



PEACEBUILDING IN CITIES: BUILDING SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT URBAN SPACES

INTERNATIONAL EXPERT FORUM ON TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PEACEBUILDING, A JOINT INITIATIVE BY FOLKE BERNADOTTE ACADEMY (FBA), INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE (IPI), CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE OPERATIONS (ZIF) AND THE SECDEV FOUNDATION

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Across the Global South, cities are growing at an unprecedented pace. Many of these growing cities are located in fragile states or societies affected by or emerging from conflict. What are the features and dynamics of these fragile cities and what strategies have been successful in preventing violence and building peace in urban spaces?

SUMMARY

- ▶ *People are migrating into urban areas in unprecedented numbers in parts of the Global South, a growing share of the population is living in fragile cities characterized by instability, a lack of infrastructure and access to public services, violence and poverty as well as high disaster risk.*
- ▶ *Cities play an important role for peace and stability, and how to build safe, inclusive and resilient cities is becoming a growing concern for peacebuilders and experts in urban development. Addressing fragile cities requires a whole-of-society approach including formal and informal institutions, improving physical infrastructure and change of attitudes and behaviour.*
- ▶ *Major adjustments are needed to allow for more effective international city-level initiatives by multilateral institutions. Any international engagement should consider the effects on and the contributions of local institutions and populace, while strengthening its capacity of analysis, planning and financial assistance at urban level.*

INTRODUCTION

Recently, a new theme is emerging that is playing a more and more important role in the discourse about fragility. Increasingly, the focus is shifting from the fragile state to the fragile city, which has long been neglected by the mainstream debate about peace- and statebuilding. Addressing the particular role of cities for peace and stability is important for a number of reasons. After decades of urban growth in the Global North, the trend has shifted to the Global South where cities are now growing at an unprecedented rate. In large parts of Africa, the Middle East and Asia people are migrating into cities like never before. Many of these growing urban areas are situated in countries in transition or conflict- and post-conflict countries. The reasons for this development are diverse and range from economic opportunities offered by cities to depletion of natural resources in rural areas to seeking protection from violence or armed conflict.

This rapid pace of urbanization has led to fragile urban environments – cities incapable of providing adequate security, public services, infrastructure, and governance to a growing number of inhabitants. It results in fragile city dwellers being exposed to violence and instability, poverty, health risks, and in some cases to natural and man-made disasters. In order to deal with fragile cities, there is a need to bridge the gap between the communities of experts and practitioners concerned with building peace and building cities, to find ways how the building of safe, inclusive and resilient cities can contribute to more peaceful societies at large.

Providing a forum for this exchange was the purpose of the International Expert Forum (IEF) “Peacebuilding in Cities. Building Safe, Inclusive and Resilient Urban Spaces” held in Cape Town, South Africa on 17 April 2015. The IEF is a joint initiative of the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), the International Peace Institute (IPI), the SecDev Foundation and the Center for International Peace Operations

(ZIF). The IEF on peacebuilding in cities was held with the special partnership of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).¹

In many ways, cities represent the epicentres for development and are indispensable for positive change. Historically, urbanization has been an important driver of development. Cities can be centres for innovation and rising economies attracting foreign investment, they can offer economic opportunities and education and it is in the major cities and the capitals where important stakeholders come together and where political decisions are taken. Events and developments in urban areas can have implications for peace and security at the national level and beyond.

A great number of countries and societies are facing challenges arising from unconventional conflicts and violence related to violent extremism or organized crime—issues that often are concentrated in urban areas. In countries affected by armed conflict or in transition, cities also are the focal point for the activities of international organizations and NGOs. Fragile cities, can bring down the social contract between a state and its population, they can become the hub for dissent, for violent uprisings or the frontline in an armed conflict. Fragile cities face challenges that require integrated urban development frameworks addressing a broad scope of issues such as public safety, accessible health care, education, economic opportunities and other services.

