic-military cooperation, suggesting that authorities are beginning to recognise the need to rebuild more fluid contacts with local communities. Government and opposition are divided on the question of whether the plan has worked.

Besides cooperation between the state and gangs, social mobilisation against violence and conflict is another method that indicates how dialogue and an inclusive process can bring about sustainable peace. The experience of the *Mujeres de Portillo* is emblematic in this respect. This initiative originated from the mothers of the members of two rival gangs in the low-income Catuche neighbourhood of

²⁸ See, for example, Pew Research Center, *Crime and Corruption Top Problems in Emerging and Developing Countries*, November 2014; *Americas Barometer 2014*, Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP); UNDP *Citizen Security with a Human Face*, Regional Human Development Report 2010-2014; UNHCR, *Children on the Run: Unaccompanied Children Leaving Central America and Mexico and the Need for International Protection*, Report, March 2014.

²⁹ Manuel Llorens, Andrés Bello Catholic University in Caracas, presentation at expert discussion Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

³⁰ See Chris van der Borgh and Wim Savenije, ‘Anti-Gang Policies and Gang Responses in the Northern Triangle’, *The Broker*, <http://thebrokeronline.eu/Articles/Anti-gang-policies-and-gang-responses-in-the-Northern-Triangle>

³¹ For example, the state of Rio de Janeiro has a recidivism rate as high as 70%. See Amy Skalmusky, ‘The Cycle of Brazil’s Prisons,’ *The Rio Times*, 14 December 2010, <http://riotimesonline.com/brazil-news/rio-politics/the-cycle-of-brazil%E2%80%99s-prisons/#>

Caracas who, after years of killings and revenges, joined efforts to stop the fighting. They personally negotiated a truce and a peace accord between rival factions, which is still effective after eight years. This spontaneous effort marked the creation of the *Comisiones de Convivencia*, mainly managed by women and young people, which have reported a number of successes in promoting and enforcing cohabitation agreements in their neighbourhoods.³² Another example is the recent development in the Mathare slum in Nairobi. Here, gangs have been registering as “youth groups”, prioritizing community projects over violence. For Van Stapele, this initiative is promising as it removes stigmatization and supports the idea that gangs should be seen first and foremost as community members with a stake in local development.³³

Self-organised initiatives like the ones described above are becoming more frequent³⁴, especially in traumatised urban societies that do not see other alternatives but taking charge of community life. At the same time, such initiatives remain fragile, and are hard to sustain without the support and the protection of state institutions.

Talking urban insecurity: new high tech approaches and their limits

The tendency to segregation and, more generally, the implementation of policies aimed at maximising integrated urban control, have been accompanied by a rapid development of technological tools and processes to improve the safety and efficiency of urban settings. While technology cannot save cities from violence and insecurity, recent trends suggest that it is becoming regarded as the new cornerstone of urban resilience.³⁵

Alberto Vanolo approached this emerging trend by introducing the concept of the smart city. A smart city, in his words, is “a highly efficient city in which urban infrastructures and everyday life are optimized and ‘greened’ through technologies provided by IT companies.”³⁶ Although the concept of smart city was initially forged in developed countries, the design and implementation of ‘smart’ technologies and approaches to urban governance is also becoming increasingly popular in developing countries, which see ‘tech cities’ as a solution to their rapidly expanding and ungovernable urban sprawls. Examples of planned smart cities range from Tanzania’s Kigamboni, to Congo’s Cité le Fleuve, to Kenya’s Tatu and Konza Tech City. In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently announced plans to create 100 smart cities over the next two decades, in close collaboration with international firms like CISCO and IBM. India has traditionally invested in urbanisation as an engine

³² To know more about the Commissions and their experience, see Amnistia Intenacional, ‘Acuerdos Comunitarios de Convivencia Ante La Violencia Armada: Pistas Para La Acción,’ accessed March 18, 2015,

http://www.academia.edu/7723265/Acuerdos_Comunitarios_de_Convivencia_ante_la_Violencia_Armada_pistas_para_la_acci%C3%B3n.

³³ Naomi van Stapele, University of Amsterdam, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014. Also see Katy Fentress, ‘Gangs of Nairobi,’ *The Guardian*, 18 March 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2014/mar/18/gangs-nairobi-mathare-slum-development>

³⁴ For example, for community-based responses to gang violence in the U.S. see *Daring to Care*, WOLA Special report, 2008:

http://www.wola.org/publications/daring_to_care; and for a recent initiative in the town of San Pedro Masahuat, El Salvador, see: ‘Comunidad unidad en contra de pandillas en San Pedro Masahuat,’ reportage, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pR9JwEqQR0>.

