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Introduction. Safe and inclusive cities: contesting violence

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Introduction. Safe and inclusive cities: contesting violence

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In 2007, the world became predominantly urban (UN-Habitat, 2007). Passing this tipping point highlighted the increasing complexities and pressures faced in addressing urban poverty and inequalities. Exacerbating these challenges are experiences of violence, insecurity and exclusion within urban spaces (Agostini et al., 2007; Burte and Kamath, 2017; Datta, 2016; Gough, Chigunta and Langevang, 2016; Lemanski, 2012; Lindell, 2019; Rodgers, 2004). The urban world is fraught with various forms of conflict and violence, from widespread or intense threats through to everyday concerns, fears and experiences (Moser and McIlwaine, 2014; Moser and Rodgers 2005; World Bank, 2010). These encounters and concerns have direct and indirect impacts on human development and economic growth, with implications for achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 that speaks about safe and resilient citiesⁱ. The New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III in Quito in 2016ⁱⁱ contains a further call for action to tackle urban safety, crime and conflict prevention as an integral part of city planning, legislation, finance and governance (Rudd et al., 2018; Schindler et al. 2017). The diverse papers in this special issue speak about these issues primarily in countries of the global South, some at the cusp of urbanisation, others at advanced stages of urbanisation, but all experiencing forms of violence emerging from their respective urban development paradigms.

Within urban research, violence, inequalities and poverty have tended to be researched and written about separately (Muggah, 2012). Generating an evidence base to understand the connections between these processes and identify the most effective strategies for addressing the challenges they pose for many cities of the global South is essential (World Bank, 2011). Today, these cities are centres of multi-layered violence including: criminal and organized violence associated with the drugs and arms trade (Rodgers and Muggah, 2009); the rise of gangs, militias and increasingly the private sector filling in the provision of services, including security and justice, and providing alternative nodes of authority due to the voids created by an absence, reluctance or weakness of states (Moser and Rodgers, 2005; Shultz, Farah and Lochard, 2004);

social violence within households and communities; and development violence by the state through evictions and displacements (Freeman and Burgos, 2016; Moser and McIlwaine, 2006, 2014; Omoegun, Mackie and Brown, 2019; Weinstein, 2013;). Many urban dwellers, and especially those in vulnerable or disempowered positions, such as women, children, refugees and the poor, must negotiate these threats and fears on a daily basis (Adebayo and Akinkyemi, 2019; Falla and Valencia, 2019; Gregory and Pred, 2006; Lindell, Ampaire and Byerley, 2019; McIlwaine, 1999; Turner and Hanh, 2019). Thus, the ambit of research on safe and inclusive cities has expanded beyond earlier studies looking at gang violence and homicides, primarily in Latin American countries, and civil war on the same continent as well as the Middle-East, to looking at everyday violence, alternatively called structural violence.

The papers in this special issue explore the links between violence or the fear/threat of violence in cities, and poverty and inequalityⁱⁱⁱ. Of particular interest are the links between urban development paradigms in conditions of inequality and deprivation, experiences/threats of evictions and displacements in slums/informal settlements, and experiences of everyday violence. Living in poverty in low-income neighbourhoods, amidst lack of employment or possibilities of coming out of poverty, has resulted in high crime rates and interpersonal violence, particularly Gender Based Violence (GBV), among these populations. Poverty and lack of opportunity for upward mobility leads to out-migration, including to cities of the global North, where migrants may still experience violence. Thus, experiences/threats of violence have complex linkages with wider development processes. The papers here, spanning four countries, India, South Africa, Brazil and the United Kingdom, bring to the fore how different experiences of violence or the threat of it are embedded in contemporary processes of urbanisation and globalisation that are structurally unequal, perpetuating inequalities of class, religion and gender at the local level.

Centring structural violence

Structural violence places the state as the central actor in perpetuating or mitigating everyday violence and the fear/threat of violence (Bhide, 2013; Farmer, 1996, 2004; Galtung, 1969) but also recognises peoples' agency in negotiating with the state in dealing with violence. The causes of structural violence have been linked to poverty and inequality stemming from political and economic systems, particularly neoliberalism (Farmer, 2004; Springer, 2011). Extreme forms of urban inequality are considered to act as a form of structural violence (Farmer, 2004; Galtung, 1969). Consequently, structural violence is not spontaneous but rather a product of a society characterised by inequality and exclusion (Agostini et al., 2007). Moser and McIlwaine (2006) have categorised everyday urban violence that intersects with structural violence into four types: social violence, which is motivated by the desire to obtain or keep social power and control; economic violence motivated by material gain; political violence motivated by the will to win or hold political power; and institutional violence perpetrated by state institutions, as well as groups operating outside the state. Violence from above, such as state-supported displacement is legitimized, while violence from below, including social protests and mass demonstrations, is criminalised (Springer, 2008).