The focus on fragile cities offers a novel perspective and level of analysis as it adds an aspect to the concept of fragility that goes beyond the state level. Urban governance is of both local and global importance and cities are an important unit of analysis, increasingly gaining the attention of policy makers and peacebuilding and development experts, but also military and security strategists. It is therefore hardly surprising that the UN High Level Panel on the Future of Peacekeeping Operations has solicited inputs on how to prevent and reduce violence in cities, showing that urban fragility has become part of the global debate on peace and security.²

In October 2016, HABITAT III, the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, will discuss the “New Urban Agenda” and the challenges of urbanization and sustainable urban growth.³ Questions related to sustainable urban growth and fragile cities have also attracted the attention of researchers from different disciplines. In addition to the work of individual researchers there are, for instance, the research program “Safe and Inclusive Cities” of the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC)⁴, examining the links between urban violence, poverty and inequalities and the work of the United Nations University on fragile cities⁵, which were among the contributions to this forum.

1. For the agenda of the meeting, please go to: <https://fba.se/en/how-we-work/research-policy-analysis-and-development/international-expert-forum/> For more information about the International Expert Forum, please see box below.

2. Report of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, http://www.un.org/sg/pdf/HIPPO_Report_1_June_2015.pdf

3. <https://www.habitat3.org/the-new-urban-agenda>

4. http://www.idrc.ca/EN/AboutUs/Donor_Partnerships/saic/Pages/default.aspx

5. <http://cpr.unu.edu/tag/fragile-cities>

› WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL EXPERT FORUM?

The International Expert Forum (IEF) is a global gathering of leading academics, experts, and policy makers focused on the next generation of peace and security challenges. How can peace be resilient to new threats? What should twenty-first century peace-building look like?

The IEF is organized by the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), the International Peace Institute (IPI), the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) and the SecDev Foundation.

The first IEF began with a series of four meetings on the conflict cycle in 2012-2013.¹ The second round of IEF started in November 2014 with a meeting held in New York at the International Peace Institute (IPI). The meeting focused on how organized crime, conflict, and violent extremism interact and undermine peace, security, and governance in fragile and post-conflict states, and the different ways in which peace-building needs to adapt in order to become more effective. The meeting focused on how organized crime, conflict, and violent extremism interact and undermine peace, security, and governance and how peace-building needs to adapt. In April 2015, the IEF continued with a meeting in Cape Town exploring the dynamics of fragile cities and evidence-based strategies to build peace in urban spaces.

1. For more information and reports from the previous IEF: <https://fba.se/en/Activities/Research/International-Expert-Forum/>

As more and more people are moving into cities, urban and local governance need to ensure security and peace, economic development and livelihoods for an increasing share of the world's population. The factors shaping urban fragility and violence are diverse and depend on the specific context. In many cities, these have led to strategies and approaches to deal with violence and address root causes of urban fragility.

FRAGILE CITIES AND URBAN VIOLENCE —SETTING THE SCENE

Fragile cities are characterized by instability, a lack of infrastructure and access to public services, violence and poverty. In many fragile, fast-growing cities, large shares of the growing urban populations live in informal settlements or slums. Often, fragile cities are prone to natural disasters and the resilience or the capacities to mitigate the impact of natural disasters such as floods or the like, are limited to non-existent. What makes many cities fragile is the combination of these different risks, the lack of resilience and insufficient coping mechanisms to deal with crises.

Fragile cities are not a marginal phenomenon. By 2050, 56 percent of the population in fragile and conflict-affected states will be living in cities, an increase of more than 20 percent compared to 2000. Over the past 40 years, the urban population in lower income and fragile countries has increased by over 300 percent. Already today, 1 billion people are living in slums around the world, marginalized and excluded from public services and formal employment. Women, youths, the very poorest and

those living with insecure land tenure face particularly acute risks.⁶

Despite these trends, fragility and violence in urban settings are not related to the size of cities or to the growth rates alone. Rather, fragile cities result from a combination of different factors associated with institutions and norms, economic opportunities and inequalities, infrastructure as well as behavioural patterns and attitudes. How these factors interact and what the specific causes and effects are, is highly context-specific. Similar to fragile states, every fragile city is distinct in the sense that it represents a unique combination of factors. The types and degrees of violence and insecurities differ from city to city. Understanding and acknowledging these differences is crucial in order to design interventions that can address the root causes of fragility. At the same time, it is possible to identify a number of shared characteristics as well as strategies to cope with fragility and to address its causes. Many of the experiences on how to deal with fragile cities and urban violence reside in the Global South, some of which are presented below.