³⁵ For example, see IBM, ‘Smarter Cities’, <http://www-03.ibm.com/innovation/us/thesmartercity/>

³⁶ Alberto Vanolo, Turin University, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

for growth and development, and is now making the idea of creating smarter cities in industrial corridors part of a strategy to attract international investments.³⁷

In the international arena of ‘smart cities’, some companies stand out as pioneers. For instance, since 2011 the trademark ‘smarter cities’ is registered as belonging to IBM.³⁸ For Vanolo, the monopoly of big companies on the development of new urban technologies risks enhancing global inequality, as middle class engineers from the Global North will be in charge of developing urban policies for cities in the Global South, thereby eroding the influence of local engineers as well as – and this is perhaps more damaging – that of democratically chosen politicians. The key question he poses is “can technological solutions really provide answers to urban problems of social exclusion and marginalization of the poor, or will they make things worse?”³⁹

For Yusuf Hassan, meanwhile, the development of the new ‘tech city’ of Konza, just outside Nairobi, illustrates how a satellite town for the *rich* is being created as an answer to urban insecurity in the capital. This, he says, only worsens one of the root causes of urban violence, namely social inequality and segregation. Indeed, acute concern expressed in the seminar over rising and exorbitant property prices in the already segregated urban settings of Lagos and Nairobi suggests access to decent lifestyles in urban settings will be a distinctly minority occupation.

Furthermore, Hassan sketched how in Nairobi itself, the new governor recently developed a ‘master plan’ for the city together with the Japanese government, which consists mainly of the building of ‘super-malls’ and ‘super-highways’, but fails to design modern solutions for the problems affecting the city’s poor majority, such as the lack of efficient public transport or basic water supply.⁴⁰

According to recent estimates, there will be more than \$400 billion in potential investment in hard and soft smart city infrastructure by 2020, in an industry that could be worth as much as \$1.5-3 trillion by 2050.⁴¹ Certainly, massive investments from international firms can ensure improved security systems, better control of suburban areas (such as traffic flows), and a more efficient use of resources. At the same time, granting to private, often foreign, interests the monopoly of a primary good like security poses serious threats for the state, its citizens and the whole society. In this regard, Vanolo issues a warning over the “violence of surveillance,” stressing that new technologies for urban security emphasize security from *fear*, rather than from real threats posed by social exclusion and resource scarcity.⁴²

³⁷ ‘Crafting ‘smart Cities’: India’s New Urban Vision,’ *openDemocracy*, August 22, 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/openindia/mathew-idiculla/crafting-%E2%80%9Csmart-cities%E2%80%9D-india%E2%80%99s-new-urban-vision>.

³⁸ Others enterprises that sell ‘smart’ technologies to cities include Schneider Electric, Hitachi, Accenture, Toshiba, General Electric, Microsoft, Oracle, Capgemini and SAP.

³⁹ Alberto Vanolo, Turin University, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

⁴⁰ Yusuf Hasan, MP for the National Alliance in Kenya, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

⁴¹ ‘Are Smart Cities a Bright Idea for the Global South?’, *Corporate Knights*, accessed March 16, 2015, <http://www.corporateknights.com/channels/connected-planet/smart-cities-bright-idea-global-south/>.

⁴² Alberto Vanolo, Turin University, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014. For more on this see Alberto Vanolo, ‘Whose Smart City’, *Open Democracy*, 8 April 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/alberto-vanolo/whose-smart-city>

In sum, one of the main risks ahead is the prevalence of an old modernist civic ideology, for which controversial social problems are reduced to simple tasks for quick and easy solution. The complexity of issues like social inequality, marginalisation, and corruption cannot be solved through sophisticated IT applications. Yet, not all is bad, other speakers at the seminar insisted. Technology may be considered a tool, whose effects, beneficial or otherwise, depends on the use to which it is put. The challenge is not to lose control and to set limits to protect the public interest, as well as promote human rights and social values, especially in developing big cities in the developing world.

At the same time that IT solutions are moving from the Global North to the Global South, the same trend is happening with security mobilities, in Rivke Jaffe's words. Urban policies "to make your city safer", designed and implemented in some cities with a degree of success, make their way to cities across the globe through complex and sometimes opaque transnational networks of global security actors. For example, Jaffe showed how models of urban surveillance and warfare that originate in Israel, through Israeli consultants to the Brazilian government, have been exported to the slums of Rio de Janeiro. Similarly, the same company that helped build the Palestinian wall has also been contracted to improve watchtower surveillance along the US– Mexico border. As urban policies moves across skills and borders, the lines between official and non-official security providers are increasingly blurred.⁴³As with the export of 'smart' technology, the export of urban security policies thus also risks confusing and fudging perceived threats, business opportunities and real development needs.