The paper by Brij Maharaj (this issue) discussing the case of the Early Morning Market at Warwick Junction in Durban, South Africa, which was due to be demolished by the eThekweni Municipality to enable a developer to construct a mall, deals with the issue of structural violence through the mechanism of urban planning. An estimated 4,000 traders who operated in the market, and are dependent on the high footfall of rail passengers, stood to lose their livelihoods under the guise of inner-city revitalisation related to Durban hosting a global sporting event - the Football World Cup. Maharaj (this issue) defines violence as the loss of livelihoods and possible immiserization, fear of forced eviction and relocation that would lead to loss of livelihoods and existing investment and physical violence by the state, which often turns brutal in the face of resistance. This 'worlding' project, which in the end was not implemented, was being justified by claims that not only would it enhance the city's global position but also help correct racial injustice, as many of the traders were of Indian origin.

Urban planning, as envisioned and practised, is shown to be a source of structural violence in the paper by Renu Desai, Darshini Mahadevia and Shachi Sanghvi (this issue), in the setting of Ahmedabad, India. They present an account of Bombay Hotel informal development, home to a Muslim population, many of whom were resettled in the area by Muslim charities post the 2002 communal violence, which then attracted other Muslim populations. The development of the Bombay Hotel area itself is a story of embedded structural violence in Ahmedabad's development. This informal development has bypassed the required legal permissions and been classified as illegal in the planning nomenclature. Under the local planning law, development can happen through a mechanism called the 'Town Planning Scheme', whereby the planning authority allocates certain parcels of private land for public amenities, such as roads, parks, schools, health centres, etc. In the case of the Bombay Hotel area, the land earmarked for public purposes is already built-up informally and hence by definition is illegal. The structural violence in this case is linked with the lack of a housing programme that caters to the needs of those who cannot afford a house on the market or access public housing. Another form of structural violence emerges when informal housing is categorised as illegal in the formal planning mechanism, hence the inhabitants are forced to live under the threat of demolition.

The paper by Amita Bhide (this issue), focussing on a slum area called Mandala in Mumbai city, also looks at structural violence in the lives of slum dwellers, in particular poorer residents who have gradually built their lives in the city through accretion. They have faced simultaneous challenges of multiple deprivations, disempowerment and lack of agency, living on the margins of citizenship and facing everyday violence from both state and non-state actors (see also Hammett, 2017; Lemanski, 2017; Coates and Garmany, 2017; and Subadevan and Ijlal Naqvi, 2019 on contested urban citizenship in the global South). Many of the slum dwellers had settled on this site following evictions from other locations in Mumbai, hence they have experienced structural violence over an extended period.

Peoples' agency and partial success

Structural violence tends to recur, despite being challenged by the affected populations, who are mainly low-income groups working and living informally. The street traders at Warwick

Junction presented by Maharaj (this issue) adopted a dual strategy, opposing the planned mall through street protests and mounting a legal challenge. After the project generated bad publicity and the mall developers realised the damaging consequences on their companies, the project was withdrawn. Some half a decade after the resistance to the eviction, the market remains neglected and allegations of its destruction by stealth have surfaced. Thus, the vulnerability of the market vendors to destruction of their marketplace, as well as their livelihoods, remains up in the air without a long-term solution.

Similarly, attempts to thwart the potential conflict and violence by the state towards the residents of a large informal settlement at the behest of urban planning, is discussed at length by Desai et al. (this issue) in the case of Bombay Hotel development in Ahmedabad. Information about the local plan's possible implementation resulted in fear of demolition and hence mobilisation at the local level, lobbying the elected representatives, and negotiations with local state officials. These actions resulted in changes to the local plan in such a way that there were no demolitions, apart from partial demolition of some buildings to widen roads to bring in drainage. Electoral democracy and clientelist politics facilitated negotiations, which prevented violence from arising, but the truce between the state and residents is only temporary as a permanent solution to land tenure has not been found.