THE ROLE OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL INSTITUTIONS⁷

In a number of cities, institutions have had key roles in addressing fragility and violence. Formal institutions, particularly those that belong to the security and justice sectors, have an important role to play. At the same time, other examples highlight that also informal institutions need to be considered and taken into account.

The experiences from South Africa's Western Cape Province highlight the role of the police and the ability of other local government institutions to adapt policing to local contexts in order to make cities safe. In the past, the interference of politics, a centralized national bureaucracy and roll-outs of untested programs have compromised the role of the police to provide public safety. Programs failed and cities like Cape Town remained unsafe. An increased influence of the provincial administration over the police and the adoption of long-term policies and programs that were tested and evaluated has significantly improved public safety in Cape Town and other urban areas. Priorities are realigned to focus on increased safety of public spaces and capacity building for communities and the police. The police service has been demilitarized and a professionalized and an independent oversight mechanism, such as an ombudsman, is in place. These institutional measures have significantly improved public safety and today, the police is enjoying increased levels of trust among the population.

6. John de Boer (2015), *Resilience and the Fragile City. Reducing Vulnerability to Complex Urban Crises*, United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, <http://i.unu.edu/media/cpr.unu.edu/attachment/1489/UNU-CPR-Resilience-and-the-Fragile-City-Article.pdf>

7. This section is based on contributions from Gilbert A. Lawrence, Former Head of Department of Community Safety for the Western Cape; Roberto Briceño-León, Laboratorio de Ciencias Sociales, Venezuela; Daniel Esser, Associate Professor, American University, Washington D.C.; Apiwat Ratanawaraha, Assistant Professor, Urban Design and Development Center, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok; Enzo Nussio, Researcher, Institute of Latin American Studies, Stockholm University; Megan Price, Research Fellow, Netherlands Institute of International Relations Clingendael, The Hague

The importance of formal institutions is also supported by a comparison of the homicide rates between cities in Colombia and Venezuela. Even though homicide occurs in all societies, there are significant differences in the prevalence. Understanding what measures work to reduce homicide rates requires a better understanding of the driving factors that relate. There are a number of assumptions commonly used to explain homicide rates relating to poverty, inequality and unemployment. In Venezuela and Colombia, these socio-economic indicators have improved significantly and since the 1990s, the poverty rate has been reduced, the GINI-index⁸ improved and unemployment has gone down.

However, a major difference is the steady rise of Venezuela's homicide rates from 20 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants in the mid-1990s to almost 70 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants in 2011. In Caracas, the homicide rate has been as high as 132 per 100 000 inhabitants. During the same period, Colombia managed to reduce the homicide rate from almost 70 to 33 homicides per 100 000 inhabitants. In Bogota, the homicide rate was cut from about 80 to 20 per 100 000 inhabitants.

The diverging development defies common explanations based on the socio-economic factors listed above. A possible explanation for the rise of homicide rates in Venezuela can be found at the institutional level and is related to the rule of law and the failure of the police and the judiciary to pursue homicides. As homicide figures were rising steadily since the mid-1990s, the number of arrests for homicides remained stable. In 2006, this development resulted in less than 9 arrests per 100 committed homicides and over 90 percent of the murders going unpunished. Contrary to Colombia, impunity has become endemic in Venezuelan cities since the mid-1990s.

While institutions seem to have failed in Venezuela, the picture is different in Colombia. In Bogota, a series of different developments have resulted in an institutionalized policy change that can help explain the remarkable improvement. A core enabling factor during the early 1990s was an initial change in policies resulting in the public elections of mayors and governors. The new political leadership adopted a holistic approach focusing on public security and increased government accountability to address the high homicide rates. Institutions were reformed and new approaches tested, including not only the police but also other sectors of government and civil society. The impact of these changes were closely observed by media, civil society and the electorate so that political costs for setbacks were considerable.