⁴³ Rivke Jaffe, University of Amsterdam, presentation at expert discussion *Big Cities: Sources of and Solutions to New Insecurities*, Secretariat of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, 13 November 2014.

Conclusions

Urbanization and its impact are at the heart of international debate, and are becoming important items on the global policy agenda. Illustrative is the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on Sustainable Cities and Human Settlements in the list of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets set by the UN Open Working Group on SDGs during their final session on 19 July 2014.⁴⁴

Local issues are no longer local, but are becoming crucially embedded in global dynamics. As the expert discussion has shown, big cities situated in different continents and at diverse levels of economic development face similar challenges. In addition, the rapid movement of people, ideas, money and information across borders have caused the collapse of state boundaries in certain aspects and promoted transnational interdependence and interconnection.

The fact that cities are becoming more important will hopefully mean that national and international authorities pay more attention to the dynamics and challenges affecting urban communities. At the same time, and as this brief has shown, the political will to address rapid urbanization needs to be accompanied by a thorough understanding of its complexity and dilemmas. This should be the first step in the design of tailored, inclusive, and participatory mechanisms to address urban concerns.

At the level of national institutions, it is important that responsible decisions are taken on how to ensure steady supervision by the state while at the same time adapting to global trends, like privatisation, weakening traditional authority, and the increasing use of technology. This asks for a tailored and gradual approach, in which the rush toward digitalisation or the desire to attract foreign investment is counterbalanced by consideration of how such a development model can be maintained. In this regard, national states should work closely with different levels of governance, and encourage increasing devolution of power while remaining the guarantor of peace and security. At the same time, as they are closer to citizens and the roots of insecurity, policy makers at the local level should play a key role in urban policies aimed at preventing and deescalating violence.

In order to make this possible, local institutions need to be empowered and receive adequate resources and skills to administrate growing cities. They need to expand their network and design a capillary system of urban governance that is effective in the entire urban territory, including in suburban areas. International donors should recognise the need to allocate financial and political support and assist local authorities in adapting their institutions to new urban settings. At the same time, in order to prevent rejection by local communities, each transformation needs to be tailored to local dynamics by taking into account and respecting existing social and cultural constituencies. The need to build trust and legitimacy is crucial.

In fragile and conflict-affected states, where public institutions have lost recognition and are perceived as the dominant gang, the way forward is particularly complex and time-consuming. Increased financial resources and devolution of power are certainly insufficient to build trust. The first step here would be to improve communication. In some places, mayors have opened a lively dialogue with vulnerable communities about gang violence and the causes behind income inequality,

⁴⁴ Goal 11: Make Cities and Human Settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. See more at: <http://urbansdg.org/>

inadequate service provision, and weak or corrupt police and justice institutions.⁴⁵ Fostering dialogue and encouraging exchange of ideas with different segments of the community is of vital importance to rebuild relations. Recognising the value of self-organised social initiatives, like the *Comisiones de Convivencia*, and supporting bottom-up forms of mediation and conflict resolution, could also help to show commitment to the process of reconstructing legitimate public institutions.

While ethical considerations should always guide their decisions, authorities should test new ways to engage with violence, conflict and its perpetrators. Often, consultative approaches or mediation are much more effective than prescriptive and repressive policies. Cities should look at examples and experiences from other cities, and share innovative and unconventional best practices. Associations like the Forum for Cities in Transition⁴⁶ are examples of how best practices and lessons learned can be shared.

Finally, besides deescalating violence and dealing with conflict, cities and their governments should address the root causes of urban insecurity, which often are linked to social segregation, lack of opportunities, and deep inequalities. From this perspective, gangs should not be seen as the cause but rather the consequence of the problem: gang members are often victims of structural social violence and stigmatisation, being part of socially and economically marginalised areas where to emerge, or simply to survive, illegality becomes the only possible way forward.

In sum, from a top-down perspective, education, responsible urban planning, and social welfare are all fundamental elements in achieving human security, and should be integrated in national and urban policies. At the bottom, meanwhile, communities should be trusted to understand their problems and needs rather better than the government or the latest technological innovation. Local institutions, lastly, can play a pivotal role in understanding their communities' needs, and communicating them to the state and, increasingly, the international level.

⁴⁵ The Colombian city of Medellin provides interesting examples of how investing in building bridges between communities leads to substantial reductions in criminality and violence rates, John Vidal, "Why Fragile Cities Hold the Key to Stability and Development | John Vidal," *The Guardian*, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/26/fragile-cities-stability-development-robert-muggah>.

⁴⁶ An initiative of the John Joseph Moakley Chair at the University of Massachusetts Boston, the Forum for Cities in Transition is an international network of mayors, councillors, municipal officials, business people, and civil society representatives, see <http://citiesintransition.net/>



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