Bhide's paper in this special issue is another example of how peace building can occur in a slum, in this case in Mumbai, through the agency of those affected by state plans. The paper presents two different approaches adopted by slum dwellers following their eviction; participating in a protest initiated by a city level organisation or engaging with the local state in negotiating solutions to access services. Following the struggles of four individuals to build their lives, Bhide narrates how some of those who were part of the city level movement changed their strategy to negotiate directly with the state. The paper illustrates how there is no singular people's agency, rather there are often several.

In literature dealing with violence, other forms of people's agency have also been discussed. The terms social inclusion and social cohesion point to the fact that the ties that bind communities together influence violence (Salahub and Zaaroura 2019). In a different way, people's agency has been invoked through participation in bottom-up development efforts, something that Bhide's paper (this issue) alludes to and which has been tested in the context of South Africa (Barolsky and Borges, 2019; Langa et al., 2019; Matzopoulos et al., 2019) and Brazil (Barolsky and Borges, 2019). These efforts have, at best, been reported to be a partial success.

Gender based violence

An important dimension of making cities safe and inclusive is to address issues around Gender Based Violence (GBV), that limits women's participation in economic, social and political activities and undermines gender justice (Chant and McIlwaine, 2016; Moser, 2016). GBV is perpetrated not just in the confines of the home but also in public domains, such as workplaces, transportation systems and other public spaces (Datta, 2016). The specific link of GBV with the

urban is that women are more likely to experience non-intimate partner violence in urban areas than rural areas (McIlwaine, 2013), while intimate partner violence is ubiquitous. For women, experience of GBV is a continuum across space and time (McIlwaine and Evans, this issue).

The two other papers in the special issue, by Elis Borde, Victoria Page and Tatiana Moura, and by Cathy McIlwaine and Yara Evans, consider masculinities and GBV. GBV is investigated in these papers at its intersectionality with other axes of violence and inequalities. The paper by Borde et al. (this issue) analyses gender relations, norms and identities, and their relation with urban violence in the context of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. McIlwaine and Evans also focus on Brazilians but in their case on Brazilian women who have migrated to London, exploring their experiences of violence at the intersection of patriarchy and their social, political and economic vulnerability in a global city.

McIlwaine and Evans' paper focusses on what they call the 'transnational urban Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) continuum'. The paper examines the discrimination, physical and psychological violence migrant women living in poor communities suffer as a consequence of being immigrants, their class, racial exclusion and GBV. They are shown to suffer additional violence in their personal space from men who struggle with their own deterioration in status and face racism in their new society, with some resorting to GBV in order to regain a perceived loss of power to reinforce hegemonic masculinities. Hence, GBV violence among international migrants moving between cities of the global South and global North travels in complex ways, with patriarchies intersecting with the everyday violence experienced in poor communities. Migrant women are unable to escape these violent situations as they also face exclusion and discrimination, unless there are appropriate support services. The continuum notion shows that different categories of GBV are interconnected; criminal acts such as rape are reinforced and propounded by other misogynistic behaviour, such as harassment, which is invisible but routinized in everyday GBV. The paper by McIlwaine and Evans (this issue) makes an important contribution to research on GBV by linking individual and family level violence to public spheres of communities within cities and states, and also transnationally across borders and over time.

The paper by Borde et al. (this issue) analyses how masculinities are constructed in a society with very high exposure to violence, and the ways in which these may transform into violence perpetrated by men, in particular against women. The study finds a strong association between exposure to violence in young men and their potential to use physical violence, including sexual violence and intimate partner violence. Exposure to violence creates fear leading to powerlessness and low self-esteem amongst young men, and hence challenges their machismo. Some attempt to establish their masculinity through perpetrating GBV. Young boys who have experienced violence in their childhood are likely to use violence at least once in their lifetime. Men who have been engaged in care giving or taking responsibility for their home and participating in domestic chores, however, are shown to be less likely to perpetrate violence. There are also instances of non-linear trajectories, such as men who protect their own families but engage in violence against others. Both the papers by Borde et al. (this issue) and McIlwaine

and Evans (this issue) contribute to the literature on GBV by showing how men often respond to feelings of powerlessness by using violence against someone they see as more vulnerable or weaker than themselves, especially female partners and children, as a way to reclaim power – the so-called ‘small power syndrome’.