While the development in Venezuelan cities can partly be explained with the failure of formal institutions to pursue perpetrators who can commit crimes with a near certainty of going unpunished, security in cities is not only dependent on formal institutions. This is particular important in fragile cities where formal institutions are weak. Here, informal institutions and non-state actors step in. The Lebanese capital of Beirut is an example of a city where security is not exclusively provided by formal security institutions.

8. The GINI index is a statistical tool used to measure economic inequality by comparing the distribution of income in a society with a perfectly equal distribution. See also: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>

Rather, security relies on an interplay between formal and informal institutions and actors with shifting interests. Security in Beirut is provided by a variety of actors representing the state, political parties, private security companies, community watch groups or armed groups. The presence of multiple security actors and negotiations with or between groups providing security is commonplace. With multiple actors around, groups shift their orientation and allegiance according to what best serves their own and their community's interests. Social cohesion within the different communities, strong norms and reliance on networks are helping to retain a balance.

Manoeuvring this context is challenging and small alterations can be sufficient to disturb this balance. In everyday life, the impact on the public space is considerable. In order to increase safety, people are moving away from streets and neighbourhoods that are seen as dangerous or where none of the different actors can provide security. For those who can afford it, facilities are protected by private security companies. Recently, the influx of Syrian refugees in Lebanon is seen as a factor threatening to unsettle the balance between communities. In this environment, finding the managers of the different security actors and identifying their interests is a delicate art of security governance. Even if this balance can be upheld, it is not sustainable. A decisive question is how an arrangement can be achieved that not only corresponds with the various groups' interests, but that is more equitable, accountable and responsive to the security needs of the population.

“Often, the security situation in cities is seen as a direct outcome of the presence and the performance of state institutions belonging to the justice and security sectors (or the lack thereof).”

The cases above illustrate different ways of how security-related institutions affect urban fragility and violence. Often, the security situation in cities is seen as a direct outcome of the presence and the performance of state institutions belonging to the justice and security sectors (or the lack thereof). This is also the case for the Pakistani city of Karachi. According to the dominant narrative, violence in Karachi is related to ethnic or sectarian conflicts and the presence of armed groups. Rarely, analyses incorporate other salient issues as drivers of violence and insecurity, such as housing prizes or land issues. Similarly, the housing market in Afghanistan's capital Kabul collapsed as the international presence has been winding down, resulting in a rise of different forms of crime and victimization related to the housing sector. Clearly, insecurity in cities is not exclusively related to different forms of direct violence and the capacity of security institutions to contain them. Nonetheless, the general narrative tends to focus on spectacular attacks rather than other types of crime and sources of instability affecting large parts of the population and their livelihoods on a daily basis, making it difficult to rally support to take action and support institutions in addressing and dealing with these issues. The result is a confluence of different causes of violence, some of which are primarily associated with the lack of institutions regulating the urban space while others relate to the ongoing conflict

at the national level. The international focus on the latter creates a tension between the global narratives and the local realities of violence.

A case illustrating the role of informal institutions not related to security is Thailand's capital Bangkok. Here, urban fragility and insecurity are driven by growing socio-economic inequalities related to land ownership and the unequal distribution of access to land.

An increasing GINI-index sets Thailand apart from the development in other countries in the region where the GINI-index has improved over the last decades. The large-scale violence in Bangkok that occurred over the course of the recent years has mostly been related to political conflicts and growing inequalities at the national level. Overall, Bangkok is a rather safe city and everyday violence is not as prevalent as in other cities. Nonetheless, the manifestation of violent dissent in the capital and the spatial concentration of (violent) crime in low-income neighbourhoods have made the city more fragile.

In certain neighbourhoods, control rests in the hands of networks of influential people who benefit from the failure of the formal institutions to provide services and security. The livelihoods of a growing part of the population are affected by the influence of informal institutions. The result is an urban space where sovereignty is divided between the state and informal networks and institutions. Here, fragility relates to institutional, indirect forms of violence rather than direct violence and physical threats.

One example are the networks of motorcycle taxis, which are an important mode of transport in Bangkok and which are governed by a set of informal institutions to contain and to manage conflicts between operators. Efforts of the state to exert control over this sector to ensure the quality of services or to control the fares have largely failed. Extending the authority of the state in a case like the motorcycle taxis in Bangkok requires an inclusive approach bringing all stakeholders together. Those controlling the networks, the operators, the communities relying on the services and the private sector need to be included. Not least, the state, the quality of and access to services and the accountability of its officials need to be considered.

The role of informal institutions raises the question whether and how it is possible to treat non-state actors as allies to provide security in urban settings where official actors, for whatever reason, are unable or unwilling to do so. At the same time, outsourcing security will always remain problematic. In particular, this concerns the role of private security companies. Experiences from Cape Town show that almost any communally brokered security provision yielded better results when compared to private security companies. Outsourcing goes hand in hand with a breakdown of accountability and questions about who gets protection. Even though private security companies often seem more professional than poorly equipped and trained official security actors, the differences are often minimal and in appearance only.

Concerning non-state security actors, a challenge is to find approaches that do not criminalize the actors and informal structures by default. If security is provided in the absence of the state and the groups are perceived as legitimate actors, a central question must be how this rule

of norms can be reconciled with the rule of law without increasing insecurity or creating new conflicts. How can municipal administrators interact with informal structures and how can the informal be formalized? Where the rule of law is weak, informal structures will be resistant to change and where the state has been weak, non-state actors and informal security providers will not go away easily. The challenge therefore is to identify ways to integrate these actors by taking into account the local particularities.

BEYOND INSTITUTIONS: AN EXAMPLE ON THE ROLE OF GENDER AND MASCULINITY NORMS IN URBAN SPACES⁹

Either formal or informal, institutions do not operate in a vacuum. A key aspect of institutions are the rules, procedures and protocols that prescribe their interaction with stakeholders and certain courses of actions. But institutions also require norms as a foundation together with a certain degree of social cohesion as well as confidence and trust as the social capital.

But what norms matter for building safe cities? Research has shown that gender and masculinity norms are of pivotal importance when discussing levels of urban violence and public safety. Urban violence is predominantly male and strongly related to other forms of gender-related violence such as intimate partner violence (IPV). Generally, the availability and access to weapons or a history of violent or criminal behaviour correlate with the level of violence perpetrated by men against their partner. Domestic violence and abuse committed by men against partners and members of their family are often related to the perpetrators' personal experiences. Men who were witnessing or being exposed to violent or abusive behaviour during their own childhood are prone to adopt similar violent behaviours as adults. Experience of violence matters and men have proven to cope poorly with violence. Regarding masculinity norms, the fact that violence remains to be seen as a pathway to manhood in many societies across the world poses a serious problem as it legitimizes the use of violence in order to gain respect or to defend one's reputation.

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It is important to realize that intrapersonal and societal forms of violence not only affect the victims, but pose a threat to development goals for the society as a whole. Therefore, a holistic approach is needed to work on violence prevention. Peaceful urban spaces and reduced levels of domestic violence cannot lie in the hands of police and the justice sector alone. At an institutional level, there must be no impunity for perpetrators of domestic violence. At the same time, it requires broader responses, including changes of attitudes and norms and a perspective on masculinity based on non-violent

trajectories. Approaches that have yielded positive effects in Rio de Janeiro include a focus on non-violent relationship between parents and children, role models showing alternative, non-violent ways and peer groups to change norms and ultimately behaviour.

Another example of long-term preventive approaches aiming at changing norms and behaviours are programs on early childhood development. Based on the fact that children who are being exposed to violence are more likely to perpetrate violence later on, these programs provide the foundations for soft skills, communication and the ability to regulate and control emotions and to exert self-control.

Interventions such as home visiting and programs for cognitive development can help reduce violence and can also improve developments in society as a whole by addressing norms condoning violence and limiting the exposure of children to violence at home and in public spaces.

PEOPLE AND PLACES¹⁰

As much as the interplay of institutions and norms matters to create safe and inclusive urban spaces, so does the relationship between people and places in cities. Regarding the latter, providing safe and inclusive spaces through urban upgrading is an important factor for preventing urban violence, although the relationship between urban upgrading and infrastructure projects on the one hand and violence prevention on the other hand, is complex and causes and effects are not easy to identify.