The role of the state

The state, as argued above, is both at the centre of creating conditions of structural violence and actions to ameliorate such violence. However, as Bhide, Desai et al. and Maharaj argue in this special issue, the state acts in response to the pressure of ground-level mobilisation. As these cases illustrate, addressing structural violence through peoples’ agency is only temporary as the causes of such violence are wide ranging. In the studies from Ahmedabad and Mumbai by Desai et al. (this issue) and Bhide (this issue), land tenure is shown to be central. The cities’ planning processes are governed by market logic, i.e. land allocation and use are determined by the market. Consequently, the highest bidders gain access to legal land, while the low-income population are forced to seek housing with informal land titles. The threat of eviction through formal planning processes remains. The solution to structural violence, as these two papers suggest, should be located in the redistributive policies of the Indian state, which needs to be reclaimed for the poor and by the poor. The central redistributive policy is land that should be treated as a social and public good. Urban policies and planning based on this paradigm would enable a move away from the market logic that urban planning is currently pursuing in the Indian context.

Bhide’s paper (this issue) allocates a central role to the state in addressing everyday violence, arguing that without adequate access to services, presumably provided by the state, the peace building process cannot start. State provisioning of services reduces the threat of violence from non-state actors, as well as from the state, and ameliorates living conditions. If the issue of tenure security is not addressed, however, the fear of violence, in particular eviction by the state, persists. Hence, even if state provisioning of basic services temporarily ameliorates violence or the threat of it, there is a need to address long-term peace-building efforts, which will only occur when the state assumes a central role in the provisioning of housing and basic services.

The paper by McIlwaine and Evans (this issue) appears to suggest the need for specialist migrant services, especially for women, provided or supported by the state. Although Borde et al. (this issue) are silent on the state’s role in addressing GBV, in case of Brazilian cities pro-active state policy could be central to ensuring that low-income and slum dominated neighbourhoods have the potential to reduce crime and violence.

Linking to broader knowledge on safe and inclusive cities

The papers in this special issue contribute to the expanding research on urban violence and entry points to create safe cities. In the forward to the book *Reducing Urban Violence in the Global South – Towards Safe and Inclusive Cities* (Salahub et al., 2019: i), Amita Bhide claims that

recent research exploring the links between poverty, inequality and violence illustrate how “safety and inclusion cannot be treated as independent arenas; they are linked”. Bhide also writes that in situations “where the state is often implicated as a perpetrator of violence and where social cohesion is frayed with groups pitched against each other, ... interventions [to reduce violence] are bound to be embedded in the complexity of violence ...” (Salahub et al., 2019: i). As Salahub and Zaaroura (2019) summarise, research on safe and inclusive cities has produced evidence of gendered acts of violence, i.e. how conditions of violence or the threat of it has specific gendered outcomes. This is clearly shown in the paper by Borde et al. (this issue).

Structural and infrastructural violence, in particular forced displacements, have been researched in the context of mega sporting events, such as the Olympics and the Football World Cup, and in association with attempts to create a World City. Infrastructural violence can be understood as the violence caused by infrastructures, especially in relation to the poor, which determines access to resources and services and makes possible certain mobilities while constraining others (Rodgers and O’Neill, 2012). Maharaj (this issue) explores this issue in relation to Durban. Research on homicides, crime and interpersonal violence is available in abundance, particularly centred in the countries of Latin America and Africa; in particular, the agents of such violence and their impacts within the context of high homicide rates, drugs and arms cartels, and the operation of mafias and gangs are investigated (Rodgers, 2004, 2009; Rodgers and Muggah, 2009). Borde et al.’s paper (this issue) is also located within this context. McIlwaine and Evans’ paper (this issue) also obliquely deals with such issues, showing how some Brazilian families and individuals attempted to escape interpersonal violence but especially women find themselves subjected to GBV in a different context, in this case London.

While the papers in this special issue provide insight into the links between violence, poverty and inequality in cities, there is still a need for further research on urban planning and design and how these link with violence or the threat of it. Action programmes on making cities safe for women deal with both urban planning as well as design (Mahadevia and Lathia, 2019) but need to expand to making cities safe for all marginal groups within the city.

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ⁱⁱ Retrieved on June 11, 2019 from <http://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Four of the five papers in this special issue are based on research conducted under the Safe and Inclusive Cities programme (2012-17) supported by the International Development Research Council (IDRC) Canada and DFID.