In Cape Town, several projects illustrate how urban upgrading can contribute to the prevention of violence. The most successful initiatives, however, have been those that couple urban upgrading, such as paved roads and lighting of public spaces, with whole-of-society approaches that, for example, include public health, improved relationships between children, parents and caregivers, life skills training for children and youths, and gender equality. Other measures have also led to positive effects, for instance limiting the access to alcohol and weapons.

However, it is important to distinguish between quick wins that can be achieved through measures such as firearm control or restrictions on the sale of and access to alcohol and long term interventions dealing with early childhood development, youth development and not least the change of socio-cultural norms mentioned above. Despite positive evidence, the causal chains remain elusive. Urban settings are very complex environments making it very difficult to identify and control all factors.

For instance, providing employment opportunities for youths through job programs has often failed as a long term solution as the occupations are of low status and low pay that do not meet the expectations of the clientele and that do not offer attractive long term opportunities for career development.

9. This sections is based on contributions from Alice Taylor, Instituto Promundo, Rio de Janeiro and Chandre Gould, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria

10. This section is based on contributions from Michael Warren, independent consultant and Programme Manager, PAX, Pristina; John de Boer, Senior Policy Advisor, UN University Center for Policy Research, Tokyo; Michael Krause, CEO, Violence Prevention Through Urban Upgrading, Cape Town; Richard Matzopoulos, School of Public Health and Family Medicine, University of Cape Town

While occupation and employment for youths are of major importance in urban areas careful analyses are required to ensure that interventions address the root causes and not only the symptoms.

CONCLUSIONS

Two major questions arose from the different cases presented and the challenges discussed at the seminar, namely: What is the role of local governments, and how can international actors support local institutions?

Fragile cities are complex phenomena that escape single-factor explanations. In Afghanistan, for example, urbanization is occurring at a previously unknown pace. Processes that took four to five generations during Europe's urbanization are suddenly happening during one generation. In Bangkok, on the other hand, growing socio-economic inequalities related to land ownership and unequal access to land seem to be at the root of fragility. In many places, rapid urbanization is unchecked and unmanaged, leading to urban exclusion of certain groups that causes societal tensions and conflicts. At the same time, rapid urbanization in itself is a result of fragility and conflicts as the majority of refugees and IDPs predominantly move to cities and it is no coincidence that the highest growth rates of cities can be found in conflict-affected states.

“Within an urban area, it is easier and cheaper to deliver basic services and infrastructure and to provide for safe communities.”

Nonetheless, cities enjoy an advantage when compared to peace- and statebuilding at the national level. Cities can be easier to fix than states given that it is about a limited geographic area. Local governments have a vital role in fostering and making use of the advantages offered by cities. Within an urban area, it is easier and cheaper to deliver basic services and infrastructure and to provide for safe communities.

Tax revenue, a key factor to build accountable and transparent states, is easier to manage in a city compared to the national level given the scope to harness taxes for public goods and economic activities.

The immediate proximity of the local government to the citizens can be used to promote responsiveness, accountability as well as inclusiveness and participation. As the examples above show, there are multiple entry points for building safe and inclusive cities. Not one single approach that deals with institutions, norms, behavioural aspects or upgrading of urban infrastructure alone is likely to succeed in the long term.

The growing preoccupation with fragile cities suggests that international engagement will progressively expand in this area, as fragility is no longer confined exclusively to nation states but rather extends to their capitals and outlying metropolitan regions. Still, because multilateral institutions, in particular the United Nations, are state-based bodies which operate at national level, major adjustments will be needed in the future to allow for more effective international city-level initiatives.

Any international engagement should also consider the effects on and the contributions of local institutions and

populace, while strengthening its capacity of analysis, planning and financial assistance at urban level.

Involving local governments and mayors in international policy debates and decision-making is key to enable an exchange of ideas and best practices to link city builders and peace builders. Establishing this link is instrumental to create a better understanding of urban perspective and its integration in peacebuilding, even if the UN, other multilateral organizations as well as bilateral donors, will continue to have states as primary interlocutors.

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